

# WHAT IS RAPE CULTURE?

**Rape Culture** is an environment (or society) where rape is common and sexual violence and harassment against women is normalized and excused in families, communities, and the media.

In Rape Culture, survivors are scrutinized, blamed and criticized, instead of those accused of committing the sexual violence. It affects us all and creates a society that disregards women's rights and safety.

The rape of one woman is a degradation, terror, and limitation to all women. Rape is aimed at breaking down the deepest and most intimate parts of a person's being - the resulting trauma is devastating and often intergenerational.

Most women and girls limit their behaviour because of rape. Most women and girls live in fear of rape. This cycle of fear is the legacy of Rape Culture.

Rape Culture is not just a catch phrase or something used by activists to garner support. It is a damaging and dangerous culture that is alive and well in our families, communities, schools, and systems.

Dispelling harmful gender norms, promoting healthy masculinity, ending victim blaming, advancing gender equity, and understanding trauma are ways we can all end Rape Culture for good.

Men and boys have a huge role in ending Rape Culture and sexual violence.

Healthy masculinity is one of the keys to ending male violence against women and feminine-presenting peoples.

**Toxic masculinity** is a cornerstone of rape culture and the negative hypersexualization of women, especially racialized women.

It supports rape culture, nurtures violence within men, and refuses to acknowledge their humanity and compassion. It is the strict adherence to hegemonic masculine norms - misogyny, aggression, bullying, harassment, homo/transphobia, and promotion of violence, including sexual violence.

Toxic masculinity not only causes trauma in men and boys as it hinders them from exploring healthy masculinity and their full potential, but it has been directly linked to violence against women and girls time and time again.



## DID YOU KNOW?

### WOMEN & GIRLS LIMIT OR CHANGE THEIR BEHAVIOURS BECAUSE OF THE EXISTENCE OF RAPE.

Aura Freedom asked women: "What are some of the ways you limit or change behaviours to avoid sexual violence?"

Here were some of their responses:

"I run to my car with my keys between my knuckles if it is dark outside and avoid alleyways."

"I downplay my wardrobe."

"I pretend to be on the phone when I am walking to make it clear to everyone around that I was talking to someone, even though I wasn't."

"I only walk on main roads so that more people will be around and even then I will avoid eye contact, especially at night."

"I wear baggy clothes to hide my body."

"I have my finger on the off button on my phone, if I click it three times it calls 911 and my emergency contact."

"I put my hood up to cover my hair in the hopes that I will be mistaken for a man."

"I have my headphones in one ear only when I'm on a walk to be fully aware of my surroundings."

"I stopped going out and meeting new people."

## RAPE CULTURE IS MAINTAINED BY:

MISOGYNISTIC LANGUAGE & HOMOPHOBIA

OBJECTIFYING WOMEN'S BODIES

SEXUALIZING GIRLS FROM A YOUNG AGE

SEXUALIZING GIRLS FROM A YOUNG AGE

IMPUNITY ENJOYED BY RAPISTS

UNHEALTHY GENDER EXPECTATIONS

VICTIM BLAMING

WE'RE NOT WAITING ANYMORE.

Sources: Marshall University - Women's Center. (2020). Rape Culture. Retrieved from <https://www.marshall.edu/wcenter/sexual-assault/rape-culture/>  
WAVAW Rape Crisis Centre. (2019, March 19). What is Rape Culture? Retrieved from <https://www.wavaw.ca/what-is-rape-culture/>  
Aura Freedom, Kokkoros, M. (2020). Relentless Resilience - A Beijing +25 Parallel Report. Retrieved from [https://aurafreedom.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/AF\\_RelentlessResilience\\_Beijing25\\_Cdn\\_ParallelRpt\\_Feb2020.pdf](https://aurafreedom.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/AF_RelentlessResilience_Beijing25_Cdn_ParallelRpt_Feb2020.pdf)