



Women's Justice Center \* June 2012 \* Centro de Justicia para Mujeres  
 PO Box 7510, Santa Rosa, CA 95407 \* Tel. (707) 575-3150 \* Vol XXXVI

## ❁ Women & Girls Count! ❁

Statistics has long suffered the stigma of being the stepchild of higher math. And many a student will roll their eyes when told to take the course. But when it comes to drilling down through the murky sediments of myth and fabrications, there's nothing that can nail the bedrock of fact like a good set of stats.

Every few years Women's Justice Center sends out a set of public record requests to our local law enforcement agencies with the goal of tracking two key indicators of our justice system response to women. First, how is our local law enforcement doing in handling violence against women cases? And, second, how is our local law enforcement doing in terms of integrating women into law enforcement work?

$$\sum_{k=0}^{\infty}$$



Answering the latter of the two questions is by far the easier of the two, as the raw numbers themselves pretty well tell the story. But even here, we've dug a little deeper this year to see a little better exactly where and why our police agencies are failing so dramatically to make much of a dent at all in ending the male monopoly on police powers throughout Sonoma County.

Tracking the law enforcement responses to rape, domestic violence, child abuse, and prostitution poses more complexities. There still isn't complete uniformity among the agencies as to how they categorize the various offenses within each of these crimes, though this has improved steadily over time.

A more formidable problem for getting the complete picture stems from one of the all too common police abuses in violence against women cases, and that is a failure to write any crime report at all.

When no report is written, of course, the victims in those cases are not only being denied protection and justice, they're also being denied critical existence in the records. Unfortunately, aside from a costly fishing expedition through all 911 calls, there's no way to quantify the number of such cases. We only know of the practice when random victims happen to call and tell us their stories, as they often do. At which point we can trace back into police calls and verify the stories.

But, whatever the deviations from pinpoint accuracy in this issue's statistical snapshot, we think you'll agree, the numbers are more than sufficient for anyone to safely conclude ~ Sonoma County women and children deserve so much better! There's just no excuse!





## Sonoma County Police Forces ~ March 2012 Sex/Race Composition

**All Police, 86% White, 91% Male ~ Rank Sgt. & above, 95% Male  
Dec. 2011 SRJC Police Academy Grads, 95% Male**

Compiled by Women's Justice Center

[www.justicewomen.com](http://www.justicewomen.com) ~ [www.ayudaparamujeres.com](http://www.ayudaparamujeres.com)

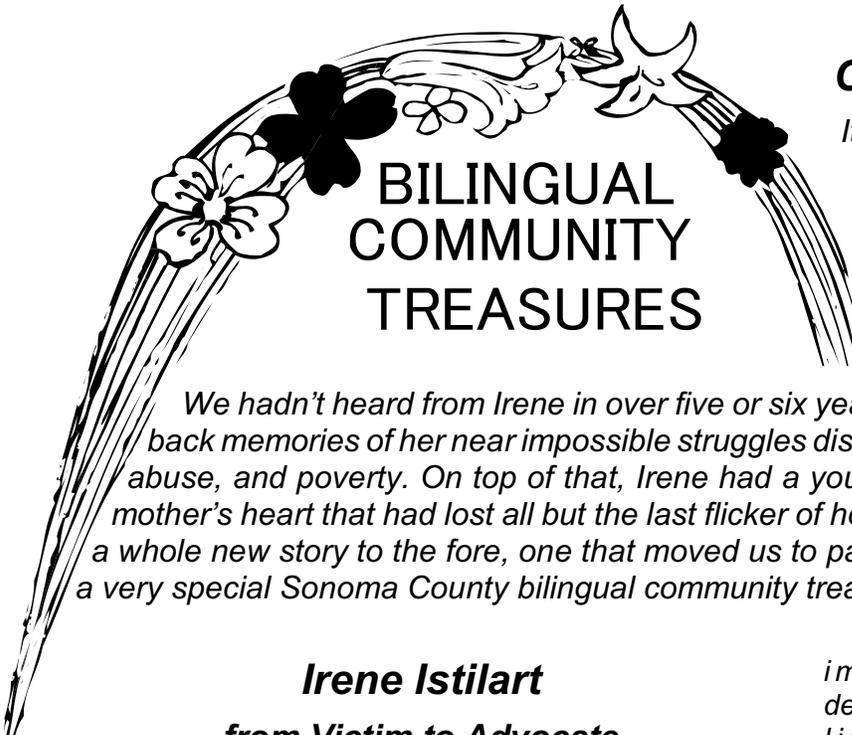
|   | Total Sworn Officers | Females     | Females SGT. & Above | Males SGT. & Above | Hispanic  | Hispanic Female | Asian     | African American | Native American |
|---|----------------------|-------------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------|------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Sheriff's Dept *</b><br><i>(includes Windsor and Sonoma)</i> | 224                  | 17          | 2                    | 38                 | 24        | 6               | 1         | 5                | 1               |
| <b>Santa Rosa Police</b>  | 163                  | 14          | 1                    | 28                 | 15        | 0               | 5         | 2                | 2               |
| <b>Petaluma Police</b>  | 63                   | 5           | 1                    | 14                 | 3         | 0               | 2         | 1                | 0               |
| <b>Rohnert Park</b>   | 56                   | 3           | 0                    | 15                 | 3         | 0               | 4         | 1                | 1               |
| <b>Sebastopol</b>   | 18                   | 1           | 0                    | 5                  | 1         | 1               | 0         | 0                | 0               |
| <b>Healdsburg</b>   | 16                   | 4           | 0                    | 5                  | 3         | 0               | 0         | 1                | 0               |
| <b>Cloverdale</b>   | 11                   | 2           | 0                    | 3                  | 1         | 0               | 0         | 0                | 0               |
| <b>SRJC Police</b>  | 11                   | 1           | 0                    | 5                  | 1         | 0               | 0         | 0                | 0               |
| <b>Cotati</b>   | 11                   | 1           | 0                    | 4                  | 2         | 1               | 0         | 0                | 0               |
| <b>SSU Police</b>   | 11                   | 3           | 2                    | 0                  | 0         | 0               | 0         | 1                | 0               |
| <b>Total Son. Co. Police</b>                                    | <b>584</b>           | <b>51</b>   | <b>6</b>             | <b>117</b>         | <b>53</b> | <b>8</b>        | <b>12</b> | <b>11</b>        | <b>4</b>        |
| <b>Total Son. Co. Police %</b>                                  | <b>100%</b>          | <b>8.6%</b> | <b>4.9%</b>          | <b>95.1%</b>       | <b>9%</b> | <b>1.4%</b>     | <b>2%</b> | <b>1.9%</b>      | <b>0.7%</b>     |

**Note:** \*. Statistics for Windsor and Sonoma Police are included in the Sheriff's Department statistics because Windsor and Sonoma Police are Sheriff's deputies contracted out to the towns of Windsor and Sonoma.

| Dec 2011- SRJC Police Academy Grads | Total | Female | Hispanic | Asian | African American | Native American |
|-------------------------------------|-------|--------|----------|-------|------------------|-----------------|
|                                     | 57    | 3      | 4        | 2     | 1                | 2               |

| Sonoma County Population (2010 Census) | Female | Caucasian | Hispanic | Hisp-female | Afr-American | Asian | Native American |
|--|--------|-----------|----------|-------------|--------------|-------|-----------------|
|  | 51%    | 77%       | 25%      | 12.5%       | 1.6%         | 4%    | 1.3%            |

cont. p7



## BILINGUAL COMMUNITY TREASURES

### Caprice in the Winds of Change

*It's not all bad news. Some things have changed. Dramatically! And often in the most unexpected places. It's a strange thing about this work. You don't often get to know the where, when, or why exactly the changes occur. But, in a way, that can make them all the more rewarding when they do occur.*

*We hadn't heard from Irene in over five or six years. Her voice on the phone immediately brought back memories of her near impossible struggles disentangling a snare of immigration issues, chronic abuse, and poverty. On top of that, Irene had a young son who had grown unruly and mute, and a mother's heart that had lost all but the last flicker of hope. But a few moments of conversation brought a whole new story to the fore, one that moved us to pass it on to you, and present to you Irene Istilart, a very special Sonoma County bilingual community treasure.*

### **Irene Istilart** **from Victim to Advocate**

*Irene's story as she arrived in the U.S. 15 years ago was a stage set for an all-too-familiar plot careening toward all-too-predictable doom. Raised with five siblings in Mexico by a single mother and roadside sales of onions and chile tomatoes, Irene escaped with a boyfriend to the United States.*

*When she soon became pregnant, the boyfriend father-to-be began making blusterous accusations that the baby wasn't his. When the baby was born, his jealousies turned to rage. "This baby is your real husband," he would storm over the newborn, "You feed him before you feed me!"*

*Insults and beatings became routine. But when a co-worker asked about the bruises over her body, Irene told her she had fallen against a door. And when the co-worker objected that those aren't the kind of injuries you get from falling against a door, you're man did that to you, Irene denied it and said, "No".*

*Even as she saw the worsening developmental effects on her young son, shame, fear, and a lifetime of patrimonial mandates and threats kept her bound in silence. By the time Irene came to us, she barely believed the sun would rise again in the east.*

*It's been years now since Irene has struck out on her own. And though struggles are still a part of her every day, she finds relaxation in her culinary classes and respite in services at her ecclesiastical church.*

*It was on a recent Sunday, the pastor began speaking from the pulpit of a young woman in the congregation who had two developmentally delayed children, a mother who had been trapped in abuse for years. The pastor went on to explain that a few days before, when the mother had fought back, the father called police, The mother was arrested and then turned over to*

*immigration detention in the lineup for deportation.*

*The pastor implored the congregation for help.*

*It was almost as if it had always been this way, the most natural thing in the world for a pastor to speak knowledgeably and empathetically from the pulpit about a complex story of abuse. And after the service, it seemed the obvious, ordinary thing to do for Irene to approach the pastor and confidently offer her special expertise. "I've been through this situation," she said with dignity where once there had only been shame, "I can help."*

*Together, Irene, the pastor, and others in this conservative congregation gathered resources and accomplished the near impossible. They bailed the mother out of immigration detention, reunited her with her children, found her legal help, and even restored the mother with a ray of hope.*

*Irene was especially proud of her particular role in all this. "I knew how to talk to her," says Irene. "I knew how to calm her, how to counsel her, and even how to get her to smile. And much to our gratification, she said, "And I also know where to go to get the information we needed."*





## Making the Wish Come True

We know for a fact that people overall want this violence against women to stop. That's evident in the copious legislation passed over the last four decades and in the angst that's expressed when incidents come to the fore.

But progress clearly hasn't yet matched the public's will. Violence against women has stubborn roots in all our most cherished institutions, and too often receives safe harbor from the very people assigned to stop it. Sophisticated rhetoric one day tricks us into believing the problems are solved, and the next is luring volumes of people's money and good will into Potemkin justice projects that not only fail to secure justice for women, they divert people from seeking real solutions.

We here at Women's Justice Center haven't solved the problems either. But with your generous support keeping us independent we can continue to ferret out the facts, speak truth to power, stay focused on communities with the greatest needs, and, our favorite strategy of all, producing quality bilingual guides to help women help each other make the justice system work for them.

Please donate today! Use the envelope and response form provided, or, donate electronically from any page on our website at [www.justicewomen.com](http://www.justicewomen.com)

*Thank  
you*



## WJC's Next Movie and Pizza Nite ~ Oct. 3

### Apache 8 A documentary film by Sande Zeig

For 30 years, the all-female Apache 8 unit has protected their reservation from fire and also responded to wildfires around the nation. This group of firefighters, which recently became co-ed, soon earned the reputation of being fierce, loyal and dependable—and tougher than their male colleagues. Facing gender stereotypes and the problems that come with life on the impoverished reservation, the women became known as some of the country's most elite firefighters. And the film is hot!



### Mark Your Calendar!

Wed, October 3

5:30 pm - no cost

Marlow Plaza Round Table Pizza

( at the intersection of Marlow and Guerneville Rd, Santa Rosa)

RSVP

575-3150



# Notes



Though we gathered multiple dimensions of violence against women and children crime statistics from each local police department, in this publication we've chosen three indicator statistics for each crime which we thought most accurately illustrated the treatment of those crimes on the path to justice. We'd be happy to pass on the more detailed data to any one who requests it.

**One significant take away from all these figures, is that a good 75% of reported sexual assaults in Sonoma County are being buried in police departments without ever being reviewed by the DA. As such, these cases are being summarily denied justice by police. And a significant percentage of domestic violence cases are being similarly disposed of, though for reasons discussed further on, the exact percentage is more difficult to assess.**

In 1995, then SRPD Chief Sal Rosano authored a county-wide domestic violence policy which required that all domestic violence police reports be sent to the DA for review. The obvious purpose of this policy was to provide legal oversight and to overcome the historical tendency of police to disregard domestic violence.

Unforgivably, the Sonoma County Law Enforcement Chief's Association has since rescinded that policy. And despite many lobbying efforts on our part, police have never seriously even considered that policy for sex crimes.

**We continue to maintain that in order to secure protection and justice for women in Sonoma County, an urgent and essential step is that law enforcement adopt an overall policy that all police crime reports of violence against women and children, including sex crimes, be sent to the DA for review.**

Beware of the self-serving misinformation in which police claim that the cases shelved in police departments are the 'bottom of the barrel' cases lacking validity or sufficient evidence. Clearly, it's absurd on the face of it to claim that 75% of reported sexual assaults and thousands of domestic violence related calls are 'bottom of the barrel' cases. Moreover, having delved into the specifics of these cases for many years on behalf of victims, we can say unequivocally that the majority of these cases are perfectly legitimate cases. Their only 'problem' is that they either have victims police think they can get away with ignoring, or because officers simply didn't want to do the work of a proper investigation.

**Sexual violence statistics:** Without going into the fine points, rape crime statistics, in general, pertain to rape of adults, and child sexual assaults are **Cont. next page**

## Forcible Rape (Adult Rape) Cases

| YEAR | Adult Rapes Reported to Police | Number of Reports Sent to DA | Number of Rape Convictions |
|------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2011 | 175                            | 41                           | 16                         |
| 2008 | 179                            | 40                           | 4                          |

## Child Sexual Assault Cases

| YEAR | Child SA Reported to Police | Number of Reports Sent to DA | Sentenced to Prison |
|------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|
| 2011 | 239                         | 65                           | 13                  |
| 2008 | 289                         | 87                           | 19                  |

## Domestic Violence

| YEAR | DV Related Calls to Police | DV Reports Sent to DA | Total DV Convictions (Fel & Misd) |
|------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2011 | 7,082                      | 1,542                 | 489                               |
| 2008 | see dv notes               | 1,885                 | 654                               |

## Prostitution

| YEAR | Prostitution Arrests (for buy or sell) | Males | Females |
|------|--|-------|---------|
| 2011 | 31                                     | 1     | 30      |
| 2008 | 21                                     | 1     | 20      |





from previous page

coded separately.

Is there progress in our rape prosecutions? At first glance the numbers appear to indicate some increase in prosecutions, however slight.

However, additional data we obtained shows the DA only filed 7 felony adult sexual assault cases in 2011. That may seem impossible given the 16 convictions, but what most likely happened is that an unusual number of cases had already been filed and were in progress at the beginning of the year, leading to a higher number of convictions than cases filed, and no answer to the question of whether rape prosecution rates are improved..

## “Where are all the angry American women?”

Asked by Lemah Gbowee, winner of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize, at the Women in the World Summit on March 8, 2012



With such small changes in one direction or another, it will require a number of data sets to determine if change is significant or not. **Suffice it to say, however, that even at 16 rape convictions, we’re still not much advanced from the dozen or so rape convictions per year of two decades ago.**

**Domestic Violence Statistics:** The difficulty in interpreting the domestic violence statistics is twofold. The “DV Related Calls to Police” is an accurate enough number. But it includes a significant number of calls that don’t rise to the level of criminal activity, such as simple verbal disputes. The “DV Reports Sent to DA” is also an accurate number, but it doesn’t include many cases which do, in fact, rise to a criminal level, but for which police either didn’t write a crime report, or didn’t forward the report to the DA for review.

**However, despite the difficulties, there’s a couple**



of hard truths that jump irrefutably out of the statistics. Out of the 1,542 domestic violence crime reports sent to the DA, less than a third resulted in any kind of conviction at all, felony or misdemeanor. After two decades of trainings, death reviews, lawsuits, petitions, and promises, those numbers are extremely discouraging and dangerous for the women of Sonoma County.

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### National Institute of Justice Study on Police Attitudes Toward Rape and Rape Victims

Police often explain their paltry clearance rates in rape cases with familiar refrains that only add insult to injury. These cases, they say, "are difficult to prove", "are 'he said, she said'", "have uncooperative victims", etc.

But a recent 2010 National Institute of Justice study\*\* of sex crime detectives and front line officers from multiple police agencies puts the blame squarely where it should be, and confirms what we have long observed.

The NIJ study finds that, indeed, police have learned to give "politically correct" answers about sexual assaults. But as the following excerpt from the study abstract makes clear, the mind set of most police is still locked and loaded against sex crimes victims, and worse, it’s stubbornly unwilling to change.

#### Quoting from the NIJ study abstract:

"Still, the findings from administering the rape scale to the officers indicate that despite many years of training, a large number of police officers still hold attitudes and opinions that undermine their ability to treat rape victims well. The officers were almost unanimously opposed to changing to a system of investigation and case processing that gives priority to protecting victims." .....

"Among the police officers in this study, there was virtually no interest in and some strong resistance to examining innovative and improved ways of investigating and managing rape cases. **The dominant theme in current investigative techniques is the presumption that victims are lying and the initial job of the investigators is to expose it.**" (emphasis ours)

\*\* *Police Investigation of Rapes - Roadblocks and Solutions*, See abstract and link to pdf of full study text: <https://www.ncjrs.gov/App/Publications/abstract.aspx?ID=254756>



# The Unyielding White Male Control of Sonoma County Police Forces



## Causes and Consequences

Nearly two decades ago in 1993, over 8,000 community members signed a petition calling for more women on our local police forces. The petition was presented to the Board of Supervisors and all city council members in the county. At the time, 6% of sworn officers throughout the county were female.

Since then, we and other activists have put together task forces, called in the feds, gathered statistics, published articles, made repeated rounds of city councils, helped launch over a dozen lawsuits, organized protests, sat in endless meetings, broadcast the benefits, flown in police experts from across the country, joined with other organizations, held town hall meetings, enlisted community leaders,.... and look at the sorry results!

In two decades, we have less than a 3% gain in the percentage of females on our police forces, making more than a few things now patently obvious.

**1. It's Intentional.** The white male control of our police forces is neither accident nor a holdover vestige of times-gone-by. It's purposefully maintained by updated, concerted, and illegal efforts from the top ranks down, designed to keep women out, drive them out, and, and most emphatically, to keep them from gaining in rank. The discovery materials from the litany of sex discrimination lawsuits over the years have revealed these machinations beyond a doubt.

**2. The public needs to scrutinize their police with as much intensity as they scrutinize their legislators, because undemocratic police forces can easily and invisibly void legislative intent.** The unique, exclusive, and unchecked powers of police to decide which laws to enforce and which to ignore literally molds our entire social structures to the will and whims of police.

These police powers, combined with white male police biases, can and do unilaterally void legislative efforts aimed at protecting the well being of specific groups, such as police failures to enforce rape laws. They can and do hyper-enforce laws that selectively oppress other groups, such as the hyper-enforcement of crack cocaine laws, and with any given law, they can selectively target one group with enforcement while keeping hands off another, such as targeting



Rohnert Park Chief



Santa Rosa Chief



Son. Cnty Sheriff



Sebastopol Chief



Healdsburg Chief



Petaluma Chief

## Sonoma County's Autocracy ~ Occupy This! ~

females for prostitution offenses, while ignoring the pimps and johns.

These biases in the hands of the gatekeepers of protection and justice put a virtual lock on the continued violent subordination of women and minorities, irregardless of legislative efforts to generate remedies.

**3. The policing problems the public does tend to focus on can't be solved without ending the exclusive male control of police powers.** Police brutality, misconduct lawsuits, militarization of police, selective enforcement, higher than average rates of domestic and sexual violence... all these problems with police that communities are perennially and unsuccessfully struggling to get a handle on...all are fanned and fueled by the male control of policing at the top. The good news is that the obvious linchpin remedy of democratizing the ranks of policing hasn't yet been fully targeted. The enormous benefits only await the effort.

**For More Ideas on What Can Be Done, See:**

*Increasing Women Numbers and Influence in Policing; Eleven Lessons Learned; Eleven Strategies Forward*

go to [www.justicewomen.com](http://www.justicewomen.com)

click on Women in Policing on the left side menu





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from page 6

And just as disturbing, of the 7,082 "DV related related calls to police" in 2011, it is preposterous to believe, as the police have deemed, that 5,540 of these calls did not merit review by the DA. Granted, there are a few people who will call police over non criminal verbal domestic disputes, but not 5,540 people in one year in one Sonoma County.

And lest these numbers become simply an abstract matter of scorn, remember that it only takes one failure of police to properly follow through to end up with a murdered woman and motherless children, as has just happened, and is certainly seeded to happen again.

**Child Sexual Abuse:** Not all child sexual abuse crimes are felonies meriting a prison sentence, but most are. This is why we give the number of cases that were sentenced to prison, understanding that a number of the cases also ended in conviction to a lesser offense, in some cases correctly, and in some not. But it's the paltry 13 sent to prison out of 239 reported cases that tells the same story as the other stats. There is much work to be done, and miles to go before we sleep.

## "...uniquely informative and realistic"

This is how the nation's largest women's organization, NOW, describes the Women's Justice Center website on their national list of referrals.

## "Dear Wonderful Women's Justice Center"

This is how Sarah Beul, Professor of Law, begins her request to us.. "I would like permission to use your Guide in our trainings of students, staff and volunteers, and to post it on our Halle Center for Family Justice web site. Thank you for writing this awesome Guide ..."

## "...our voice in the system"

This is how a Santa Rosa victim describes what Women's Justice Center means to her, as translated from Spanish.

"We don't know how the system works here, we're afraid, and we don't know where to turn for help. Women's Justice Center is our voice in the system. You have helped so many women like me find a new world without abuse. I feel very grateful

and fortunate I found you."

**New on our Website**  
at [www.justicewomen.com](http://www.justicewomen.com)

**Just click on "What's New"**



We've just posted a new bilingual, online guide book, **Advocating for Victims of Sex Crimes During the Police Investigation,**

and this bilingual tip sheet, **Improving Sex Crime Victim Interviews; 12 Do's and Don'ts,**

and more...

**Oh, and almost forgot...**you can now read this newsletter online, too. So, of course, tell a friend!

**Please help us continue this important work. Donate Today!**

(Through our website, if you wish, at [www.justicewomen.com](http://www.justicewomen.com) )

**And have a wonderful summer!**

