

# Research Brief

## Sexual Violence in Idaho, 2023

April 2025

### KEY FINDINGS

Between 2016 and 2023



Increase in number 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 expanding services in rural areas
- Training for all sectors of the justice system
- Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs)

According to data collected from state and local law enforcement agencies, the rate of sexual violence victimization had been slowly increasing nearly every year since 2016, but suddenly dropped to a 6-year low in 2023. 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

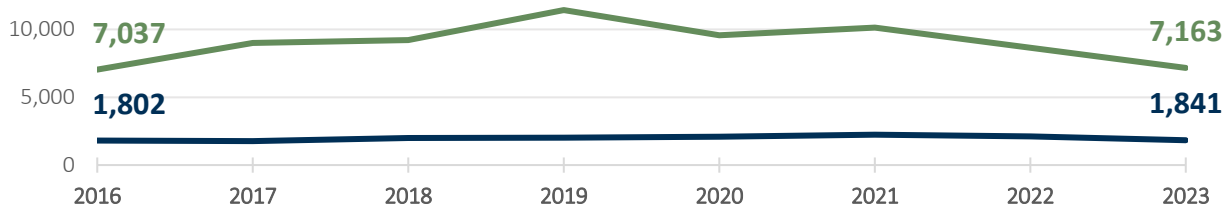
#### Idaho Incident-Based Reporting System

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 2023, 1,841 victims of sexual assault were known to law enforcement, a 2% increase since 2016 (1,802), but a 13% drop from 2022 (2,121). The victimization rate was 0.98 victims per 1,000 Idaho residents, down 8% from 2016, and down 23% from an 8-year high of 1.27 in 2021. Sexual assault victims accounted for 10% of all victims of crimes against persons in 2023. See Figure 2 for county-level victimization rates.

#### Grant-Funded Victim Services

The State of Idaho manages multiple federal grant programs that provide funding to agencies serving victims of crime. These include the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Victim Assistance, STOP Violence Against Women Act (STOP), and Sexual Assault Services Formula Program (SASP) federal grants. In 2023, these funds enabled victim service providers to serve 7,163 sexual assault victims, up 2% from 2016, but down from 11,424 in 2019. In 2023, the number of sexual assault victims who accessed services via programs funded with federal dollars was nearly four times higher than the number of sexual assault victims known to law enforcement (3.9 times higher, which is equal to 2016; down from 5.6 times higher in 2019).

**Figure 1. The number of sexual assault victims who received grant-funded services was nearly four times higher than the number known to law enforcement in 2023.**



## Law Enforcement Data for Historically Underserved Populations

### *Hispanic/Latino Victims*

Individuals who identify as Hispanic/Latino reported being victimized to law enforcement at lower rates than the general population in 2023, according to IIBRS data. While Hispanics/Latinos accounted for 13.3% of Idaho's population in 2023, they accounted for 9.8% of sexual assault victims reported to law enforcement. Data from the 2023 National Crime Victimization Survey indicates that Hispanic/Latino victims reported to law enforcement at a slightly higher rate than White victims in 2023, but the difference between the two groups was not statistically significant and the sample size was small enough to warrant caution when comparing those two groups.<sup>1</sup> Historically, Hispanic/Latino victims are less likely to report their victimization to law enforcement, meaning the true victimization rate among the Hispanic/Latino population could be higher than IIBRS data suggests. Hispanic/Latino victims known to law enforcement were concentrated in southern Idaho, where they make up a larger share of the population due to their significant presence in the agricultural labor force (see Figure 3).

### *American Indian/Alaska Native Victims*

Individuals who identify as American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) reported being victimized to law enforcement at lower rates than the general population in 2023, according to IIBRS data. While American Indians/Alaska Natives accounted for 2.9% of Idaho's population in 2023, they accounted for 0.3% of Idaho's sexual assault victims reported to law enforcement. This runs counter to national-level survey data, which shows that AI/AN women are nearly twice as likely as non-Hispanic White women to have experienced sexual assault within the previous year.<sup>2</sup> Idaho's AI/AN victims known to law enforcement tended to be concentrated in four counties that overlap with a reservation or are in urban areas, where they make up a larger share of the overall population (see Figure 4).

## Victim Service Agency Needs

Victim service agencies are regularly provided opportunities to communicate agency needs to the Pass-Through Grants and Research (PGR) Department of the Idaho State Police, which serves as the State Administering Agency (SAA) for the STOP and SASP grants. Additionally, in 2024, the Idaho Statistical Analysis Center (ISAC; a component of PGR) surveyed victim service providers as part of a larger criminal justice system stakeholder survey.<sup>3</sup> Three of the most commonly cited needs by victim service agencies are discussed below.

### *Resources for Expanding Services in Rural Areas*

About two-thirds (66%) of respondents to ISAC's survey who work in victim service agencies indicated that their agency serves clients from a county outside where the agency is located. 43% of respondents said their agency's staff can travel to provide services, and 25% said they can provide services via telehealth or another online platform. However, 40% still reported that at least some clients travel to them from other counties. 12 agencies that receive STOP and/or SASP funding noted in their 2023 annual reports that the need for additional services in rural areas was a "significant area of remaining need", up from two in 2022.

<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2025, March 11). *NCVS dashboard: Single-year comparison characteristic*. [Web tool]. Retrieved from <https://ncvs.bjs.ojp.gov/single-year-comparison/characteristic>

<sup>2</sup> Rosay, A. B. (2016, May). *Violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women and men: 2010 findings from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey*. Retrieved from <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/249736.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Rodgers, K., & Strauss, T. (2024, October). *2024 Idaho justice system stakeholder survey*. Retrieved from <https://isp.idaho.gov/pgr/isac/>

*“Further need exists to reach victims in underserved areas and from underserved populations. Many areas of Idaho are rural or remote in nature and require additional funding to provide services to these remote, rural areas. Transportation is a significant barrier for many victims in these [sic] state, where public transportation is only available in a few metropolis areas yet is deficient and limited even in these metropolis areas. In the other areas of the state, victims struggle to gain access to services that may be located several hours away and only accessible when rural roads are maintained during the warmer months.”*

### *Training for All Sectors of the Justice System*

In their 2023 annual reports, 13 agencies that receive STOP and/or SASP funding reported that additional and improved training for all parts of the justice system on how to work with sexual assault victims in a trauma-informed manner is a significant need (up from seven in 2022). This includes law enforcement, prosecution, judges, medical professionals such as SANEs, and counselors/therapists. Respondents noted that additional training for those who come into contact or work directly with sexual assault victims would both improve existing services, expand the justice system’s capacity to work with victims, and reduce the stigmatization of sexual violence victims that contributes to low reporting rates.

*“Unfortunately, one of the greatest needs is changing the stigma of sexual assault victims at a societal level. Ongoing training needs to occur among those who encounter sexual assault patients, such as law enforcement, health care providers, etc. Not everyone approaches this type of patient with the appropriate care or concern so improving interactions would benefit the patient dramatically. Furthermore, the community needs access to educational opportunities, training, and conversations to correct the falsehoods and shift the mindset and stigma regarding victims of sexual assault. The sooner victims feel supported, the sooner we can see an increased reporting rate and conviction of offenders.”*

### *Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs)*

In 2024, Idaho State Police Forensic Services announced that it had trained over 250 sexual assault nurse examiners (SANEs) since 2017.<sup>4</sup> Despite this achievement, 85% of respondents to ISAC’s 2024 survey who work in victim service agencies said that access to SANE programs locally remains a “high” or “moderate” need. STOP and SASP recipients echoed that sentiment in their 2023 annual reports.

*“In our community, a major challenge we face is the shortage of Forensic Nurse Examiners (FNEs), formerly known as SANEs, who are trained and available around the clock. Sexual assaults and domestic violence incidents occur at all hours, and not having 24/7 FNE coverage creates additional issues. One of these issues is the lack of communication from law enforcement agencies that respond to such cases without an FNE present. They need guidance on appropriate procedures to avoid inadvertently harming the physical or mental well-being of the victims while ensuring justice.”*

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<sup>4</sup> Idaho State Police. (2024, October 29). *Idaho State Police announces milestone of 250 trained SANE nurses*. Retrieved from <https://isp.idaho.gov/idaho-state-police-announces-milestone-of-250-trained-sane-nurses/>

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## Conclusion

Both law enforcement and victim services data show that the number of sexual assault victims in Idaho increased from 2016 to high points in 2019 (victim services) and 2021 (law enforcement) before declining through 2023. While these data sets cannot tell us on their own why those patterns emerged, some other data can add additional context.

First, most victim service agencies (13) that received STOP and/or SASP funding noted in their 2023 annual reports that an area of significant need continues to be training for everyone who works with sexual assault victims that helps them approach those interactions in a trauma-informed way and reduces the stigma that comes with experiencing sexual violence. It is thought that this will improve the experience of victims as their case moves through the justice system and will encourage more victims to report to law enforcement, which will ultimately improve offender accountability and long-term outcomes for victims.


Second, recent ISAC research shows that although the number of sexual assault victims has persistently been about four times higher than the number that report to law enforcement, the actual number of victims in Idaho is larger still. Data from the 2021 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey estimates the number of adult Idahoans who had experienced sexual assault within the 12 months prior to taking the survey to be 13,112 (95% confidence interval: 7,895 – 18,329), a number more than three times higher than the number of sexual assault victims served through federally funded programs in 2021 (4,191).<sup>5</sup>

Finally, the decline in the amount of federal grant funds that are available to support the provision of direct services is having an impact in Idaho. Although federal funding for victim services increased 87% between 2017 and 2021 to a high point of \$16 million, funding fell 13% in 2022 to \$13.9 million and fell another 6% in 2023 to \$13.2 million. Meanwhile, the number of sexual assault victims served by federally funded programs increased 12% between 2017 and 2021, but then fell 15% in 2022 and another 17% in 2023. This indicates that the increase in funding from 2017 to 2021 aided Idaho’s victim service agencies in ramping up their capacity to serve larger numbers of victims, but that capacity is now being scaled back as the amount of available grant funding decreases. The administrators of these funds (including, but not limited to, the state SAAs for VOCA, STOP, and SASP) should be aware of these issues and work to allocate resources as efficiently as possible to ensure that all Idahoans have access to effective services when they need them.

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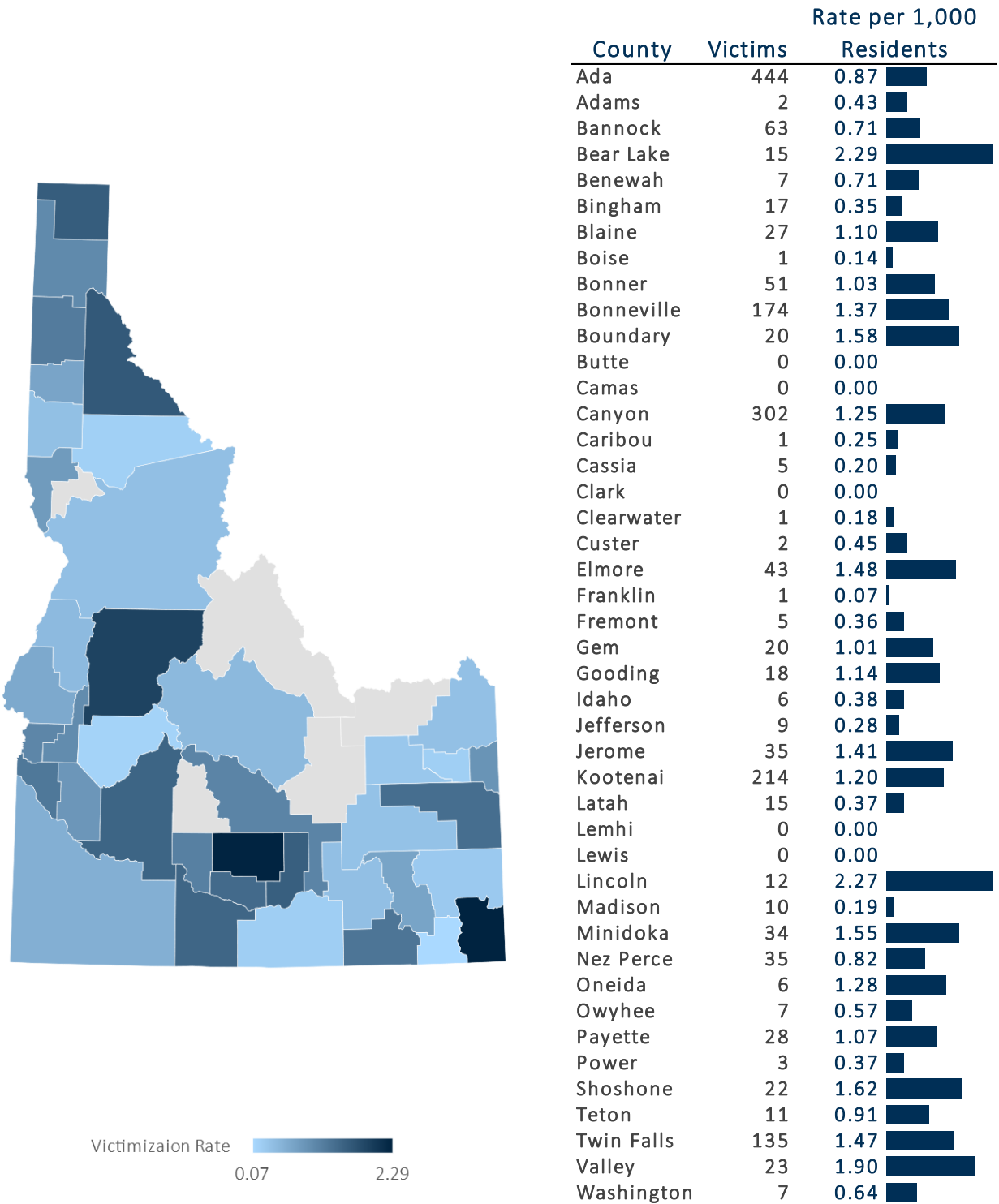
<sup>5</sup> Idaho Statistical Analysis Center. (2024, November). *Sexual violence in Idaho: Prevalence and health impacts*. Retrieved from <https://isp.idaho.gov/pgr/isac/>

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*Figure 2. Total Victims of Sexual Assault Known to Law Enforcement, 2023*

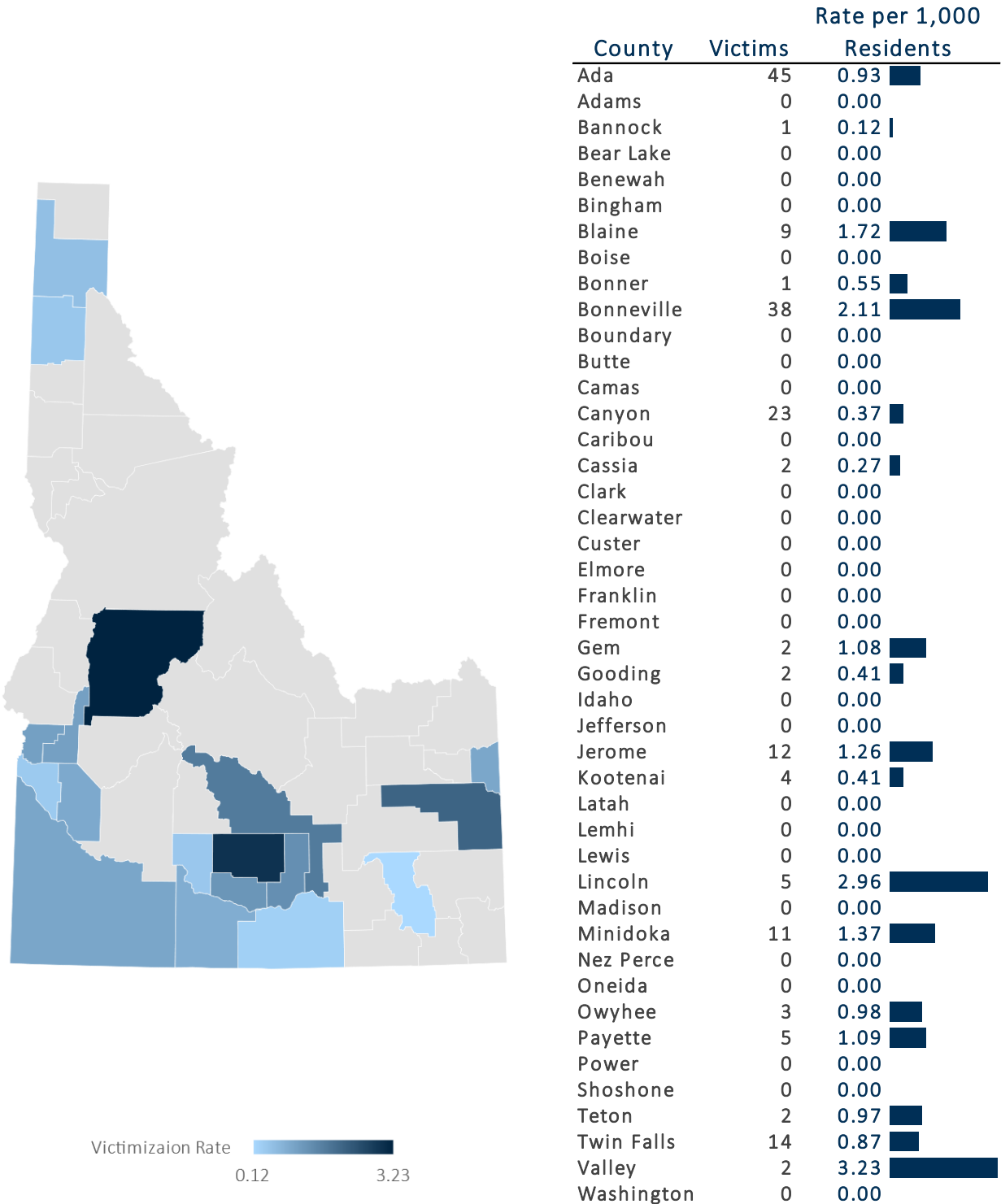


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*Figure 3. Hispanic/Latino Victims of Sexual Assault Known to Law Enforcement, 2023*



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*Figure 4. American Indian Victims of Sexual Assault Known to Law Enforcement, 2023*

