

RISK FACTORS FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT

Risks are the things in a person's environment and circumstances that have the potential to harm them. This includes things such as prejudice, ignorance, and poorly designed infrastructure. Risks also include things that might be missing from those circumstances, such as respect and friendship

1



LGBTQIA+

Anyone who is working out their gender identity can be at risk of feeling socially isolated and an 'outsider', especially from their peers. A perpetrator may pick up on feelings of uncertainty and loneliness and try to persuade the person that only they genuinely understand and accept them.

2



Lack of cultural safety

Anyone who has their cultural identity challenged, denied or dismissed is likely to feel unsafe, disrespected and devalued. This creates uncertainty and anxiety, which brings all the risks noted above.

3



Low self-esteem

Low self esteem creates a deep, unmet need for affection, admiration, and acceptance. Without feelings of self-worth, a person may not see the value in the boundaries, respect, and consent they are entitled to.

4



Loneliness

Loneliness can lead to feelings of neglect, isolation, and alienation. This makes it easier for a perpetrator to isolate the person from their loved ones, both emotionally and physically.

5



Communication barriers

The existence of communication barriers may make it difficult for the person to express what they need to say, or make it difficult for others to hear or understand them.

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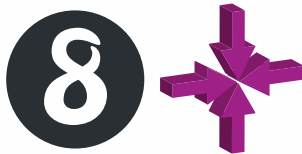
Misunderstanding
boundaries

Without a clear sense of their personal boundaries, a person may be unsure about what constitutes abuse. Consequently they will be less likely to disclose sexually abusive behaviour they witness, experience, or hear about.



Not recognising danger

Some people may not recognise when a situation has become dangerous, for example, if they are routinely deprived of control, have sensory disabilities and/or are very trusting of others. ,



Intersectional identity

People who have identities with characteristics that cut across social norms or expectations of disability, sexuality, culture, class, ethnicity, and religion may experience additional social vulnerabilities.



Prior abuse and/or
trauma

Previous trauma can result in long term anxiety, emotional disturbances, and memory problems that make it hard to build strong boundaries and defences. A victim-survivor who lacks the support network and tools to cope with their past trauma can become more vulnerable to further abuse.



Violence at home

Domestic violence fosters a home environment of instability, insecurity, poor communication, and mishandled aggression. Survivors are reluctant to speak up, may blame themselves and do not expect to be believed. This makes them vulnerable to someone who promises stability and security, even if the stability comes with other unwanted behaviors.