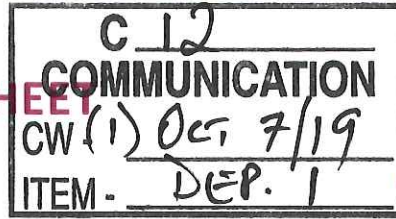


SEXUAL VIOLENCE FACT SHEET



women's support network
of york region

What is Sexual Violence?

Sexual violence is a broad term that describes any violence, physical or psychological, carried out through sexual means or by targeting sexuality. Any act that undermines an individual's sexual or gender integrity can be considered sexual violence.¹

This can include unwanted sexual touching, sexual harassment, stalking, voyeurism, sexual assault, rape, online sexual harassment, ritual abuse, incest, childhood sexual abuse, indecent/sexualized exposure, exhibitionism, sharing sexual photographs or videos without permission, unwanted comments or jokes, forced marriage or cohabitation, or trafficking and sexual exploitation.¹

What is Human Trafficking?

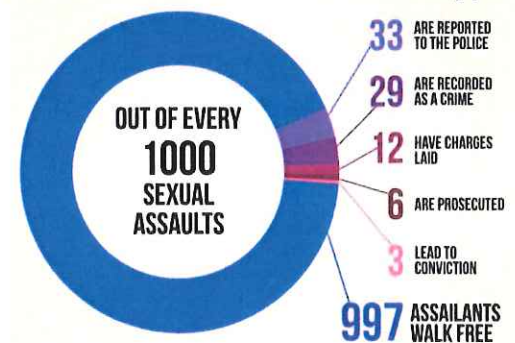
Human trafficking involves the recruitment, transportation, harbouring and/ or exercising control, direction or influence over the movements of a person in order to exploit that person, typically through sexual exploitation or forced labour. It is often described as a modern form of slavery.²

Sex trafficking can occur via escort services, massage parlours, bars and strip clubs, phone sex lines, internet chat rooms, and forced prostitution, among others. People being trafficked are often lured and groomed by people posing as a potential romantic partner.³ Violence and/or threats of violence are often used as a means to control or force people being trafficked into performing sexual services.³

Prevalence of Sexual Violence

- Sexual assault is the only violent crime that is **not** declining in Canada⁴
- Women account for **92% of victims** of police-reported sexual assaults⁴
- Over 70%** of people being trafficked are **females under the age of 25**⁵
- 1 in 3 women** will experience some form of sexual violence in their lifetime⁶
- 39% of adult women** in Canada reported having at least one experience of sexual assault since age 16⁶
- 1 in 6 men** will experience some form of sexual violence in their lifetime⁶

THERE ARE **460,000** SEXUAL ASSAULTS in Canada every year



Source: Johnson, "Limits of a Criminal Justice Response: Trends in Police and Court Processing of Sexual Assault," in Sheehy, Sexual Assault in Canada: Law, Legal Practice and Women's Activism, 2012.

YWCA CANADA

WOMEN'S SUPPORT NETWORK OF YORK REGION

Image 1. Sexual Assault in Canada⁶

Certain people face a higher risk of sexual assault:

- Rates of sexual assault for young people ages 15-24 is 18 times higher than people ages 55+⁴
- Women who are Indigenous, racialized, differently abled, institutionalized, single, unemployed, and/or have low-incomes experience heightened risk for sexual assault⁴



The Effects of Sexual Violence

Any type of sexual violence can have long-term impacts on survivors.⁹ People who have experienced sexual violence may experience⁹:

- Flashbacks (memories of trauma feel as if they are currently taking place)
- Dissociation (detachment from reality, “out of body” experiences)
- Depression
- Anxiety disorders
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Sleep disorders
- Suicidal behaviours
- Self-harm
- Eating disorders
- Substance abuse issues
- Unwanted pregnancy
- Gynaecological or other health complications
- Sexually transmitted infections

Why Are Police Reported Incidents of Sexual Violence So Low?

Trauma Responses are Complicated!

- You may have heard of the “fight or flight” response, but “freezing” is another common reaction to fear and stress that can paralyze the person experiencing the violence and they become physically incapable of resisting or speaking up.⁴
- Most sexual assaults are committed by someone the survivor knows. Survivors often struggle to comprehend how someone they know could hurt them, and they may worry about getting that person in trouble. They may also feel shame or embarrassment.⁴
- This person might be in a position of authority over the survivor and the survivor may be afraid they won't be believed. In a workplace setting, survivors may fear that they will jeopardize their career or reputation if they speak up.⁴

Criminal Justice System Barriers to Reporting Sexual Violence

- A person can be re-traumatized or re-victimized when reporting a sexual assault when they are not believed, blamed or made to feel responsible for the violence, or subjected to callous or insensitive treatment, when police fail to take evidence, or when their cases are dropped arbitrarily.⁴
- Studies show that when women of colour report violence, particularly rape, their experiences are often taken less seriously within the criminal justice system.⁴
- 53% of survivors in a survey said they did not report their sexual assault because they weren't confident in the police and 2/3 stated they were not confident in the criminal justice and court system in general.⁴

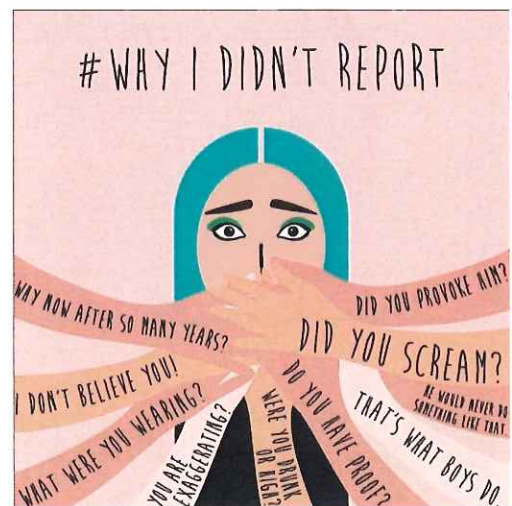


Image 4. #WhyIDidn'tReport Graphic¹⁰

Combatting Sexual Violence

Ending and preventing sexual violence requires a number of different interventions that address individual, community, and systemic factors¹¹:

- ✓ Raise awareness about the importance of consent and what consent means and looks like
- ✓ Teach young people how to develop healthy relationships
- ✓ Challenge victim-blaming. Let survivors know you believe them and it is not their fault.
- ✓ Hold people causing harm accountable for their actions – otherwise we send the message that violence and abuse are acceptable
- ✓ Address the systemic barriers in the criminal justice system
- ✓ Challenge gender inequality and rape culture – if you hear or see something, say something!

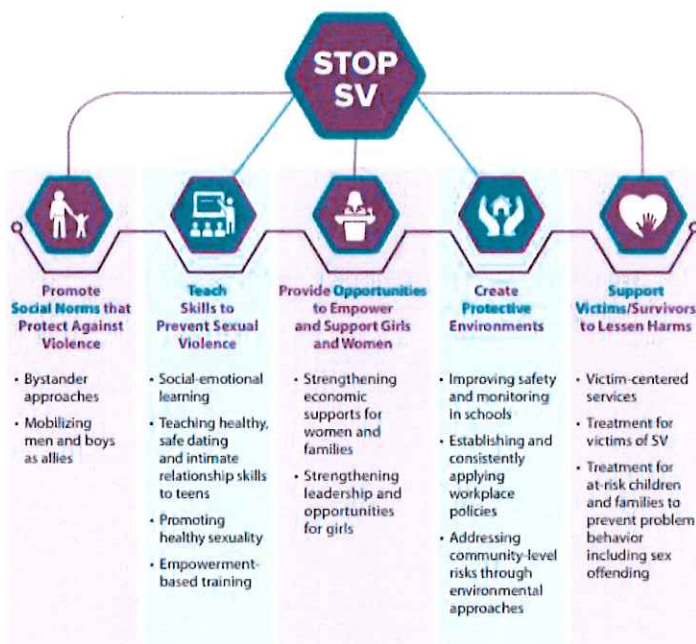


Image 5. Strategies to End & Prevent Sexual Violence¹¹

Learn more about Sexual Violence

Women's Support Network of York Region: <https://womenssupportnetwork.ca/>

Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres: <https://sexualassaultsupport.ca/>

Canadian Women's Foundation: <https://www.canadianwomen.org/>

Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline: <https://www.canadianhumantraffickinghotline.ca/>

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In 2016, our programs and services reached more than 3,600 individuals and our volunteers provided more than 10,500 hours of support on the crisis line.

Women's Support Network of York Region gratefully acknowledge the contributions from its funders:



Funding for programs is provided by the government of Ontario. Views expressed in the programs are views of WSN and do not necessarily reflect those of the province.



As an agency of the Government of Ontario
Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario



"Sometimes I isolate myself, and I can't get out, and I need a friend (someone who cares), that's when I call you because you know what it's like."

- K.S.

"You never doubted me and always kept me going when I felt like giving up."

- S.D.

Address

1110 Stellar Drive, Unit 109
Newmarket, Ontario L3Y 7B7

Phone

T 905-895-3646
F 905-895-6542

Email

info@womenssupportnetwork.ca

Website

www.womenssupportnetwork.ca



Charity No. 135562262-RR0001



women's support network
of york region

DEDICATED TO ERADICATING
SEXUAL VIOLENCE

24/7 Crisis Line
905-895-7313 / 1-800-263-6734

24/7 Human Trafficking Helpline
905-758-5285

About Us

The Women's Support Network of York Region (WSN) is a feminist non-profit organization providing free, confidential, and accessible services to the community of York Region.

Counselling Program

Free, client-centered, non-judgmental, confidential support to individuals who have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime, including but not limited to:

- Sexual assault
- Date rape
- Childhood sexual abuse
- Sexual harassment

We offer:

- Crisis and individual counselling
- Peer support
- Advocacy support

Individuals can refer themselves to our counselling service by calling 905-895-3646.

Counsellors work with individuals to increase understanding of trauma responses, improve their coping skills, and eliminate any isolation, shame or guilt caused by sexual violence.

***Counselling at satellite office available in Richmond Hill upon request.**

Anti-Human Trafficking Program

WSN offers crisis response, outreach, and case management services for individuals who have been trafficked or are at-risk of being trafficked for sexual exploitation.

Our case manager provides client-centered support, resources, and referrals as needed.

Referrals include:

- Assistance with emergency basic needs (shelter, food, hygiene products)
- On-going counselling/support
- Medical assistance
- Legal support
- Employment assistance
- Education/vocational training
- Immigration services

We are here to listen and all calls are confidential. Call our 24/7 Human Trafficking Helpline today 905-758-5285.

Volunteer With Us

Whether volunteering for a one-time event or for our crisis-line, our volunteers are pillars of our organization. They make our programs and services possible. Contact us if you are interested in becoming a volunteer.



24/7 Support Line

Telephone support, problem solving, and information about sexual violence and exploitation.



Counselling

For individuals and/or peer support who have experienced sexual violence



Public Education

Preventive education about sexual violence, consent, healthy relationships, sexual exploitation, or as requested.



Case Management

For individuals who have been trafficked or are at-risk of being trafficked for sexual exploitation.



Training

On what sexual exploitation is, recognizing the signs, how to stay safe, and how to support individuals. Training are customized based on needs.