

Sexual Assault

Sexual assault can take many different forms and be defined in different ways, but one thing remains the same: it's never the victim's fault.

What is sexual assault?

The term sexual assault refers to sexual contact or behavior that occurs without explicit consent of the victim. Some forms of sexual assault include:

- Attempted rape
- Fondling or unwanted sexual touching
- Forcing a victim to perform sexual acts, such as oral sex or penetrating the perpetrator's body
- Penetration of the victim's body, also known as rape

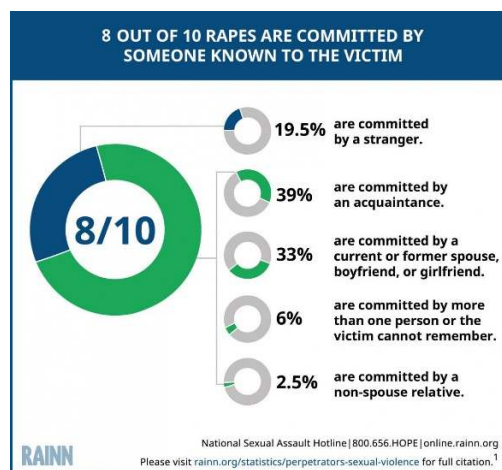
What is rape?

Rape is a form of sexual assault, but not all sexual assault is rape. The term rape is often used as a legal definition to specifically include sexual penetration without consent. For its Uniform Crime Reports, the FBI defines rape as "penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim." To see how your state legally defines rape and other forms of sexual assault, visit RAINN's [State Law Database](#).

What is force?

Force doesn't always refer to physical pressure. Perpetrators may use emotional coercion, psychological force, or manipulation to coerce a victim into non-consensual sex. Some perpetrators will use threats to force a victim to comply, such as threatening to hurt the victim or their family or other intimidation tactics.

Who are the perpetrators?



Survivors of both stranger rape and acquaintance rape often blame themselves for behaving in a way that encouraged the perpetrator. It's important to remember that the victim is never to blame for the actions of a perpetrator. (<https://www.rainn.org/articles/sexual-assault>)

To speak with someone who is trained to help, call the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 800.656.HOPE (4673) or chat online at [online.rainn.org](https://www.rainn.org).

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