

Alcohol/Drug-Facilitated Sexual Assault

Introduction

Many or even most sexual assaults involve alcohol/drug use by the perpetrator and/or survivor, but myths and misconceptions exist about what role substance use plays in incidents of sexual violence. The use of drugs and alcohol before or during an incident of sexual violence is commonly used as a reason to blame survivors and/or to excuse offenders for their actions.

- Victims of drug-facilitated or incapacitated rape were less likely than victims of forcible rape to report to the authorities.
- Drug- and alcohol- facilitated rape was defined as an incident in which the perpetrator deliberately gives the victim drugs without her permission or tries to get her drunk, and then commits an unwanted sexual act against her involving oral, anal, or vaginal penetration. The victim is unconscious, or awake but too drunk or high to know what she is doing or to control her behavior.
- Incapacitated rape was defined as an unwanted sexual act involving oral, anal or vaginal penetration that occurs after the victim voluntarily uses drugs or alcohol. Like in drug- and alcohol-facilitated rape, the victim is unconscious, or awake but too drunk or high to know what she is doing or to control her behavior.
- Amongst college-aged women who were victims of incapacitated or drug/alcohol facilitated rape, 96 percent involved alcohol, while 17 percent involved alcohol and another drug. The most common drug used other than alcohol was marijuana.
"Drug-facilitated, Incapacitated, and Forcible Rape: A National Study," D. Kilpatrick et al., 2007
- Approximately one-half of all sexual assault victims report that they were drinking alcohol at the time of the assault, with estimates ranging from 30 to 74 percent.
"Alcohol's Role in Sexual Assault" A. Abbey et al., 1994 and "Understanding Violence Against Women," N. Crowell et al., 1996
- Although alcohol consumption and sexual assault frequently co-occur, this phenomenon does not prove that alcohol use causes sexual assault. In some cases, the desire to commit a sexual assault may actually cause alcohol consumption (e.g., when a man drinks alcohol before committing a sexual assault to justify his behavior.)
"Alcohol and Sexual Assault," A. Abbey et al., 2001
- Many men falsely believe that alcohol increases sexual arousal and legitimates nonconsensual sexual aggression. Perpetrators perceive drinking women as more sexually available, for example, believing that women who have two or more drinks are more interested than other women in having sex.
Journal of Studies on Alcohol, "Alcohol-related Sexual Assault: A Common Problem Among College Students," A. Abbey, 2002
- To better assess perpetrators' and victims' level of intoxication and the resulting impairment, investigators must ask additional questions about the number of drinks consumed, the time period in which they were consumed, the person's normal drinking level and drinking pace, and the degree of subjective intoxication.
"Alcohol and Sexual Assault," Abbey et al., 2001