



**Avalon**  
Sexual Assault Centre  
1526 Dresden Row, 4th Floor  
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 3K3

Business Line: (902) 422-4240  
Fax Line: (902) 422-4628  
SANE Business Line: (902) 422-6503  
SANE Fax Line: (902) 422-4962  
SANE Response Line: (902) 425-0122

avaloncentre@eastlink.ca  
bzareski\_saneprogram@yahoo.com  
www.avaloncentre.ca

## Young Women and Girls and Sexual Violence

### A Statistical Reality:

- Commonly used stats state that between 1 in 2 to 1 in 4 females are sexually assaulted in their lifetime. We are talking about upwards of 12.5 % to 25% of the world population. This is a reality that disproportionately affects women's lives worldwide.

- In 2007/8 SANE responded to 113 immediate sexual assaults. Of the 94 cases entered into the data base:

- 50 were between the ages of 17-25
- 14 were aged 13-16
- 9 were 12 and under

(Avalon Centre Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program)

- 63% of all sexual assaults reported to police involve girls under age 16 (Russell, 1996)

- 54% of girls under the age of 16 have experienced some form of unwanted sexual attention. 24% have experienced rape or coercive sex, and 17% have experienced incest

(Holmes and Silverman, 1992; Russell, 1996)

- The largest proportions of victims of sexual assault are young; Forty-four percent of victims are under the age of 25.

- In Canada there are on average 65 reports of sexual assault a day (Stats Can, 2005). According to this figure that means a sexual assault occurs every 22 minutes in Canada.

- Stats Can reports that 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys are sexually assaulted before the age of 16.

~ Girls are targets of abuse within the family more so than boys. Four out of five victims of family-related sexual assaults (79%) are girls, and over half (55%) of physical assaults of children by family members are against girls. Female victims' risk increases with age, with it peaking at age 14. Incidence rates are 160 per 100,00 according to Statistics Canada (Stats Can, 1999. Family Violence in Canada, Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile).

- The risk for sexual assault is four times higher for women aged 16-24 than any other population group (Warsaw, 1988).

- The 2004 General Social Survey (GSS) indicates that rates of overall violent victimization are significantly higher among the Aboriginal population (319 versus 101 people per 1,000 population) and that Aboriginal women, in particular, are at

high risk of victimization with rates that are three and a half times higher than that of non-Aboriginal women.

- Rates of sexual assault and other violent crimes are higher on reserves than in other areas of Canada (Stats Can, 2006). In the last 20 years, 500 Indigenous women have disappeared. (Canadian Association of Sexual Assault Centres, CASAC, 2005)

- 83% of women with disabilities will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime.  
(METRAC, 2001)

- Only 6% of all sexual assaults are reported to the police. Only 1% of date rapes are reported to police.

(Juristat, 1993; Ontario Women's Directorate, 1995)

- 1 in 5 male students said that forced intercourse was all right "if he spends money on her", "if he is stoned or drunk", or "if they had been dating for a long time".  
(Johnson, 1996)

- 54% of sex offenders are aged 18-34. (Stats Canada, 2004)

### *A Social Reality:*

These are some examples of the types of unwanted sexual experiences Avalon is aware of Young women in Nova Scotia experiencing:

- Adult men targeting teenage girls for sexual purposes (On line or in public). This includes adults violating the age of consent/protection laws governing consensual sexual activity.

- Young women being encouraged or coerced by their boyfriends or male friends to strip or perform sexual acts for or in front of other males (sometimes in exchange for money, drugs, or "presents").

- Young women threatened with personal violence and/or loss of personal property if not complying with sexual coercion.

- Sexual "games" such as lipstick parties where young women put on different colored lipsticks and have contests to see how far they can circle a penis with their mouth. Another popular one that still gets talked is gel bracelet "tag". Girls wear different colored gel bracelets; each color represents a sexual act. The boys try to rip the bracelets off and the girl has to perform what ever sexual act the bracelet represents.

- Young women being sexually assaulted by one or more people while unconscious.

- Youth being groomed by pedophiles or for prostitution.

- Youth continue to experience various levels of sexual harassment, stalking, bullying, and peer pressure related to dating/sexual activity.

- ~ The use of drugs and alcohol to facilitate sexual violence.
- ~ Incest: sexual abuse by a family member including stepfather or mother's boyfriend.
- ~ Breach of trust: sexual harassment, exploitation, or assault by an adult in a position of trust and/or authority.
- ~ Pictures of young women that are sexually suggestive or depict sexual acts, state of undress, etc. are circulated via cell phone, MSN, Face Book etc. Sometimes these pictures may be taken or sent by the young woman initially to someone she trusts but then are circulated without her permission. In other situations girls are unaware of the pictures until they are circulated.
- ~ Sexual contests: young men have contests regarding sexual activities with often unsuspecting young women.
- ~ Sexual perpetrators taking advantage of youth in vulnerable or compromising situations: youth who are drinking underage or lying about where they are, youth who are homeless, in conflict with the law, involved in the sex trade, etc.
- ~ Youth "agreeing" to having sex in exchange for a place to live, food, services provided, or in trade for something they want/need, etc.

### *An Emotional/Psychological Reality:*

- ~ Youth who are marginalized racially, by sexual orientation, due to physical or mental disability, mental health, etc. and youth who are homeless, or considered "at risk" behaviorally are often vulnerable to sexual violence and least likely to report or seek supports or to be believed if they do disclose.
- ~ Youth may be reluctant to disclose to adults or take legal action after sexual assault for fear of repercussions for their own actions: i.e. drinking underage, lying about their activities/whereabouts, not being believed or blamed for the sexual assault.
- ~ Youth believe that they can't talk to adults/service providers about sexual assault because they won't understand, will judge or lecture them, or will take action that the youth doesn't want, i.e. report the sexual abuse/assault, tell their parents.
- ~ Often youth are also unaware of what services/supports are available to them or are unable to access those services due to transportation, cost, concern re: confidentiality, etc.
- ~ Youth don't always possess the analytical skills to process sexual trauma, or the ability to cope with or express sexual assault trauma effects. Their coping techniques may be misinterpreted or considered by support providers to be inappropriate.