

Use the Right Words:

Media Reporting on Sexual Violence in Canada

by **FEMIFESTO + COLLABORATORS**



femifesto

2015



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¹ For the purposes of this document, we use the term “survivor”. We recognize that people who have been subjected to sexual violence have the right to choose how they want to be referred to in media stories. There is a lot of debate over the use of victim or survivor; in the end it is up to the individual to choose how they want to be referred to.

PREAMBLE

Self-Care

The following guide discusses coverage of sexual violence in mainstream Canadian media. Engaging with stories of sexual violence can have impact. It can result in vicarious trauma, or trigger our own memories of sexual violence if we are survivors. We welcome you to take care of yourself as you choose how you want to engage with this project. Included throughout the guide are suggestions for self-care.

As you know, journalists are not immune to sexual violence. For those that are survivors, reading this guide can evoke a range of feelings. If you need to speak to someone please refer to the list for resource and/or crisis centres in your community, found on pages 46-47 of this guide.

About femifesto

femifesto is a Toronto-based, feminist organization that works to shift rape culture to consent culture. We provide education, training and research on gender-based violence including building consent culture, addressing rape culture, and media reporting.

We acknowledge that we engage in this work upon the unceded territory of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation.

femifesto is an ever-evolving collective and committed to engaging in ongoing dialogue in respect to our work. Join the conversation:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/femifesto

Email: info@femifesto.ca

Twitter: www.twitter.com/femifesto

Tumblr: ourfemifesto.tumblr.com/

Website: www.UseTheRightWords.ca

FEMIFESTO TEAM

Sasha Elford, Shannon Giannitsopoulou, Farrah Khan, and Faria Abbas

Process

femifesto began the research process for this guide in 2011. Since then, we have engaged with a multitude of voices and communities through surveys, interviews, events, and focus groups. These conversations were integrated into the *Use the Right Words* to ensure it is accountable, responsible, and comprehensive.

As part of this process, we received guidance and feedback from an amazing and supportive advisory committee. These individuals supported us in critical conversations about reporting on sexual violence, and provided key insights on resources and concepts. We incorporated their diverse knowledge and experiences into *Use the Right Words*.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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- Chanelle Gallant, sex worker rights advocate & community organizer
- Ellie Gordon-Moershel, independent audio producer
- Stephanie Guthrie, Women in Toronto Politics
- Shannon Higgins, Associate Producer, CBC Radio One's The Current
- Tessa Hill, Co-founder, We Give Consent
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- Nicole Pietsch, Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres
- Reva Seth, author, lawyer & strategic communications consultant
- Freeyelle Menal Mehari, Organizer, Canadian Federation of Students
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COLLABORATORS

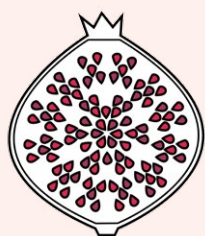
femifesto incorporated a femtorship program to support youth to build skills in social justice research. We were honoured to work with Faria Abbas, a young journalist, to conduct interviews with diverse community members about creating consent culture in their communities. Throughout 2015 and 2016 we will be releasing these interviews to continue an intersectional discussion of consent culture and media reporting. Thank you to Faria and to the following survivors, community organizers, frontline workers, journalists, and others who generously shared their thoughts:

Margaret Alexander
 Denise Balkissoon
 Cyndy Baskin
 Glen Canning
 Mooky Cherian
 Chelby Daigle
 Chanelle Gallant
 Ellie Gordon-Moershel
 Tessa Hill
 Riya Jama
 El Jones
 Kim Katrin Milan
 Destiny Laldeo
 Julie Lalonde
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 Naheed Mustafa
 Marianne M. Park
 Alena Peters
 Jess Rueger
 Leslie Spillett
 Anne Thériault
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 Lia Valente
 Andrea Villanueva
 Kit Wilson-Yang

Funder



Thank you to our generous funder, the Laidlaw Foundation for supporting this project through the Youth-Led Community Change program.



Pomegranate Tree Group

Thank you Pomegranate Tree Group for their gracious support of the project through their Femtorship Program.

Additional Resources

There are many amazing projects and resources that address media reporting on sexual and gender-based violence. These resources informed our initial work on media reporting on sexual violence. They have built the foundation on which *Use the Right Words* was created:

- Canadian Judicial Council: “The Canadian Justice System and the Media”
- Chicago Taskforce on Violence Against Girls & Young Women: “Reporting on Rape and Sexual Violence: A Media Toolkit for Local and National Journalists to Better Media Coverage”
- DART Center tipsheets: “Reporting on Sexual Violence” and “Reinvestigating Rape”
- Jessica Luther’s primer for sports journalists reporting on sexual assault: “Changing the Narrative” (Sports on Earth)
- Klinik Community Health Centre: “Trauma-informed: The Trauma Toolkit”
- Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault: “Reporting on Sexual Violence: A Guide for Journalists”
- Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women: The Media Hub
- Women, Action, and the Media
- Rhode Island Coalition to End Violence Against Women: “Telling the Full Story: An Online Guide for Journalists Covering Domestic Violence”
- TransPride Canada: “Style Guide: Media Reference Guide - Best Practices”

The outline and format of the Chicago Taskforce’s media toolkit served as one of the foundational resources for the original, draft version of this work, entitled *Reporting on Sexual Assault: A Toolkit for Canadian Media*, which we released in December 2013.

JOURNALISTS: WE WANT TO WORK WITH YOU!

In recent years, there has been a swell in coverage about sexual violence in mainstream Canadian media. We have seen media coverage of the reports of social media exchanges that incite sexual violence, social media groups targeting women students, the Jian Ghomeshi court case, and the more than 1200 murdered and missing Indigenous women.

Mainstream media has the power to shape conversations about violence in our communities. News stories about sexual violence affect the way we think about it. They can impose a hierarchy that frames certain kinds of sexual violence – or certain kinds of survivors – as less legitimate than others. For example, a study comparing local press coverage of missing/murdered Indigenous women from Saskatchewan and missing/murdered White women from Ontario found that “Indigenous women received three and a half times less coverage; their articles were shorter and less likely to appear on the front page.”³ Furthermore, stories of missing and murdered Indigenous Two Spirit and trans people are often left out of mainstream media coverage entirely. No language is neutral; words and linguistic choices used by friends, family, the criminal justice system, community leaders, and media can haunt a survivor long afterwards.

“Rape is violence, not ‘sex’. Reporting on sexual assault means finding not only the language but the context and sensitivity to communicate a trauma that is at once deeply personal and yet a matter of public policy; immediate and yet freighted with centuries of stigma, silence and suppression. Reporting on sexual violence requires special ethical sensitivity, interviewing skills, and knowledge about victims, perpetrators, law and psychology.”

Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma²

“I think I just want the media to name sexual violence when it occurs.”

Anonymous femifesto survey respondent



PICTURE PEOPLE WHO CARE ABOUT YOU AND TREAT YOU WITH RESPECT.



According to the 2009 General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization, about one in ten sexual assaults is reported to police.¹⁰⁰

This tool was created in recognition of the power media has in shaping understandings of sexual violence, and to support those who work in the media as they navigate covering sexual violence. *Use the Right Words* provides the language and frameworks required to report on sexual violence in ways that do not shame or blame survivors.

Using This Guide

Use the Right Words includes information on sexual violence, resources for journalists (e.g. Checklist when Reporting on Sexual Assault, and Tipsheet: 10 Essential Tips on Interviewing Survivors of Sexual Assault), infographics and statistics on sexual violence—all informed by survivors, journalists, anti gender-based violence advocates, lawyers and community members from across Canada.

We hope that this guide will be a valuable tool and resource for journalists, media makers, community organizers, educators, and others who want to think, talk, and write about how we can shift from rape culture to consent culture in Canada. This is a multi-purpose tool can be used in several ways:

- finding tips for specific language or frameworks to use in a news article;
- facilitating conversations or trainings with colleagues about responsible reporting on sexual violence;
- mentoring new journalists on ways to report about sexual violence.

However you use the guide, we hope that you take from *Use the Right Words* the resources and knowledge you need to contribute to a public discourse on sexual violence that is supportive of survivors.

This guide is informed by an intersectional approach to sexual violence, which recognizes that survivors are impacted differently based on varied and interlocking experiences of oppression and their social location. How people experience, heal from, and address sexual violence is shaped by the multitude of social locations e.g. class, sexuality, citizenship status and gender expression. *Use the Right Words* is a survivor-informed guide, created by and with a diverse group of survivors.

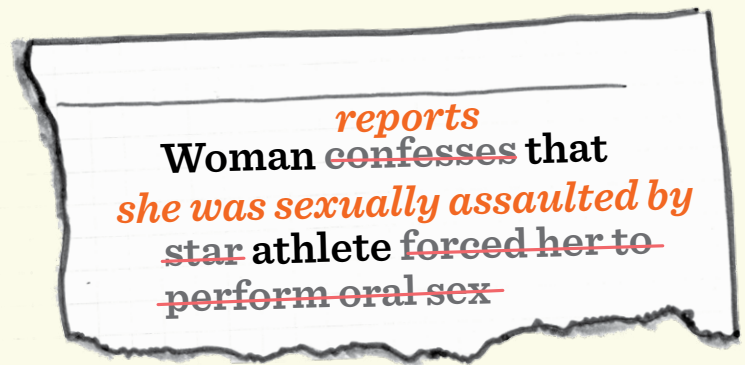


REMEMBER THE WORDS
TO AN INSPIRING SONG,
QUOTE OR POEM.

NOTE: When we say “sexual violence” we are referring to a range of abusive and violent behaviours including, but not limited to: rape, sexual harassment, molestation, unwanted sexual contact. The acts are conducted without a person’s freely given consent.⁴

LANGUAGE CHECKLIST WHEN REPORTING ON SEXUAL ASSAULT

femifesto conducted a scan of Canadian media stories on sexual assault from 2010 to 2015. The scan provided us with clear examples of promising practices for reporting on sexual violence.



Language

DO	DON'T
DO Use “said,” “according to,” or “reports” and attribute the words to a specific speaker.⁵ Rather than presuming when to use the word “alleged,” seek advice on when it is legally required in specific contexts. Alternatively, when reporting after criminal charges have been laid, you can use language such as: “<name>, who has been charged with the sexual assault of OR who has been charged in relation to <name>”.	DON'T Overuse words like “alleged” or “claimed.”⁶ Excessive use of these words can imply disbelief of the survivor on the part of the reporter. The language used depends on the context. Not using alleged in some contexts can have serious legal implications and could even leave a survivor open to being sued by an abuser. When in doubt, consult with a lawyer.
DO Use the descriptor that an interviewee prefers, such as “survivor,” or “person who experienced sexual assault.”⁷ Many people may prefer the term “survivor” because it conveys agency and resilience. Others may prefer “person who has been subjected to sexual assault” because it doesn’t define an individual solely in relation to an experience of sexual violence. “Complainant” is another option if the survivor has filed legal charges.	DON'T Default to the descriptor “victim” unless this is the wording an interviewee prefers. Many people feel “victim” has negative connotations.

DO Respect the survivor's autonomy by using language of their choice. e.g. "sex work" versus "prostitution." Using survivor's preferred gender pronouns.⁸ Ask the interviewee what gender pronouns they prefer (She? He? They?).	DON'T Refer to communities with language they don't use to describe themselves.
DO Use more neutral language like "shares," "says," or "tells" to describe a survivor telling their story.	DON'T Use phrases like "the survivor admits/ confesses" to describe a report of sexual assault.⁹ This language implies responsibility or shame on behalf of the survivor. Words like "confesses" also subtly frame an assault story as a salacious sexual encounter.
DO Use language that places the accountability for rape or other forms of sexual assault with the perpetrator.¹⁰ e.g. "He raped her." (Understanding that for legal purposes, you may have to add the word "allegedly" when applicable.) e.g. Alternatively, within the context of an ongoing criminal trial you can use "he's alleged to have raped her," or "the complainant says <name> raped her."	DON'T Describe sexual assault as belonging to the survivor (i.e. "her (the survivor's) rape") Use phrases like "she was raped" or "a rape occurred" without identifying the role of the perpetrator.¹¹ The connotation of "her assault" and "her rape" is that the rape belongs to the survivor and removes the perpetrator's accountability.
DO Use language that accurately conveys the gravity of sexual assault.	DON'T Downplay the violence of sexual assault, or suggest some forms of assault are more serious. e.g.: "The survivor was unharmed." "The survivor was not physically hurt."

DO Use words that make it clear that sexual assault is violent and non-consensual.¹²

e.g.: "...oral rape."
"...sexual assault."
"...was subjected to sexual assault."

If there is a valid need to describe the specifics, ensure that they speak to the violent nature of the act, but avoid needlessly including salacious details of the assault.

e.g. "forced mouth onto [the survivor's specific body part]"

DON'T Use euphemisms or gentle words to describe sexual violence.^{13,14}

Euphemisms: "engaging in" or "sex scandal"

Gentle language: "fondle" or "caress",
"private parts"¹⁵

DO Use language that conveys that sexual assault is not sex, it is violence.

e.g. "rape" or "sexual assault"

DON'T Use language that describes sexual violence as sex.

e.g. "oral sex", "sexual activity," "kissing," "sex that was forced," "non-consensual sex"

DO Make the perpetrator the subject of the sentence and assign the verb to them. This is also how police are encouraged to write their reports.¹⁶

i.e. "The police report that the perpetrator forced the survivor to..."

DON'T Make the survivor the subject of the sentence and assign the verb to them.

e.g. "The victim performed fellatio against their will."



CHECKLIST WHEN REPORTING ON SEXUAL ASSAULT: FRAMEWORKS & IMAGERY

femifesto conducted a scan of Canadian media stories on sexual assault from 2010 to 2015. The scan provided us with clear examples of promising practices for reporting on sexual violence. These tips for the all forms of media including but not limited to headlines, interviews, article content, imagery, and social media posts.

Frameworks



DO



DON'T

DO

DO Recognize the unique life experiences of each survivor. If applicable, include details of their personal and communal strength.

DON'T

DON'T Play into the “tragic victim” stereotype or rescue narratives.

e.g. Emphasizing that the survivor’s had a tragedy in their life rather than their courage or resilience.

DO Ensure that survivors and anti-sexual assault advocates, especially those from marginalized communities, are afforded space to speak about the issue.

If you don't have access to the survivor's side of the story, speak to violence against women experts, and rely on police and court documents, to keep the story balanced.

DON'T Focus solely on police, legal, and perpetrators' voices when reporting on sexual assault.

DO Depict sexual assault as a serious crime.

DO Ensure that every detail you include about the assault serves to honour the survivor's story or to contextualize sexual assault in broader culture. If a graphic detail does neither of these it doesn't need to be in the story.

DON'T Sensationalize sexual assault or depict it in a gratuitous or voyeuristic way.^{17,18}

e.g. Using words such as "sex scandal," "controversy," or including salacious details.

DO Focus on why it is an act of sexual assault and what the circumstances were that led to the person who was sexually assaulted accessing justice or supports.

Contextualize sexual assault as part of the larger problem of sexual violence and gender-based violence.

DON'T Focus the discussion on a survivor's clothing, addictions, employment, marital status, sexuality, past relationships, or involvement in the sex trade industry.^{19,20}

This can imply that responsibility lies with the survivor for making poor decisions or that they were "asking for it."

DO Include biographical details about the perpetrator. Ensure if you do, they do not feed into suggesting their innocence.

DON'T Exonerate or dismiss the violence of perpetrators by focusing on facts that make them appear to be "unlikely" rapists.

Unnecessary emphasis on a perpetrator's community standing, race, religion, mental health struggles, class position, employment, etc. may suggest a bias towards their innocence.

e.g. Describing the perpetrator as an "upstanding citizen" who volunteers in the community.



DO Recognize that perpetrators may hold a position of power over the person that they sexually assaulted. This could be social power (such as the power that comes with being male, white, middle-class, etc.) OR power specific to the relationship between the perpetrator and survivor (e.g. student/teacher, employee/employer, etc.).	DON'T Suggest that a report of sexual assault between individuals of differing positions of power is an attempt to tarnish a public figure or a stunt of a “jilted ex-girlfriend.”
DO Focus on the harm done to the survivor.²¹ Sexual assault has long-term financial, social, economic, physical, and spiritual impacts.	DON'T Focus entirely on community or family reactions, which often focus on exonerating or sympathizing with the perpetrator. DON'T Solely emphasize the impact on the perpetrator and their community’s reputation
DO Contextualize sexual assault as a result of systems, oppression, and attitudes that exists in all communities and cultures. One of the important principles on which the Canadian criminal legal system is based is the presumption of innocence until guilt is proven, and that the past few decades has seen a significant number of convictions overturned, often when the accused is a member of a marginalized community.	DON'T Use a survivor or perpetrator’s social location (i.e. ethnic background, religion) as a rationale for sexual violence. e.g. Suggesting newcomers to Canada who commit sexual violence do not know any better, that it’s a part of their ‘culture’ or that that sexual violence is an “imported” problem.²²
DO Consider how oppression and inequality make people in marginalized communities more vulnerable to sexual violence and poses challenges to their accessing supports.²³	DON'T Assume all survivors are the same.²⁷ DON'T Suggest that people in marginalized communities are themselves to blame for experiencing disproportionately high levels of sexual violence.
DO Take sexual violence that is enacted online, such as threats and harassment seriously.	DON'T Dilute or downplay sexual violence online by identifying “bullying” or “cyberbullying” as the sole problem^{24,25} When “bullying” or “cyberbullying” become the focus of discussions, other factors such as racism, sexism, transphobia, as well as the context of sexual violence, are left out of the picture.

DO Convey that sexual assault always has an impact on all survivors, whether financial, physical, mental, spiritual, or emotional.²⁶	DON'T Assume that members of some communities are less affected by sexual assault. e.g. people with disabilities, men who are sexually assaulted, people who are sexually assaulted while detained or incarcerated.
DO Recognize that everyone has the right to be safe and access supports. DO Recognize that sexual assault does not define a survivor's entire identity.	DON'T Suggest that there are "good" or "bad" survivors of sexual violence or individuals who "deserve" to be assaulted. DON'T Imply the survivor is tarnished, ruined, or has "lost their innocence."
DO Ensure that interviewees will move the conversation forward on rape culture or sexual violence.	DON'T Interrupt broadcast interviews about sexual violence by allowing texters or callers to voice their doubts or misgivings about the veracity of the survivor's account. This can derail an important conversation about sexual violence.

Imagery

DO	DON'T
DO Use imagery that appropriately illustrates the article. e.g. An exterior shot of a building at the university where the story took place. You can also check in with a survivor about using imagery of their choice. Use imagery that illustrates resilience.	DON'T Use stock imagery that emphasizes the actions of the survivor. e.g. Using photos of women drinking to illustrate a story on sexual assault suggests that women invite sexual assault by doing so. DON'T Use stock photos that portray violence in a salacious way. Many people have experienced violence in their own lives and already know what it looks like; a reminder is not needed. e.g. A photo of a woman with two black eyes.
DO Use images of survivors from diverse communities.	DON'T Assume that survivors of sexual violence come from only one community.

10 ESSENTIAL TIPS ON INTERVIEWING SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

Interviews can provide a much needed space for survivors to share their story. The following is a list of 10 essential tips for conducting a safe, responsible, and respectful interview:

- 1. Connect:** Ensure you have support and crisis line numbers on hand for the person who experienced sexual violence to connect with throughout the interview process. You can refer to the resources provided in the guide on pages 46-47. Acknowledge that survivors may have complex responses to being interviewed. For example, they may be happy to have contributed to raising awareness on the issue, but may also be struggling with memories or emotions that may have been triggered by discussing it. Recognize that survivors may not be able to predict how they will feel after an interview takes place, or after an interview has aired or been published.
- 2. Reflect:** Societal attitudes and stigma can result in survivors feeling silenced. Keep in mind that retelling a traumatic story is never easy and sexual violence is a highly sensitive topic. Have compassion during the interview; do not shame or blame the survivor for the violence that was perpetrated against them. Before asking difficult questions, have an open conversation with the interviewee about what information you feel you need.
- 3. Check Your Assumptions:** Before an interview, it's important to become informed about the impact that the trauma of sexual violence has on survivors. How do you know what you know about sexual assault? Do not approach the interview with negative assumptions about an interviewee who may be healing from trauma (e.g. that they're making it up, want attention, or should be over it already). "Recovering from trauma is a process and takes time."²⁸ Memory loss, inability to concentrate, and panic attacks are common symptoms of trauma and they may arise during the interview. See Klinik Community Health Centre's *Trauma-informed: The Trauma Toolkit* for more information.

"Survivors should have the right to say if their experience gets published. [The] opportunity and right to tell their side of the story in THEIR OWN WORDS, with support from response based language—so that they don't continue to internalize their actions as reasons that they were assaulted."

YWCA of Banff Programs and Services response to femifesto survey



According to 2007 police-reported data, 97% of persons accused of sexual offences were male, higher than the representation of males among persons accused of all other types of violent crime (78%).¹⁰¹

4. **No Two Survivors Are the Same:** How people experience, heal from and address sexual violence is shaped by age, gender, race, ability, class, and other social locations. The interview is an opportunity to understand different forms of resiliency and the story should honour each survivor's experience (e.g. don't assume that reporting to the police is every survivor's vision of justice).^{29,30} A survivor might be incredibly sad during the interview or appear calm or flat during an interview. There is no right or wrong way to act when telling one's story of sexual violence.
5. **Respect Survivors' Boundaries:** Respect the right of survivors to choose how and when they will tell their story. Prepare the interviewee by doing a no pressure pre-interview or having a short conversation. This can provide an interviewee with questions that will be very similar to the ones they will be asked in the interview and be an opportunity to identify their boundaries. If possible, provide questions well in advance of the interview. If a survivor shares that they are uncomfortable with a question, don't ask it or probe for more information. Sometimes this may not be feasible with deadlines, etc. In such cases, if possible, the interviewee could provide you with topics and personal details they would like to either avoid or focus on (e.g. is it okay to mention their queer identity?). Also having been subjected to sexual violence is not the sole identity of a survivor; do not add in questions about sexual assault when the interviewee is engaging in the interview under a different pretense (e.g. about a business they own).
6. **Identification:** Ask how the interviewee would like to be identified (e.g. person who experienced violence, survivor, victim? Would they like to be identified by name, pseudonym, or remain anonymous?). Recognize that there are real personal costs to being public about sexual violence and so anonymity may feel safest to some interviewees.³¹ What words do they use to describe the violence they experienced (e.g. "rape," "sexual assault")? Communicate to other newsroom staff members about the language being used and why it's important not to change it.³²

"Survivors are in the best position to narrate their understanding of sexual violence. We need to listen to them with open hearts and without assumptions and without stereotypes."

Anonymous femifesto survey respondent



There were about 677,000 incidents of sexual assault in 2009 according to the GSS.¹⁰²

Since most sexual assaults go unreported, police-reported sexual assault counts are considerably lower: 21,000 sexual assaults were reported by police in the same year.¹⁰³

7. **Informed Consent:** Make sure the survivor is aware of exactly where, when, and in what formats the story will be published. This includes what brands or media outlets will have rights to publish the story. Let them know who else will be interviewed (e.g. will the perpetrator be featured as well?) This will allow for them to make an informed decision on whether they want to be interviewed and what support systems they might need. If you plan to take pictures or video, check in with them and ask for permission before the interview.³³ If in the future you plan to use the survivor's story in any context other than what they have agreed to, ask for their permission first.
8. **Format and Safety:** If the interview will be broadcast, ask the survivor if they want voice alteration or facial blurring effects so they remain unidentifiable. If the interview is being broadcast live, ask the interviewee if they would prefer a delay, in case they are triggered and need to take a break.
9. **Interview:** Schedule the interview in a safe space that is pre-approved by the survivor.³⁴ Ensure there is enough time for the interview to be conducted at a pace that is not rushed. Take the time at the beginning of the interview to review your process with the interviewee. Offer opportunity the survivor to be accompanied by a support person, as some survivors may be triggered while sharing their story and need support from a counsellor or friend. In the course of the interview, you will most likely ask questions that are distressing. Taking a few minutes to explain why those difficult questions have to be asked. For example, you may say "I am going to ask you about how this violence changed your life. I am doing this because I want people to understand that the effects of sexual violence can impact every aspect of a person's life."



Depending on the source, the rate for sexual assaults committed against women is roughly 2.2 to 5.6 times higher than that of sexual assaults committed against men in Canada. According to the 2009 GSS, 7 in 10 incidents of self-reported sexual assault were committed against women.¹⁰⁴

- 10. Follow Up:** Allocate time at the end for a follow-up conversation with the survivor on how the interview went.^{35,36} Before sending a story to an editor or sharing it with anyone else, make time for the survivor to review their comments. There may be something they feel uncomfortable with and want edited or removed. Provide a gentle reminder of resources available to them (e.g. crisis lines, phone numbers for accessible trauma counsellors) for support post interview.

For more information on responsible, accountable reporting, visit The Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma's website at <http://dartcenter.org/>. The Dart Center is a project of the Columbia Journalism School and their website includes information for journalists, educators, and researchers writing about traumatic events.

This is an ongoing conversation. Email info@femifesto.ca and let us know other ways survivors can be supported when being interviewed.

"A list of standard, non-invasive starter questions would be great. It would be helpful to have a starting off point that you could then tailor to the particular case."

**Respondent to femifesto's
"Canadian Journalist Survey on
Reporting on Sexual Assault"**

What Are Examples of Questions to Ask Survivors in an Interview?

1. What do you think is important for people to know?
2. How has this experience impacted you?
3. What services/resources/people helped you in your healing?
4. What were the barriers to you coming forward?
5. What suggestions do you have to make it safer for survivors to come forward?



Violence against women in rural communities is affected by their personal, financial, and geographical isolation, as well as community complicity and gossip, lack of transportation or anonymity, and anxieties about an abuser's status: "One woman stated that other people's employment was dependent on her husband, therefore they wouldn't want to believe her. Another pointed out that her husband was highly placed in their church and she didn't want him to be embarrassed before them."¹⁰⁵

Can't Find a Survivor to Feature?

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS AND FOSTER MEDIA LITERACY

In our interviews with violence against women organizations, many shared a common situation of receiving a call from a journalist requesting to speak with a survivor that day—often within a few hours. This request is usually turned down due to an inability to quickly find a survivor who feels safe and ready to speak with the media. This can be addressed by:

- 1. Building solid relationships:** Connect with sexual assault centres and violence against women organizations in your community prior to the need for an interviewee. This allows you to build trust with the organization as well as discuss the possibility of having a survivor on a show in the future.
- 2. Offering training:** Your media outlet might want to offer media training to sexual assault centres that includes both survivors and frontline workers. This can help demystify speaking to the media, increase media literacy, and provide much needed media sources. It also demonstrate that your media outlet is working to improve the ways you cover sexual violence.
- 3. Creating a list:** Have on roster a number of frontline workers, researchers, and counsellors who work in the sexual violence support field so they can provide their knowledge on the subject matter. Please note that these experts are being interviewed not for their personal histories of sexual violence but their knowledge of the subject matter. If they do not disclose that they wish to speak about a personal experience of sexual violence, then please do not ask that of them. Even if the expert has named that they were a survivor in another media story, they do not have to discuss this unless they offer to do so.



45.8% of respondents in a study of street-involved sex workers in Vancouver had been sexually assaulted by someone without a weapon. 40.7% had been sexually assaulted with a weapon.¹⁰⁶



SELF-CARE FOR SURVIVORS SPEAKING IN THE MEDIA

Having your voice heard in the media can be a powerful moment but it also can be very challenging. Here are a couple of tips for having your boundaries respected and taking care of your heart in the process.

BEFORE

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- 1. Identification & safety:** If you want a conversation to be off the record, say so before anything else -- you may not be able to ask retroactively. Determine beforehand if you want to disclose your identity (and the pros/cons of choosing/not choosing to do so). Also think through how you want to be identified (e.g. as a survivor, victim or person who was subjected to violence). It's your choice. Confirm the way you want to be identified one or two times, in writing, with the reporter before agreeing to an on-the-record interview. If you are currently in legal proceedings, you may want to consult with a lawyer before posting on social media or doing media interviews.
- 2. Request media training:** Media outlets sometimes offer pro bono media training for organizations and communities. You can also check in with your local violence against women agencies to see what resources and training they offer.
- 3. Logistics:** Ask if the interview will be live or pre-recorded (this may help with answering hard questions). Ask where, when, and in what formats the story will be published. Find out if anyone else is being interviewed (e.g. will the perpetrator be featured as well?). Lastly, request that they ask your permission first if the interview will be used in any context other than what you originally agreed to.
- 4. Format:** If the interview will be broadcasted, know that you can ask for voice alteration or facial blurring effects so you are unidentifiable. If the interview is being broadcasted live, you can ask for a delay in case you need to take a break.
- 5. Take notes:** For radio and television interviews, producers will do a pre-interview with you that usually provides the theme of questions that will be asked during the interview. Take notes during the pre-interview so that you have a chance to think through your talking points.
- 6. State your boundaries:** While this can't always be accommodated, ask if it's possible to see the questions ahead of time. Be clear about topics that are off-limits and share this with the producer. Even if they push you to speak about a subject, remind yourself that you don't have to answer any questions you don't want to.
- 7. Practice:** Talk through your speaking points with someone you trust or in front of a mirror. You can tape yourself if want to hear what you sound like. Think about how you might respond if you are asked the questions you do not feel comfortable answering (e.g. "I prefer to focus on these issues instead of ..."). You can also practice asserting boundaries with the journalist, thinking through what to say if you feel triggered or unsafe.

8. Harassment: Work with a trusted friend, counsellor, or legal advisor to prepare in advance how you will address any harassment, including on social media, that may arise as a result of the media coverage.

9. Make a self-care plan: Interviews can be scary and exhausting but knowing you have a plan to centre and recharge after can help get through the hard part. Talking openly about violence you have been subjected to can be challenging. Think through what self-care practices you already employ. Use these during the prep for the interview to center yourself beforehand.

DURING

DURING THE INTERVIEW

- 1. Pause:** Take a breath to slow down the interview and give yourself a moment to pause to think about how you will answer questions. It's ok to ask what the interviewer means by a certain question.
- 2. Repeat the question:** When answering the reporter, restate the question to extend your thought processing time. Ensure that you are clear on what is being asked of you.
- 3. Breathe:** Remind yourself there is no rush, your words are important, and your voice is needed in the conversation. If the interview is being recorded and you don't like the way you answered a question, ask if you can answer again.
- 4. Have support present:** If you find it useful you can request a trusted friend or advocate to come with you to the interview. They can sit with you in the space while you are interviewed.
- 5. Reframe:** If an interviewer asks you a question you do not feel is relevant to the story you want to tell, you can always reframe the question (e.g., "Although that is important, I'm more interested in discussing x)."

6. Ground yourself: Do a ritual that will make you feel present during the interview: eating a meal before you speak, holding an object that makes you feel safe (a stone, a piece of jewelry), drinking water, praying, meditating, or sitting in a quiet place.

AFTER

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- 1. Celebrate:** Make sure to congratulate yourself for the huge step you are taking to own and share your story. No matter how the interview went, celebrate yourself!
- 2. Practice self-care:** Sharing traumatic stories, no matter where we are at with our healing, has an impact. You may want to take breaks from social media or ask a trusted loved one to monitor your social media mentions for a few days. Ensure you practice loving kindness with yourself as you navigate all the different feelings that can emerge.
- 3. Ask:** For a correction within the story if there is a mistake.³⁷ If there is no follow up, you can file a complaint with the media outlet through their public editor or ombudsman. If you are unsatisfied with the follow up, you can contact your local press council to make a complaint.
- 4. Inform:** Let people in your close circle of support know you are going to be in the media. Let them know what support you will need from them in the next couple of days.
- 5. Connect with supports:** Have someone to debrief with after the interview and in the coming days as the story is out in the public.
- 6. Give feedback:** Check in with the producer, writer or journalist about your experience. You can provide suggestions for ways they can create safer spaces for survivors in the future.

Written by Farrah Khan with Kwe Today & Sarah MacLean

JOURNALISTS FACING WORK-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE

While *Use The Right Words* focuses on providing journalists with tools to report on sexual assault, it is important to recognize that journalists themselves are subjected to gender-based forms of sexual violence in their work.

In recent years, we have seen increased media coverage of journalists facing sexual violence in the field. Recently, we have seen high profile stories of reporters who are women in Canada being confronted by men who shouted the “fuck her right in the pussy” (FHRITP) phrase at them during their broadcasts. These stories prompted several other journalists across Canada to come forward with their own accounts of sexual harassment in the workplace.

Among the many risks journalists face, they are often targets of harassment and aggression. While harassment is a concern for all journalists, journalists who are women in particular are more likely to be targets.³⁸

What is the prevalence of sexual harassment among journalists?

62% of women journalists report having experienced verbal sexual harassment.



30% of women journalists report having experienced non-verbal sexual harassment.

22% of women journalists report having experienced physical sexual harassment.



20% of women journalists report having experienced environmental sexual harassment.³⁹



Generally, charges are less likely to be laid by police in cases of sexual offences than other types of violent offences. In 2007, charges were laid in almost half of other types of violent crime, but only in over a third of sexual offences reported to police.¹⁰⁷

Although the media spotlight has only recently been shone on workplace sexual violence encountered by journalists, such violence is not uncommon.

While there are many resources for journalists in conflict zones, the issue of journalists facing sexual violence in the workplace is less often addressed. We created the following tipsheet to provide journalists and media organizations with a resource on sexual violence in the workplace. While this tipsheet includes information on legal rights and workplace sexual violence policies, we recognize that there are many intersecting barriers to journalists disclosing and/or reporting sexual violence.

Disclaimer: The information in this guide is for information purposes only, and does not constitute legal advice. For legal issues that arise, you should consult a lawyer.

Tips for Journalists Encountering Sexual Violence In The Workplace

- 1. Sexual violence is not your fault:** Journalists themselves can be subjected to sexual violence in the workplace. All sexual violence and sexual harassment should be understood as part of systemic, gender-based violence, and a well-documented global pandemic, and not as individual, isolated incidents caused by the survivor's behaviour or appearance. Sexual violence is never okay and never survivor's fault regardless of your appearance, where you are, or what you are reporting on.
- 2. Practice self-care:** People working in the field of journalism are not immune to rape culture. Some journalists are also survivors of sexual violence. Reporting on cases of sexual violence and interviewing survivors can be triggering and retraumatizing. Consider building on your current self-care practice to sustain and nourish yourself. You can access *Caring for Yourself is a Radical Act: Self Care Guide for Youth Working in Community*, a free, online resource for more information and activities on practicing self-care.



In police-reported data in 2011, women knew their sexual attacker in three quarters of incidents: 45% as a casual acquaintance or friend, 17% as an intimate partner, and 13% as a non-spousal family member. One quarter of sexual assaults against women were committed by a stranger.¹⁰⁸



A study of sexual assault survivors presenting to local hospital emergency departments and police between 1993 and 1997 found that one in five was a sex trade worker. These survivors were also more likely to be severely injured and younger than other sexual assault survivors.¹⁰⁹

3. There is no one right way to respond to violence:

As every survivor is different, every person addresses violence, accesses supports, and heals from trauma in different ways. You may choose any combination of the following options for seeking support, disclosing and reporting, or others not included on this list. Any way you choose to survive and feel safe is valid.

- **Tell yourself.** Sometimes the first person survivors need to disclose to is themselves. Too often we can internalize messages that it wasn't "so bad" or was somehow our fault. It's important to name the experience for what it is: a form of sexual violence.
- **Turn to your friends or family for support.** Disclose when ready to people you trust. This can provide a meaningful system of support. Let them know what you need.
- **See a counsellor or attend a group counselling session.** You can contact your local sexual assault center to access counselling or get a referral.
- **Learn your rights.** Canadian laws such as the Canada Labour Code and the Canadian Human Rights Act protect workers against sexual harassment at work. (See provincial and territorial labour codes and employment standards codes/acts, which contain the same protections: Provincial Legislation and Resources On Workplace Sexual Harassment: Links To Provincial and Territorial Human Rights Agencies, Links To Provincial Employment Legislation and Standards). Also, The Criminal Code of Canada imposes sanctions and penalties for physical and sexual assault (some forms of sexual harassment, such as sexual assault constitute a criminal act.)
- **Disclose to your employer, if you do not have a union.** Every workplace should have a policy on sexual assault and sexual harassment. In some provinces, this is required by law. (Laws on sexual harassment in the workplace differ between each province. See links below for each provinces' related legislation.)



"The direct costs of sexual assault are estimated to be more than \$546 million a year. If pain and suffering are calculated at the rates given for sexual assault in the Justice Canada report, that number rises to \$1.9 billion. With more information about prevalence and impact this number will only rise."¹¹⁰

- **If you are a union member, talk to your union.** If you have a union, you will be expected to take your complaint to your union first. All collective agreements (union contracts) provide for a grievance process. This is a legally-protected process for complaints, including enforcement of employment and human rights law. Most collective agreements contain specific extra protections against discrimination and harassment as well. If you are a union member, contact your union right away. It will be up to you whether you proceed with a grievance of complaint, but they can advise you and explain your rights and options. If you are not comfortable with your local union representative, you can call the main office or a higher-level representative.
- **Consult with a lawyer.** If you do not have a union, or if your union has said they can't help you, a lawyer can give you specific advice, and can explain your legal options to address the violence. Depending on where you live, and whether you qualify, you may be able to speak to a lawyer for free, or at a discount, through Legal Aid, a community legal clinic, or a women's organization. Contacting your province's Legal Aid office may be a good place to start. There are a number of legal clinics in Canada, such as the Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic, that can provide you with information on your options.
- **Report to police.** Whether or not to report sexual assault or harassment is a personal choice. In some ways, reporting takes the matter out of your hands, since criminal charges are between the Crown and the accused person. Nevertheless, the police and Crown will require your participation in what can become a very public process. It is not guaranteed that the perpetrator will face charges or be found guilty, even when you know that they are. There will be many factors to consider, and your counsellor or support organization may have some insight. Ultimately, reporting or not reporting is your choice.
- **Make a human rights complaint to your local Human Rights Tribunal.** "In Canada, workplace sexual harassment claims are handled regularly upon application to the appropriate human rights tribunal. Human rights tribunals have significant power to require employers to pay damages, implement policy changes, and impose other penalties and requirements to remedy harassment cases. If the victim is forced to quit their job as a result of harassment in the workplace by a fellow employee, they also may be entitled to salary loss benefits."⁴⁰



There are more than 1200 missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada.¹¹¹



Indigenous women in the provinces reported a rate of violent victimization that was nearly 3 times higher than the rate for non-Indigenous¹¹² women (279 versus 106 per 1,000 population). This was the case for spousal violence, as well as violence perpetrated by other family members, friends, acquaintances, and strangers.

4. Document: Although you may not choose to disclose ever or report immediately, it is helpful to create a paper trail of the incident(s) in case you decide to in the future. You may create a detailed, accurate log of the sexual violence you encountered that includes names, dates, times, locations, witnesses, and other details.⁴¹ Note any follow-up actions, including conversations with your employer, and their response. Labour Boards, Human Rights Tribunals and courts generally consider first hand, written notes to be good evidence, especially if they are dated and written as quickly as possible after the event or action occurred. Even a simple notation in an agenda or on a calendar lends extra weight to your story in these formal settings, if you decide to report.

5. Have your voice heard in the conversation. Speaking out about sexual violence and rape culture can be an empowering moment for some survivors. You may choose to write an op ed, do a media interview, or speak out on social media or a blog. Alternatively, you may choose to tell no one, tell only yourself, share your story in your self-help group, or confide in trusted friends or family. Anything you choose to survive is powerful and is your choice.

6. Engage in transformative justice. Recognizing that intersectional oppressions are at the root of rape culture, addressing and confronting those oppressions can be an integral part of accountability and healing. Whether or not you choose to disclose your own experiences of sexual violence, you may participate in initiatives which, on an inter-personal, community or systemic level, work to increase safety, transform social conditions which perpetuate violence, and make space for survivor agency. You can check out the guide by Creative Interventions about the process of Transformative Justice.

7. Create a support network: Freelance reporters can be especially vulnerable to sexual violence in the field as independent contractors without access to policies, health coverage or readily available workplace resources. Freelance journalists may want to connect with colleagues, form community alliances, connect with police and/or contact community organizations that work to end gender-based violence, to share resources, and access support.



Indigenous women 15 years and older are 3.5 times more likely to experience violence than non-Indigenous women.¹¹³



Tips for Media Organizations on Preventing and Responding to Sexual Violence in the Workplace

The onus should be on workplaces, not survivors, to ensure employee safety and foster a consent culture in the workplace. The following are tips for media organizations on how to prevent and respond to sexual violence in the workplace.

1. Know and abide by the law

Employers in Canada have a legal responsibility to make reasonable efforts to ensure that employees are not subjected to sexual harassment. Provincial and territorial employment standards and labour laws, as well as human rights legislation, lay out specific legal obligations for most employers falling under provincial and territorial jurisdiction. Employers in workplaces falling under Federal jurisdiction must abide by the Canada Labour Code and Canadian Human Rights Act.

2. Have a comprehensive policy

Provincial and territorial employment laws increasingly require employers to develop workplace policy on sexual assault and sexual harassment. While many workplaces have not yet done so, having policy and programs in place is by far the best way to both prevent and ensure an adequate response to sexual assault and sexual harassment.” See links on page 25 for more information on the laws that apply in your province or territory.

3. Provide ongoing training

Provide recurring staff trainings on sexual violence. These trainings should include definitions of sexual violence and sexual harassment in the workplace, provide examples, and explain the workplace policy on sexual violence. Consult with violence against women organizations for resources.

Employers can be held legally responsible for sexual harassment at work. Employers have a legal responsibility to provide workers with a safe and harassment-free work environment. They have the responsibility to stop sexual harassment, or any harassment for that matter, when it occurs. Failure to act on a complaint, in a timely manner, or to ignore that sexual harassment when it occurs, leaves employers facing legal responsibility, which could amount to tens of thousands of dollars in legal fees and penalties.⁴²



Indigenous women in the provinces reported a rate of violent victimization that was nearly 3 times higher than the rate for non-Indigenous women (279 versus 106 per 1,000 population). This was the case for spousal violence, as well as violence perpetrated by other family members, friends, acquaintances and strangers.¹¹⁴

4. Provide a safety planning document for all employees

Develop safety planning documents with guidance from violence against women organizations. Safety plans should apply to all journalists working both in the field and online regardless of gender.

As part of their job requirements, journalists often have their professional and sometimes personal information easily accessible online. Safety plans should include steps to address this, such as:

- an online commenting policy and state what procedures will be enforced when inappropriate/sexually violent content is posted on social media;
- policies and procedures that detail how journalists will be supported when they are being subjected to sexual violence online (e.g. harassment via social media). Steps can include taking screen grabs before deleting the messages or blocking the account in case the staff member decides to report to police or disclose to their employer;
- harm reduction options for journalists, such as setting up an additional phone number that is separate from journalists' main line (VOIP lines are generally less costly), using a separate mailing address/PO Box for documents that must be mailed to journalists, or creating a second email address which forwards emails to their main account;⁴⁵
- requirements to ask journalists what their boundaries are regarding sharing their contact information with others.⁴⁶

If a sexual assault occurs at the workplace, the employer may be found vicariously liable depending on the circumstances of the case. Vicarious liability means the employer may be required to pay money to the victim for compensation. This is important because the assailant may not have the financial resources to pay the settlement or judgment himself. Whether the employer can be found vicariously liable will depend on the facts of the case, including (but not limited to) factors such as:

- 1) "the employer's policies promoting safety and preventing sexual assault;
- 2) the employer's awareness or willful blindness, if any, towards the sexual assault;
- 3) the manner in which the victim came in contact with the assailant;
- 4) the location where the sexual assault took place (such as at the office)."⁴³

The law governing federal workplaces says: "Every employer, after consulting with employees or their representatives, must issue a policy on sexual harassment. The policy must contain at least the following items:

- a definition of sexual harassment that is substantially the same as the one in the Code;
- a statement to the effect that every employee is entitled to employment free of sexual harassment;
- a statement to the effect that the employer will make every reasonable effort to ensure that no employee is subjected to sexual harassment;
- a statement to the effect that the employer will take disciplinary measures against any person under his or her direction who subjects any employee to sexual harassment;
- a statement explaining how complaints of sexual harassment may be brought to the attention of the employer;
- a statement to the effect that the employer will not disclose the name of the complainant or the circumstances related to the complaint to any person unless disclosure is necessary for the purposes of investigating the complaint or taking disciplinary measures in relation to the complaint;
- a statement informing employees of their right to make a complaint under the Canadian Human Rights Act."⁴⁴

THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA ECOSYSTEM



When it comes to media reporting (paper, radio, video and online) there are many players who have a hand in creating a story. Even if a journalist writes an article using language and frameworks that are supportive of survivors, they may not have the last say in every detail of the final product. Editors may make the decision to change the headline. Social media account managers make the decision of what caption to post when sharing an article. Photographers may capture the photos that can accompany a story. Online content creators may choose the stock image that is set as the feature image of an online post.

Recognizing the complex journalism ecosystem, it is important for all key members of a media organization to be well-versed on reporting practices that do not shame or blame survivors. You may wish to share this guide with your co-workers, or request that management provide a staff training on the topic. In particular, staff responsible for vetting content—those who have sign-off and final say—may be the first priority for this type of training.



HOLDING SOMETHING THAT GIVES YOU STRENGTH (I.E. A CRYSTAL, STONE OR ANIMAL).



90% of federally-sentenced Indigenous women report having been physically and/or sexually abused before incarceration.¹¹⁵



“Women with disabilities were... 3 times as likely to be forced into sexual activity (i.e., be threatened, held down, or hurt).”¹¹⁶

WHAT IS RAPE CULTURE?

This guide provides strategies for reporting on sexual assault in the context of a broader rape culture that exists in society.

Rape culture is...

A university in Canada that allows the following student orientation chant: "Y is for your sister. O is for oh-so-tight. U is for underage. N is for no consent. G is for grab that ass."



Pop music that tells women "you know you want it" because of these "blurred lines."

Supporting athletes who are charged with rape and calling their victims career-destroyers.⁴⁷



Rape Culture is "situations in which sexual assault, rape, and general violence are ignored, trivialized, normalized, or made into jokes."⁴⁸

Rape Culture is "where rape and sexual violence is an accepted and expected norm."



image: Grrrl Army



More than 50% of the sexual assault survivors reported to police in 2007 were children and youth under the age of 18.¹¹⁷

"It is appalling that sexual violence against sex workers doesn't receive the same amount of attention that sexual violence against someone who is not a sex worker does. There is the portrayal of sex workers in media as not having the same status as someone of another profession and therefore the crime is not as severe."

KB, Toronto, ON

Historical Context of Rape Culture in Canada

Rape culture does not exist in a vacuum; it is shaped by power dynamics within and between communities and social structures that existed historically and persist today. We see this at work, for example, in the way that settler rape of Indigenous women was, and is, a part of the colonial project of Canada; in the way that orientalist stereotypes characterize reporting on recent high-profile rape cases in India; in the way that “post”-slavery black men were constructed as natural sexual predators; and in the case of the Sikh men aboard the Komagata Maru in 1914, who were denied entry to Canada in part for fear that they would harm white Canadian women. Additionally, survivors from historically and currently marginalized communities are more likely to be held responsible and blamed for the violence they have experienced (e.g. people in the sex industry may be blamed for putting themselves at risk because of their employment).

Sexual Assault Myths

Rape culture reinforces many common myths about sexual violence. These myths—such as the idea that sexual assault mainly occurs outdoors at night, that women’s style of dress invites sexual assault, or that most sexual assault are committed by strangers—often result in survivor-blaming and ineffectual “safety tips” being the focus of sexual violence prevention.⁴⁹

“What is news about sexual violence? It’s an old saying: ‘When dog bites man, it isn’t news. When man bites dog, it is.’ By its nature, news often emphasizes the unusual. In the case of rape, an assault by a stranger on a dark night is news primarily because it is so unusual. Other unusual, sensational cases involve serial rapes, kidnapping, and assaults of very young or very old people. Yet for people with little knowledge of the topic, the unusual becomes the norm.”

Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault, 2013



BREATHE, REPEAT OUT
LOUD TODAY’S DATE, TIME
AND MONTH.



In 2011, youth who identified as girls were eight times as likely as youth who identified as boys to be a victim of sexual assault or another type of sexual offence.¹¹⁸

How to **NOT** get raped: The **SMART** Way

Start young

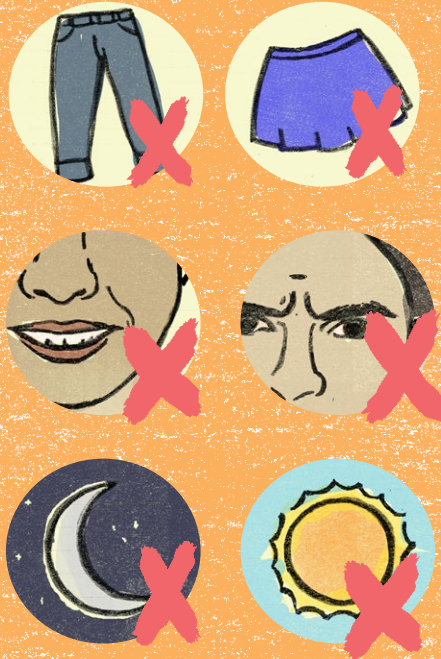
Learn self-defence but know that you are physically weak and cannot defend yourself. Learn not to talk to strangers before you learn to talk. Learn not to walk alone before you learn to walk. Especially learn how to be accountable for your rapist's actions.

Trust your instincts

Avoid all environments where you feel unsafe and where sexual assaults commonly take place: walls, doorways, pillars, streets, sidewalks, corridors, elevators, lobbies, parking lots, cars, public transit, cabs, parks, bars, restaurants, apartments, houses, offices, universities, colleges, nursing homes, and government institutions.

Always conform

Don't embrace the pleasures and power of your own desires. Don't dress to impress—yourself. Don't find yourself gorgeous and alive and wanting to share that. Don't wear flirty skirts or revealing dresses. On the other hand do not be tomboyish. Avoid any expression that does not conform to gender norms as some people may use rape as a way to "discipline" you.



Don't ask for it

Do not smile or be charming. Be pleasant and polite to everyone you meet—if you're hostile, you may be asking for assault. But, be sure you don't lead on your attacker. Never invite anyone into your home, but never be alone. Don't be coy. Don't be brazen. Don't confuse anyone—mixed messages can be dangerous.

Protect yourself

If you live alone, install extra locks, buy a dog, and carry a small weapon. If you live with others, carry the dog and weapon around your home. Also, make sure you don't carry the dog or weapon with you, as weapons could be used against you.

Date smart

Don't go on dates alone, you could be attacked. Don't go on dates in groups because then you could be attacked by a number of people. But don't decline date offers either—insulting a potential suitor is just asking for trouble.

If attacked

Scream and struggle unless your attacker is the type who will kill you for fighting back. If you stay still for survival, make sure that they wouldn't have let you go if you had resisted. Talk kindly to them, but don't say anything that might sound bad in court. Protect yourself from injury, but make sure you get some bruises to count as evidence.

Call the police

Unless you face institutional barriers to accessing justice (e.g. you are an Indigenous person, woman of colour, person with a disability, trans*, queer, a sex worker, a Muslim woman wearing the niqab, young, low-income, homeless, a newcomer, have precarious immigration status, Deaf... you get the picture).

Avoid rapists

Most importantly, stay away from those who commonly commit assaults: strangers, family members, friends, partners, spouses, co-workers, bosses, clients, teachers, doctors, teammates and police officers. Be extra careful during peak times when rapes occur i.e. daytime, nighttime, dawn, afternoon, early evening, tea time, nap time. If you suspect you are being followed, go to a well-lit area: unless you can't because it's dark outside—then set off a flare gun or light a torch (why are you outside when it's dark anyway?).

This infographic is a satirical representation of many of these persistent rape myths and accompanying safety tips.

Created by femifesto:
Sasha Elford, Shannon
Giannitsopoulou, Farrah Khan

In collaboration with: Rebecca
Faria, Stephanie Guthrie, Julie
Lalonde, Chanelle Gallant, and
Lisa Mederios.

How Rape Culture Works

"The number one issue is the constant repetition of the question, 'What can women do to avoid rape?'... Why isn't the question, 'What can we as communities do to prevent men from raping?'"

Audrey Batterham, Toronto

RAPE CULTURE REINFORCES THE GENDER BINARY

- Rape culture reinforces the gender binary, as well as the expectations and roles the binary creates for people based on their gender.
- Characteristics like dominance, aggression, and violence are depicted as inherently masculine traits.
- Passivity, submissiveness, and victimhood are seen as inherently feminine traits.

RAPE CULTURE TELLS US THAT MEN CAN'T CONTROL THEMSELVES

- The myth that "boys will be boys" suggests that boys and men cannot control themselves because they are inherently violent and cannot resist their sexual urges. This myth operates by encouraging men to perform their masculinity by enacting sexual violence. As a result, "violence is seen as sexy and sexuality as violent."
- Seeing men as naturally sexually aggressive assumes that they have no control over their choices.
- This leads to the assumption that rape and other forms of sexual violence are inevitable and that they are about sex, rather than power and control.

RAPE CULTURE CONSTRUCTS FEMINIZED PEOPLE AS PASSIVE OR SEXUALLY-AVAILABLE

- In rape culture, feminized people are constructed as passive.
- This contributes to problematic assumptions about consent, such as:
 - the belief that "no actually means yes;"
 - that the absence of a no (i.e. silence) constitutes consent.
- Other forms of violence that people are subjected to on a daily basis, such as unwanted sexual remarks or sexual touching, are ignored or downplayed. They come to be viewed as inevitable and even natural or flattering.



GET FRESH AIR: OPEN A WINDOW, GO OUTSIDE, EMBRACE NATURE.

"I feel the instance of an assault is often met with two main responses: It's not that bad... OR What did she do to deserve it?"

Anonymous femifesto survey respondent

"I would like to see sexual violence talked about in regards to all survivors: female survivors, male survivors, inmates, vulnerable/marginalized populations such as women of colour, same-sex and/or queer and/or trans relationships, women with disabilities, etc."

Alisha R., Toronto, ON

ENSURING INCLUSION AND DIVERSE REPRESENTATION IN REPORTING ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE

"There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle, because we do not live single-issue lives."

Audre Lorde, Sister Outsider

Sexual assault is not a single-issue struggle; it is connected to oppressive systems in our society, such as colonialism, transphobia and ableism, that inform violence, the justice system and access to power. Using an intersectional approach in reporting means recognizing that "patterns of subordination intersect" in people's experiences of violence.⁵⁶ This allows for a more complex and contextual understanding of violence that addresses the reality of people's "multi-issue" lives.

While it is a positive development that the media is now engaging in discussions about sexual violence and rape, many marginalized communities are left out of these discussions. Given the widespread violence against Indigenous women, it is notable that in our research we encountered few examples of reporting on Indigenous women as survivors. We found a similar lack of media attention to the sexual violence faced by many marginalized communities, including women of colour, people with disabilities, LGBTTIQQ2A (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersex, queer, questioning, Two Spirit and asexual) spectrum people, newcomers, sex workers, criminalized people, and people with precarious immigration status.

Mainstream media representations can inform our understanding of which kinds of violence matter, whose bodies are in need of protection, and what makes a survivor "worthy" of compassion and justice. The key element in sexual assault is the use of power and control, but not all survivors experience violence the same way. It is crucial to draw attention to sexual assault against marginalized communities.



85% of federally sentenced women had experienced physical abuse and 68% had experienced sexual abuse before being incarcerated.¹²⁰

"The media needs to spend more time making sure a victim's class and race aren't entering - even subconsciously - into decisions about whether or not to report a case."

Jarrah Hodge, Vancouver, BC

An example of reporting from an intersectional analysis is a 2013 *24 Hours Vancouver* article on anti-Indigenous frosh chants at the University of British Columbia.⁵⁷ In addition to singing chants that glorified the sexual assault of young women, some students at UBC's frosh events impersonated Indigenous people, naming their team "Pocahontas" and chanting "white man, steal our land." This article includes quotes that highlight how these racist chants are not divorced from sexism, but that the two are interrelated: "It's not only racist, it's also misogynist."⁵⁸ There is a recognition that sexual assault (which is glorified in one chant) was a part of the colonialism (which is trivialized in the other).

SEXUAL ASSAULT AND HARASSMENT LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN CANADA

Under Canadian law, sexual assault is defined as “an assault of a sexual nature that violates the sexual integrity of the victim.”⁵⁹ Sexual assault occurs when consent is absent.

The Canada Labour Code describes sexual harassment as “any conduct, comment, gesture, or contact of a sexual nature that is likely to cause offence or humiliation to any employee; or that might, on reasonable grounds, be perceived by that employee as placing a condition of a sexual nature on employment or on any opportunity for training or promotion.”⁶⁰

Under the Canada Labour Code, every employee is entitled to employment free of sexual harassment. It is important to know that there are parallel provisions in the provincial codes. For more information on the codes in your province, see page 25.

In our conversations with journalists, concerns were raised regarding what wording to use when reporting on sexual violence, particularly where the term rape is involved, as the term does not appear within the Criminal Code of Canada. The Code was amended in 1983, when the crimes of rape and indecent assault were replaced with three new sexual assault offences focusing on the violent, rather than sexual, nature of the offence.

Canada’s Criminal Code 265. (1) A person commits an assault when

(a) without the consent of another person, he applies force intentionally to that other person, directly or indirectly;

(b) he attempts or threatens, by an act or a gesture, to apply force to another person, if he has, or causes that other person to believe on reasonable grounds that he has, present ability to effect his purpose; or

(c) while openly wearing or carrying a weapon or an imitation thereof, he accosts or impedes another person or begs.

(2) This section applies to all forms of assault, including sexual assault, sexual assault with a weapon, threats to a third party or causing bodily harm and aggravated sexual assault.

DEFINITION: CONSENT

“a voluntary agreement to engage in sexual activity. In other words, it means communicating yes on your own terms.”⁶¹

Consent must be active and continuous. Someone cannot legally⁶² consent if they are drunk, under the influence of drugs, unconscious (including being asleep), if threatened or coerced, or in case of fraud or the exercise of authority. The legal age of consent in Canada is 16 years; however, the age of consent is 18 years in cases involving sexual activity that is exploitative of the young person (e.g. prostitution, pornography, within a relationship of authority, trust or dependency, or any other exploitative nature/ circumstances of the relationship.⁶³) Also, the law provides “close in age” or “peer group” exceptions.⁶⁴ Children under 12 cannot legally consent under any circumstances.

RAPE CULTURE BLAMES SURVIVORS AND ABSOLVES PERPETRATORS

- Rape culture leads us to believe that the person assaulted was “asking for it” or secretly “wanted it” based on:
 - their racialized identity
 - the way they dress
 - who they date
 - what employment they choose
 - where/when they choose to go out
- Survivor-blaming is a big part of rape culture. Survivors often cite fear of being blamed for the attack as a reason for their unwillingness to come forward. A creates a climate that shames and blames survivors of violence for “asking for it” or making “stupid decisions”. It limits survivors’ ability to feel safe in sharing the violence that has been perpetrated against them.
- A Canadian Women’s Foundation study on attitudes regarding sexual violence in Canada found that “19 per cent of the respondents believe that women may provoke or encourage sexual assault when they are drunk.”⁵⁰

RAPE CULTURE IGNORES THE DIVERSITY OF PEOPLE THAT ARE SUBJECTED TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE

- Because the gender binary is so ingrained in rape culture, the sole focus on men versus women means that the diversity of people subjected to sexual assault is ignored. The fact that some individuals may be more vulnerable to violence or have less access to supports is ignored. In rape culture, social location such as race, class, religion is not acknowledged. Many studies in fact show that social location has a significant impact on who is targeted for sexual violence^{51,52} as well as how a survivor may choose to cope.^{53,54}
- “As a society, we are particularly bad at recognizing the victimization of [people] who are viewed as hypersexual, and therefore “unrapeable”, by our cultural norms e.g. women who are poor, young, Black, trans, [sex workers], and/or bi.”⁵⁵

“The media discussion of sexual violence in relation to Muslim women has to stop using negative generalizations about Muslim cultures, religious realities, and focus instead on the lived experience of Muslim women.”

Kirstin S. Dane

Gender binary: The idea that you can only be male or female, and that you must identify with the one of these two genders throughout your life (the one you were assigned at birth) and that your behaviours and appearance must conform appropriately to that gender.

“As an Indigenous woman, the discussion of sexual violence against Indigenous women is particularly egregious, with discussions still tacitly perpetuating negative stereotypes about the ‘sexual availability’ of Indigenous women.”

Anonymous survey respondent



“It is estimated that only 20% of the cases of sexual abuse involving disabled people are ever reported to the police, community service agencies, or other authorities.”¹¹⁹

While certain levels of sexual assault in the Criminal Code may be classified as causing little or no injury, all sexual assaults are inherently violent acts that cause harm and trauma. There is no hierarchy of harm. Every person who is subjected to sexual violence can label and describe their own experiences themselves.

There are also criminal laws to deal with different types of relationships between perpetrators and victims of sexual violence, such as when a perpetrator is in a position of authority over the victim or if there is a relationship of dependency.

Aggravated Sexual Assault 273. The Criminal Code allows for increased penalties for sexual assault where the accused “wounds, maims, disfigures or endangers the life of the complainant.”

- (1) Every one commits an aggravated sexual assault who, in committing a sexual assault, wounds, maims, disfigures or endangers the life of the complainant.

Aggravated sexual assault

- (2) Every person who commits an aggravated sexual assault is guilty of an indictable offence and liable

(a) where a firearm is used in the commission of the offence, to imprisonment for life and to a minimum punishment of imprisonment for a term of four years; and

(b) in any other case, to imprisonment for life.⁶⁵

Sexual assault laws in Canada are gender-neutral, meaning all people within the gender spectrum can be victims of sexual assault, as well as charged with sexual assault.

Under Canadian Criminal Code, a judge must order a publication ban to protect the identity of all victims of sexual offences, as well as witnesses of sexual offences who are less than 18 years old. “In these cases, the judge tells the victim, witness or Crown prosecutor that they may make a request for this protection. If a request is made, the judge must order a publication ban.”⁷⁰

The publication bans are intended to protect survivors of crimes from experiencing adverse consequences when pursuing criminal charges, and isn’t imposed until the perpetrator is arraigned. Not all survivors and their communities agree with publication bans. Some appreciate a ban, while others are working to have them lifted so a survivor can choose whether their name is used or not.



One in three women will experience some form of sexual violence in their lifetime.⁶⁷



One in six men will experience some form of sexual assault in their lifetime.⁶⁸

A large, stylized, yellow-green number '99%' with a slight 3D effect and a shadow. It is positioned above a thin blue horizontal line.

In 99% of sexual assaults, the accused perpetrator is male.⁶⁹

Under the Criminal Code, there are three levels of sexual assault crimes, which encompass rape as well as other forms of sexual assault:

Sexual Assault Level 1:

Any form of sexual activity (e.g. kissing, touching, oral sex, vaginal or anal intercourse) forced on another person or nonconsensual bodily contact for a sexual purpose. Level 1 sexual assaults involve minor physical injuries or no injuries to the victim.

Sexual Assault Level 2:

A sexual assault in which the perpetrator uses, or threatens to use, a weapon or threatens the victim's friends or family members, or causes bodily harm to a third party, or commits the assault with another person (multiple assailants).

Sexual Assault Level 3: A sexual assault resulting in wounding, maiming, or disfiguring or endangering the life of the victim.⁶⁶



BREATHE. ALLOW YOUR BREATH INTO YOUR BODY AND BREATHE OUT. THIS IS ALL YOU NEED TO DO IN THIS MOMENT.



“Young women in police and youth custody report abuse and mistreatment such as the performance of breast and gynaecological exams as part of their psychiatric assessments.”¹²¹



SEXUAL ASSAULT CASES: RECANTED, UNFOUNDED, FALSE

Charge and conviction rates for adults are lower for reported sexual assaults than for other violent crimes in Canada.⁷¹ While very few reports of sexual assault are false reports, cases sometimes do not result in charges or convictions because they are recanted or deemed unfounded.

Recanting Sexual Assault:

Due to a variety of factors including long court processes, inadequate supports for survivors navigating the system, poverty, pressure from supporters of the perpetrator, or fear of or actual retaliation from perpetrators' supporters, a survivor might recant their statement about sexual assault. This does not mean that the violence did not take place, it means that at this time they may not feel that they have the resources or support to move forward with the report.

Unfounded Sexual Assault:

"Generally, it is at the discretion of the police to investigate and lay charges where they believe on reasonable grounds that an offence has been committed. In some provinces (i.e. British Columbia) the Crown must lay charges."⁷² Sometimes, police may not lay charges in a sexual assault case, calling the case "unfounded." Where charges are laid, Crown prosecutors will review the charges to determine whether the facts and evidence present a reasonable prospect of conviction and whether the prosecution is in the public interest. After this assessment, the Crown may decide to drop the charges. These cases are often coded by the state as unfounded—this does not mean that sexual assault did not occur. It means that the police and/or the Crown, in their legal discretion, decided not to pursue the case.

Rates of "unfounded" cases vary across jurisdictions due to inconsistent coding, but police statistics show that sexual assaults are deemed unfounded at a rate higher than any other crime. When last reported, levels of "unfounded cases" across Canada averaged 16% for sexual assault.⁷³ In some jurisdictions, levels were as high as 34%.⁷⁴



CREATE: BELT OUT A SONG, WRITE A POEM, PAINT, SCULPT, DRAW OR MAKE A COLLAGE.

"We need to be careful about how this conversation is racialized. If it's mainly white women's bodies we're protecting, we've seen how that plays out in communities of colour with men of colour being profiled and criminalized and the rapes of women of colour being seen as low priority or somehow not as egregious."

Una Lee, Toronto, ON

False reports to the police about sexual assault:

“What if she is lying?” is a comment often made when talking about sexual assault. Let’s talk about false sexual assault charges.

While Canadian data is not available, statistics from the US and UK show that false reports of sexual assault are very uncommon. A 2013 UK-based study found that, over a 17 month period in England and Wales, not only were there a very small number of false rape accusations—35 out of 5,651 or 0.6% of reported rapes—but that in cases where false accusations were made, there were other factors at play. For instance, many cases involved reports made by individuals with mental health issues. In some cases survivors were pressured by family members or partners to redact their statements.⁷⁵ NOTE: It is important to recognize who gets convicted of sexual violence and who does not. In Canada, Indigenous folks and people of colour are disproportionately incarcerated. For example, in Canada, 9.5% of federal inmates are Black, yet Black Canadians account for less than 3% of the total Canadian population.⁷⁶ Also, “Indigenous people represent a staggering 23% of federal inmates yet comprise 4.3% of the total Canadian population. One-in-three women under federal sentence are Indigenous.”⁷⁷ This does not mean they are more likely to commit sexual violence, but more likely to be convicted due to systemic oppression.

Similarly, in the US, studies have found that the rate of false reports of sexual assault is somewhere between 2-8%⁷⁸. Given that we know very few cases of sexual assault are ever reported (less than 1 in 10 in Canada⁷⁹), this number of false reports is incredibly low when considering there is an epidemic of sexual assault. The low reporting rate for sexual assault is due to a number of factors, which are outlined in the next section.

Often, society jumps to emphasizing the right of perpetrators to be presumed innocent, rather than focusing on supporting survivors. When we focus on the reports of those who have been sexually assaulted continue to be questioned when they come forward, it feeds into the misinformed and inaccurate narrative that false reports of sexual assault are commonplace. It discourages other survivors from coming forward, because they think they will be disbelieved. It tells survivors that the perpetrator merits more support and sympathy than they do.



BREATHE: CLOSE YOUR EYES, AND TAKE FIVE DEEP BREATHS. THIS IS ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IN THIS MOMENT.



According to the 2004 GSS, gays and lesbians experienced violent victimization (including sexual assault, robbery and physical assault) at a rate that was almost 2.5 times higher than the rate for heterosexuals (2425 violent incidents per 1,000 population). The rate for bisexuals was 4 times higher than the rate for heterosexuals (4155 versus 99 violent incidents per 1,000 population).¹²²

"WHY DON'T ALL SURVIVORS REPORT?"

10 BARRIERS TO REPORTING SEXUAL ASSAULT IN CANADA

In Canada, only 1 in 10 sexual assaults are reported to the police.⁸⁰ "Why didn't you report?" is a question that is commonly posed to survivors. This line of questioning suggests that survivors are to blame for not reporting, or that their experiences were not serious or legitimate enough to do so. However, survivors should not be faulted for any of the ways in which they choose to survive. Survivors resist reporting for many reasons. An understanding of the intersecting barriers to reporting is key in both framing media reports of sexual assault in ways that are supportive of survivors and creating trauma-informed interview questions. This list captures only a few of the many barriers to reporting:

1. **Shame and blame of people subjected to sexual violence**

// When survivors disclose to their support systems or authorities, they are often met with shame and blame. For example, 19% of Canadians believe that women may provoke or encourage sexual assault when they are drunk.⁸¹ Failure to support or believe survivors when they disclose deters others from coming forward. Due to rape culture's pervasiveness, many survivors do not feel the sexual violence enacted against them was "that bad" or deserving of attention. Also, folks who do not fit the stereotypical depiction of a survivor (i.e. a white, able-bodied, cisgender woman) often receive even less support when disclosing.

2. **Effects of trauma** // In addition to physical trauma, sexual violence survivors often suffer from long-term psychological and emotional effects, including PTSD, depression, anxiety, shame, fear, and self-blame⁸², all of which can make reporting challenging. For example, as a result of trauma, the survivor may place blame and responsibility on themselves, rather than the assailant, as a way to "make sense of" and take "ownership/control" of what happened.



40% of gay students and 33% of lesbian students reported being sexually harassed in Canadian schools.¹²³

"Physical and emotional recovery are separate from the legal process. It is not the responsibility of survivors to report in order for society to be safe. Victims should NOT be made to feel guilty for not reporting."

**Melody McGregor,
Thunder Bay, ON**

3. Sexual assault is most likely to be committed by someone who knows the survivor // Contrary to what is implied by safety tips such as “stay in well-lit areas,” most assaults are committed by someone known to the survivor (80%)⁸³ and most assaults occur in a private residence (58%).⁸⁴ Reporting a sexual assault when the assailant is someone you know is difficult; many of us have been taught from a young age that sexual violence is something to be ashamed of or kept secret. Speaking out about sexual violence enacted by a family member can have harsh personal repercussions, such as loss of financial support or being ostracized.

4. Inequitable access to legal information // Some survivors may not be familiar with their rights in regards to sexual assault, and as a result are not aware of the legal options available to them. Legal information may not be readily available in the first language of the survivor. For example, legal resources that are not available in American Sign Language video format will not be accessible to some Deaf and Hard of Hearing folks. In addition, some populations of survivors – such as youth and immigrant communities, for example – have limited access to basic information on their sexual and legal rights, or to resources in their first language.⁸⁵

5. Most sexual assault cases do not lead to a conviction // Survivors are deterred from reporting by the very low rates of conviction in sexual assault cases. Undergoing a lengthy legal process may not seem worthwhile considering the improbability of a conviction. In 2007, charges were laid in only 37% of sexual offences reported to police.⁸⁶ Generally, only half of those charged with sexual assault go to trial⁸⁷, and of those that do, only 42% resulted in conviction in 2010-11⁸⁸. Research has found that, given the very low rate of reporting for sexual assaults, this means only 0.3% (or 3 out of every 1000) of sexual assaults in Canada result in a conviction.⁸⁹

6. Mistrust of police // Survivors who are from communities with historically or current tenuous relationships with the police—including but not limited to Indigenous, racialized, poor, Black, newcomer, and Muslim communities – may be deterred from reporting as a result. For some survivors, walking into a police station to report can feel unsafe, or as if they are betraying of their community. For example, “it is widely reported by sex workers, globally, that police engage in ‘excessive use of physical force, forced removal and subsequent abandonment [to] outlying areas, and coerced sex to police in exchange for freedom from detainment, fine, or arrest.’”⁹⁰ Also, “98% of trans people report at least one experience of transphobia and 24% report having been harassed by police.”⁹¹



49% of trans students in Canada reported experiencing sexual harassment in school.¹²⁴



“The degree of risk of sexual abuse of persons with disabilities appears to be at least 150% of that for individuals of the same sex and similar age without disabilities.”¹²⁵

- 7. Disproportionate incarceration rates of marginalized communities //** Indigenous folks and people of colour who have been subjected to sexual violence from members of their community may not want to contribute to the already-disproportionate number of racialized bodies that are incarcerated due to systemic injustices. For example, as a result of past and present colonial violence, Indigenous peoples are nine times more likely to go to prison than the majority of the non-Indigenous population in Canada.⁹²
- 8. The “burden of proof” //** Survivors do not always have physical “proof” that they have been sexually assaulted. They may decide long after the violence that they want to report, making this proof difficult to obtain.
- 9. The court process for sexual assault is not designed to be supportive of survivors //** If cases of sexual assault do make it to court, the survivor is often subjected to victim-blaming and shaming by the defence. Defence lawyers will sometimes attack the survivor’s character and narrative, to convince the judge or jury that the survivor is not credible. Survivors are required to repeatedly retell their story in explicit detail, which can be retraumatizing. Additionally, the Crown Attorney is not there to represent or support the survivor but to represent the interests of the Canadian people.
- 10. Economic resources and employment status //** Survivors may not be able to take time off work to access resources for healing and justice, including a lengthy trial. They also may fear losing their job if the violence occurred at their workplace. For example, if migrant workers have worker’s permits tied to their employer, reporting their employer can result in deportation. Many caregivers and agricultural workers also live with their employer, so reporting would lead to loss of housing.



“Violence against women is the leading cause of women’s homelessness in Canada. Every year, violence and abuse drive over 100,000 women and children out of their homes and into emergency shelters. Many more - often young women - never make it to shelter at all. They live on the streets of our cities, in poverty and exposed daily to sexual harassment and violence.”¹²⁶



IDENTIFICATION: SURVIVOR, VICTIM, OR AN ALTERNATIVE?

People who have been subjected to sexual violence have the right to choose how they want to be referred to in media stories. There is a lot of debate over the use of victim or survivor; in the end it is up to the individual to choose how they want to be called.

Victim:

The word “victim” conveys that “someone committed a crime against this person, and that they were injured by it.”⁹³

But the word victim can imply “passivity, acceptance of one’s circumstances, and a casualty.”⁹⁴

“Victim” is also “a noun which identifies a person solely according to what someone did to them; it conveys nothing about what they did to resist or respond, or anything about any other identity they may have. In this way, it also plays into our ideas about what a victim really looks like: passive, perfectly compliant with police and prosecutors’ demands, not angry, sexually pure (which isn’t just about personal history, it’s about race, class and other identities and what meanings are attached to them).”⁹⁵

“Victim” can be seen as ignoring coping and resistance strategies that people who have experienced sexual assault develop to survive violence.

Survivor

The term “survivor” can convey agency and resilience. It can be seen to imply “ingenuity, resourcefulness, and inner strength.”⁹⁶

At the same time, “the word survivor, is, like victim, a noun. It describes a person according to their experiences of (and resistance to) violence, and nothing more: it is one-dimensional.”⁹⁷

Replacing “victim” with “survivor” can mean a total rejection of “victim.” “Rejecting ‘victim’ and everything that goes with it can be particularly harsh on people with identities such that society expects them to be strong, e.g. black women.”^{98,99}



FEED YOUR BODY: DRINK A GLASS OF WATER. EAT SOMETHING IF YOU NEED A SNACK. GET YOUR BODY MOVING, WHETHER IT’S BY TAKING A WALK OR DANCING TO YOUR FAVOURITE SONG.



Among male survivors of sexual violence in Canada, rates are highest for boys 3 to 14 years of age.¹²⁷

Alternative Language

EXAMPLES OF ALTERNATIVE LANGUAGE YOU CAN USE TO AVOID THE VICTIM/SURVIVOR DICHOTOMY:

“a person who was subjected to sexual violence”

“a person who was sexually assaulted”

“a person who survived sexual abuse”

“complainant” (applicable in court cases)

This language depicts sexual assault as something that happened to a person - it doesn't define their whole life in relation to the experience of violence.



COOK FOOD THAT SMELLS
AND TASTES COMFORTING.



The Federal Office of the Ombudsman for Victims of Crime's 2009-10 report included a section on Sexual Violence & Harassment in the Canadian Military, which stated: "There is research from the United States that suggests that one in seven service women in the U.S. military will experience sexual assault while in the military and that more than 80 per cent of these will not be reported. One-third of female veterans seeking health care through Veterans Affairs have experienced rape or attempted rape during their service. While direct comparisons to the U.S. experience cannot be drawn, the Ombudsman felt that there were enough similarities to cause concern. Despite improvements to the environment for women in the [Canadian] military, it is impossible with current data to determine the reality of sexual assault and harassment in the [Canadian] Forces and how secure victims feel in coming forward."¹²⁸



INDIGENOUS, PROVINCIAL, TERRITORIAL AND NATIONAL RESOURCES

This is not an exhaustive list.

Indigenous:

- National Association of Friendship Centres
<http://nafc.ca/en/friendship-centres/>
- Talk4Healing - <http://www.talk4healing.com/>
- Native Youth Sexual Health Network
<http://www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com/>
- List of Indigenous Transition Houses and Family Violence Crisis Lines in B.C. from The Healing Journey
<http://www.thehealingjourney.ca/inside.asp?279>

Alberta:

- Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services
www.aasas.ca

British Columbia:

- Ending Violence Association of BC
www.endingviolence.org

Manitoba:

- List of sexual assault services in Manitoba from Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres:
<http://www.casac.ca/node/50>

New Brunswick:

- Directory of services for victims of abuse from Public Legal Education and Information Services of New Brunswick
<http://www.gnb.ca/0037/report/Directoryeng.pdf>
- Fredericton Sexual Assault Centre
<http://www.fsacc.ca/>

Newfoundland and Labrador:

- Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre
www.nlsacpc.com

Northwest Territories:

- Sexual Assault: A Help Book for Teens in the Northwest Territories (includes a directory of services on final page)
<http://www.justice.gov.nt.ca/VictimServices/documents/EnglishSexualAssaultBookforTeens.pdf>
- List of sexual assault services in Northwest Territories from Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres:
<http://www.casac.ca/node/59>

Nova Scotia:

- Map of sexual assault services in the province from Nova Scotia Domestic Violence Resource Centre
<http://www.nsdomeesticviolence.ca/resource-map/type/sexual-assault-services>

Nunavut:

- List of sexual assault services in Nunavut from Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres
<http://www.casac.ca/node/58>

Ontario:

- Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes (AOcVF)
<http://francofemmes.org/aocvf/>
- Draw the Line Campaign
www.draw-the-line.ca
- Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres
www.sexualassaultsupport.ca
- Ontario Network of Sexual Assault/
Domestic Violence Treatment Centres
<http://www.satcontario.com>
- List of Ontario provincial support resources
from the Canadian Federation of Students:
<http://cfsontario.ca/en/section/211>

Prince Edward Island:

- PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre
www.peirsac.org

Québec:

- Government of Québec sexual assault resources
<http://www.agressionssexuelles.gouv.qc.ca/en/index.php>

Saskatchewan:

- Sexual Assault Services of Saskatchewan
sask.ca

Yukon:

- List of sexual assault services in Yukon from
Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres:
<http://www.casac.ca/node/60>

Nationwide:

- Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres
www.casac.ca
- Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime
crcvc.ca
- Making a Difference Canada
makingadifferencecanada.ca

SURVEY RESPONDENTS:

From 2013-14, femifesto collected community feedback through an online survey about this guide and Canadian media reporting on sexual assault. Thank you to those who lent their voices:

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Audrey Batterham, Toronto, ON

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