



Rape  
Crisis

Tyneside and  
Northumberland

**SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN LATER LIFE**

**INFORMATION FOR SURVIVORS**



## WHAT IS SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

Sexual violence is any type of sexual behaviour that the victim does not consent to. 1 in 5 women and approximately 1 in 20 men experience at least one form of sexual violence during their lifetime.

Rape and sexual assault can happen to anyone at any age, from the very young to the very old.

**RAPE MYTH – ONLY YOUNG WOMEN ARE RAPED**

## IT IS A MYTH THAT OLDER PEOPLE DON'T EXPERIENCE SEXUAL VIOLENCE.

**RAPE MYTH – MOST OLDER PEOPLE ARE RAPED BY STRANGERS**

Dr Hannah Bows at the Centre for Research into Violence and Abuse (CRIVA) at Durham University has been working with Rape Crisis Tyneside and Northumberland, Age UK Teesside and Age UK Gateshead to help understand this under-researched topic. Dr Bows' research examined police recorded sexual offences involving a victim aged 60 and over and found there are around 150 reported rapes each year across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. However, rape is one of the most under-reported crimes, so it is likely the true figure is much higher.

## SEXUAL VIOLENCE CAN HAPPEN IN A RANGE OF CONTEXTS AND CIRCUMSTANCES

Both women and men can be victims of sexual offences, although most recorded offences involve a female victim and male offender. Offenders can be partners, spouse, family members, acquaintances, neighbours, friends or strangers. Sex without consent is rape, regardless of who the offender is. The research found that most offenders were known to victims and most were younger than victims (66% were aged under 60).

**RAPE MYTH – WE'RE MARRIED SO IT IS OK**

The research found that most rapes happened in the victim's home, however sexual offences can also be perpetrated in other locations including the offender's home, or other private, or public, places. They can also happen in care homes; the second most common location in the research was a care home.



## IF YOU HAVE BEEN RAPED OR SEXUALLY ASSAULTED

- You can get immediate help from a range of places, including hospitals, your GP, sexual assault referral centres, the police or rape crisis centres. You can call 999 to get help from the emergency services.
- If you do not want to report to the police, you can go to a sexual assault referral centre (SARC) or rape crisis, who can give you confidential support and advice. Details on how to find your local SARC or rape crisis centre are provided at the end of this leaflet. SARCs can help with medical examinations and sexual health checks and have specialist trained staff to help you. Rape Crisis can provide practical and emotional support, counselling, groupwork and most have specialist sexual violence helplines. Rape Crisis can also provide information to those supporting survivors of sexual violence.
- If you can, keep any items of clothing and other personal items you had at the time you were raped or sexually assaulted safe and do not wash them, or your body, as this may result in forensic evidence being lost. However, do not worry if you bathe or have washed your clothes.
- You can get support from a SARC or rape crisis at any point after you are raped or sexually assaulted, no matter whether it happened minutes, hours, days, weeks, months or years ago. They will listen to you, believe you and provide you with help and support.

The research shows that very few older people access specialist sexual violence services for support after rape or sexual assault for a range of reasons including embarrassment, feeling ashamed or confused, or not being sure who can help you. Many people feel like this after being rape or sexually assaulted, but the support services are there to help you and are specially trained in providing support to victims.

## IMPACTS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

You may suffer from a range of physical and emotional side effects or impacts, including physical injuries, bruises, cuts and genital trauma, confusion, depression, shock and post-traumatic stress disorder (a type of shock). However, every individual has different experiences. The specialist services can offer the support that is right for you.

## USEFUL CONTACTS

- **In an emergency, dial 999 and ask for the police and/or the ambulance service**
- **Rape Crisis England and Wales, Rape Crisis Scotland and Rape Crisis Northern Ireland provide a range of specialist services to support survivors of sexual violence.** For information, you can call the Freephone helpline: 0808 802 9999 or find your local centre by visiting:
  - [www.rapecrisis.org.uk/centres.php](http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk/centres.php) (England and Wales)
  - [www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk/help-information/local-rape-crisis-centres/](http://www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk/help-information/local-rape-crisis-centres/) (Scotland) or
  - [www.rapecrisishelp.ie/find-a-service/](http://www.rapecrisishelp.ie/find-a-service/) (Northern Ireland).
- **Survivors UK** provide support to men who have been raped or sexually assaulted, including a helpline, online and text chat services. More information and contact details are available on their website: [www.survivorsuk.org/about-us/](http://www.survivorsuk.org/about-us/)
- **Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs)** provide support following a rape, including interviews, examinations and storage of forensic evidence for both women and men. To find out more, or for information on the nearest SARC, you can search on the NHS website [www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Rape-and-sexual-assault-referral-centres/LocationSearch/364](http://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Rape-and-sexual-assault-referral-centres/LocationSearch/364) or <http://thesurvivorstrust.org/sarc/> or <http://therowan.net>.
- **Age UK centres provide a range of advice, information, activities and support for people aged 50 and over in their local communities.**  
To find your nearest Age UK centre visit [www.ageuk.org.uk/about-us/local-partners/](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/about-us/local-partners/) or call 0800 169 8787.

This doctoral research was conducted by Dr Hannah Bows (@Hannah\_Bows) and supervised by Professor Nicole Westmarland (@Nwestmarland) at the Durham Centre for Research into Violence and Abuse (@CRIVADurham).

An article published in the British Journal of Criminology based on the research can be accessed here: <http://bjc.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2016/04/12/bjc.azv116>.

The doctoral research was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). A grant from R.W. Mann Trust funded the design and printing of this guide.

This leaflet was designed in partnership with Rape Crisis Tyneside and Northumberland, Age UK Teesside and Age UK Gateshead.