



**4 OUT OF 5 FEMALE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS SAID THAT THEY HAD BEEN VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE IN A DATING RELATIONSHIP**

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**MANY ON-CAMPUS SEXUAL ASSAULTS OCCUR DURING THE FIRST EIGHT WEEKS OF CLASSES**



**MORE THAN 80% OF RAPES THAT OCCUR ON COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES ARE COMMITTED BY SOMEONE KNOWN TO THE VICTIM, WITH HALF OF THESE INCIDENTS OCCURRING ON DATES**

## SEXUAL VIOLENCE ON CAMPUSES

### THE GENDERING OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The *United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women* recognizes violence against women as an ongoing barrier to gender equality and women's human rights and freedoms.<sup>1</sup> While men experience violence in many capacities, sexual violence in homes, communities, workplaces and campuses disproportionately targets women. The effects of sexual violence go far beyond physical injuries. The long-term effects on women's mental health and well-being can be very serious and in most cases, women who experience violence identify an emotional effect.<sup>2</sup>

While the vast majority of incidents go unreported, women account for nine out of ten police reported sexual assaults in Canada.<sup>3</sup> In nearly all cases of sexual violence against women, the abusers are male.<sup>4</sup> The offender is known in three-quarters of reported cases, with a large proportion of these people being casual acquaintances or friends.<sup>5</sup> Almost one in five reported sexual offences against women occur with an intimate partner, with 97 per cent of all sexual offences by intimate partners being reported by women.<sup>6</sup>

Young women aged 15 to 24 experience higher instances of sexual violence in Canada. While the police-reported rate of violent crime against young women is significantly higher than older women – 42 per cent higher than the rate for women aged 25 to 34, and almost double for women between 25 and 44

– instances of sexual violence echo this trend.<sup>7</sup> According to the most recent Statistics Canada General Social Survey, 70 per cent of self-reported sexual assaults were against women and almost half of all self-reported sexual assaults were against people aged 15 to 24.<sup>8</sup> Young women report the highest rates of being stalked, with stalkers being known to victims in over two-thirds of cases.<sup>9</sup>

### SEXUAL VIOLENCE ON COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES

Post-secondary institutions are meant to be safe spaces with the mission to educate students and engage the community in critical thought and discussion. While college and university campuses are places where students are heavily engaged with academic and social activities, they are also places where women face sexual violence starting from the first day they step foot on campus.

Many on-campus sexual assaults occur during the first eight weeks of classes.<sup>10</sup> More than 80 per cent of rapes that occur on college and university campuses are committed by someone known to the victim, with half of these incidences occurring on dates.<sup>11</sup> One national survey revealed that four out of five female undergraduate students said that they had been victims of violence in a dating relationship and of those women, 29 per cent reported incidences of sexual assault.<sup>12</sup>

In a campus survey of undergraduate students at the University of Alberta, 21 per cent of students reported having at least one unwanted sexual

experience at some point in their life, with 15 per cent after age 14.<sup>13</sup> Of those students who reported having an unwanted sexual experience after the age of 14, 42 per cent said that it took place while being registered at university.<sup>14</sup> Over one-third of those who experienced unwanted sexual experiences said that their most serious experience happened while being a student at university, with over one-half reporting that it happened in their first year of studies.<sup>15</sup>

Surveys on male students have shown extremely problematic attitudes whether they have been a perpetrator of sexual violence or not. One survey showed that 60 per cent of Canadian college-aged males indicated that they would commit sexual assault if they were certain that they wouldn't get caught.<sup>16</sup> Another national survey found that 20 per cent of male students believed forced sex was acceptable if someone spent money on a date, if the person's date was stoned or drunk or if individuals had been dating for a long time.<sup>17</sup> These attitudes further reveal the extent of systemic sexual violence against women, especially the impact on female students.

## A NOTE ON REPORTING

Statistics related to sexual and gendered violence are often based on incidents that are formally reported to police. However, most cases of such violence are not reported by victims for several reasons. Less than one in ten sexual assaults are reported to police, which is a significantly lower rate compared to other types of crimes.<sup>18</sup> This high level of under-reporting shows that statistical reports are a large underestimation of the prevalence of sexual violence and the true extent of the problem.

Women may be less likely to report sexual assault and other forms of violence because they may not feel safe to do so or feel that they would not be supported. Sexual violence carries a stigma that may often cause someone to feel uncomfortable to talk about it or report an incident. It is estimated that four out of five women who are sexually assaulted do not report due to feelings of humiliation or the fear of being re-victimized in the legal process.<sup>19</sup> For example, judges and police have been reported making comments such as that a woman was "asking for" sexual violence by wearing a skirt. This victim-blaming within our judicial and justice systems is unacceptable.

- 1 United Nations, General Assembly. *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women*. 1993.
- 2 Springtide Resources.
- 3 Statistics Canada. *Gender Differences in Police-reported Violent Crime in Canada*, 2008, 2010.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Statistics Canada. *Measuring violence against women: Statistical trends*. 2013.
- 8 Statistics Canada. *Criminal victimization in Canada*. 2009.
- 9 Statistics Canada. *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile*. 2005.
- 10 Department of Justice Canada. *Factsheet on Dating Violence*. 2003.
- 11 Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women. *York University Safety Audit*. 2010.
- 12 DeKeseredy and Kelly. *The Incidence and Prevalence of Woman Abuse in Canadian University and College Dating Relationships: Results From a National Survey*. 1993.
- 13 University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre. *A Survey of Unwanted Sexual Experience Among University of Alberta Students*. 2001.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Lenskyj, Helen. *An Analysis of Violence Against Women: A Manual for Educators and Administrators*. 1992.
- 17 Johnson, H. *Dangerous Domains: Violence against Women in Canada*. 1996.
- 18 Statistics Canada. *Gender Differences in Police-reported Violent Crime in Canada*, 2008, 2010.
- 19 Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children. *Sexual Assault Statistics Sheet*.



70% OF SELF-REPORTED SEXUAL ASSAULTS WERE AGAINST WOMEN



ALMOST HALF OF ALL SELF-REPORTED SEXUAL ASSAULTS WERE AGAINST PEOPLE AGED 15 TO 24

WOMEN AGED 18 TO 24 EXPERIENCE THE HIGHEST RATES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CANADA



ALMOST ONE IN FIVE REPORTED SEXUAL OFFENCES AGAINST WOMEN OCCUR WITH AN INTIMATE PARTNER