

# Sexual Abuse 101

## About Sexual Assault

Sexual violence happens in every community and affects people of all genders and ages. Sexual violence is any type of unwanted sexual contact. This includes words and actions of a sexual nature against a person's will and without their consent. A person may use force, threats, manipulation, or coercion to commit sexual violence.



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# Forms of Sexual Violence

- Rape or sexual assault
- Child sexual assault and incest
- Sexual assault by a person's spouse or partner
- Unwanted sexual contact/touching
- Sexual harassment
- Sexual exploitation and trafficking
- Exposing one's genitals or naked body to other(s) without consent
- Masturbating in public
- Watching someone engage in private acts without their knowledge or permission
- Nonconsensual image sharing



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## Who does sexual violence impact?

- Victims of sexual violence include people of all ages, races, genders, and religions — with and without disabilities.



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There is a social context that surrounds sexual violence.



Social norms that condone violence, use power over others, traditional constructs of masculinity, the subjugation of women, and silence about violence and abuse contribute to the occurrence of sexual violence.



Oppression in all of its forms is among the root causes of sexual violence.

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Sexual violence is preventable through collaborations of community members at multiple levels of society—in our homes, neighborhoods, schools, faith settings, workplaces, and other settings.



We all play a role in preventing sexual violence and establishing norms of respect, safety, equality, and helping others.

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## What is Consent?



Consent must be freely given and informed, and a person can change their mind at any time.



Consent is more than a yes or no. It is a dialogue about desires, needs, and level of comfort with different sexual interactions.

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## Can Consent be given if someone never speaks?

- Yes. Consent can be given or denied without ever saying a word. For instance, a person can reject consent by pushing someone away, pulling away, not responding to their advances or touches, looking away or simply disengaging from whatever is happening. Someone who is scared may not say “no” or resist, which doesn’t mean they’re giving consent.
- There may be many non-verbal signs of consent as well, such as taking someone’s hand to lead them to the bedroom or placing your hand on their body, but you should always try to get a verbal, enthusiastic “yes” to make sure consent is clear. You can always try saying something like, “Do you want me to take your shirt off for you?” or “What would make you feel good right now?”



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## Can a person give consent under the influence of alcohol?

- Not legally. However, it isn’t unusual for a person to have one or two drinks prior to a consensual encounter. But if a person is inebriated to the point of incapacitation, even what seems to be a clear consent for something might not be so clear in the eyes of the law. If a person is incoherent, can’t communicate clearly, can’t stand up straight on their own, and seems to be so drunk that they don’t know what is going on or might not have any memory of it, it’s best to assume you do not have consent. Generally speaking: if there’s a chance this person might not remember anything the next morning, err on the side of caution, stop and help make sure they are safe.



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## What if I give consent first and then change my mind?

- Just as you have the freedom to give consent, you always have the freedom to not give it. This includes consent in the middle of a sexual act. For instance, you might say you want to have sex with a person, but halfway through you change your mind. Telling that person “I’m not comfortable” or “I changed my mind” is perfectly okay. They don’t have to like your change of heart, but they must accept it! You can also try saying, “Can we pause?” or “Hey can we do something else right now?”



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## What if I want to consent to one thing but not the other?

- All forms of sexual activity are entirely your choice. Consent is a very personal decision, and should include only things you are comfortable with. For instance, a person can consent to kissing and “making out” but that doesn’t mean they consent to anything else. Or a person might consent to sex, but that doesn’t mean they consent to oral sex. Make sure you are asking your partner explicitly what they are and are not comfortable with doing before doing it. Additionally, consenting to sex one weekend does not mean you consent to sex the following weekend.



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## Can I say “no” if I’m in a dating or marriage relationship with someone?

- Absolutely. Your body belongs to you, no matter what your relationship status might be. Even if you’ve happily consented to encounters in the past, you are always entitled to say “no” at any time. Remember that just because you are in a relationship with someone, you’re still the one who has ultimate control over your own body, mind and actions. If you hear “no”, even to something you’ve done before, pushing and pressuring your partner to do it again is not okay.



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## You are not alone

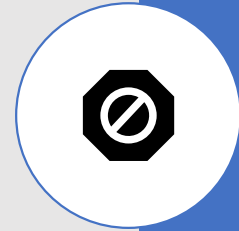
- Many sexual assault survivors are afraid to come forward for fear of not being believed, or being blamed for what happened to them. If you’ve experienced an assault or feel confused about a questionable sexual situation, know that you are not alone.



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## Victims often know the person who sexually assaulted them.

- People who sexually abuse usually target someone they know.



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## Victims are never at fault.

- Choosing to violate another person is not about “drinking too much,” “trying to have a good time,” or “getting carried away,” nor is it about the clothes someone was wearing, how they were acting, or what type of relationship they have with the person who abused them. Violating another person is a choice.



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## Rape is often not reported or convicted.

A person may choose not to report to law enforcement or tell anyone about a victimization they experienced for many reasons. Some of the most common include:



a fear of not being believed



being afraid of retaliation



shame or fear of being blamed



pressure from others



distrust towards law enforcement



a desire to protect the attacker for other reasons

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## Impact on Survivors



An assault may impact a survivor's daily life no matter when it happened. Each survivor reacts to sexual violence in their own way. Common emotional reactions include guilt, shame, fear, numbness, shock, and feelings of isolation.



Physical impacts may include personal injuries, concerns about pregnancy, or risk of contracting a sexually transmitted infection. Economic impacts of sexual violence include medical and other expenses in addition to things like time off work. The long-term psychological effects survivors may face if their trauma is left untreated include post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, isolation, and others.

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## Impact on Loved Ones



Sexual violence can affect parents, friends, partners, children, spouses, and/or coworkers of the survivor.



As they try to make sense of what happened, loved ones may experience similar reactions and feelings to those of the survivor such as fear, guilt, self-blame, and anger.

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## Impact on Communities



Schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, campuses, and cultural or religious communities may feel fear, anger, or disbelief when sexual assault happens in their community.



Violence of all kinds destroys a sense of safety and trust.



There are financial costs to communities including medical services, criminal justice expenses, crisis and mental health service fees, and the lost contributions of individuals affected by sexual violence.

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## Impact on society



The contributions and achievements that may never come as a result of sexual violence represent a cost to society that cannot be measured.



Sexual violence weakens the basic pillars of safety and trust that people long to feel in their communities because it creates an environment of fear and oppression.

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## Some Helpful Resources in Lagos State

Included below are some agencies in Lagos State offering Sexual Assault services:

- Stand to End Rape (STER) Initiative: [contactus@standtoendrape.org](mailto:contactus@standtoendrape.org)
- The Mirabel Center: [sarc@pjnigeria.org](mailto:sarc@pjnigeria.org)
- Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team (DSVRT): [dsvrt@lagos.gov.ng](mailto:dsvrt@lagos.gov.ng)
- Media Concern Initiative for Women and Children (MediaCon):  
[helponline@mediaconcern.net](mailto:helponline@mediaconcern.net)
- Women at Risk International Foundation (WARIF): [info@warifng.org](mailto:info@warifng.org)
- Cece Yara Foundation: [info@ceceyara.org](mailto:info@ceceyara.org)
- Project Alert on Violence Against Women: [info@projectalert.org](mailto:info@projectalert.org)

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