


# A Preliminary Study on Unwanted Sexual Intercourse within Long-term Relationships in The Bahamas

William J. Fielding  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5433-9673>

Virginia Ballance  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1067-8205>

University of The Bahamas

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## Abstract

Rape has been a concern in The Bahamas and the law recognizes rape outside of marriage as being a criminal offence. However, the so-called “marital rape exception” means that rape within a marriage is not treated as a crime. This has resulted in several national conversations about changes to the law. This study focuses on established (long-term) relationships and so is distinct to previous studies on rape in The Bahamas. This Internet-based study, which obtained responses from over 1,000 women, attempts to provide a first estimate of the prevalence of rape within long-term relationships. The estimate of at least 15% is in line with other studies from North America. The results also indicate that over 50% of the adult population are in favour of changing the law allowing the marital rape exception; however, the level of support varies by sex and age of the respondent. Male respondents in the 55 or older age group were less inclined than younger men to agree that marital rape can occur. The study provides a preliminary estimate of the number of women who would be potentially protected by a change to the law and indicates that such a change would be in the public interest.

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*I went to the police station, gave my report [on her rape by her husband], and I was told they do not get into marital affairs. They told me there's nothing they can do about it because the law says they cannot intervene in marital affairs. (Gibson, 2012)*

## Introduction

As has been noted in various publications such as Curry (2016), Fielding et al. (2016) and Sutton and Alvarez (2016), Bahamian society suffers from gender-based violence such as domestic violence, sexual abuse and rape. Further, The Bahamas is not untypical among countries in the Caribbean region whose laws are silent on rape within marriage

(Elvy, 2015). However, on a global scale, only 36 countries have not outlawed marital rape (Agrawal, 2020). It is noteworthy that several of the countries which do not outlaw marital rape are in the Caribbean region (and they share both a legal and cultural heritage of slavery and a legal system based on that of the United Kingdom [Castillo & Prado, 2010]). Family violence is a concern throughout the Caribbean region (Gibbons, 2015). Sutton and Ruprah (2017) suggest that gender-based violence is more tolerated in The Bahamas than elsewhere in the Caribbean, which might also reflect a greater resistance to gender equality in The Bahamas. Notably, two Bahamian government proposals to alter legal discrimination against women in the passing

on of citizenship to their children failed in the last two decades (Bethel & Fielding, 2020). Gender-equality issues remain a concern to the Bahamian government if they wish to meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal number five of achieving gender equality and empowerment for all women and girls (Bahamas Government, 2018) as well as achieving goal four in the draft Bahamas *National Development Plan* (Bahamas Government, 2016).

Since 2002, there has been an ongoing discussion regarding marital rape in The Bahamas. This arose from a government-sponsored referendum which sought approval to outlaw marital rape (Benjamin & LeGrand, 2012). Such a change would align the laws of The Bahamas with its international obligations to eliminate all forms of violence against women; these include the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women. CEDAW has repeatedly appealed to the Government of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas regarding the country's deficiencies in various aspects of women's rights, including marital rape (CEDAW, 2018). A strategic plan was published in 2015 (Bahamas National Task Force for Gender-based Violence, 2015), which outlined actions to counter gender-based violence and discrimination against women. While the current law concerning rape protects unmarried persons (Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act, 1991, which was amended in 2010), those who are married are not offered the same protection. Therefore, there is a concern that the marital rape exception in the current law protects those who have sex with their wives when the woman may not consent. This is despite the finding that 82% of males and 89% of females agreed that a spouse could rape their

partner (Bethel & Fielding, 2020). While some Bahamian religious leaders claim that a "man cannot rape his wife" (Jones, 2022), others condemn violence of any sort between husband and wife (Turnquest, 2018; Scott, 2022a). Mixed messages have also been heard from elected Bahamian officials indicating that marital rape is a private matter (The Official Nassau Guardian Ltd., 2017), that it is not even possible ("Conflicted on Marital Rape", 2020) or that it should be illegal (Rolle, 2021). Given this heterogeneous picture of aspects relating to intimate partner violence, the concerns noted by the OECD (OECD Development Centre, 2019) report on gender inequality in The Bahamas are understandable.

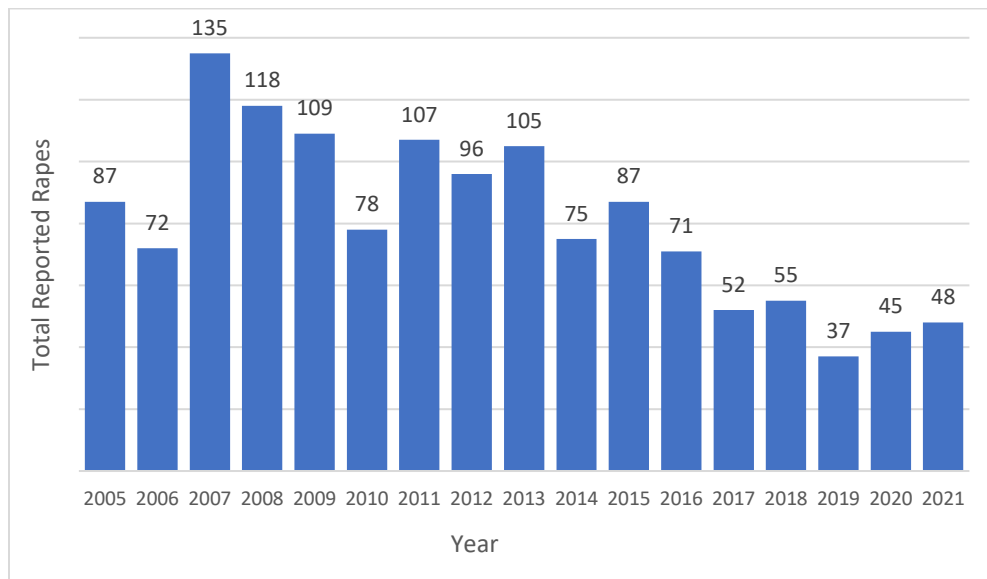
This concern about marital rape is aligned with the claim that The Bahamas has a high number of rapes per capita. Although it is often repeated that The Bahamas has one of the highest rates of rape in the region, if not the world (Strachan, 2022), such comments are difficult to verify due to underreporting and run contrary to the decline in reported rapes since 2005 as seen in Figure 1. While the official statistics on rape are disputed (Bethel & Fielding, 2020), they may be a cause of some optimism at a time when global trends on sexual violence are heterogeneous (Borumandnia et al., 2020). These figures contrast with the perceptions of between 70-90% of college students who thought that it was very common or common for females to have sexual intercourse against their will (Bethel & Fielding, 2020). However, official statistics do not differentiate between rapes which arise from casual relationships or those which arise from established relationships. This is an important distinction as rape by strangers is less common than rape by a person known to the victim and, in many instances, the victimizer was labelled as a boyfriend or ex-boyfriend (Bethel & Fielding, 2020). Bethel and Fielding (2020) estimated that 23.1% of

294 female university students had been victims of rape and Williams et al. (2021) estimated that 21.8% of students (out of 372 female respondents) in long-term relationships or married had been raped. Williams et al. (2021) also estimated that 7.2% of women in long-term relationships had sex against their will in their most recent sexual encounter with their long-term partner. However, this estimate should be treated with caution as it based on limited data (69 responses). In the United States, it has been estimated that 10-14% of married women are raped by their husbands (Kennedy Bergen, 2006) and 18.3% of all women are raped (Black et al., 2011). These figures suggest that the prevalence of rape in The Bahamas remains comparatively high and a cause for concern.

Beyond the numbers of rapes, whether they are considered high or low, it should be noted that the effects of rape are not singular. Both Williams et al. (2021) and others (for example, Mahoney & Williams, 1998) have demonstrated the detrimental effects of rape on the victim which persist after the event. Therefore, a better impression of the effect of rape on society may be appreciated by considering the cumulative number of rapes over a period of time to better understand the accumulation of suffering in society caused by these events. Literature reviews on marital or wife rape also highlight the fact that rape in long-term relations has lasting consequences for the victim (Mahoney & Williams, 1998; Martin et al., 2007). The public health concerns associated with sexual abuse are recognized by the Bahamas Ministry of Health (2010).

**Figure 1**

*Number of Rapes in The Bahamas Reported by the Royal Bahamas Police Force, 2005 to 2021*



Note: Derived from Royal Bahamas Police Force crime statistics.

In the Bahamas, studies on unwanted sexual intercourse have tended to focus on incidences which occur irrespective of the duration of the relationship (Bethel & Fielding, 2020). It is commonly accepted that

when consent to participate in sexual intercourse is not freely given by someone who is able to give consent, the act of sexual intercourse is rape (Equality Now, 2021). However, we also note that people can

participate in unwanted sexual intercourse which is consensual, but still unwanted, so creating a grey area between willing participation in sex and rape (O'Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998). In The Bahamas, the law indicates that unless consent is freely given, the sexual intercourse is rape. In addition, there is also the need for the participants to be of legal age to give consent to engage in sexual intercourse; otherwise, the act is also classified as rape (Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act, 1991). Once these legal considerations are taken into account, it can be demonstrated that the number of people who experience rape is higher than perceived, even by the victims themselves (Bethel & Fielding, 2020).

Based upon the 2010 Bahamas census (Bahamas Department of Statistics, 2012), it can be estimated that 42% of females aged 15 and over are in a long-term union. We can also estimate that 37% of females aged 15 and over are not protected by the current law with respect to rape, because they are legally married. Consequently, it can be appreciated that any discussion focusing solely on marital rape (the act of non-consensual sexual intercourse occurring between a legally-married couple) only applies to a minority of females aged 15 and older. We presume that it is in recognition of these figures that policy makers have avoided only addressing marital rape when taking about gender-based violence and the law (Rolle, 2022). This stance is reflected in this study, which focuses on long-term relationships, irrespective of whether or not there is a contract between the partners. This perspective of focusing on rape within long-term relationships allows us to exclude rape which occurs in transient relationships, "date rape," or rape by a stranger. This study is, therefore, narrower in focus than those of Bethel and Fielding (2020) and Williams et al. (2021).

It is against this ongoing interest and national conversation (Rolle, 2021) and women openly discussing the trauma arising from sexual abuse and rape (Bowleg, 2021) that a study was undertaken to obtain further insight as to how common rape may be in long-term relationships, not only in marriage. Although it is appreciated that men can be raped, our results will focus on females in long-term relationships.

## **Method**

In Spring 2022 an Internet-based survey using a snowball sampling method was undertaken. The target population was adults (aged 18 and over) normally residing in The Bahamas. Consent to participate in the study was obtained by a compulsory question which only allowed respondents to enter the survey if they agreed to participate. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of University of The Bahamas.

Based on the input of university students, a long-term relationship was defined to be marriage or a relationship of one year's duration or longer. The survey included questions about attitudes towards marital rape as well as whether it should be outlawed. Using the Reason for Consenting to Unwanted Sex Scale (Humphreys & Kennett, 2011), it was possible to examine further pressure within a long-term relationship which may be associated with unwanted sex, and even rape. The survey also posed questions about the participant's lifetime experience of rape and sexual abuse within their long-term intimate relationships as well as their attitudes and practices with regard to consenting to sexual intercourse.

Students from University of The Bahamas initiated the sample using their social media contacts. This resulted in 3,268 persons opening the survey link and 15 (.5%) declining to participate.

## Results

After cleaning the dataset to match the target population, 2,845 responses were retained. In common with other Internet surveys in The Bahamas (for example, Bethel & Fielding 2020; Williams et al., 2021), most respondents were female (70.4% of 2,841 responses) and 0.3% identified their sex as *Other*. Due to the small number of respondents identifying their sex as *Other*, these people were omitted from the results. The modal age group was 18-24 years (47.7% of 2,845 responses) and 34.2% of 2,841 responses were university students, which reflects the fact that university students started the sampling.

There were significant differences between age groups of the same sex regarding the concept of marital rape and whether it should

be outlawed. Male respondents in the 55 or older age group were less inclined than younger men to agree that marital rape can occur, Table 1. Each statement appearing in the table received the greatest support from the younger respondents.

Table 2 indicates that the ever-married group showed least support for the idea that rape can occur within marriage or that rape within marriage should be illegal. This is consistent with the idea that married women tend to feel that they do not need to give explicit consent (Table 3).

While we appreciate that males can be subjected to rape, in the results below we focus on the females in this study as females are most at risk of being victims of rape.

**Table 1**

*Respondents by Sex within Age Group, Agreeing that a Man Can Rape his Wife, and that Marital Rape should be Illegal*

| Agreeing that: | <i>A husband can rape his wife</i> |        | <i>Marital rape should be illegal</i> |        |
|----------------|------------------------------------|--------|---------------------------------------|--------|
|                | Male                               | Female | Male                                  | Female |
| 18-24          | 63.5%                              | 72.1%  | 71.9%                                 | 80.9%  |
| 25-34          | 57.8%                              | 69.2%  | 59.9%                                 | 76.3%  |
| 35-44          | 60%                                | 60.7%  | 53.1%                                 | 65.1%  |
| 45-54          | 50%                                | 59.1%  | 56.1%                                 | 67.7%  |
| 55 or over     | 45.1%                              | 61.2%  | 48.2%                                 | 63.7%  |
| $\chi^2 p =$   | .047                               | < .001 | < .001                                | < .001 |
| <i>N</i> =     | 832                                | 1,997  | 833                                   | 1,994  |

**Table 2**

*Respondents by Sex within their Marital Status, Agreeing that a Man Can Rape his Wife, and that Marital Rape should be Illegal*

| Agreeing that:                          | <i>A husband can rape his wife</i> |        | <i>Marital rape should be illegal</i> |        |
|---|------------------------------------|--------|---------------------------------------|--------|
| Status                                  | Male                               | Female | Male                                  | Female |
| Married at some stage                   | 59.0%                              | 60.8%  | 53.3%                                 | 65.9%  |
| Never married                           | 59.0%                              | 68.8%  | 63.3%                                 | 77.5%  |
| More than one partner in last 12 months | 59.6%                              | 73.6%  | 65.4%                                 | 83.5%  |
|   | $\chi^2 p =$                       | .564   | .005                                  | <.001  |
|   | $N =$                              | 614    | 1,473                                 | 615    |
|   |                                    |        |                                       | 1,471  |

**Table 3**

*Attitudes and Practices Concerning Consent and Sexual Intercourse, Percentages within Aspect*

| Aspect of consent   | Agree | Not sure | Disagree | N =   |
|---|-------|----------|----------|-------|
| I always give clear consent of wanting to have sexual intercourse*                            | 82.1  | 8.2      | 9.7      | 1,197 |
| I sometimes feel/felt pressured to have sex even when I do not want it*                       | 41.9  | 5.9      | 52.2     | 1,197 |
| I have had sexual intercourse against my will*  | 23.7  | 7.3      | 69       | 1,186 |
| I am NOT married but it is NOT necessary for me to give my consent when my partner wants sex. | 22.7  | 2.8      | 74.5     | 687   |
| I am married so it is NOT necessary for me to give my consent when my husband wants sex       | 29    | 7.7      | 63.3     | 297   |
| I am married so I must have sex with my husband whenever it wants it                          | 22.6  | 7.6      | 69.5     | 291   |

Note: \* Responses varied by age exact  $\chi^2$  test,  $p < .05$

### Aspects of Long-term Intimate Partner Relationships

Most females had long-term relationships with males (94.8% of 1,231 responses), so we should note that while most relationships were heterosexual, some were not. Of 1,474 females who had a long-term intimate partner, 34.5% were currently married. A number of female respondents reported

having sexual intercourse when they or their partner were unable to give consent (see, for example, Table 4). This demonstrates that rape, within long-term relationships may be more common than generally understood. The role of alcohol or drugs in rape may also be a cause for concern.

**Table 4**

*Circumstances Under which Females had Sexual intercourse, Percentages within Aspect*

| Ever had sexual intercourse when:  | Yes  | No   | Not sure | N =   |
|--|------|------|----------|-------|
| Respondent was physically or mentally unable to give consent (e.g.: drunk or high)*            | 20.5 | 76.7 | 2.8      | 1,199 |
| Respondent's partner was physically or mentally unable to give consent? (e.g.: drunk or high)* | 10.1 | 87.8 | 2.2      | 1,193 |
| Respondent was afraid of their partner (e.g.: angry or threatening)                            | 7.4  | 91   | 1.5      | 1,183 |

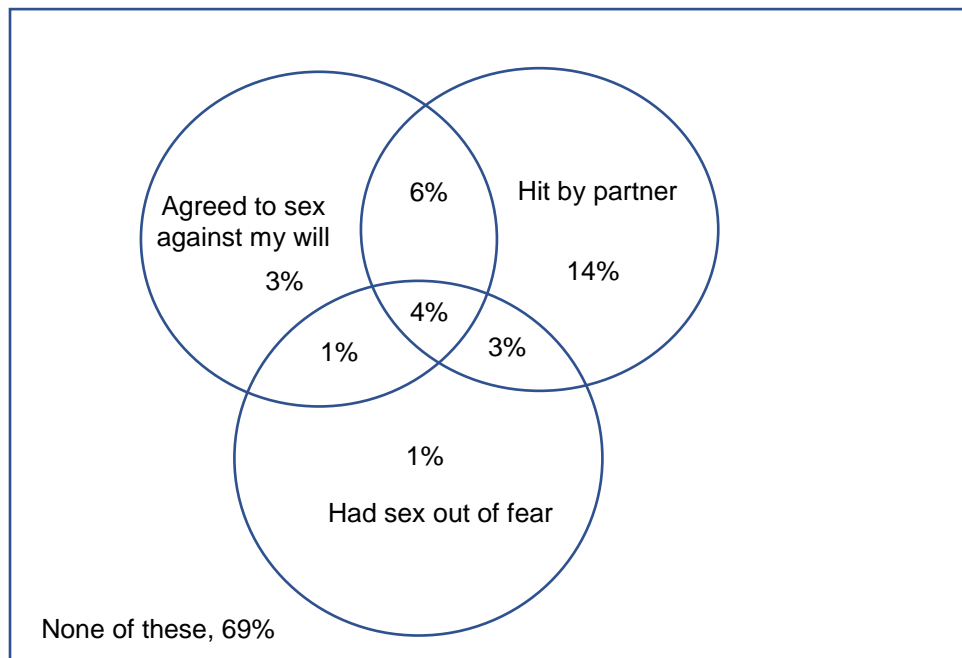
Note: \* Responses varied by age exact  $\chi^2$  test,  $p < .05$

While most females (69%) had not been hit by their long-term partner, were not fearful of their partner and had not had sex with their partner against their will, 4% of females had suffered from all of these concerning issues (Figure 2). While these percentages may not seem large, they potentially indicate that based upon the 2010 census, around 7,300 of women may fall into this group. Further, this figure represents a relatively large percentage

of those who suffer just one of these issues, except the *Hit by partner* group, and demonstrates the co-occurrence of these matters in the lives of women who have experienced long-term relationships. We can also note that when women are subject to physical violence, they have almost a 50% chance of being subject to other behaviours of concern.

**Figure 2**

*Co-occurrence of Behaviours of Concern in Women in a Long-term Relationship.*



Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Similar percentages of both single and ever-married women had been victims of rape by their long-term partner(s) (see Table 5). A logistic regression confirmed that there were

no statistically significant differences ( $p > .05$ ) of the percentages of raped women due to age or current marital status.

**Table 5**

*Women Ever Raped by a Long-term Partner, by Age Group and Marital Status*

|               | Age group  | Ever raped by a long-term partner | 95% CI of percentage |       | N =   |
|---------------|------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|-------|-------|
| Ever married  | 18-24      | 17.8%                             | 8.4%                 | 32%   | 39    |
|               | 25-34      | 19.3%                             | 12.1%                | 28.5% | 88    |
|               | 35-44      | 14.7%                             | 9%                   | 22.2% | 109   |
|               | 45-54      | 16.3%                             | 10.6                 | 23.5% | 123   |
|               | 55 or over | 8.5%                              | 4.3%                 | 14.9% | 106   |
|               | Overall    | 14.8%                             | 11.8%                | 18.3% | 465   |
| Never married | 18-24      | 12.1%                             | 9%                   | 15.7% | 365   |
|               | 25-34      | 22.4%                             | 16.9%                | 28.7% | 192   |
|               | 35-44      | 5.8%                              | 2%                   | 13.2% | 69    |
|               | 45-54      | 22.4%                             | 12.6%                | 35.5% | 49    |
|               | 55 or over | 9.1%                              | 1.9%                 | 26.1% | 22    |
|               | Overall    | 14.9%                             | 12.4%                | 17.7% | 697   |
| Overall       | 18-24      | 12.6%                             | 9.7%                 | 16.1% | 404   |
|               | 25-34      | 21.4%                             | 16.9%                | 26.5% | 280   |
|               | 35-44      | 11.2%                             | 7.2%                 | 16.5% | 178   |
|               | 45-54      | 18.0%                             | 12.8%                | 24.3% | 172   |
|               | 55 or over | 8.6%                              | 4.7%                 | 14.4% | 128   |
|               | Overall    | 14.9%                             | 12.9%                | 17%   | 1,162 |

We can estimate if respondents were victims of rape from their participation in sex when they were afraid of their partner or if they were unable to give consent. These estimates suggest that 18% (95% CI [14.7, -21.8]) of 443 ever-married women were raped and

28.3% (95% CI [25, 31.7]) of 693 never-married women were raped by their long-term partners. However, we note that the women in the 18-34 age group were more likely to have been raped only once, rather than women in the older age groups ( $\chi^2 = 25.7$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $N = 1,165$ ,  $p < .001$ ), Table 6.



**Table 6***Frequency of Rape, by Age Group.*

| Age group: | <i>Never raped</i> | <i>Once</i> | <i>More than once</i> | <i>N =</i> |
|------------|--------------------|-------------|-----------------------|------------|
| 18-24      | 87.4%              | 8.2%        | 4.5%                  | 404        |
| 25-34      | 78.6%              | 10.4%       | 11.1%                 | 280        |
| 35-44      | 88.8%              | 5.6%        | 5.6%                  | 179        |
| 45-54      | 82.2%              | 7.5%        | 10.3%                 | 174        |
| 55 or over | 91.4%              | 1.6%        | 7.0%                  | 128        |

Of 1,198 female respondents, 14% said that they had consented to unwanted sexual intercourse with their long-term partners. Those who had consented to unwanted sexual intercourse were 11.1 times more likely to have also been raped compared to those who had not consented to unwanted sex,  $OR = 11.1$ , 95% CI [7.7, 15.9]. When a woman had suffered physical violence from her partner, she was at an increased risk of being raped,  $OR = 3.7$ , 95% CI [1.6, 4.8].

The Consenting to Unwanted Sex Scale had a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  score of .94, indicated good reliability. Women who were never married had a similar score on the Consenting to Unwanted Sex Scale as women who were or had been married ( $M$  ever married = 54.6,  $SE = 4.12$ ,  $M$  never married 51,  $SE = 3.13$ ,  $p = .51$ , analysis of covariance with covariate age group). However, younger women had a higher score on the Consenting to Unwanted Sex Scale, so indicating that young women face more pressure to consent to unwanted sex than older women,  $r = -.2$  (95% CI [-.32, -.08]). As might have been anticipated, those women who were ever raped had a higher

score on the Consenting to Unwanted Sex Scale than those who had never been raped ( $M$  ever raped = 65.2,  $SE = 3.35$ ,  $M$  never raped 42.6,  $SE = 2.96$ ,  $p < .001$ , analysis of covariance with covariate age group).

Of the 18 items in the Consenting to Unwanted Sex Scale, three items demonstrated the greatest differences between the ever raped and never raped women. These were: verbally pressured to participate in the unwanted sexual behaviour, partner begged me to engage in the unwanted sexual activity until I could not argue anymore, and partner physically would not let me leave ( $\chi^2$ ,  $N \approx 255$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $p < .001$ ). These actions paint a picture of both psychological and physical violence preceding an encounter unwanted by the woman, which may have resulted in rape.

Overall, both the ever and never married groups were equally likely to have suffered sexual abuse or rape by their long-term intimate partners and unlikely to report the victimization (see Table 7).

**Table 7***Occurrence and Reporting of Sexual Abuse and Rape by Female Victims*

| Event                     | Ever married | Never married | OR  | 95% CI |     |
|---------------------------|--------------|---------------|-----|--------|-----|
| Victim of sexual abuse    | 14.1%        | 13.6%         | 1   | .75    | 1.5 |
| Reported the sexual abuse | 9.3%         | 12.3%         | .73 | .34    | 1.6 |
| Ever raped                | 14.8%        | 14.9%         | .99 | .54    | 1.4 |
| Reported the rape         | 13%          | 13.6%         | .95 | .45    | 2   |

**Discussion**

This study responds to the call for further research which is related to gender-based violence made in the 2015 Bahamas National Task Force for Gender-based Violence. We should note that the results from this Internet-based convenience sample can be expected to be biased compared to results which may have arisen from a random sample of adults, so the results should only be extrapolated to the wider population with caution. However, the COVID-19 pandemic made an Internet survey a practical way to collect data.

The opinions of respondents concerning marital rape, if it can occur, and whether it should be outlawed indicate that over 50% of respondents agree that it can happen and should be outlawed. However, the level of support is not uniform between or within men and women (Table 1) and this probably accounts for the differences reported in the Bahamian media on the topic of marital rape. For example, older men appear more hesitant to speak against marital rape than younger women (Scott, 2020; Wallace, 2022). However, despite the differences, this study indicates that there is general support for changes to be made to the existing law on rape concerning the marital rape exception. It should be noted that the results from this study contrast with an earlier study (Fielding, 2021). The difference may reflect volatility in public opinion arising from reports of sexual abuse in the media, as reflected in an editorial

in a daily newspaper (“Marital Rape Issue”, 2021).

The results from this study are in broad agreement with the estimates for marital rape reported from the United States. We should note that this study gives estimates of the lifetime experience of rape within long-term relationships; it does not attempt to estimate the occurrence of rape of women only within marriage. However, our estimate of between about 15-30% of women being victims of rape in their long-term relationships demonstrates that women need protection from harm even within stable relationships. These figures compare with 23.1% of college females who were ever raped (Bethel & Fielding, 2020) and 23.7% in Williams et al. (2021). The incidence of reported rape in Table 5 suggests that being in a long-term relationship offers no clear protection from rape, compared to those women who are not in a long-term relationship. Why this might occur would be an area of future research. Both the 2020 and 2021 studies noted higher values of rape, when fear and ability to consent were considered. Overall, these estimates suggest the prevalence of rape in The Bahamas to be similar to that found elsewhere (Mahoney & Williams, 1998). The lack of an age effect in Table 5 suggests that younger women are most at risk of being raped, a finding consistent with data from the United States (Kennedy Bergen, 2006); however, older women are more likely to

suffer multiple rapes (Table 6). Further research would be required to confirm if the women who experience multiple victimizations are being raped repeatedly by the same long-term partner.

The study again demonstrates the reluctance of victims to report their victimization by partners, and again indicates that the official rape figures reflect a small percentage of the actual number of rapes. This has been found in earlier studies (Aranha, 2016). This finding is not unique to The Bahamas (Motalingoane-Khau, 2007) and probably reflects the fear which victims have of notifying those who might help them. This fear was illustrated in the case of a woman in a safe home, who may have killed herself or been killed as she was fearful of her boyfriend (Bowleg, 2022). The difficulty in successfully prosecuting a sexual offender before the courts can discourage women pressing charges (Ward, 2021), as well as the fact that the Attorney General might need to allow the case to proceed in the case of a wife wishing to bring sexual assault charges against her husband (UN Women, 2009).

It is generally accepted that informed consent is considered a necessary condition for the act of sexual intercourse not to be rape (What is consent?, n.d.). Our data suggest that rape occurs more commonly than appreciated due to the inability of a woman to give consent: women reported having sex when they were under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or in fear of their partner. These circumstances are recognized by the Bahamian law on rape as preventing valid consent from being possible, and so the data suggest that women are still not well educated as to the circumstances which can result in sexual intercourse being an act of rape. Again, this finding is consistent with Williams et al. (2021) and Bethel and Fielding (2020) who studied college students.

The use of violence by a partner to obtain sex was part of a package of coercive behaviours, and the use of violence elevated the risk of the woman being raped. The use of violence to influence the behaviour of another may be a learnt behaviour through the use of corporal punishment on children (Fielding & Ballance, 2021) and may be related to limited communications skills as noted by those who work with violent (typically male) offenders in The Bahamas, such as The Family: People Helping People Program (2018). Further, the insistence of a man to have sex when he wishes may also reflect the normative attitudes towards masculinities current in The Bahamas (Bethel-Bennett, 2014), and elsewhere in the Caribbean (James & Davis, 2014).

The mean values on the Consenting to Unwanted Sex Scale were higher than the values reported by Humphreys & Kennett (2011). This finding confirms the findings in both Williams et al. (2021) and Bethel and Fielding (2020) which further suggest that men in the Bahamas exert more pressure on women than men in Canada. Why this might be so would be an area for further research. It may indicate a tension between men and women which may result in violence when the man insists in engaging in sexual intercourse, or, we might conjecture that as rape inside and outside of marriage is an offence in Canada (Kashan, 2017), this may be a deterrent to men exerting pressure on women.

## **Conclusion**

Rape occurs within long-term relationships and some women in long-term relationships live in fear and suffer violence from their intimate partners. Presently, a man who rapes or even abuses his wife is unlikely to face a custodial sentence. This is evident from the observation that although the number of sex-related crimes reported to the police are

similar to the number of homicides, the number of men in prison for sex-related crimes is fewer than for homicides (Fielding et al., 2019). The reluctance of those who are aware of the victimization to report the abuse allows victimizers to continue to harm women and by extension those around them. Although laws can penalize those who rape women, it is only through prevention and education activities that the harm can be avoided. As demonstrated by Sutton and Alvarez (2016), The Bahamas would be well-served by investing more in crime prevention than in the costs associated with incarceration. The invisible trauma associated with rape can be expected to last

longer than the seven-year sentences that are “typically” given rapists (Johnson, 2015 and Scott, 2022b) which demonstrates the need to prevent such crimes and maybe align the punishment with the harm caused. Further, unless rapists are appropriately rehabilitated (Przybylski, 2015), how might they behave when they are released into Bahamian society?

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