

AP Investigation Reveals Hundreds of U.S. Officers Fired for Sexual Misconduct

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According to AP's data, approximately 1,000 officers across the nation had their licenses revoked and lost their jobs over the last six years for sex crimes that included rape and possession of child pornography.

A thousand officers getting fired might sound like a lot, but, of course, it's a pretty small fraction of the number of law enforcement officers in America. According to another study, the Cato Institute's investigation discovered that in 2009 and 2010 sex misconduct was the second most reported offense against officers, after the use of excessive force.

That's extremely surprising. Because sexual assault is generally less likely to come to the attention of police than other crimes.

He resigned from his first job with the Delray Beach Police amid a probe into whether he struck his wife with a boot, fracturing her nose, and then lied about it to investigators. With the exception of homicide, where there's literally a dead body to be explained away, cops will nearly never find out a crime was committed if no one reports it to them.

In this long exposure photo, cars travel along Lincoln Boulevard in Oklahoma City on Wednesday, June 10, 2015, near the site where a woman says she was sexually assaulted by Oklahoma City police officer Daniel Holtzclaw.

And the reasons that sexual assault is underreported to begin with get compounded when the assailant is a police officer.

Experts on sex assault believe most victims never come forward, and said fears can be compounded if the offender is an officer.

Reporting misconduct is only the beginning. The investigation included examining the records of state and local police, sheriff's deputies, prison guards and school resource officers. Though nine states and the District of Columbia declined to provide information or said they did not track officer misconduct, decertification records from 41 states were obtained and then dissected to determine whether the cause of revocation involved sexual misconduct. In the vast majority of states, an officer is only put at risk of losing his certification after he's already been held accountable for the misconduct by someone else.

Now with more evidence of improprieties among police officers, we hope that more departments will lift the veil and bring criminal cops to justice. Illinois, for example, passed a law this year to create a database to monitor officers who are fired for misconduct, as part of a larger bill that set guidelines on body cameras and expanded the role of special prosecutors in misconduct cases. That amounts to an officer being fired for sexual misconduct almost every other day. But it's extremely common for officers (like any sort of employee) to resign instead of being fired.

"It's happening probably in every law enforcement agency across the country", said Chief Bernadette DiPino of the Sarasota Police Department in Florida, who helped study the problem for the worldwide Association of Chiefs of Police.

A small number of states are also improving how they collect information on officers and discipline them. Most of the officers have been convicted and are serving time. She's poor. She was repeatedly raped by a family member when she was a little girl, she said and she says the police officer raping her is not the worst thing that's ever happened to her. Because of these gaps, these numbers are most certainly an undercount.

Christopher Epperson, 37, of the Wasatch County Sheriff's Department in Utah, is serving three years' probation in the sexual assaults of two inmates.

Only a few of these 1,000 or so officers were charged with crimes; others gave up their badges in order to avoid charges.