Rape Arrests in Washington

Rape poses a risk to the safety of Washington residents. This report focuses on rape arrests from the Washington State Patrol (WSP) and aims to explore the demographics of those being arrested for rape.

Data Parameters

The WSP maintains a database of Washington criminal history information, or background checks, consisting of fingerprint-based records and disposition information from law enforcement agencies and courts throughout the state. Data is retrieved from the Washington State Identification System (WASIS) for criminal history information and the Washington Crime Information Center (WACIC) for non-fingerprint hot file information. In conjunction with the WSP's Automated Biometric Identification System (ABIS), this database connects all arrests based on fingerprints, not merely by name. The following parameters were used for this brief:

- Rape is defined by RCW 9.44, and in terms of the present data, involves having "rape" noted on the arresting offense record, designating a crime involving a rape. The most common rape-related arrests in the present data include rape in the first degree (RCW 9A.44.040), rape in the second degree (RCW 9A.44.050), and rape in the third degree (RCW 9A.44.060).
- Only individuals who were 18 years or older at the time of arrest were included.
- Due to conflicting records associated to one arrest, any arrests with multiple demographics (i.e., race, sex, birth dates) were excluded to avoid any potential incorrect assumptions and to maintain data integrity. As such, data might be underreported.
- The data is provided as arrest based, not individual based, therefore, an individual would be represented as many times as they were arrested from 1995 to 2024.

Limitations

This brief identifies a few major limitations that could impact any work that utilizes this data. These limitations include but are not limited to:

- Analyses are descriptive and non-generalizable. Any inferences and implications are limited, and results are modest. Further analyses must be completed for causal relationships to be determined.
- Administrative data and the lack of detail or richness significantly limits any conclusions yielded from this work.
- In terms of demographic assessment, these results must be interpreted cautiously. Race data can be misclassified, which impacts any analysis of race across criminal justice decision points. 2.0% of arrests were excluded in the demographic analysis due to race data being unknown whereas less than 0.1% of the sex data was excluded. Race data provided by WSP are defined by NCIC and are required to be utilized by all agencies reporting CHRI to the FBI.
- Any longitudinal analyses must be carefully evaluated due to potential policy changes in rape laws that could impact trends and interpretations.
- Due to the impacts of COVID-19, trends might be skewed and underreported.
- There are many factors that contribute to the reluctance of a victim reporting abuse, and the data might not accurately represent the true picture of rape-related arrests.

Demographics

Between January 1, 1995, to December 31, 2024, there were 8,618 rape-related arrests. The average age of an arrestee was 33 years old (M = 33.2, SD = 11.6). Rape-related arrests were more likely to be associated with males as compared to females (Table 1). Rape-related arrests were more likely to be associated with white arrestees than the rest of race categories. In terms of age category, those about same age as the average age or younger were more likely to be associated to an rape-related arrests.

Washington's population is almost evenly distributed in terms of sex, and the majority of the population were white (81.0%), while the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color community) presented slightly less than one-fifth of the Washington population.

Table 1. Rape-related arrests demographics

	N	%
Sex		
Female	85	1.0
Male	8,532	99.0
Race		
American Indian or Alaskan Native	137	1.6
Asian or Pacific Islander	341	4.0
Black	1,611	19.1
White	6,360	75.3
Age Category		
18 to 25	2,582	30.0
26 to 35	2,721	31.6
36 to 45	1,929	22.4
> = 46	1,386	16.1

Notes: Percentages are based on column totals. Due to rounding, totals may not equal 100%. Due to unknown values demographic totals may not be equal.

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Outcomes

Most felony rape-related arrests were classified as a Class A felony (73.1%) (Figure 1). Class A felony is the most severe classification. Class C felony accounted for about a fourth of the classified felonies and Class B felony accounted for only 1.6%. It is important to note that not all arrests were classified, leading to an unspecified felony arrest (18.4%); there are many reasons for non-classification, including the potential of a fast-paced environment during the arrests. Among all rape-related arrests, 99.6% were classified as felony offenses, while the rest were associated with a less severe classifications: gross misdemeanor (0.4%). Due to low counts, only rape-related felonies, classified and non-classified, will be evaluated.

Majority of rape-related arrests were classified as a Class A felony across all demographic breakdowns (Table 2). Class B felony, which is less severe than Class A but more severe than Class C accounted for less than 2.0% of rape-related arrests across all demographic breakdowns. Additionally, across the sex, race, and age breakdowns, less than 1.0% of rape-related arrests were classified as a gross misdemeanor, which is not shown in Table 2 due to low counts. Note that these classifications reflect the charge at time of arrest, which may be modified by the court prior to disposition.

On average, there were about 287 rape-related arrests annually from 1995 to 2024. The years 1995–2010 and 2018, were all above average. Additionally, Figure 2 shows the number of arrests with a firearm enhancement from 2010 to 2024. From the peak in 2018, there was a 41.3% decrease to the low point in 2021, which likely reflects reductions in arrests during the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, there was a general decrease in rape-related arrests over time.

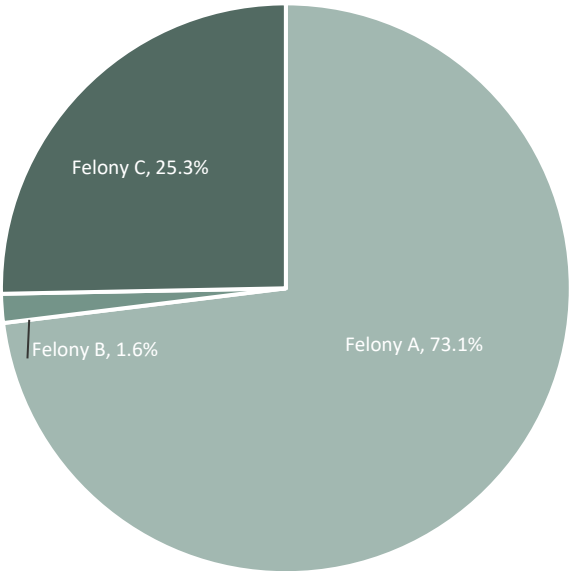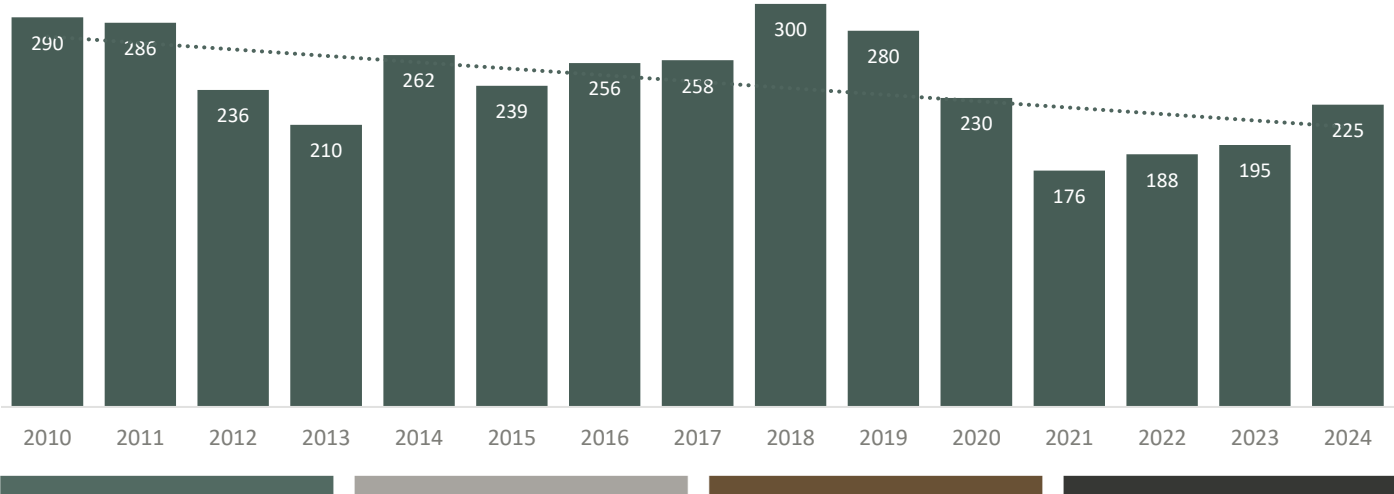**Figure 1. Distribution of ranked felony classifications for rape-related arrests**

Table 2. Distribution of offense classification by demographics for rape-related arrests

	Classification N (%)			
	Felony	Felony A	Felony B	Felony C
Sex				
Female	--	54 (63.5)	--	16 (18.8)
Male	1,557 (18.4)	5,029 (59.3)	110 (1.3)	1,744 (20.6)
Race				
American Indian or Alaskan Native	24 (17.6)	75 (55.1)	--	34 (25.0)
Asian or Pacific Islander	90 (26.7)	172 (51.0)	--	66 (19.6)
Black	454 (28.6)	867 (54.6)	31 (2.0)	230 (14.5)
White	965 (15.3)	3,876 (61.5)	71 (1.1)	1,393 (22.1)
Age Category				
18 to 25	374 (14.5)	1,484 (57.7)	29 (1.1)	676 (26.3)
26 to 35	531 (19.6)	1,613 (59.7)	38 (1.4)	508 (18.8)
36 to 45	386 (20.1)	1,145 (59.7)	36 (1.9)	343 (17.9)
> = 46	277 (20.1)	841 (61.1)	11 (0.8)	243 (17.6)

Notes: Percentages are based on row totals. Due to rounding and not reporting Gross Misdemeanors and Misdemeanors totals may not equal 100%.

Figure 2. Frequency of rape-related arrests by year

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