



# NAVIGATING CONFIDENTIALITY

In Rural Communities

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SHE / HER

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**AZ.**  
**COALITION**

TO END SEXUAL AND  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

# WHAT'S MY JOB?

- TRAINING

- Quarterly Sexual Violence Core Advocacy Training (SVCAT) for new advocates or renewal every 2-3 years
- By agency request
- Other webinars – check out ACESDV.org to see what's coming up

- TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Support for advocates and agencies
- Help with hard cases
- Community connections
- Special event share out via Listservs
- Emotional support
- SART development and support

I don't know everything, but I'm dedicated to finding the right person to help when it's not me!!

Email me at [Carrie@acesdv.org](mailto:Carrie@acesdv.org) to join the SV Listserv!

**AZ.**  
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TO END SEXUAL AND  
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# HOUSEKEEPING

- Can you hear me?
- This presentation may contain information and topics that are uncomfortable.
- You are encouraged to take care of yourself however you need.
- If you have questions – they are welcome!
- Please interrupt or notify me if I speak too quickly!
- Please interact to your level of comfort.



# HOUSEKEEPING CONT.

- This training is for you! I hope you get whatever you can from it.
  - I recognize that many of you are experts and value your additions to today's training.
- There is a training evaluation at the end – please fill it out!

# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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- Understand the dynamics of sexual assault in rural areas.
- Understand the basics and meaning of confidentiality.
- Discuss specific concerns for rural communities.
- Evaluate how to navigate barriers and concerns for confidentiality.

# UNDERSTANDINGS AND AGREEMENTS

1. Everyone deserves freedom from harassment, discrimination, and victimization.
2. Victimization or crimes are **NEVER** the victim's fault.
3. We **believe** people.
4. Being uncomfortable is when **learning** happens – try to stay in a growth mindset.
5. **Questions are encouraged!**

# SEXUAL ASSAULT

In Rural Communities

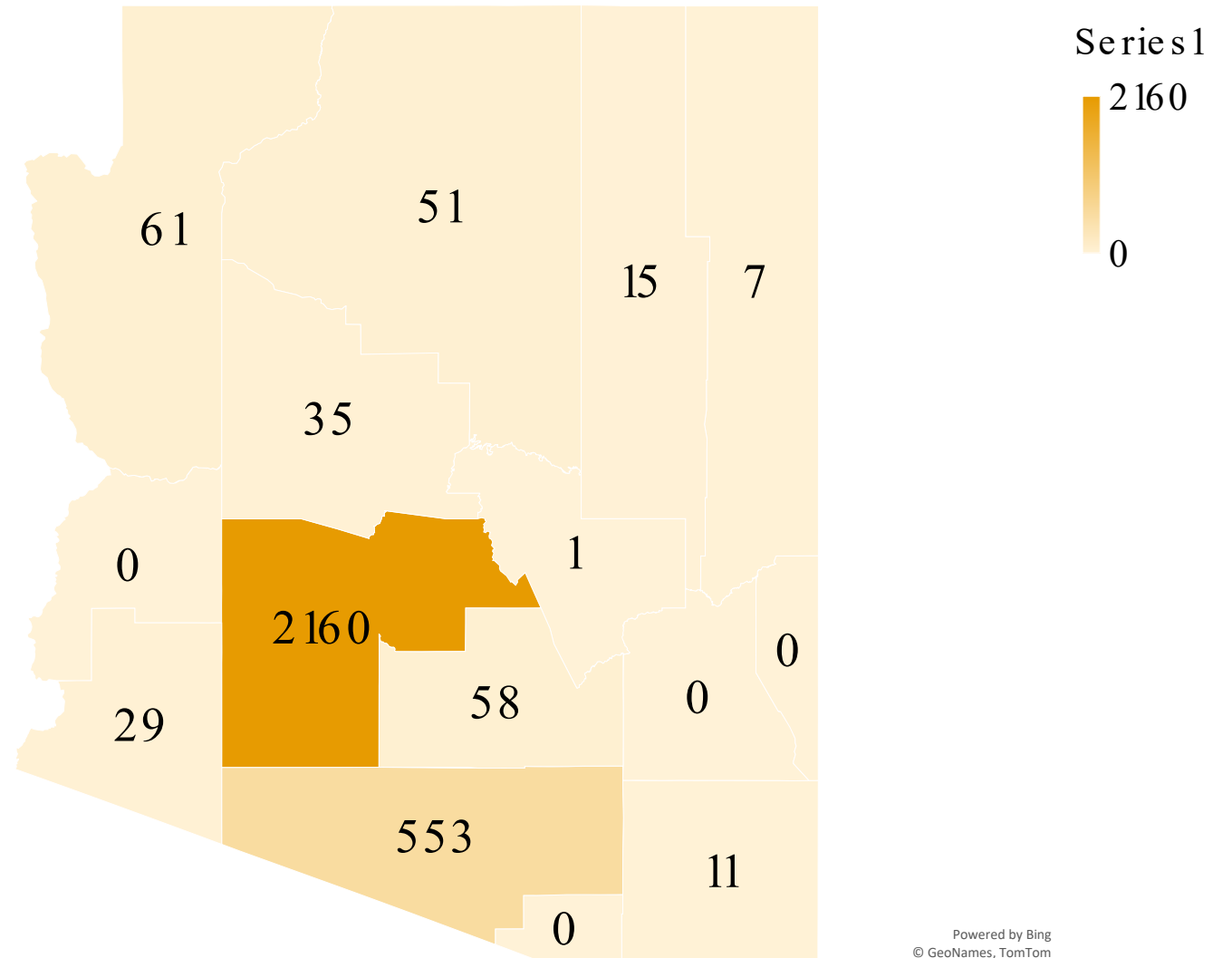
- Sexual assault in rural areas is notably underreported compared to urban areas.
- Only 4+2% of violent crimes, including sexual assault, are reported to police in rural areas.

Bureau of Justice Statistics

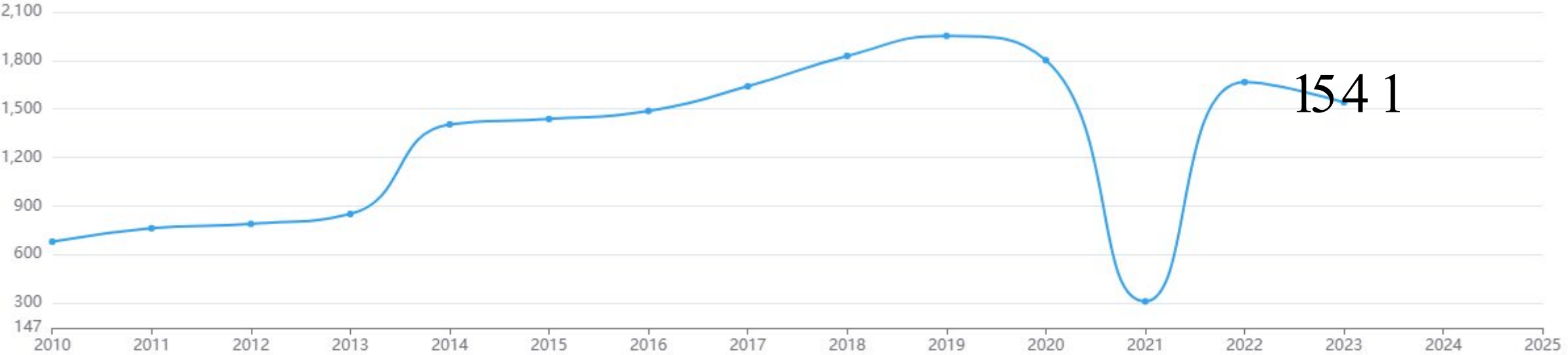


## Sexual Assault Reports in Arizona, 2019 Per FBI "Violent Crimes" Report

Do you think  
these are the only  
sexual assaults  
that occurred?



# Incidence of rape in Arizona cities with population 500,000 and up

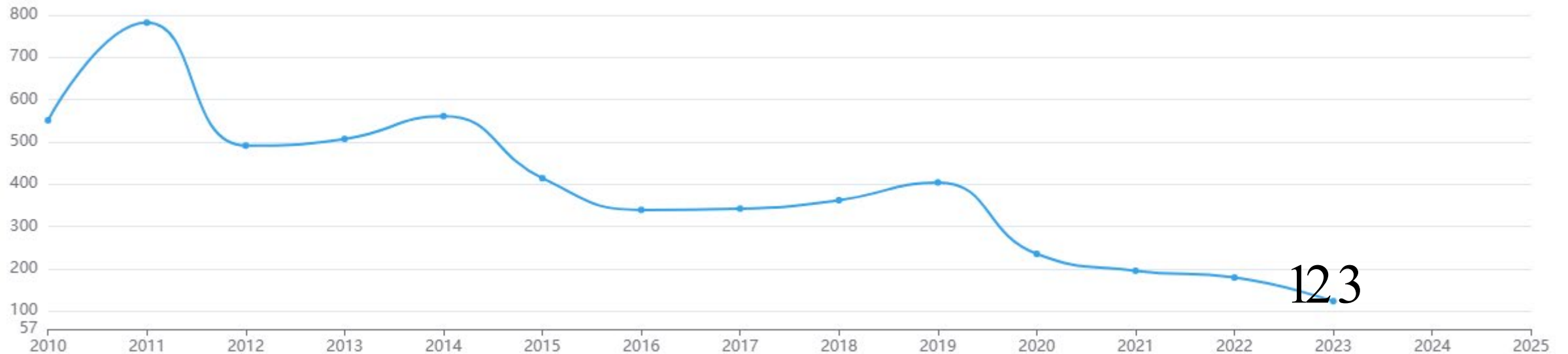


Some 2021 data is missing due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

FBI Crime Data Explorer, 2025



## Incidence of rape in Arizona cities with population less than 10,000



Some 2021 data is missing  
due to the Covid-19  
pandemic.

FBI Crime Data Explorer, 2025

THE RATE OF VIOLENT VICTIMIZATION, WHICH INCLUDES RAPE OR SEXUAL ASSAULT, IS HIGHER IN URBAN AREAS COMPARED TO RURAL AREAS.

Urban 24.5 per 1000 people

Rural 11.1 per 1000 people

**Violent Crime in the United States, 2023 – Rates per 100,000 inhabitants**

	<b>U.S., total</b>	<b>Metropolitan Statistical Areas</b>	<b>Cities Outside Metropolitan Areas</b>	<b>Nonmetro coun- ties</b>
Violent Crime	374.4	392.2	356.3	199.5
Murder and non-negligent manslaughter	5.7	5.9	5.5	4.3
Rape	38.0	37.3	51.9	35.6
Robbery	66.5	75.0	24.4	6.5
Aggravated Assault	264.1	274.0	274.6	153.1

Source: 2023 Crime in the United States, CIUS Estimations File: Table 2, [Federal Bureau of Investigation Crime Data Explorer: Documents & Downloads](#)

SEXUAL ASSAULT IS THE  
MOST UNDERREPORTED  
CRIME TO POLICE

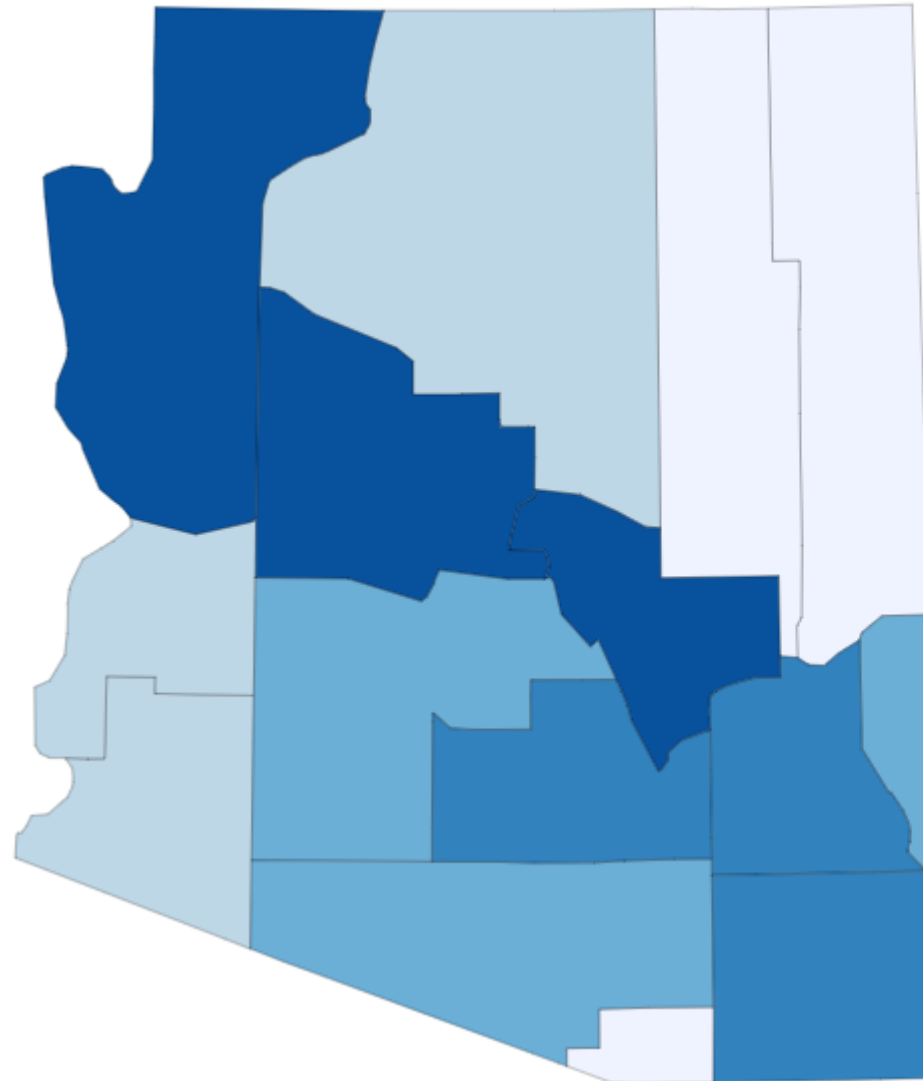
75% of sexual  
assaults are not  
reported

80% of reported  
rapes are reported by  
white women

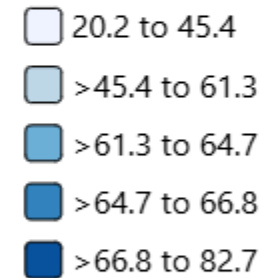


# POPULATION OF WHITE PEOPLE BY COUNTY

Both Sexes, All Ages, 2019-2023



Percent



The NIH uses data from the US Census, which has its tribal information on a separate page

# CONFIDENTIALITY

Meaning and Importance

# CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality ensures that sensitive information is only disclosed to authorized individuals under specific conditions.

- Personal
- Medical
- Legal
- Financial details

# What Does Confidentiality Mean for a Survivor?

- Trust
- Safety
- Respect
- Power





# WHAT DOES CONFIDENTIALITY MEAN IN A RURAL CONTEXT?

# SPECIFIC CONFIDENTIALITY CHALLENGES

In Rural and Tribal Communities



# Overlapping Relationships

- Rural service providers often have dual or multiple relationships with clients, seeing them not only in a professional capacity but also in social, religious, and community settings.
- This familiarity can build trust but also raises ethical concerns when professionals have to navigate personal relationships as well as confidentiality.

# Challenges in rural areas

- **Geographic isolation**
  - Long distances to services or no available services
  - Limited transportation options



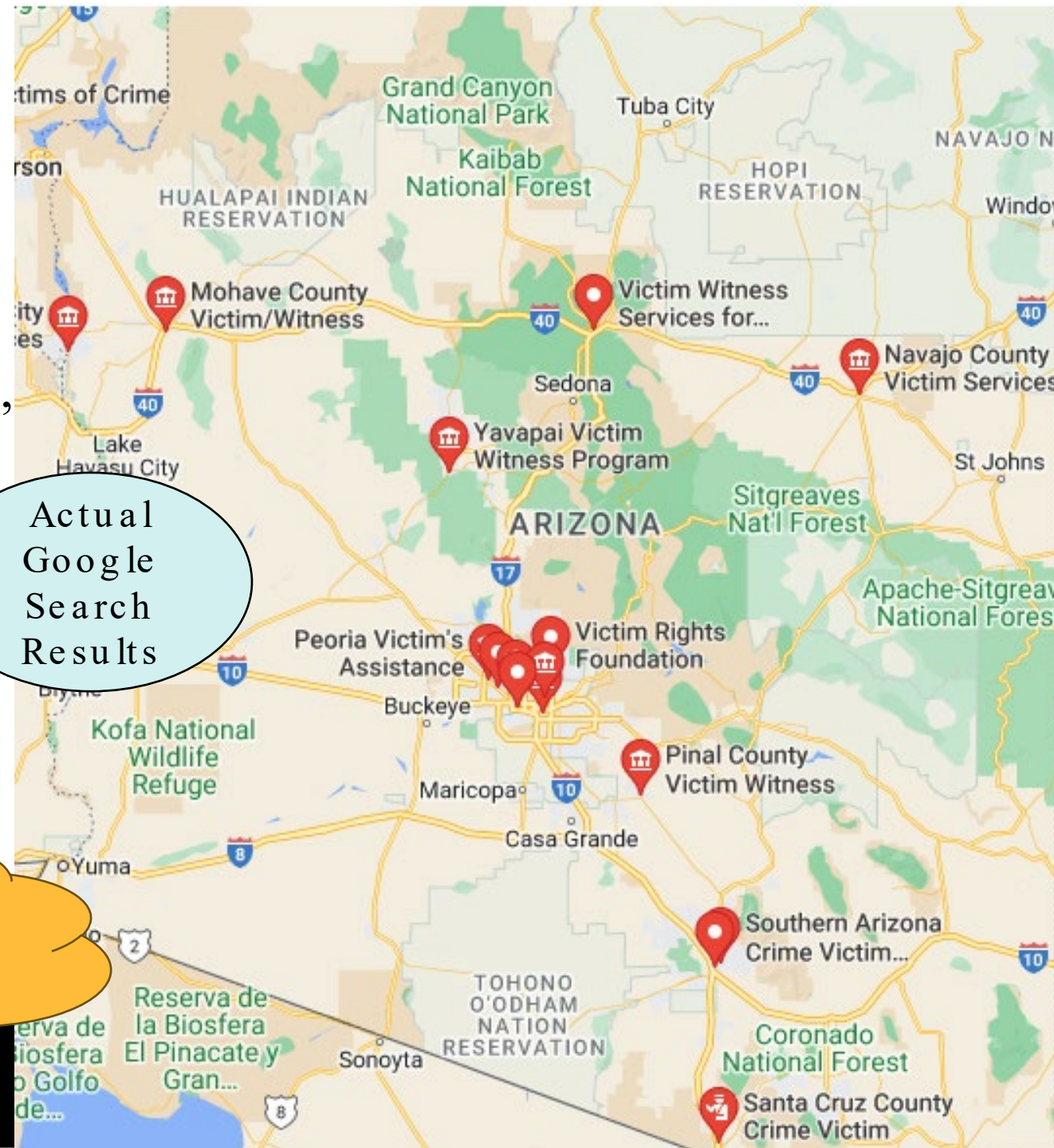
# Challenges in rural areas

- Limited availability of resources
  - Fewer specialized services (e.g., counseling, medical care)
  - Limited law enforcement presence


victim services

Actual  
Google  
Search  
Results

[www.arizonasurvivors.org](http://www.arizonasurvivors.org)







# Challenges in rural areas for undocumented survivors

- Lack of trust or safety in systems
- Inability to get to sexual assault examiner due to checkpoint locations
- Limited awareness of VAWA laws or T/U Visa availability
- Language barriers

# Challenges in Rural areas for Indigenous Survivors

- Historical trauma with government
- The FBI has very few investigators and thus successful prosecution only occurs for 1 in 10 sexual assault cases
- Each of Arizona's 22 different tribes has different laws and processes
- Physical isolation and lack of basic need resources
- For additional education on this topic, please reach out to SWIWC

SWIWC





# Challenges in rural areas

- Cultural and social barriers
  - Stigma surrounding sexual violence
  - Hush-culture
  - Traditional gender roles make it difficult for non-female identified people to report



# Challenges in rural areas

- Lack of anonymity and privacy
  - Small, close-knit communities
  - Fear of community judgment
  - Service providers may be someone the victim knows



# HOW MANY PEOPLE CAN YOU KNOW?

According to a 2013  
study, the average  
American knows about  
600 by their first name.



NYT, 2013



# Social Media

- In the United States, the average social media user manages approximately 7 accounts across various platforms.
- People have an average of 395 connections on the Facebook.
- While the **average Instagram user** hovers around 150 to 200 followers, nearly half of users have between 1,000 and 10,000 followers.

Prioridata.com , 2025  
Themarketinghaven.com , 2025



# RURAL VS. URBAN/SUBURBAN

## Rural

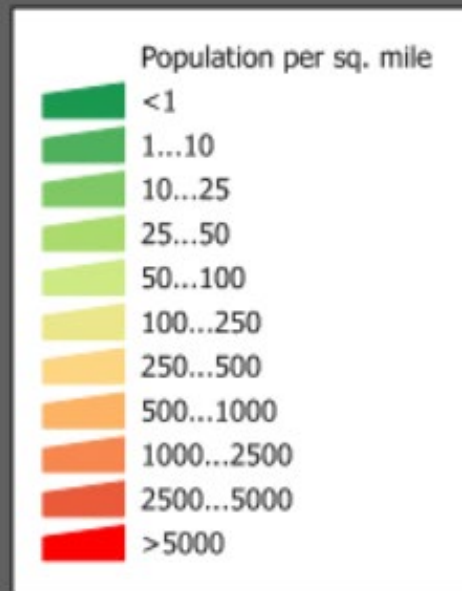
- Approximately 40% of rural residents report knowing all or most of their neighbors.
- 63% of rural residents have lived in their local community for 11 years or more.

## Urban/Suburban

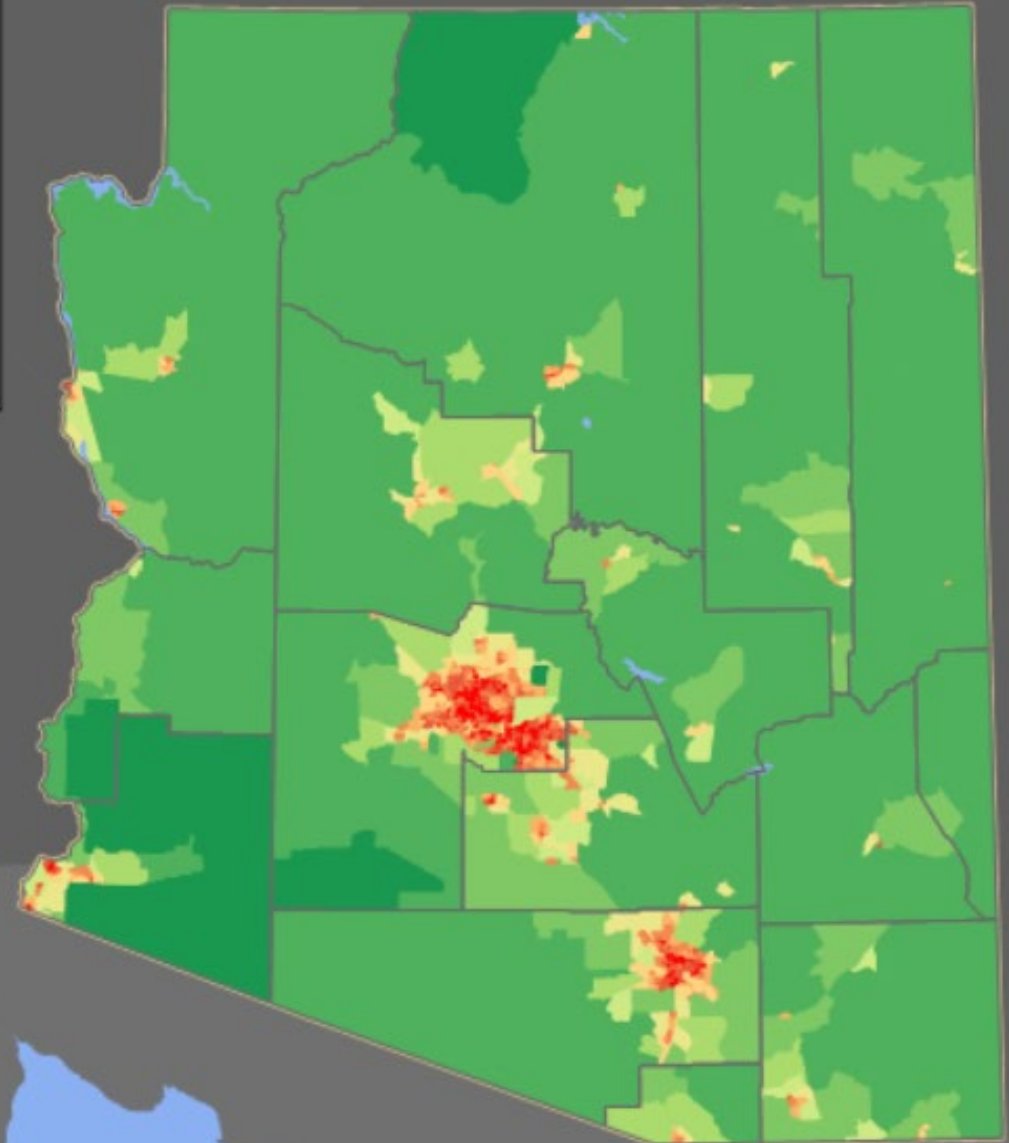
- About 24% of urban residents say they know all or most of their neighbors.
- 45% urban/suburban residents have lived in their community for 11 years or more.

# Arizona Population Distribution

- What do we see?



Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
Census 2010 Summary File 1  
population by census tract



# Arizona!

## Apache County:

- Alpine: 145

## Cochise County:

- Bowie: 449
- Dragoon: 209
- Elfrida: 459
- Portal: 171

## Coconino County:

- Fredonia: 1,314

## Gila County:

- Haigler Creek: 39
- Winkelman: 296

## Graham County:

- Bylas: 1,948
- Fort Thomas: 374

## Greenlee County:

- Clifton: 3,933

## La Paz County:

- Bouse: 996
- Salome: 1,530

## Mohave County:

- Dolan Springs: 1,989
- Oatman: 102

## Navajo County:

- Pinetop-Lakeside: 4,030

## Pima County:

- Arivaca: 695
- Sasabe: 54

## Pinal County:

- Kearny: 1,741
- Mammoth: 1,428

## Santa Cruz County:

- Patagonia: 913

## Yavapai County:

- Bagdad: 1,876
- Clarkdale: 4,424
- Cornville: 3,362

## Yuma County:

- Dateland: 852
- Tacna: 602

Reminder: How many people can we know by first name?




# DISCLOSURES

Of Sexual Assault

# Disclosure

92% of survivors  
disclose to at least  
1 person.



Who do you think  
survivors disclose to  
first?

# Disclosure

It's more common to  
disclose to a close

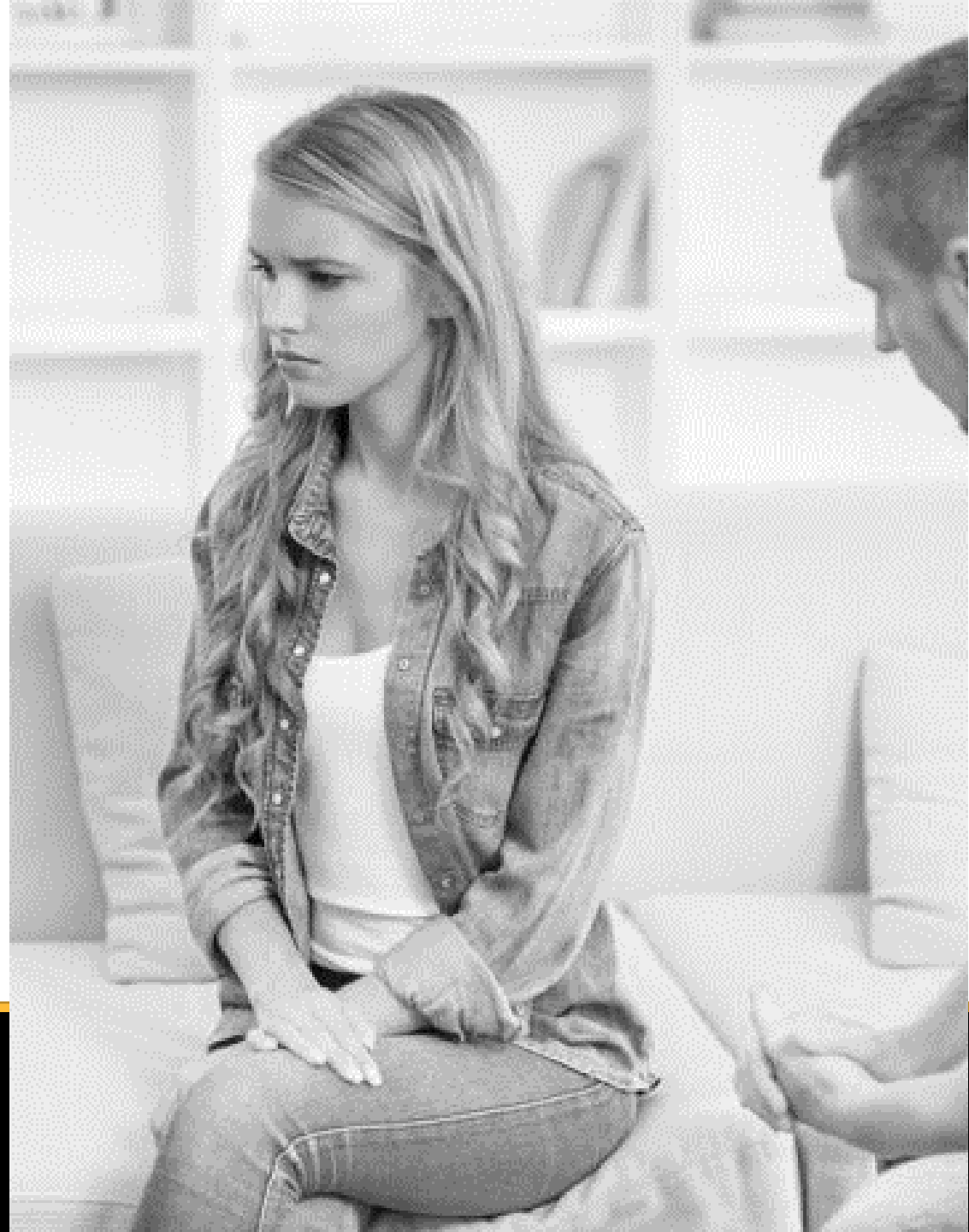
friend

or acquaintance than  
to a family member.



# Reactions to Disclosure

- **Negative reactions** decrease survivors' perceived control over recovery and increase self-blame.
- **Positive reactions** increase survivors' perceived control over their recovery and promote empowerment.



WHICH KIND OF REACTION  
DO YOU THINK HAS A  
STRONGER EFFECT OVER  
THE SURVIVOR?



# Reactions to Disclosure

Negative reactions to disclosure create a stronger negative effect than positive reactions create a positive effect.



# Reactions to Disclosure

*Putting it all Together*

- Negative reactions to disclosure create a stronger negative effect than positive reactions create a positive effect.
  - Negative reactions are those that decrease survivors' perceived control over recovery and increase self-blame
    - Increase isolation and negative coping strategies
    - Feelings of not being believed, being blamed, or being judged
  - Positive reactions are those that increase survivors' perceived control over their recovery (empowerment)
    - Decrease long term PTSD symptoms
    - Increase social engagement and use of formal (advocacy) supports

HOW MIGHT A DISCLOSURE  
IN A RURAL COMMUNITY BE  
DIFFERENT THAN IN AN  
URBAN AREA?



# NAVIGATING CONFIDENTIALITY

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# ARS § 13-4430 CONSULTATION BETWEEN CRIME VICTIM ADVOCATE AND VICTIM; PRIVILEGED INFORMATION; EXCEPTION

- A. A crime victim advocate shall not disclose as a witness or otherwise any communication made by or with the victim, including any communication made to or in the presence of others, unless the victim consents in writing to the disclosure.
- B. Unless the victim consents in writing to the disclosure, a crime victim advocate shall not disclose records, notes, documents, correspondence, reports or memoranda that contain opinions, theories or other information made while advising, counseling or assisting the victim or that are based on communications made by or with the victim, including communications made to or in the presence of others.
- C. The communication is not privileged if the crime victim advocate knows that the victim will give or has given perjured testimony or if the communication contains exculpatory evidence.
- D. A defendant may make a motion for disclosure of privileged information. If the court finds there is reasonable cause to believe the material is exculpatory, the court shall hold a hearing in camera. Material that the court finds is exculpatory shall be disclosed to the defendant.
- E. If, with the written or verbal consent of the victim, the crime victim advocate discloses to the prosecutor or a law enforcement agency any communication between the victim and the crime victim advocate or any records, notes, documents, correspondence, reports or memoranda, the prosecutor or law enforcement agent shall disclose such material to the defendant's attorney only if such information is otherwise exculpatory.
- F. Notwithstanding subsections A and B, if a crime victim consents either verbally or in writing, a crime victim advocate may disclose information to other professionals and administrative support persons that the advocate works with for the purpose of assisting the advocate in providing services to the victim and to the court in furtherance of any victim's right pursuant to this chapter.

*Exculpatory evidence is evidence that tends to excuse, justify, or absolve the alleged fault or guilt of a defendant.*



# Organizational Policies

- Use forms that inform the consent of how information will be used.
  - **Data protection:** How client information will be stored and secured.
  - **Limits to confidentiality:** When information may need to be shared (such as mandatory reporting).
- Read the fine print on your intake forms.
- Read the fine print to your survivor!

# Make it KNOWN!

Advertise publicly ahead of time that your organization:

- Follows confidentiality laws
- Is safe to talk to
- Is not allowed to share with anyone that the survivor doesn't want them to

Share upon intake:

- Confidentiality expectations
- Boundaries



# Secure Data

- Arizona law recognizes confidentiality privileges for sexual assault, domestic violence, and crime victim advocates (A.R.S. § 13-4430). However, there are limitations:
  - Confidential communications between a survivor and an advocate are protected, meaning an advocate cannot be forced to testify about private discussions with a survivor.
  - This privilege does not necessarily extend to text messages, as written communication is often considered documentary evidence rather than testimony.



This is the reason to  
have a work phone!





# Intentional Boundary Setting

- Set expectations during intake.
  - “In this room, we are advocate and survivor. Out in the world we can be related by marriage.”
  - “If I see you in public, I will never mention anything that happens in this room unless it’s something you bring up.”
  - “For now, if I see you in public, I will not approach you first.”
  - *Make sure survivor agrees to this.*

Socialworktoday, 2024



# Intentional Boundary Setting

- Consistently enforce your boundaries.
  - If the survivor pushes back in public, that's okay. Prove to them that you're safe by not engaging or saying, "I can't talk about that here."

Socialworktoday, 2024

# Workaround options

- Have a discreet entrance to the facility or be willing to meet a survivor off site.
- If the survivor is concerned about knowing people while obtaining a forensic medical exam, ask if they'd prefer to be transported to another county.
- Consider creating a code-word with the survivor for when you call about their case, or when they call you.
- If funding is a concern, consider the SARP program.





WHAT COULD HAPPEN IF YOU TALK  
TO THE SURVIVOR ABOUT THEIR  
CASE IN PUBLIC?

# Why It Matters

- Protecting survivor confidentiality is the **advocate's** responsibility, not the survivor's.
- Advocates who cross those boundaries can find themselves giving advice, rather than helping a survivor to regain their power.
- Blurring the lines in your professional relationship not only puts the survivor's confidentiality at risk but also compromises your work, your agency, and your funding if you receive grants.

Socialworktoday, 2024



THANK YOU  
FOR ALL THAT YOU DO!



Please complete this form !

Questions?

Carrie@ACESDV.org

Compliment/Complaint Dept:  
Brooke@acesdv.org