

UNDERSTANDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

MAKE THE LEAP: LEARN MORE ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE. REFLECT ON YOUR OWN ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS.

Our understanding of sexual violence has grown and developed over the years. There was a time when most people believed it meant rape by a stranger. We now recognize that there are many forms of sexual violence, including sexual assault and sexual harassment. It goes far beyond the impact on survivors and their families. Sexual violence costs Canadians billions of dollars every year.¹

Sexual violence is an act of aggression against another person.

Sexual assault describes any event of unwanted sexual touching and/or physical force. It is the legal term for rape in Canada. Sexual assault is the only violent crime in Canada that is not declining.²

Sexual harassment includes unwanted sexual comments and behaviours, as well as touching. It may take the form of jokes, threats, comments about sex, or discriminatory remarks about someone's gender. A 2014 poll in Canada showed that 43% of women have been sexually harassed in their workplace. Women were also more than twice as likely as men to say they had experienced unwanted sexual contact while at work (20% compared to 9%).³

Sexual violence happens every time there is no consent between the individuals involved. When a sexual relationship involves someone who has authority over another person, such as a youth and a caregiver or person in a position of trust, the youth cannot legally consent to sexual activity.

STATS CANADA TELLS US THAT:

- 1 in 4 girls, and 1 in 6 boys will be sexually assaulted during their lifetime
- 60% of sexual abuse/assault victims are under the age of 17
- Over 80% of sex crime victims are female
- 97% of reported assaults involve a male perpetrator
- 10% of sexual offenders are female (Corrections Canada)
- 15% of sexual assault victims are boys under 16
- 83% of girls with disabilities will be sexually assaulted during their lifetime
- 57% of Indigenous girls and women have been sexually abused

IN ONTARIO⁴:

- 20% of trans youth have been targets of physical or sexual assaults
- 37% of trans students have been physically harassed or assaulted
- 49% of trans students have been sexually harassed in school

Most (80%) sexual violence is committed by someone who knows the victim.⁵ It can happen when you are dating, hooking up, and/or married. It happens in both opposite and same-sex relationships. And it happens in many settings - online, in a public setting and in private. Sexual violence has many forms, it's not just rape.

Sexual violence is about power and control, not sexual desire. It is an act of aggression against another person. It is never the survivor's fault. It is never okay.

— Ontario's Sexual Violence & Harassment Action Plan

¹ Canadian Women's Foundation: Fact Sheet: Sexual Assault and Harassment.

² ibid

³ See Canadian Women's Foundation: <http://www.canadianwomen.org/facts-sexual-assault-sexual-harassment>

⁴ Egale Human Rights Trust. Every Class in Every School: <https://egale.ca/every-class>

⁵ See Stats Canada: <https://www.sexassault.ca/statistics.htm>