

# Key Terms

Version 11

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## What is Sexual Violence?

Sexual violence is any sexual act or act targeting a person's sexuality, gender identity or gender expression, whether the act is physical or psychological in nature, that is committed, threatened or attempted against a person without the person's consent, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, indecent exposure, voyeurism and sexual exploitation.

## What is Consent?

Consent is voluntary agreement to engage in the sexual activity in question. It is the act of willingly agreeing to engage in specific sexual behaviour and requires that a person is able to freely choose between two options: yes and no.

This means that there must be an understandable exchange of affirmative words that indicate a willingness to participate in a mutually agreed-upon sexual activity. Further:

- silence or non-communication must never be interpreted as consent, and a person in a state of diminished judgement cannot consent
- a person is incapable of giving consent if they are asleep, unconscious, or otherwise unable to communicate
- a person who has been threatened or coerced (i.e., is not agreeing voluntarily) into engaging in the sexual activity is not consenting to it
- a person who is drugged is unable to consent
- a person is unable to give consent when under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs
- a person may be unable to give consent if they have a mental disability preventing them from fully understanding the sexual acts
- the fact that consent was given in the past to a sexual or dating relationship does not mean that consent is deemed to exist for all current or future sexual activity, regardless of relationship status
- a person can withdraw consent at any time during the course of a sexual activity

- a person is incapable of giving consent to a person in a position of trust, power or authority, such as a faculty member initiating a relationship with a student who they teach or an administrator in a relationship with anyone who reports to them
- consent cannot be given on behalf of another person

It is the responsibility of the initiator of sexual activity to ensure clear and affirmative responses are communicated at all stages of sexual engagement. It is also the initiator's responsibility to know if the person they are engaging with sexually is of the age to consent.

## **Survivor**

We respect that every individual should be given the opportunity to identify with the language of their choice and understand that individuals may change how they identify throughout their healing journey. It is the prerogative of the person who has experienced these circumstances to determine how they wish to identify.

## **Rape Myths**

False beliefs about sexual violence, rooted in victim blaming, and often based in prejudice and stereotypes

## **The Red Zone**

The first eight weeks of classes, a time of heightened campus-related sexual violence. More than 50% of campus sexual assaults take place during this time.

## **Survivor-centric approach**

An approach that aims to centre the rights, dignity, and respect of each survivor at the forefront of all actions

## **Survivor-driven support**

Support that is defined by the survivor. The survivor takes the lead in how they would like to access and receive support.

## **Trauma-informed care**

Care that names and recognizes trauma and its effects while promoting empowerment and safety of survivors

## **Victim blaming**

When a survivor is blamed for the violence they have experienced

## **Internalized victim blaming**

Blaming oneself for the violence one experienced

## **Coercion**

In the context of sexual violence, unreasonable and persistent pressure for sexual activity. Coercion is the use of emotional manipulation, blackmail, threats to family or friends, or the promise of rewards or special treatment to persuade someone to do something they do not wish to do, such as being sexual or performing particular sexual acts.

## **Disclosure**

When someone who has experienced or witnessed sexual violence tells someone about their experience. Individuals who disclose can receive support without making a report/complaint. Learn more about the disclosure process [here](#).

## **Perpetrator**

In conversations around sexual violence, an individual who has committed an act of sexual violence is referred to as a perpetrator.

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