

WHAT IS SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

Canada operates from a broad definition of **Sexual Violence**, which includes both **Sexual Assault** and **Sexual Harassment**. This includes any sexual violence committed by an intimate partner, ex-partner, or even by a spouse. Rape is rape, even in intimate partnerships, relationships and marriages.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

Sexual Assault includes all unwanted sexual activity, such as kissing, fondling, sexual grabbing, and rape. It is any sexual contact or activity with anyone without consent and includes forcing someone to commit unsafe or humiliating sexual acts.

The Canadian Criminal Code defines sexual assault as “any unwanted sexual act done by one person to another or sexual activity without one person’s consent or voluntary agreement.”

Sexual Violence can include these acts and more:

- Sexual degradation and humiliation
- Sexual assault, including rape
- Coercion/forcing participation in sexual acts with others
- Coercion/forcing viewing of pornography
- Coercion/forcing drug use in sexual acts
- Unwanted filming/photo taking of sexual acts

SEXUAL HARRASSMENT

Sexual Harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, unwanted touch, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal and physical forms of harassment.

The Canadian Criminal Code defines Sexual Harassment as “any conduct, comment, gesture, or contact of a sexual nature that is likely to cause offence or humiliation to any person.”

Sexual Harassment can include these acts and more:

- Cat-calling
- Stalking
- Demanding hugs
- Unwanted touching, sexual looks or gestures
- Unwanted pressure for sexual favours or dates
- Telling sexual jokes or stories

Sexual Violence is deliberately carried out against a person’s will. It is meant to show power and domination. It is made possible by harmful gender norms and unequal power relationships. Most Sexual Violence is committed by men against women, girls and gender diverse peoples. This makes Sexual Violence a gendered crime and, in Aura Freedom’s opinion and the opinion of other feminist groups, a hate crime.

Knowing about consent is paramount to preventing and understanding Sexual Violence and supporting survivors. Explore our PDF on Consent in the **Relentless Resilience Hub to End Gender-Based Violence** at: aurafreedom.org/RelentlessResilience

WHAT IS MARITAL RAPE?

Marital Rape/Sexual Violence is committed by a partner or ex-partner with whom the survivor is, or has been, living with in a partnership that is recognized by law. This could be a marriage, cultural partnership, common-law partnership or other.

Marital Rape is an example of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and is any unwanted sexual act or activity, including non-consensual sexual acts. Consent is needed for all sexual acts, even in intimate partnerships. **Rape within a marriage or an intimate partnership is still rape.**

In relationships, survivors often experience coercion into sexual acts.

Coercion is:

- Manipulating someone until they give in to a sexual act (*this is sexual assault!*)
- Involves blackmailing, pressuring, threatening, intimidating & guiltting someone into a sexual act
- Not giving consent on your own terms
- Not being given space to freely say NO

For more info and resources on GBV, including survivor support available in Canada, visit the **Relentless Resilience Hub to End Gender-Based Violence** at: aurafreedom.org/RelentlessResilience

Sources: Criminal Code of Canada, s. 271 Sexual Assault
Department of Justice - A Definition of Consent to Sexual Activity
<https://canada.justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-pp/victims-victimes/def.html>

