

# Sexual Assault Against Men & Boys



**Sexual assault survivors who are men and boys are often underserved. Social norms and toxic masculinity can make it hard for men & boys to speak out and get help.**

Because of the many stereotypes and myths related to sexual violence, many survivors never come forward or seek justice. Social beliefs about who can and cannot be a survivor may hinder men & boys from reporting or telling someone. Under apartheid, sexual violence against men was not criminalized. South Africa's current legislation recognizes that people of all gender identities and expressions can be victimised.



Asking for help or reporting at the police station can be intimidating and you might be worried about judgement or not being believed. Remember that as a survivor of violence, your right to access justice and care is protected by the law.

## Facts About Sexual Violence Against Men & Boys

- Sexual violence can and does happen to men and boys. The statistics suggest that men and boys are sexually assaulted everyday in South Africa.
- Sexual assault is not about the sexual orientation of the victim or perpetrator. Sexual violence is often about control, humiliation, harm, and domination.
- Men and boys who have been sexually assaulted may have the same emotions and feelings as others who have been sexually assaulted, but may face different challenges because of societal attitudes and beliefs about sexual violence and masculinity.
- Counselling can help with dealing with the emotional effects of sexual assault.
- Victim advocacy can help identify resources and reporting options in a confidential and compassionate manner.

## Reporting Sexual Assault

Because of the many stereotypes and myths related to sexual assault and masculinity, men & boys can face challenges when reporting or accessing the criminal justice system.

Whether or not you decide to report the crime, consider having a sexual assault evidence collection kit (SAECK) done to collect any DNA evidence in case you would like to report later. You can access these services at a Thuthuzela Care Centre (TCC). TCC's are one-stop units where sexual violence survivors can access forensic services, medical care, containment counselling, report to the police, and referral to relevant services. TCCs are at certain public hospitals all over the country. TCC services are free and available 24/7.

You do not have to report alone. You can take someone with you or ask for a victim assistant officer. If you report at the police station, the officer taking your statement should take you to a private room to take your statement.



## Dealing with Emotions

If you are the victim of sexual violence, you may be experiencing a range of emotions and feelings. Some common feelings and emotions may be, but not limited to, are:

- Denial
- Self-blame
- Shame
- Helplessness
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Anger
- Fear
- Guilt
- Mood swings
- Loneliness
- Social withdrawal
- Flashbacks
- Nightmares
- Numbness
- Dislike of sex
- Difficulty with intimacy

These feelings and emotions can impact a man's overall well-being. His sense of self and security in the world may have changed.

He may withdraw from interpersonal relationships and feel completely alone. He may begin to question his overall identity of masculinity and feel that he is less of a man after the assault because of social ideals of what makes a man.

## How to Support Men & Boys

[Listen & Believe.](#) If someone tells you about surviving sexual violence, understand that they are trusting you and choosing to be vulnerable. Listen to their story and how it's affected them and avoid asking too many questions that make the survivor feel like they have to prove they are telling the truth.

[Be Aware of Harmful Myths.](#) There are a lot of stereotypes about men & boys who survivor sexual violence. You might not even know that something you believe can be hurtful. Educate yourself so that you avoid perpetuating stereotypes and saying something inappropriate to the survivor.

[Don't Get Caught Up in 'What Happened'.](#) It can be tempting to want to know exactly what happened to someone. Let the survivor share as much or as little as they are comfortable with. It can be hard to talk about a traumatic event or uncomfortable talking about genitals, violence, and sex.

[Be Survivor-Led.](#) Trust that the survivor is the expert on their own life. It can be tempting to try and 'fix' things and you might want the survivor to do what you think will help. Let the survivor decide and support them rather than thinking you know better.





## Harmful Myths to Avoid

- Men & Boys always want sex and so cannot be raped.
- Only certain (gay, bisexual, trans) men can be raped.
- Men should be able to fight off any attack.
- Only men in prison get raped.
- Only gay men rape boys/men.
- Men shouldn't express emotions and should deal with trauma on their own.

## Kwanele Can Help

As a womxn-led organization, we understand that boys/men might feel that we can't understand or won't help them. Kwanele are equipped to survivors of all gender identities and expressions. We can put you in touch with organizations who work specifically with men and help you feel less alone if you choose to report.

## Getting Help

It can be difficult, but it is okay to ask for help. You do not have to deal with feelings and emotions alone. Sexual assault is a traumatic experience. Getting help and using support systems are important along the path of healing.

Kwanele South Africa offers confidential advocacy services. If you do not know where to turn, consider contacting Kwanele South Africa to learn of resources that may be helpful for you.

**Visit:**

**[kwanelesouthafrica.org](http://kwanelesouthafrica.org)**

