

Date and Acquaintance Rape

What is date and acquaintance rape?

Date and acquaintance rape happens when someone, most likely a woman is sexual assaulted by someone they know. The offender is likely someone they trust, a boyfriend, a friend or an acquaintance that uses physical force or guilt to force or coerce an unwanted sexual encounter.

How common is date and acquaintance rape?

Keeping in mind that it is estimated that **80%¹ of sexual assaults are not reported** in 2007 the police reported that **in 82% of sexual assaults the victim knows the perpetrator**, 28% of these were casual acquaintances, 4% were business acquaintances, 8% were identified as friends and 5% were current or former boyfriends². And the Ontario Women Directorate estimates that **31% of sexual assaults take place in dating and acquaintance relationships**.³ The Statistics Canada 1993 Violence against Women Survey found that **one in five women** have been involved in at least one incident of sexual attack by a date or boyfriend since the age of 16; and **that 24%** of women, age 18-24, have been sexually attacked by a date or boyfriend.⁴

Age is a significant factor, **20-25% of college-aged women will be victims of sexual assault** at some point during their college careers⁵ and approximately **1 in 3 sexually active adolescent girls reported experiencing physical or sexual violence from dating partners**.⁶

The impact of date and acquaintance rape⁷:

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 counseling.

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. Sexual assaults from a stranger are generally more believed than date/acquaintance rape by society at large and by law-enforcement.

A survivor tells her story:

"I was one of the lucky ones. When the truth finally did come out, I was met with support and understanding from most of my friends and family. What I still have to suffer through, however, is the willful ignorance and inconsideration of perfect strangers who try to solicit laughs with jokes about rape.

If someone close to you had just survived a murder attempt, would you joke about it to them? Like murder or stalking or a crippling disease, rape is a harrowing experience that haunts your every step and alters your life permanently.

I still have nightmares and panic attacks. It has affected my mental and physical health, my performance at work and school, my relationships with friends, with family and with my boyfriend. You can heal, you can move on, but once it has happened, it is a part of you for the rest of your life; it never leaves, never changes, and it is never, ever funny."

Want to continue reading this survivor's story? Click [here](#).

¹ Ontario Women's Directorate, 2002, [Sexual Assault](#): Reporting Issues

² Statistics Canada. 2010. [The Nature of Sexual Offences](#)

³ Ontario Women's Directorate, 1995, [Facts to Consider About Sexual Assault](#)

⁴ Statistics Canada, 1993, [Violence Against Women Survey \(VAWS\)](#)

⁵ [Sexual Assault on Campus](#), C Bohmer and A Parrot, Lexington Books, 1993

⁶ ["Dating Violence and Sexually Transmitted Disease/HIV Testing and Diagnosis Among Adolescent Females,"](#) *Pediatrics*, August 2005

⁷ ["Bad Dates or Emotional Trauma?: The Aftermath of Campus Sexual Assault,"](#) MD Schwartz and MS Leggett, in *Violence Against Women* 5 1999: 251-271