

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month, and the second week in April is National Victims' Rights Week. Chances are good that we all know someone who has experienced sexual violence, even if they haven't told us. They are watching us and listening to how we talk about the issue. Do we believe survivors? Do we make them feel safe? Or do we blame them and make jokes about victims?

Sexual violence is not limited to one specific population, but rather it is something that impacts people of all backgrounds and identities. Anyone can become a victim, including children, teens, adults and seniors. Nearly 1 in 5 women and 1 in 67 men have experience rape or attempted rape in their lifetime. People who identify as LGBTQ experience sexual violence at higher rates than people who identify as heterosexual.

Most people are victimized by someone they know. Last year alone 88% of sexual assault victims served by Crime Victims Council knew their perpetrators. People who abuse can be family members, friends, partners or other trusted individuals. This can often make reporting even more difficult. About 2 out of 3 rapes go unreported, making it the most unreported crime according to the FBI.

How we talk about sexual violence matters. Our words matter. The things you say every day send a message about your beliefs and your values. When you hear comments that blame victims or make light of sexual violence, speak up. Sexual violence can only thrive when it is not taken seriously. Show others that you don't believe in stereotypes but that you do believe in survivors.

We hope that you can join Crime Victims Council as we honor, support and believe survivors of sexual violence, not only in April, but also throughout the year.

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