

# Sexual Assault: Reporting Issues

## FACTS TO CONSIDER

- The majority of sexual assaults are not reported to police.
- According to Statistics Canada, only 6% of all sexual assaults are reported to police. [\[1\]](#)
- Of the 6% of sexual assaults that are reported, only 40% result in charges being laid. Of those cases where charges are laid, two-thirds result in conviction. [\[2\]](#)
- Only 1% of all "date/acquaintance rapes" are reported to police. [\[3\]](#)
- An Alberta study on sexual assault against people with disabilities found that while 88% of offenders are known to the victim (family members, friends, acquaintances, caregivers), 80% are never charged and less than 10% are convicted. [\[4\]](#)
- It is estimated that over 80% of women who are sexually assaulted do not report it due to feelings of shame and humiliation or due to their fear of re-victimization through the criminal trial process. [\[5\]](#)
- Women who have been sexually assaulted often fear that if they report a sexual assault, they will be re-victimized by the justice system.
- For women of colour, and immigrant and refugee women, that fear is compounded by racism.
- The credibility of women with disabilities has often been questioned when they report sexual assault, particularly in the case of women with developmental, psychiatric and learning disabilities.
- The credibility of sex trade workers is also often questioned.
- Incidents of sexual assault are often questioned by police, doctors, courts, even family and friends.
- If a woman is sexually assaulted by a man she knows, it is often perceived that she "asked for it" in some way. Women often hear, and may tell themselves, messages such as "what did you think he wanted," "you drank with him, didn't you?" or " you should have expected something like this to happen."

## FURTHER RESOURCES

- Currie, J. (1995). *Ethnocultural minority women, spousal assault and barriers to accessing problems in using the justice system: A review of the literature*. Ottawa: Department of Justice.
- Roberts, G., G. Williams, J. Lawrence & B. Raphael (1998). "How Does Domestic Violence Affect Women's Mental Health?" In *Women and Health*, Vol. 28 (1).

## REFERENCES

1. Statistics Canada (1993). *The Violence Against Women Survey*. Ottawa: The Daily, November 18, 1993.
2. Parriage, A., & Renner, K.E. (1998). *Do Current Criminal Justice Practices Lead to Unjust Outcomes For Adult Victims of Sexual Assault?* Available.

3. Russell, D. (1984). *Sexual Exploitation: Rape, Child Abuse and Workplace Harassment*. California: Sage Publishing.
4. Sobsey, D. (1988). "Sexual Offenses and Disabled Victims: Research and Practical Implications". *Vis-à-Vis: A National Newsletter on Family Violence*. Vol.6. No. 4. Winter.
5. Fassel, M. (1994). *Disclosure of Medical and Therapeutic Records in Sexual Assault Trials: The Implications for Women's Equality*. Unpublished paper presented at the Canadian Institute Conference, Toronto: April 1994 at 3. Cited in: Diane Oleskiw and Nicole Tellier, *Submissions to the Standing Committee on Bill C-46, 1997*, Ottawa: National Association of Women and the Law, p. 9.