

# WHAT IS DENIM DAY?

 **Denim Day** is the last Wednesday of **Sexual Assault Awareness Month (April)**, raising awareness and encouraging people to wear jeans with a purpose, support survivors of sexual assault, and educate themselves and others about all forms of sexual violence and gender-based harm.

## WHAT are the origins?

The campaign began after a ruling in 1998 by the Italian Supreme Court, where a rape conviction was overturned because the justices assumed the victim was wearing tight jeans, therefore she must have helped the perpetrator remove her jeans, thereby implying consent. Outraged by this assumption, the women in the Italian Parliament came to work the next day wearing jeans, in protest of this decision and in solidarity with the victim.

## HOW can I participate?

Wearing jeans, wearing a button (available at testing sites and entrances to campus) to raise awareness and have a conversation about consent, using the digital toolkit to download materials for discussion and virtual Zoom-based support.

Learn more about Denim Day and USC's **Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services**, a unit of Counseling and Mental Health Services in USC Student Health, the campus resource for students, providing advocate services (24/7) to survivors of sexual assault and gender-based harm; providing mental health services, and promoting prevention education programs for students and student-serving departments. Licensed clinical mental health care is provided through clinician faculty members of the Department of Psychiatry and the Behavioral Sciences in the Keck School of Medicine of USC.

Call **213-0740-9355 (WELL)** for 24/7 access to counseling and mental health support, advocate accompaniment to crisis centers and medical care. **Questions?** Contact us at [studenthealth@usc.edu](mailto:studenthealth@usc.edu).



*Check out <https://studenthealth.usc.edu/saam-denimday> to see how you can support survivors this month.*

# COMMON MYTHS

## ABOUT SEXUAL ASSAULT & SEXUAL VIOLENCE

**Myth:** It only happens to women.

**Fact:** *Any person of any gender, age, race, class, religion, occupation, physical ability, sexual identity, or appearance can be assaulted.*

**Myth:** It's not really assault when a person changes their mind in the middle of sexual activity.

**Fact:** *Consent is reversible; a person can change their mind at any time. Their partner is responsible for respecting their decision to stop.*

**Myth:** Sexual assault is usually violent and involves a stranger.

**Fact:** *Over 80% of sexual assaults on college campuses are committed by someone the victim knows, such as a friend or an acquaintance.*

**Myth:** If a person doesn't fight back, they weren't really assaulted.

**Fact:** *There are many reasons why a victim might not physically fight their attacker, including: shock, fear, threats or the size and strength of the attacker. Many experience their body freezing (medical term is "tonic immobility") which is a temporary state of motor inhibition believed to be a response to situations involving extreme fear.*

## Additional Information: Sexual Assault Awareness

**Sexual and Gender-based Violence** includes any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality using coercion or threat, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work. **People of any age, ability, ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, or physical ability can experience sexual violence.**

Examples of Sexual Violence:

- Sexual Assault
- Sexual Harassment (including digital)
- Child Sexual Abuse
- Intimate Partner Violence
- Stalking (including digital)

For more definitions, check out [USC's Policy on Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation](#).

**Sexual Assault** is having or attempting to have sexual contact with another individual without consent or where the individual cannot consent because of age or temporary or permanent mental incapacity. This includes:

- Sexual intercourse (anal, oral, or vaginal), including penetration with a body part (e.g., penis, finger, hand, tongue) or an object, or requiring another to penetrate themselves with a body part or an object, however slight; or
- Sexual touching of the private body parts, including, but not limited to, contact with the breasts, buttocks, groin, genitals, or other intimate part of an individual's body for the purpose of sexual gratification.

Consent must be affirmative. "Affirmative consent" means affirmative, conscious, and voluntary agreement to engage in sexual activity. It is positive cooperation in act and attitude made with knowledge and agreement to the nature of the act.

Consent cannot be obtained through physical force, threats, or coercion, or by taking advantage of another person's incapacitation. Coercion is conduct, including intimidation or express/implied threats of immediate or future physical, emotional, financial, or reputational harm to the Reporting Party or another, which would place a reasonable person in fear they will be injured or harmed if they do not submit.



It is the responsibility of each individual involved to ensure they have the affirmative consent of the other(s) to engage in each act of sexual activity.

Enthusiastic consent is about creating ongoing communication with a partner:

- Confirming that there is reciprocal interest before initiating any physical touch
- Letting your partner know that you can stop at any time
- Explicitly agreeing to certain activities, either by saying “yes” or another affirmative statement, like “I’m open to trying.”
- Periodically checking in with your partner, such as asking “Is this still okay?”

Examples of lack of consent:

- A “Yes,” or the absence of a “No” under *incapacitation* — under the influence of alcohol and other substances (intoxication); asleep; unconsciousness
- Giving in because of *fear*
- Agreeing to sex because of *fear* or *threats*
- The *absence of a “no”*
- *Cease of protest or silence*
- *Coercion*: Coercion is conduct, including intimidation or express/implied threats of immediate or future physical, emotional, financial, or reputational harm to the Reporting Party or another, which would place a reasonable person in fear they will be injured or harmed if they do not submit.

## **The Extent of the Problem**

*In the United States ([all statistics from the 2015 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey](#))*

- Approximately 1 in 5 women in the U.S. reported completed or attempted rape at some point in their lifetime. Approximately 2.6% of men in the U.S. reported completed or attempted rape at some point in their life time.
- Approximately 1 in 14 men in the U.S. was made to penetrate someone else (attempted or completed) against their will at some point in their lifetime.
- Approximately 1 in 6 women and 1 in 10 men experienced sexual coercion (e.g. being repeatedly asked for sex, sexual pressure due to someone using their influence or authority) at some point in their lifetime.
- Majority of victims of completed or attempted rape reported that it occurred prior to age 25.

At USC ([all statistics from the 2019 AAU Survey](#))

- 31% of female undergraduate students, 10.2% of male undergraduate students, and 26.1% of TQGN (transgender, queergender, and gender non-conforming) undergraduate students experienced at least one incident of nonconsensual sexual contact since entering USC
- 66.3% of female undergraduate students, 43.2% of male undergraduate students, and 74.2% of TQGN undergraduate students experienced at least one incident of sexual harassment behavior upon entering USC
- 27.6% of female graduate students, 19.4% of male graduate students, and 54% of TGQN graduate students experienced at least one incident of sexual harassment behavior upon entering USC
- Males tend to be the most common perpetrators of sexual harassment (88.4% of incidents faced by undergraduate students involved a male perpetrator; 84.7% of incidents faced by graduate students involved a male perpetrator)
- 21.6% of sexual harassment behavior towards graduate students were perpetrated by faculty

### What can I do to combat sexual violence and support survivors?

- **Learn more** about relationship and sexual violence and how it impacts the survivors, their loved ones, and our community
- If you see something or hear something that is sexist, homophobic, transphobic, and misogynist, **do something about it—using the “4D’s” to distract, be direct, delegate to others, or debrief afterward:**
  - Create a **distraction** and change the topic to de-escalate the situation
  - If you are comfortable **directly** approaching the situation, make sure that you are safe.
  - If there is someone else who can address the situation better, consider **delegating** to someone in position of power or who knows how to help survivors (RSVP advocates are great individuals who can support survivors – they are available 24/7 and you can reach them by calling Student Health at 213-740-WELL (9355))
  - It’s important to check-in afterward. **Debrief** about what happened.
    - Tell the survivor that you believe them and thank them for being vulnerable
    - Encourage survivors to seek help they need, **but do not force them to do anything unless they are ready**
    - Be patient and respect their autonomy. There is no need to pry to get additional information from them
- Learn more through additional [workshops](#).
- Join [Violence Outreach Intervention and Community Empowerment \(VOICE\)](#). VOICE is a peer outreach program engage USC students in supporting survivors of trauma and preventing sexual and gender-based violence in their respective communities on campus.

### Questions to reflect upon:

- What can I change in my everyday practice?
  - Do I consume media (TV shows, movies, songs) that perpetuate or encourage relationship or sexual violence?
  - Can I volunteer or donate my time or money to an organization that support survivors?
- Is there someone in my life that I can have honest conversations about their lack of awareness surrounding relationship and sexual violence?
- If I notice someone being disrespectful, how am I going to educate them and show that I don't condone their behaviors?
- If someone shared their past experiences with relationship and sexual violence, how can I respond to validate their lived experiences?

### **Where can I refer people to?**

For students impacted by relationship and sexual violence, please reach out to [Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services](#) by making an appointment on MySHR or calling Student Health at 213-740-9355 (WELL). Our advocates and clinicians are confidential and what you choose to share with them will not be shared with anyone else unless your life or someone else's life is threatened.

### **Where to Learn More**

- [USC Task Force on the 2019 AAU Survey on Campus Climate on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct](#)
- [USC's Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#)
- [National Sexual Violence Resource Center](#)
- [Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network \(RAINN\)](#)
  - 24/7 hotline: 800-656-HOPE (4673)
- [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#)
  - 24/7 hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
- [Know Your IX](#)
- [Valor US \(formerly CALCASA\)](#)