

Research Brief



Sexual Violence in Idaho, 2020

December 2021

KEY FINDINGS

5-Year Victimization Trend



Increase in rate of sexual assault victims known to law enforcement



Increase in number of sexual assault victims who received grant-funded services

Victim Service Agency Needs

- Resources for staff retention and training
- Resources for combatting COVID-19
- Housing/shelter for victims

According to data collected from state and local law enforcement agencies, the rate of sexual violence victimization in 2020 was at its highest point in recent history. This research brief examines recent trends in sexual violence victimization, as well as the needs of non-profit agencies that provide services to victims of sexual violence.

Measures of Victimization

Idaho Incident-Based Reporting System

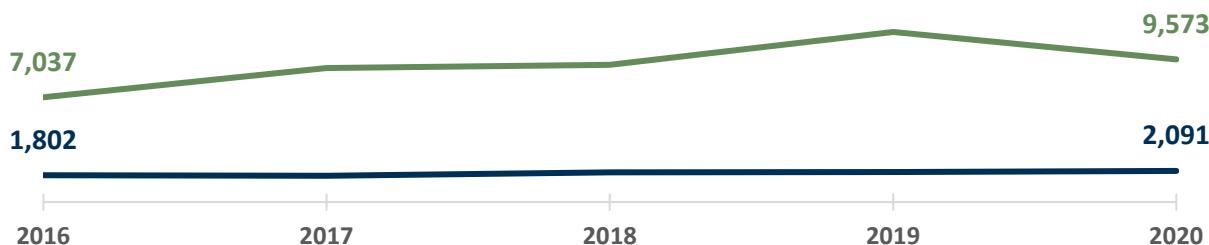
State and local law enforcement agencies report data on criminal incidents to the Idaho Incident-Based Reporting System (IIBRS), housed at the Idaho State Police. In 2020, 2,091 victims of sexual assault were known to law enforcement, a 16% increase since 2016 and the highest number since 2009. The victimization rate was 1.17 victims per 1,000 Idaho residents, up 9% from 2016. Sexual assault victims accounted for 12% of all victims of crimes against persons in 2020. See Figure 2 for more county-level victimization rate information.

Grant-Funded Victim Services

The State of Idaho manages multiple federal grant programs that provide funding to agencies serving victims of crime. These programs include the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Victim Assistance, STOP Violence Against Women Act (STOP VAWA), and Sexual Assault Services Program (SASP) federal grants. In 2020, these funds enabled victim service providers to serve 9,573 sexual assault victims, up 36% from 2016. In 2020, the number of sexual assault victims who accessed services via programs funded with federal dollars was 4.6 times higher than the number of sexual assault victims known to law enforcement (up from 3.9 times higher in 2016, but down from 5.6 times higher in 2019).

Figure 1.

The number of sexual assault victims who **received grant-funded services** was **4.6 times higher** than the number **known to law enforcement** in 2020.



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Historically Underserved Populations

Hispanic/Latino Victims

Individuals who identify as Hispanic/Latino were victimized at lower rates than the general population in 2020, according to IIBRS data. The rate of sexual assault among Idaho's Hispanic/Latino population was 0.89 per 1,000 Hispanic/Latino residents, compared to 1.12 overall. While Hispanics/Latinos accounted for 13.0% of Idaho's population in 2020, they accounted for 10.7% of Idaho's sexual assault victims. Hispanic/Latino victims tended to be concentrated in southern Idaho, where they make up a larger share of the overall population due to their significant presence in the agricultural labor force. See Figure 3 for 2020 county-level victimization rates among Idaho's Hispanic/Latino population.

American Indian/Alaska Native Victims

Individuals who identify as American Indian/Alaska Native were victimized at lower rates than the general population in 2020, according to IIBRS data. The rate of sexual assault among Idaho's American Indian/Alaska Native population was 0.74 per 1,000 American Indian/Alaska Native residents, compared to 1.12 overall. While American Indians/Alaska Natives accounted for 1.4% of Idaho's population in 2020, they accounted for 0.9% of Idaho's sexual assault victims. American Indian/Alaska Native victims tended to be concentrated in counties that overlap with a reservation and in urban areas, where they make up a larger share of the overall population. See Figure 4 for 2020 county-level victimization rates among Idaho's American Indian/Alaska Native population.

Victim Service Agency Needs

Victim service agencies are regularly provided opportunities to communicate agency needs to the Planning, Grants & Research (PGR) Department of the Idaho State Police, which serves as the State Administering Agency for the STOP VAWA and SASP grants. Additionally, in 2019, the Idaho Statistical Analysis Center (ISAC; a component of PGR) surveyed victim service providers as part of a larger criminal justice system needs assessment. Three of the most commonly cited needs by victim service agencies are discussed below.

Resources for Retaining and Training Staff

85% of respondents to ISAC's 2019 survey who work in victim service agencies indicated that increased pay for staff was a "moderate" or "high" need. Additionally, six agencies that receive STOP VAWA and/or SASP funding noted in their 2020 annual reports that additional funding and/or staff was a "significant area of remaining need".

"The greatest need we see continues to be funding of the program. We have seen an increase in services the last couple of years with the SASP funding. We are seeing more survivors seek our services especially counseling. Further funding and an increase in funding will continue to allow our organization the opportunity to further our reach and provide more quality hours for advocates and our counselor."

Resources/Strategies for Mitigating the Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic

In their 2020 annual reports, nine agencies that receive STOP VAWA and/or SASP funding reported that the COVID-19 pandemic was having multiple adverse effects on their ability to reach and serve sexual assault victims. These impacts included a reduction in the agency's ability to conduct outreach and educational activities, reductions or significant changes in service provision, adverse effects on victims' mental health,

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and increased victim dissatisfaction with the criminal justice system due to the slowing of case processing in law enforcement agencies and the courts.

"The onset of COVID-19 has meant adapting to an altered form of service delivery. Clients experienced increased symptoms, exacerbated by the pandemic, which has increased the number of clients seeking services and elongated the counseling waitlist. Clients appeared to be struggling with increased depression and increased stressors, as well as a decrease in their ability to access support systems and coping skills safely. Most clients have continued to be able to access counseling services via Zoom, but technical issues arise often. Even more so, some clients do not have access to appropriate technology for Zoom, so sessions are conducted over the phone which is less ideal. Clients also experience a barrier in attending sessions due to the need for childcare with children home from school."

Housing/Shelter for Sexual Assault Victims

Idaho's population growth in recent years has put a strain on all residents, and that strain is magnified for victims of sexual assault. 97% of respondents to ISAC's 2019 survey who work in victim service agencies said that housing/shelter for victims was a "moderate" or "high" need. STOP VAWA and SASP recipients echoed that sentiment in their 2020 annual reports. The need for housing was further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"One area of remaining need is the lack of shelter and affordable housing in our community especially for under-served populations. Boise and the neighboring cities, such as Nampa, are some of the fastest growing cities currently in the United States. With this rapid growth, we are seeing an increasing need for safe shelter and affordable housing... The shelters in our community are consistently full, so victims are put on a waiting list. Affordable housing units have a year or longer wait list, which discourages victims from leaving an abusive situation."

Conclusion

The recent rise in sexual assault victimizations in Idaho is one of which criminal justice leaders and victim service providers should take note. As the number of victims rises, both criminal justice and victim service agencies will need to increase their capacity to serve these individuals. Focus areas should include finding ways to increase agency capacity to handle higher caseloads, retain and train staff, provide safe housing or shelter for victims, and respond to the evolving effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Contact Us

Idaho Statistical Analysis Center
Planning, Grants & Research
Idaho State Police

isp.idaho.gov/pgr/sac
 pgr@isp.idaho.gov

Thomas Strauss, MPA
ISAC Director & Principal Research Analyst

(208) 884 – 7040

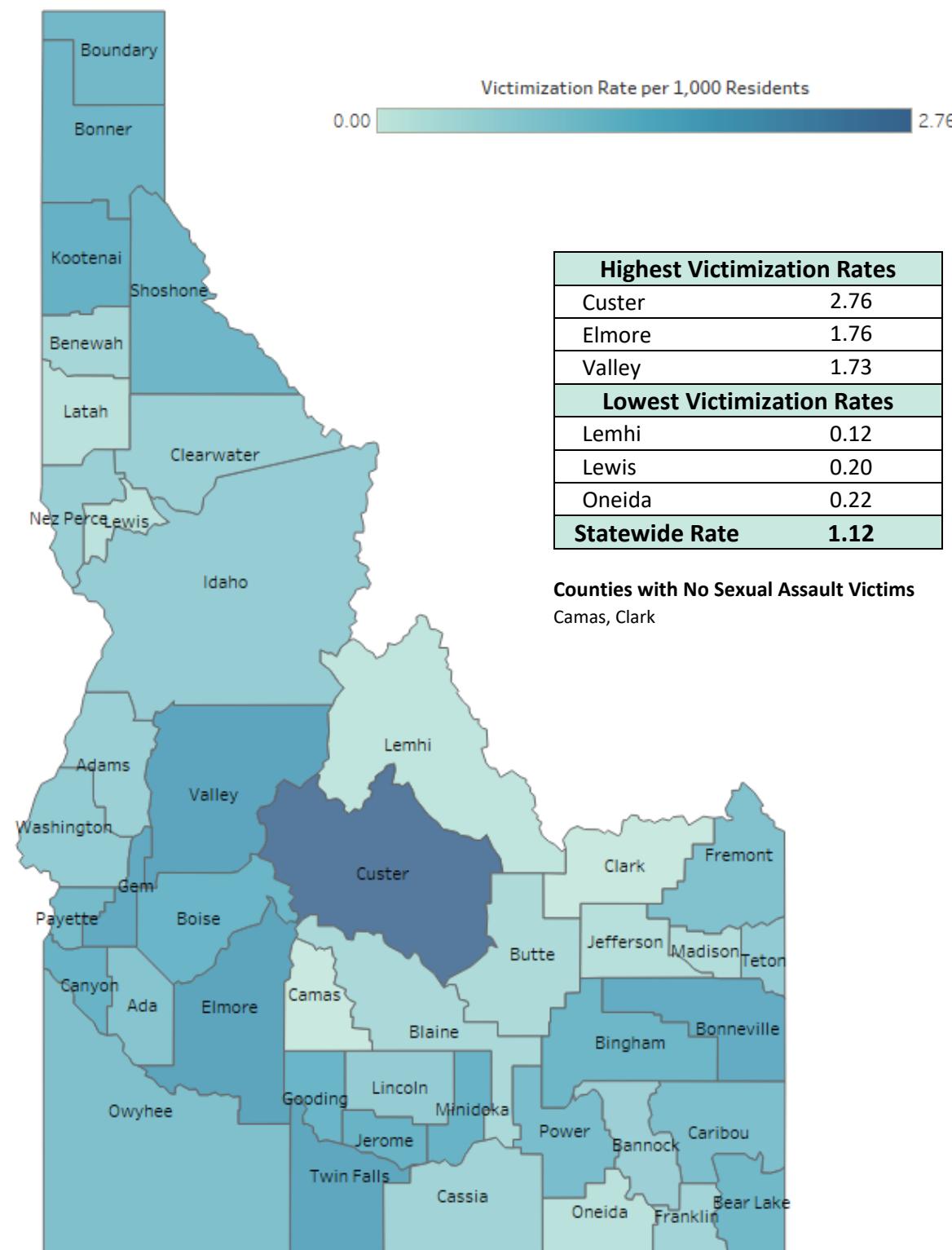
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Figure 2. Total Victims of Sexual Assault, 2020



Source: Idaho Statistical Analysis Center analysis of Idaho Incident-Based Reporting System data

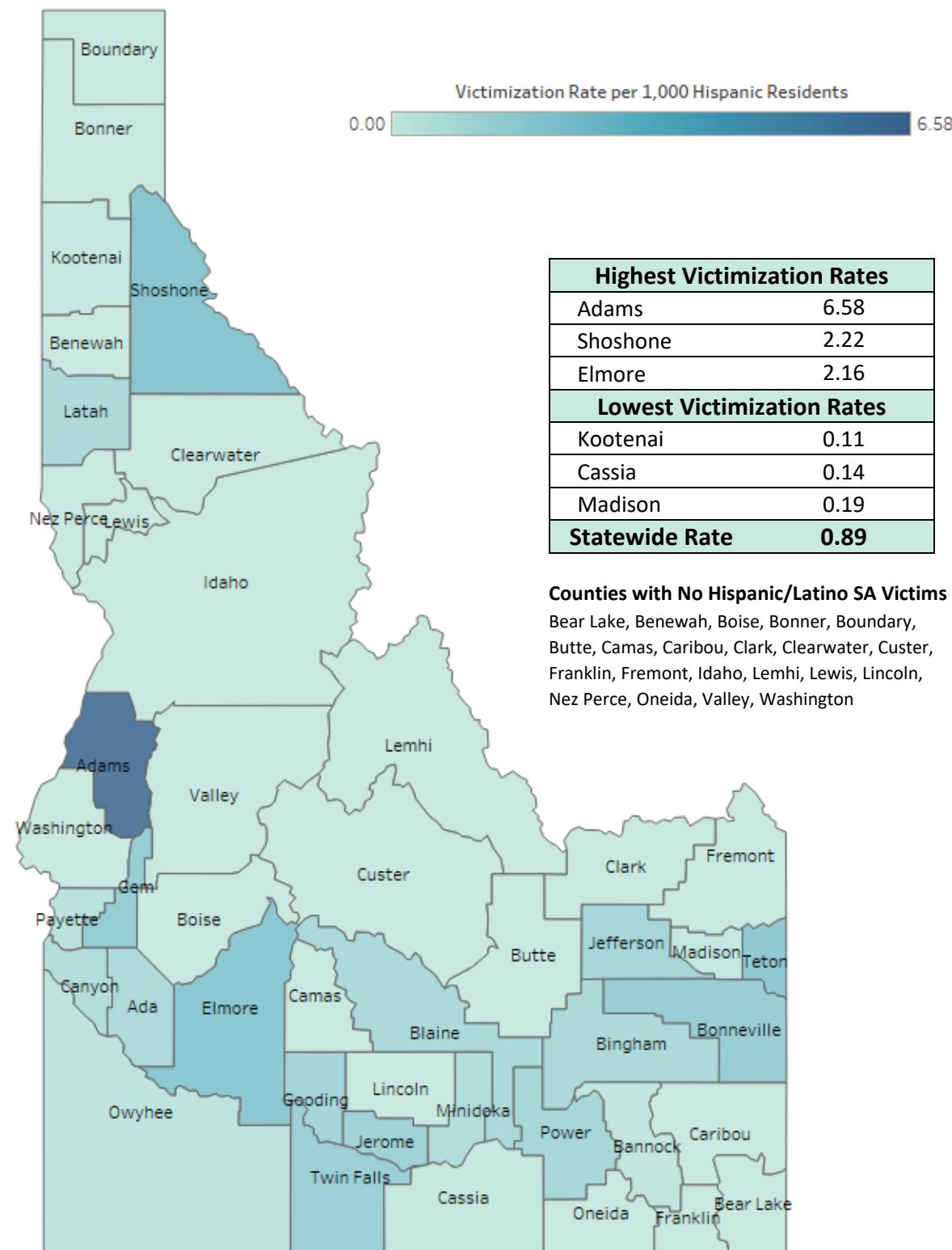
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Figure 3. Hispanic/Latino Victims of Sexual Assault, 2020



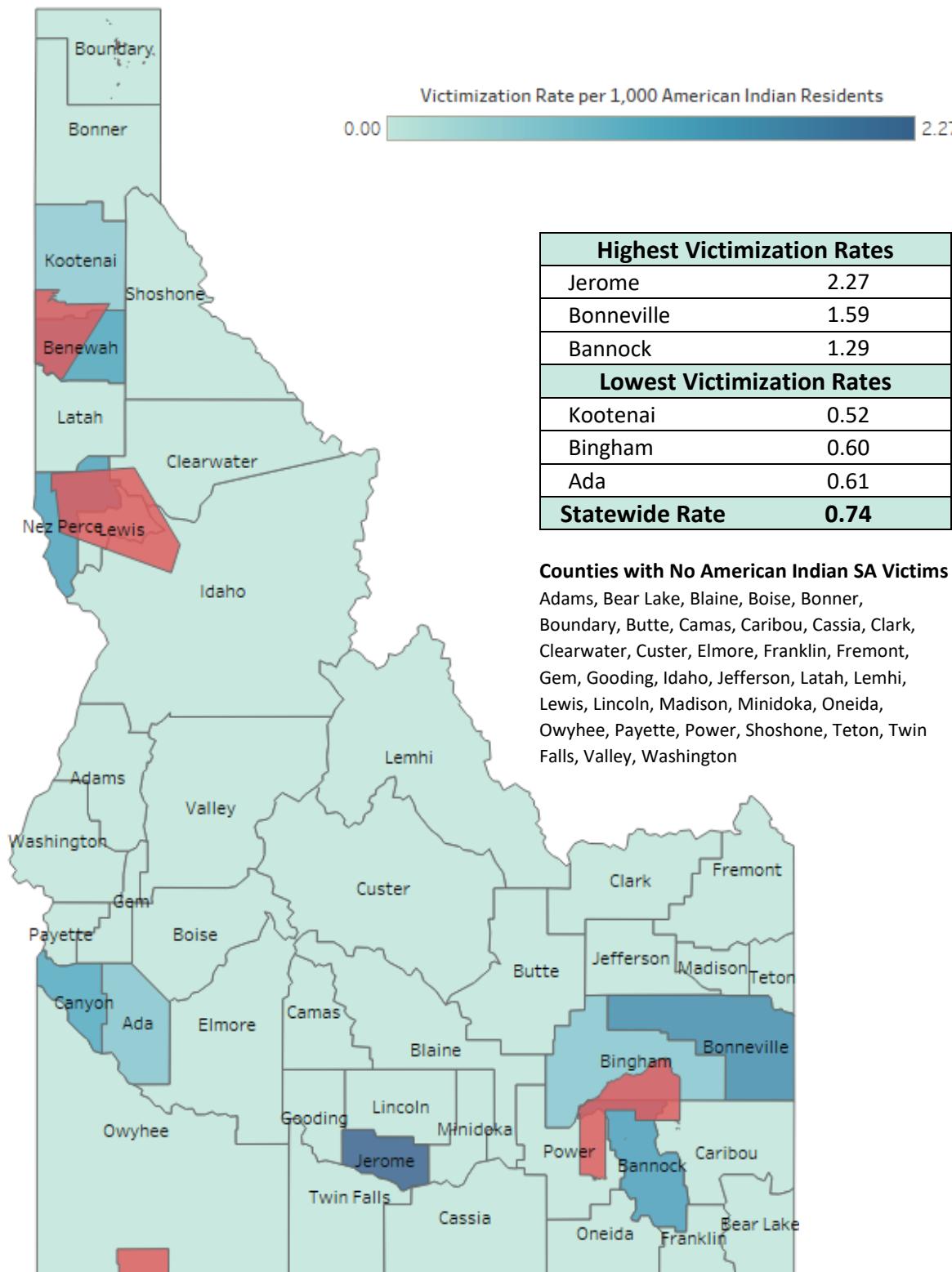
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Figure 4. American Indian Victims of Sexual Assault, 2020



Source: Idaho Statistical Analysis Center analysis of Idaho Incident-Based Reporting System data

NOTE: Red areas indicate reservations.