

Sexual Assault

Sexual assault can take many different forms, but one thing remains the same: it's never the victim's fault.

What is sexual assault?

The term sexual assault refers to sexual contact or behavior that occurs without explicit consent of the victim. Some forms of sexual assault include:

- Attempted rape
- Fondling or unwanted sexual touching
- Forcing a victim to perform sexual acts, such as oral sex or penetrating the perpetrator's body
- Penetration of the victim's body, also known as rape

What is rape?

Rape is a form of sexual assault, but not all sexual assault is rape. The term rape is often used as a legal definition to specifically include sexual penetration without consent. For its Uniform Crime Reports, the FBI defines rape as "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." To see how your state legally defines rape and other forms of sexual assault, visit RAINN's State Law Database.

What is force?

Force doesn't always refer to physical pressure. Perpetrators may use emotional coercion, psychological force, or manipulation to coerce a victim into non-consensual sex. Some perpetrators will use threats to force a victim to comply, such as threatening to hurt the victim or their family or other intimidation tactics.

Who are the perpetrators?

The majority of perpetrators are someone known to the victim. Approximately **eight out of 10 sexual assaults** are committed by someone known to the victim, such as in the case of **intimate partner sexual violence** or **acquaintance rape**.

The term "date rape" is sometimes used to refer to acquaintance rape. Perpetrators of acquaintance rape might be a date, but they could also be a

classmate, a neighbor, a friend's significant other, or any number of different roles. It's important to remember that dating, instances of past intimacy, or other acts like kissing do not give someone consent for increased or continued sexual contact.

In other instances, the victim may not know the perpetrator at all. This type of sexual violence is sometimes referred to as **stranger rape**. Stranger rape can occur in several different ways:

- **Blitz sexual assault:** when a perpetrator quickly and brutally assaults the victim with no prior contact, usually at night in a public place
- **Contact sexual assault:** when a perpetrator contacts the victim and tries to gain their trust by flirting, luring the victim to their car, or otherwise trying to coerce the victim into a situation where the sexual assault will occur
- **Home invasion sexual assault:** when a stranger breaks into the victim's home to commit the assault

Survivors of both stranger rape and acquaintance rape often blame themselves for behaving in a way that encouraged the perpetrator. It's important to remember that the victim is never to blame for the actions of a perpetrator.

*To speak with someone who is trained to help, call the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 800.656.HOPE (4673) or chat online at **online.rainn.org**.*

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