FACT SHEET
(Updated August 2012)

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?

- 31% of sexual assaults take place in dating and acquaintance relationships.³
- 20-25% of college-aged women will be victims of sexual assault at some point during their college careers.⁴
- Approximately 1 in 3 sexually active adolescent girls reported experiencing physical or sexual violence from dating partners.⁵
- In 2003, 9% of all students in grades 9 through 12 reported having been raped at some time in their lives.⁶
According to police-reported data from 2008:7
• Dating relationships accounted for more than one quarter of all violent incidents and almost one third of all homicides perpetrated by intimate partners. Close to 23,000 incidents of dating violence were reported to police in 2008.
• From 2004 to 2008, there has been a steady increase in rates of police-reported dating violence. Rates for women have increased by 40%. It is unclear whether the rise reflects an actual increase in violence or whether it is a result of a greater willingness among victims to report the assault.
• Approximately 10% of male victims and 1% of female victims of dating violence involved same-sex dating relationships. The types of offences did not differ substantially from incidents involving opposite-sex dating relationships.

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?
• Victims of sexual offences know the accused in 80% of cases. About 10% were assaulted by a friend, while 41% were assaulted by an acquaintance. A family member assaulted just over 28%, while the remaining 20% were assaulted by a stranger.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

A longitudinal survey with college men, in 2003, found that 2 out of 15 reported perpetrating sexual assault.14

Both victimization studies and police-reported data suggest that sexual assault incidents are most likely to occur when the victim and offender are known to each other. Over half (55%) of the sexual assaults reported in the General Social Survey in 2004, involved an offender who was a friend or acquaintance to the victim. In the case of police-reported data in 2007, a victim and offender were known to each other in 82% of the cases.15

REPORTING

Quantifying sexual assault continues to be a challenge, since the majority of these crimes are not reported to police.16

• 90% of sexual assault victims who knew their attacker did not report the attack to the police.17
• 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.  
• Less than 1 in 10 sexual assault incidents were reported to police, a proportion significantly lower than that for other violent offences.

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.

Police-reported data from 2007 indicate that 77% of sexual offences resulted in no physical injury to the victim and that a higher proportion of level 1 sexual assaults resulted in no physical injuries (80%), in comparison to level 2 sexual assaults (40%) and aggravated sexual assaults (7%).

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.

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.

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

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.

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

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

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.²⁸

**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 girls²⁹:
- 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 boys³⁰:
- 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 students³¹, 1 in 5 said that forced sex was acceptable:
- “If he spends money on her” or “if he is stoned or drunk”.
- “If they have been dating for a long time”.

51% of male college students reported they might rape a woman if assured they would not get caught.³²
RESOURCES

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

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

VictimLink BC provides information and referral services for victims of family and sexual violence and all other crimes. It is a multilingual line.

• Call toll-free in BC at 1-800-563-0808, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

• VictimLink BC is TTY accessible. Call TTY at (604) 875-0885. If calling from outside the Lower Mainland, please call the Telus Relay Service at 711. Text 604-836-6381. Email victimlinkbc@bc211.ca.

Helpline for Children

• Call 310-1234 (no area code required), 24 hours a day everyday.
• If calling from a pay phone, call the operator “0”. This is a free call.
• To use the TDD (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:
REFERENCES:

2 Ibid.
3 Facts to Consider About Sexual Assault, Ontario Women’s Directorate, 1995.
5 “Dating Violence and Sexually Transmitted Disease/HIV Testing and Diagnosis Among Adolescent Females,” Pediatrics, August 2005
6 Child Trends DataBank, 2004
16 Ibid.
17 Sexual Assault on Campus, C Bohmer and A Parrot, Lexington Books, 1993
Violence Against Women with Disabilities, DisAbled Women’s Network (DAWN), www.dawncanada.ca


Ibid

Ibid


Facts About Sexual Assault, American Medical Association, 1997


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