

Alberta's Sexual Violence Commitment

Alberta has made a government-wide commitment to prevent sexual violence and improve support for survivors.

The commitment includes actions in three key areas:

- **Shift the culture** by promoting a culture of consent and gender equality
- **Improve the response** by ensuring that the social, health, justice and education systems respond effectively to sexual violence
- **Support individuals** by funding community agencies that help survivors and run education and prevention programs

What is sexual violence?

Sexual violence is a sexual act committed against someone without that person's freely given consent. It can be physical and/or non-contact, affects all ages and genders, and the person committing the act may be known or a stranger.

Sexual assault is a legal term used in Canada to explain any form of sexual contact without consent and can include forced or unwanted kissing, touching, vaginal penetration, anal penetration or oral sex.

Sexual harassment is defined as unwanted or uninvited sexual remarks, gestures, sounds and actions that make a person feel unsafe, degraded or uncomfortable, even if the harasser claims to have been only joking.

Sexual consent is defined in Canada's *Criminal Code* as the voluntary agreement to engage in sexual activity. Silence or passivity does not equal consent and consenting partners must be capable of revoking consent at any time.

Sexual exploitation happens when a person in a position of trust or authority uses that power to start or attempt sexual activity with another person. It can be through direct or indirect touching, violence, coercion or the use of threats.

Alberta's Sexual Violence Commitment

Every Albertan has the right to live free from violence. Perpetrators of sexual violence violate that right.

The Government of Alberta does not tolerate these abuses of power and control. Though anyone can experience sexual violence, we recognize it impacts women and girls most.

We stand firmly with survivors, advocates and community agencies to stop sexual violence in all its forms.

We commit to supporting survivors, improving our response, and shifting to a culture of consent by advancing gender equality.

We will work until all survivors are believed and supported, and this violence is eradicated from our communities.

What is government doing to prevent sexual violence and support survivors?

- Supporting sexual assault centres and agencies with stable funding to agencies in Alberta.
- Increasing access to the legal system for survivors of family and sexual violence by removing the time limit to bring forward civil claims.
- Making it easier for survivors of family violence to leave dangerous situations by allowing them to break residential leases without financial penalty.
- Boosting funding for women's shelters by \$15 million to help ensure no woman fleeing violence is turned away.
- Providing funding to second-stage shelters for the first time to help women in need with longer term accommodation.

Who is hurt by sexual violence?

Even though anyone can experience sexual violence, most incidents occur against women and girls.

- 87 per cent of survivors are women and girls.
- 94 per cent of offenders are men.
- 95 per cent of survivors do not report their assaults to the police, making sexual violence the most underreported crime in Canada.

Statistics show that some groups are more likely to experience sexual violence:

- Indigenous women and girls
- Children and adolescents
- People with disabilities
- LGBTQ
- New Canadians - immigrants and refugees

Everyone can play a part in preventing and ending sexual violence.

Call 911 to help someone who is in immediate danger, or when you don't feel safe stepping in to help someone.

How you can intervene:

- Even as a bystander you can help stop sexual violence and harassment
- If it is safe to do so, speak up and come to a victim's defence if you witness sexual harassment and offer support
- Call the police if you witness sexual assault
- Tell the police if you see anyone adding something suspicious to another person's drink
- Check in with your friends and any vulnerable individuals to see that they get home safely
- Say "no" if anyone tries to share explicit texts or snapchats
- Refuse to join degrading conversations that keep sexism and sexual violence alive (and voice your disapproval)

How to be an ally and support survivors:

- Never blame the survivor
- Talk to your children about consent and healthy relationships
- Participate in public awareness programs
- Get your organization to promote training programs for professionals
- Volunteer or donate to organizations that work to prevent sexual violence and support survivors
- Raise awareness about sexual violence in your community