

END VIOLENCE TOGETHER

For The Dignity Of Every Woman

FACT SHEET

ACQUAINTANCE RAPE

Acquaintance rape is difficult to talk about but it happens to many girls and women.

Acquaintance rape is an act of violence. It is never the survivor's fault.

DEFINITION

Acquaintance rape is also called date rape – it means sexual assault that happens between acquaintances or “friends” or between people who are dating. Sexual assault is any forced or coerced sexual contact. Most victims of sexual assault are girls or women. Most offenders are male.¹

There are three levels of sexual assault in the Criminal Code of Canada:²

Level 1: any forced sexual contact without bodily harm

Level 2: forced sexual contact causing or threatening to cause bodily harm or using a weapon (imitation or real)

Level 3: forced sexual contact that causes aggravated bodily harm or endangers the life of the victim or others

STATISTICS

How common is acquaintance rape?

- 40% of women in Canada have been sexually assaulted.³
- 31% of sexual assaults take place in dating and acquaintance relationships.⁴
- 20-25% of college-aged women will be victims of sexual assault at some point during their college careers.⁵
- Approximately 1 in 3 sexually active adolescent girls reported experiencing physical or sexual violence from dating partners.⁶
- In 2003, 9% of all students in grades 9 through 12 reported having been raped at some time in their lives.⁷

Place Your Agency Information Here

Who are the survivors?

- Most sexual assault victims are young women between 16 and 25 years old.⁸
- 9 to 17 year olds girls have the highest rate of sexual assault and physical assaults by friends or acquaintances.⁹
Girls under the age of 18 are 4 times more likely to be sexually assaulted than boys.¹⁰

Who are the offenders?

- Approximately 71% of all sexual assaults against girls and 29% against boys between the ages of 12 to 17 years of age are committed by an acquaintance.¹¹
- 16% of completed rapes and 10% of attempted rapes are committed by multiple offenders.¹²
- Of alleged gang rapes by college students, 55% were committed by fraternity members and 40% by school athletes.¹³

REPORTING

- 90% of sexual assault victims who knew their attacker did not report the attack to the police.¹⁴
- While students may report sexual assault to college officials, they often do not report the crime to the police. Fewer than 5% of sexually assaulted students reported the crime to police.¹⁵
- In a survey of college women, 38% reported having been sexually victimized in ways that met the legal definitions of rape or attempted rape, yet only 1 in 25 reported the assault to the police.¹⁶

THE IMPACT OF ACQUAINTANCE RAPE

Compared to victims of stranger rape, acquaintance rape victims blame themselves more, view themselves more negatively, and suffer more serious psychological injuries. Acquaintance rape victims are less likely to seek crisis services, tell someone, report to police or seek counselling.

Acquaintance rape victims feel particularly vulnerable and unsafe, since they have found that even people they trusted may commit an act of violence against them. Family and friends may not be a source of support for acquaintance rape victims, as they may be for victims of stranger rape. If they tell friends or family, the severity of the attack may be minimized, or the victim may be blamed for the rape.¹⁷

According to Statistics Canada, women are physically injured in 11% of sexual assaults.¹⁸

Sexual assaults on women with disabilities can trigger severe physical reactions. A woman with epilepsy may have a seizure, a woman with cerebral palsy may develop even more unclear speech, or a woman with diabetes may go into insulin shock.¹⁹

Women who were subjected to physical or sexual abuse as children or adults are at greater risk of health problems including: injury, chronic pain, gastrointestinal disorders, anxiety and clinical depression.²⁰

Violence increases the risk of behaviors such as smoking and substance use.²¹

The impact of acquaintance rape often persists long after it has stopped. Survivors of abuse average more surgeries, physician and pharmacy visits, hospital stays and mental health consultations than other women. This is despite the factoring of other factors affecting health care use, and discounting emergency room visits.²²

Women who have been sexually assaulted and/or battered are more likely than other women to commit suicide.²³

Over 75% of the abused women who killed their abuser were raped by him.²⁴

A survey of 388 female college seniors showed that 79.3% of those sampled who reported having been raped or sexually assaulted while intoxicated put all or part of the blame on themselves. 50% of the women raped by force or threat of force also took on some degree of self-blame.²⁵

ATTITUDES

Studies show that many youth and adults believe that forced sex is acceptable in some circumstances. This is one of the reasons why acquaintance rape is so common. **Forced sex is never acceptable.**

In a survey of 11 to 14 year old boys and girls²⁶:

- 51% of the boys and 41% of the girls said forced sex was acceptable if the boy “spent a lot of money” on the girl
- 31% of the boys and 32% of the girls said it was acceptable for a man to rape a woman with past sexual experiences
- 65% of the boys and 47% of the girls said it was acceptable for a boy to rape a girl if they had been dating for more than six months

In a survey of 13-14 year old boys²⁷:

- 11% thought that if a girl said “no” to sex she really meant yes
- More than 1 in 4 agreed that girls who get drunk at parties or on dates deserve whatever happens to them
- Almost half felt that rape was sometimes the victim’s fault
- 40% agreed that girls who wear sexy clothes are asking to be raped
- More than 1 in 3 thought they would not be arrested if they forced a date to have sex
- 36% agreed that if a girl goes into the bedroom on a date, she wants to have sex
- More than 15% agreed that forcing your date to have sex is sometimes acceptable

- More than 7% thought that it was okay for a boy to force a girl to have sex if the girl got him sexually excited

In a survey of male college students²⁸, 1 in 5 said that forced sex was acceptable:

- “if he spends money on her” “if he is stoned or drunk”
- “if they have been dating for a long time”

1 of 12 male college students committed acts that met the legal definition of rape. 88% of men whose actions came under the legal definition of rape were adamant that their behavior did not constitute rape.²⁹

51% of male college students reported they might rape a woman if assured they would not get caught.³⁰

RESOURCES

There are approximately 400 programs to assist with violence against women and children in BC. These include:

- Community-Based Victim Assistance Programs
- Stopping the Violence Counselling Programs
- Outreach Programs
- Transition Houses
- Children Who Witness Abuse Programs
- Second Stage Houses
- Safe Homes

To find a program in your community you can call:

VictimLINK (Victim Information and Referrals) is a Multi-lingual line.

- Call toll-free in BC at 1-800-563-0808, 24 hours every day
- If you are deaf or hard of hearing, call Information Service Vancouver’s TTY Service at (604) 875-0885. If calling from outside the Lower Mainland, call collect

Helpline for Children

- Call 310-1234 (no area code required), 24 hours every day
- To use the TTD (Telephone Device for the Deaf), call 1-866-660-0505

CONTACT US

- If you want more information
- If you need help
- If you want to volunteer or make a donation

PLACE YOUR PROGRAM NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION HERE:

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- ²⁶ “Young People’s Attitudes Toward Acquaintance Rape,” J White and JA Humphrey, 1991, in *Acquaintance Rape: The Hidden Crime*, ed. Andrea Parrot, John Wiley & Sons
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