



AMHERST POLICE DEPARTMENT

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According to Statistics Canada, **one in three women** will experience a sexual assault in some form in her lifetime. This startling statistic highlights why the month of May has been designated as Sexual Assault Awareness Month. The goal of organizers is to raise public awareness of sexual assault, to educate communities and individuals on how to prevent sexual violence, and to provide support and information on available resources for victims.

The term sexual assault is often interpreted by the public as rape. The term is given a much broader interpretation by the courts. A sexual assault can range from a non-violent touch to a violent physical assault. One court decision defined sexual assault as “...an assault, ... which is committed in circumstances of a sexual nature that the sexual integrity of a victim is violated.”

Here is some statistical information on sexual assaults in Nova Scotia and Amherst.

- In 2011, a total of 708 sexual assault incidents in Nova Scotia were reported to the police.
- Police-reported data for Nova Scotia indicate that, in 2011, 82% of victims of sexual assault were female while 97% of suspects were male.
- Most victims are women younger than 25.
- They often know the person who assaulted them and in many cases fail to report the crime to police.
- Locally, Amherst had 15 sexual assault related complaints in 2012. Six of those complaints resulted in criminal charges

What can we do as a community? We need to talk about the issue; challenge the sexual assault myths and stereotypes that condone or perpetuate sexual assault; to not be sexual assault bystanders; and to support victims and survivors. Ask questions about each other, to build mutual respect and empathy. We must change societies' attitudes toward blaming or shaming the victim.

The Amherst Police Department would like to highlight a poster campaign that has been endorsed by the N.S. Chiefs of Police. The “**Don’t Be That Guy**” posters focus on the issue of consent. Each poster makes a statement about consent. Here are 4 of them.

- “Just because she isn’t saying no... doesn’t mean she’s saying yes.”
- “It’s not sex... when she’s passed out.”
- “It’s not sex... when she’s wasted.”
- “Just because you help her home doesn’t mean you get to help yourself.”

The posters can be viewed at halifax.ca/MenEndingViolenceAgainstWomen

The key messages of the posters are:

1. Sex without on going consent = Sexual Assault.
2. Sex with someone who’s unable to consent = Sexual Assault.
3. Sex without voluntary consent = Sexual Assault.

Hopefully you will not be a victim, but if you are or if you know someone who is a victim, here is some information that I hope will help.

- Remember that **the assault is not your fault.**
- Go to a safe place.
- It is your choice what to do next.
- Reporting the assault to the police is your choice. We encourage you to contact us but it is your choice.
- Seek support. Locally, women can access support through Autumn House crisis line, 667-1200. There are trained staff on hand to help woman who are victims of sexual assault and other forms abuse 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.