

Unit 8: Sexual Assault

What Is Sexual Assault?

Sexual assault includes unwanted sexual touching or penetration without consent, such as rape, forced sodomy (anal intercourse), forced oral copulation (oral-genital contact), rape by a foreign object (including a finger), and sexual battery (the unwanted touching of an intimate part of another person for the purpose of sexual arousal).

Sexual assault is not about love, romance, sex, or physical attraction. It is a violent act. The offender's purpose is to exert power and control, intimidate, humiliate, punish, or force a victim to do something against his or her will. Research has determined that rapists can be categorized into those who release pent-up rage on the victim, those who have the need to exert power and domination over victims, and those who enjoy inflicting harm on the victim.

Victims of sexual assault usually know the offender. The offender may be an intimate partner, family member, friend, neighbor, or coworker. While most reported sexual assault cases involve women as victims, men also are sexually assaulted. Being in a marriage or relationship does not mean that consent for sex is automatically given. People who are married or in relationships can commit rape or be raped.

In 1992, 62 percent of victims were younger than age 18 at the time of their first assault. Years later, this trend has not changed.⁴⁷ Young people are still at a higher risk of being raped. Young children, older people, and people with physical and cognitive disabilities are also more vulnerable to being victimized.

Victims of sexual assault who are under the influence of alcohol or other drugs at the time of the assault are unable to give their consent. They may not fully understand what is happening to them or may even be unconscious.

Sexual assault involves physical and nonphysical force. Physical force includes using a weapon, hitting, kicking, choking, or holding someone down. Sometimes, even though force is used, there are no signs of bruising or injuries.

Nonphysical force is called "coercion" and includes verbally threatening a victim into doing something he or she doesn't want to do. If a victim thinks he or she will be in danger by saying "no," this indicates force. Nonphysical force can include the use of peer pressure on a child or teenager.

Some people wonder why the sexual assault victim didn't fight back if what happened was "really" sexual assault. Victims often say they were confused, "froze" during the assault, or were terrified of angering the offender and causing more force to be used. Victims should not be blamed or questioned if they don't fight back. The sheer trauma of being sexually assaulted can be overwhelming.

Words To Know

- Coercion
- Consent
- Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Rape
- Sex
- Voluntary



⁴⁷ <https://ucr.fbi.gov/nibrs/2016/tables/data-tables> (Table: Victims, Age by Offense Category, 2016)

The emotional and psychological injuries caused by sexual assault can last much longer than physical wounds. Common reactions include anger, fear, depression, anxiety, mood swings, problems sleeping, becoming less trusting, and flashbacks. In addition, victims of sexual assault often feel betrayed, unsafe, and unsure of whom to tell and whether they will be believed.

Where Do Sexual Assaults Happen?

- Homes
- School campuses
- The military
- The workplace
- Senior citizen care facilities
- Anywhere

Examples of Physical and Nonphysical Force

- Use of a gun (Physical)
- Use of a knife (Physical)
- Telling someone, "I'll tell your boyfriend" (Nonphysical)
- Threatening someone, "I'll hurt your kids" (Nonphysical)
- Telling someone, "I'll break up with you and tell everyone that you're easy" (Nonphysical)



In the News: Sexual Assault Trends

Take a look at the trends concerning sexual assaults below. Which trend bothers you the most?

- More than half of all rapes occur before the victim is 18 years old.⁴⁸
- In about 79 percent of cases, sexual assault victims know the offender.⁴⁹
- Both women and men are at risk of being raped.
- About 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men have experienced sexual violence by an intimate partner.⁵⁰
- In the United States, about 1 in 3 women and nearly 1 in 6 men experienced some form of contact sexual violence during their lifetime.⁵¹
- Nearly 23 million women and 1.7 million men have been the victims of completed or attempted rape at some point in their life.⁵²
- An estimated 6.8 million men were made to penetrate another person in their lifetime.⁵³
- Of all male victims made to penetrate another person, 20 percent reported that their first victimization occurred between the ages of 11 and 17.⁵⁴
- Significantly more women and men with a history of sexual violence or stalking by any perpetrator, or physical violence by an intimate partner, reported asthma, irritable bowel syndrome, frequent headaches, chronic pain, difficulty sleeping, and limitations in their activities compared to women and men without a history of these forms of violence.⁵⁵
- Less than 22 percent of sexual assaults were reported to police, according to the 2016 National Victimization Survey.⁵⁶

⁴⁸ <https://ucr.fbi.gov/nibrs/2016/tables/data-tables> (Table: Victims, Age, by, Offense, Category, 2016)

⁴⁹ <https://ucr.fbi.gov/nibrs/2016/tables/data-tables> (Table: Relationship of Victims to Offenders by Offense Category, 2016)

⁵⁰ <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/NISVS-StateReportFactsheet.pdf>

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cv16.pdf>

Examples of Sexual Assault

The following are definitions and examples of sexual assault crimes. As you read each scenario, consider the impact on victims. Remember: Sexual assault is about violence, coercion, and doing harm. It is not about consensual sex.

Rape

Penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim.

After volunteering to take his 60-year-old blind neighbor grocery shopping, the man brings her home, helps her put the groceries away, and then refuses to leave. Instead, he cuts off her clothes, pushes her down on the floor, and rapes her.

Phillip and Maria have been living together for 5 years. When Phillip gets angry, he hits Maria and threatens her. He takes her to their bedroom and forces her to have sex, even though she repeatedly says "No."

My life is divided into two parts: before the rape and after the rape.
—Rape victim

What do you think happens to the victims?

Fondling

Touching the private body parts of another person for sexual gratification, forcibly or against that person's will. If the victim is unable to give consent because of age or mental incapacity, then fondling may be charged regardless of whether touching was against the person's will.

Terrence was playing video games with his girlfriend's little brother, Keenan. Terrence promised Keenan two new video games for a favor. Keenan did as he was asked and took his pants off. Terrence touched Keenan's penis.

How might Keenan think and feel in response to being fondled?

Leticia went to a party with her brother and drank half a beer and ate a plate of food. She didn't know that Carlos had been watching her for a while. When she wasn't looking, he put a drug in her beer. Leticia didn't quite pass out, but she couldn't talk or move very well. All she remembers is Carlos touching her vagina and breasts through her clothes.

I don't know how to help my daughter.
—Father of rape victim

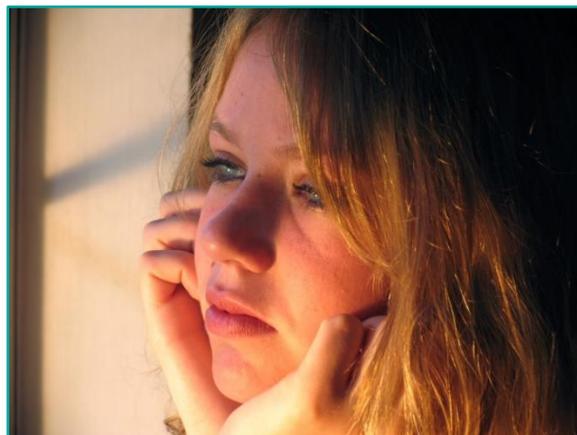
How would you feel if Leticia were your daughter or sister?



What Is the Impact of Sexual Assault?

Criminal behavior such as sexual assault creates a ripple effect that has a negative impact on a number of life areas: financial, physical, emotional, and religious/spiritual. The following lists outline some examples of how sexual assault affects these areas of victims' lives. Add your own examples below.

<p>Financial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wage loss • Purchase of security services or a security system • Legal fees • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ • _____ 	<p>Physical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weight changes • Chronic pain • Bruises • Vomiting • Temporary or permanent damage to sexual organs • Inability to become pregnant because of damage to sexual organs • Broken bones • _____
<p>Emotional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depression • Embarrassment • Anger • Vulnerability • Guilt • Suicidal thoughts • Flashbacks • _____ 	<p>Religious/Spiritual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questioning the goodness of others • Questioning faith • "Why would my 'higher power' let this happen?" • "Why would this happen to a good person?" • Forgiveness issues • _____ • _____ • _____





OVC *Victim Impact: Listen and Learn* DVD

After viewing the OVC *Victim Impact: Listen and Learn* DVD clip about rape/sexual assault, answer the following questions:

What was the emotional impact of the rape on Debbie?

What was the physical impact of the rape on Debbie?

What was the “domino effect” of the rape on Debbie’s family?



Being Accountable for Your Crimes

Sexual assault victims/survivors may never regain the sense of confidence, self-worth, or dignity they once had. **No one has the right to sexually assault someone, regardless of the circumstances. No one has the right to harm another person.**

How Can I Be Accountable for My Crimes?

What if my sister was raped?
—Dmitri

Just because we were on a date didn't mean she owed me anything.
—Aaron

The trauma I inflicted on her must have been awful. How can I start to make it right?
—Calvin

I need to take responsibility for what I did to him.
—Jaclyn

What can these offenders do to show they are changing their thoughts and behavior?



Additional Activities

Activity B – Susan

How might Susan be affected in each of the following situations?

Assault

Susan is walking to a mall to go shopping and takes a shortcut through an alley. As she nears the end of the alley, a man attacks her. He grabs her, throws her to the ground, hits her in the face, and steals her purse.

Will she report this to the police? Yes No

Rape

Susan meets up with some of her coworkers at a local pub after work. A friendly guy buys her a drink and asks her to dance. The next thing she remembers is waking up in her car. Her pants are missing and she is in a lot of pain in her private parts. Her head is throbbing and her mouth tastes bitter.

Will she report this to the police? Yes No

Acquaintance Rape

Susan is out on a date with her boyfriend. He kisses her and Susan kisses him back. He begins to remove her clothing and she responds with “No!” and struggles with him. He refuses to stop and rapes her.

Will she report this to the police? Yes No

Sex

Susan is out on a date with her boyfriend. They talk about whether they are both ready to have a physically intimate relationship with each other and agree that they are. At the end of the evening, they decide to spend the night together and have sex.

Will she report this to the police? Yes No

Marital Rape

Susan’s husband wants to have sex. Susan tells him she is tired and needs to get sleep because tomorrow she has an interview for a possible promotion at work. He says he’s tired of her excuses and suddenly, he rolls over and holds her down with his body, forcing himself inside of her.

Will she report this to the police? Yes No

Are the emotions the same or different in each situation? How do you account for similarities or differences?

Define rape.

How does society’s attitude toward sexual assault affect a rape victim?

What is the difference between “giving consent” and “cooperating” in this context?

Activity C – Mrs. Johnson

Mrs. Johnson, age 72, lives with her 76-year-old husband. Both Mr. and Mrs. Johnson are retired. Mr. Johnson has gone to the Laundromat. Mrs. Johnson answers the door and a stranger asks her if she has any yard work for him. Mrs. Johnson tells him that she doesn't.

As Mrs. Johnson is closing the door, the man pushes his way in, knocking her to the floor. He kicks her and demands money. Mrs. Johnson begs the man not to hurt her and tells him all of her money is in her purse. The man becomes angry when he discovers only \$13 and tells Mrs. Johnson he is going to teach her a lesson for insulting him. The man beats and rapes Mrs. Johnson.

What is the impact on Mrs. Johnson?

Who else has been victimized? How do you think those people feel?

Do you think the man would have raped Mrs. Johnson if she had given him more money?

Yes No

If Mrs. Johnson was your grandmother, would you be embarrassed to talk to her about what happened?

Yes No **Why or why not?**

What do you think Mr. and Mrs. Johnson's family and friends can do to help?

Who else can help?

Activity D – Andre

Andre, 17, was kidnapped by a man, taken to an abandoned building, and tied up. He was sexually assaulted and lost consciousness. When he regained consciousness, he was in an alley in an unfamiliar area of town.



Will Andre call the police?

- Yes
- No

Will Andre tell his family?

- Yes
- No

Will Andre seek help from a sexual assault center?

- Yes
- No

Imagine you are Andre. What are your thoughts and feelings following the attack? What are you going to do following the attack?

Imagine that Andre is a member of your family. What are your thoughts and feelings after being told of the attack? What are you going to do to assist Andre?
