

What can I do if it's happening to me?

If you're in a situation where you're being sexually assaulted by a current or ex-partner, it can sometimes feel like you have no way out. Regardless of whether you want to stay with your partner or not, there are some things you can do to access support for yourself and try to bring a stop to the abuse.

- Keep in contact with friends and family members. Your offending partner may try and isolate you from the people who care about you in an attempt to remain in control of you and the relationship. Keeping in contact with your support systems may provide a link to freedom from the abuse.
- Confide in others. Many survivors feel they should keep the rape a secret as they feel embarrassed or ashamed, or don't want to betray their partner. Silence allows the offender to continue their behaviour. You can gain emotional support from talking to others about what's happening.
- Investigate your options. There are various agencies in the Auckland area that offer support to people who are affected by partner rape. You may want to gather information and resources to get an idea about what options are available to you.

Rape Prevention Education offers a referral service that is culturally appropriate, safe and supportive. You can contact them to talk through your options and get information about what's in your area. Call (09) 360 4004 during office hours, email info@rapecrisis.org.nz

Partner Rape

Rape Prevention Education

Rape Crisis Auckland Inc.
Ph. (09) 360 4004
Fax (09) 360 4015
Email: info@rapecrisis.org.nz

PARTNER RAPE



Rape Prevention Education

RAPE CRISIS AUCKLAND INCORPORATED
WHAKATU MAURI

*Supporting survivors of sexual violence & their whanau.
Working to eliminate rape and sexual abuse through
education and community work.*

CONTACT DETAILS

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What is partner rape?

Partner rape happens when your spouse or de facto partner (someone who you live with in a committed, intimate relationship) has sex with you without your consent. This includes if you feel pressured, threatened or coerced into participating in any type of sex when you don't want to, or if you are physically forced into, or during, sex.

Partner rape can happen to men and women of any age, ethnicity or sexual identity. It is generally part of an ongoing abusive relationship, but may also happen as an isolated incident within a relationship that is otherwise respectful and equal. It can happen between a man and a woman or partners of the same sex.

How can you be raped by your partner?

Sometimes people have difficulty understanding how unwanted sex with someone you have previously been or are currently sexually intimate with could be considered 'rape'.

New Zealand passed legislation in 1986 that protects any person in a marital or de facto relationship from having sex when they do not want to. These laws mean that any type of non-consensual sex, regardless of your relationship with the offender, can be reported to the Police as rape.

Some people who have been pressured or forced into sex with a current or ex-partner feel uncomfortable labelling their experience as 'rape' and their partner as a 'rapist'. Regardless of what you choose to call the experience, and whether or not you report it to the Police, support is always available.

Effects of partner rape

Coming to terms with being sexually assaulted by your partner can be hard. It can be difficult to imagine how someone who you love and trust, and who is supposed to love and care for you, can hurt you in this way. The sense of betrayal and disbelief may be overwhelming.

Survivors of partner rape often feel that they are to blame for the assault happening. They may feel guilty, ashamed, or responsible for keeping the assault a secret. This can lead to depression, anger, confusion and loss of confidence and self-esteem.

It isn't uncommon for a survivor to disassociate emotionally and feel numb or detached from their abusive partner. They may also develop hostility towards the offender's gender, or feel they'll never be able to trust anyone or be in an intimate relationship again.

Statistics

- 17% of women in a recent New Zealand study reported that they had been sexually assaulted by a current or ex-partner (Fanslow & Robinson, 2004)
- 13% of the survivors who contacted Rape Crisis Auckland in 2003 were raped by their partner
- According to Ministry of Justice statistics, 6.5% of the sexual assault reported in 2001 where the survivor knew the offender before the assault occurred was perpetrated by a current or ex-partners of the same sex. 39.9% of abusive ex- or current partners were of the opposite sex to the survivor.

Myths about partner rape

"It's not rape if it's a partner/spouse who forces you to have sex"

Any sex without consent is rape. Whether married or in a relationship with a person, no one has ownership of your body and your decisions about it but you.

"Spouses/partners can't be 'real' rapists"

Most people who rape are in a married, de facto or otherwise stable relationship.

"It's not rape if the survivor is confused about their experience, or doesn't call it 'rape'"

There are many reasons why someone who is raped by their partner might not want to label it as such. There may be pain and confusion around identifying that someone they genuinely love has hurt them in such a way. No matter what the survivor calls it, sex without consent is never ok.

"It's not rape if the survivor remains with their partner - surely if it was that bad, they'd leave"

There are many reasons why someone may choose to not leave an abusive partner, and none of them mean that the rape wasn't serious or traumatic.

"Rape by a partner isn't 'real' rape unless it's extremely violent"

In general, rape that happens in any context doesn't involve a great deal of physical violence. When rape happens within an intimate relationship, the offender often knows other ways (like threats or coercion) to scare and subdue their partner.

No one has ownership of your body but you