



no means no

Violence against Women

Male against female violence accounts for nearly half—forty-eight percent—of all violent crime in Canada, according to the *1997 Crime Statistics Report* by Statistics Canada. Female against male violence accounts for only six percent of all violent crime in Canada.

Although male against female violence is the most common violent crime in Canadian society, it is the least likely to occur among strangers. In 87% of reported cases the woman knew her assailant. In 46% of the cases the woman was assaulted by her spouse.

Sexual Assault and Students

The Statistics Canada *1993 Violence Against Women Survey* found that one in every three Canadian women had been sexually assaulted. The same survey found that 24% of women, age 18-24, have been sexually attacked by a boyfriend or acquaintance.

The most common form of violence among university and college students is sexual assault. A national survey on the abuse of women on university and college campuses found that:

- 20.2% of female students said they gave into unwanted sexual intercourse because of a man's continued arguments and pressure;
- 6.6% of female students said that they had unwanted sexual intercourse because the man threatened or used some degree of physical force;
- 13.6% of female students said that, when they were drunk or high, a man attempted unwanted sexual intercourse.¹

Drug-Induced Rape

Valium, Librium, Rohypnol, GHB, Robaine, and Chloral Hydrate are some of the drugs that are known to be used in rapes. They are often known by names such as mind erasers, party poppers, liquid ecstasy, mickey finns, and roofies. In a drink, these drugs are often colourless, odourless, and tasteless. The effects can include muscle relaxation, disorientation, hallucinations, loss of inhibitions, slowing of psycho-motor performance, and black-outs. Drugs such as Rohypnol can cause the loss of memory for ten to twelve hours. In this drugged state, women are usually unable to protect themselves from sexual assault.²

Use of Date Rape Drugs in Canada

While statistics on the use of rape drugs in Canada are unavailable, reports of their use continue to increase.

Canada's first major seizure of Rohypnol occurred in January 1999 when the RCMP seized 3,500 doses in North Vancouver, BC.³

In the United States of America, federal Drug Enforcement Administration seizures of Rohypnol have increased dramatically since the mid-1980s. Between 1985 and 1991 there were only three federal rape cases involving date rape drugs. Yet, in 1996 alone there were 2,607 state and local rape cases involving date rape drugs.⁴

Supreme Court Ruling on Consent: No Means No

It has now been more than a decade since Parliament rewrote the Criminal Code to make it clear that voluntary consent is a prerequisite to any sexual activity. In a 1999 ruling, the Supreme Court of Canada upheld an Alberta man's conviction for sexual assault. The Alberta Court of Appeal had earlier overturned the conviction. In its ruling, the Supreme Court stated that:

- "A belief that silence, passivity or ambiguous conduct constitutes consent is a mistake in law and provides no defence... An accused cannot say that he thought 'no' means 'yes.'"
- "The complainant either consented or not...There is no third option. There is no defense of implied consent to sexual assault in Canadian law."
- "A belief by the accused that the complainant in her own mind wanted him to touch her, but did not express that desire, is not a defense."⁵

Everyone's Responsibility

Violence against women is both a crime and a social epidemic. The problem will not be overcome until all men respect the right of women to decide if, how, when, and with whom they have sex.

On campus, female and male students must work together to raise awareness about date rape, and dispel common myths concerning the incidence and circumstances of sexual assault.

Sources

1. Walter DeKeseredy and Katherine Kelly, "The Incidence and Prevalence of Woman Abuse in Canadian University and College Dating Relationships," *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 1993.
2. Some Facts About Violence Against Women, Information Bulletin, *BC Ministry of Women's Equality*, April, 1999.
3. *Vancouver Sun*, January 26, 1999, A1.
4. *The Varsity*, March 31, 1997.
5. *Globe and Mail*, February 26, 1999, A1, A7.