

# Child & Youth: Understanding the Issue

## Definitions

### Child Sexual abuse

The improper exposure of a child to sexual contact, activity, or behaviour. This includes all forms of sexual contact, including oral contact (forced kissing), sexual touching, oral-genital contact (forced oral sex), and/or vaginal or anal penetration. Showing a child sexually explicit material (pornography) or genitalia (flashing) are also sexual abuse, as is the invitation to sexual touch, even when no physical contact has occurred.

### Consent

A voluntary agreement to engage in sexual activity. Consent must be clear, informed, voluntary, sober, act and person-specific, ongoing, mutual, active, and come directly from the individuals engaging in the sexual activity. It is impossible to get consent from children, though close-in-age and peer experimentation exceptions exist for youth ages 12-15.

### Coercion

Forcing another person to engage in sexual activity against their will. Force can often include, but is not limited to, acts of violence, threats (physical or emotional), pressure, deception, or guilt.

### Non-Consensual Photo Sharing

When an intimate or sexually suggestive photo or video is taken, shared, or otherwise used without the voluntary consent of the person in the photo or video.

To learn more, visit [sace.ca/learn](https://sace.ca/learn)

## Believe

Children and youth rarely lie about sexual abuse.

Of children  
know the  
person  
who sexually  
abused them.

95%

1 in 2  
Girls

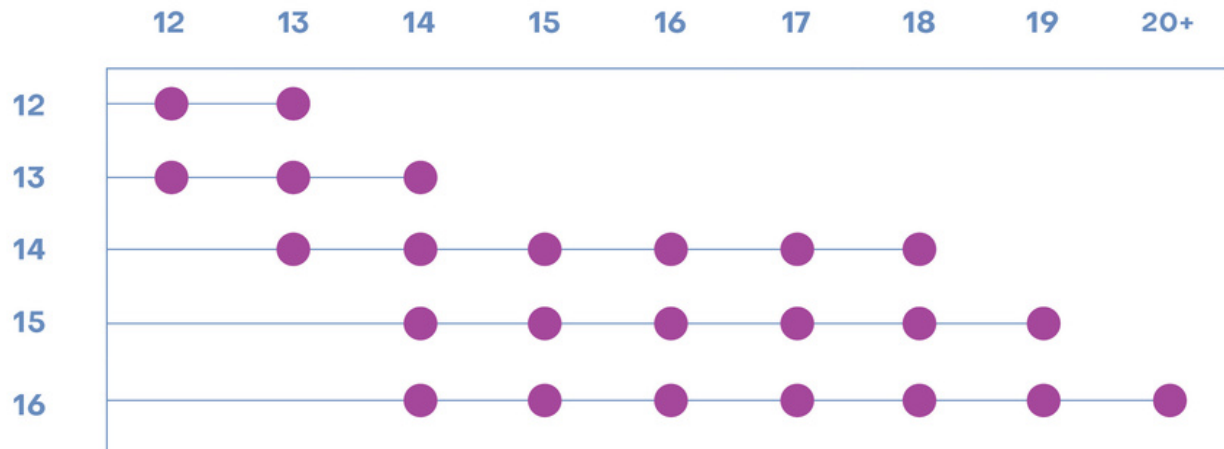
will experience  
sexual abuse  
before the  
age of 18.

1 in 4  
Boys

Children of any gender  
identity or expression are  
vulnerable to abuse



# Age of Consent in Canada



## Age of Consent is 16

When someone is 16 years old they are able to consent to sexual activity with a person who is 14 or older. The only exception would be when the older person is in a position of power, trust, or authority (see Sexual Exploitation Laws for detail).

## Close-In-Age Exemption

Applies only to people who are 14 & 15 years old. When someone is 14 or 15 they are able to consent to sexual activity with a person who is LESS than 5 years older than them.

### 14-years-old

- Can consent to sexual activity with someone up to the age of 18.

### 15-years-old

- Can consent to sexual activity with someone up to the age of 19.

## Peer Experimentation Exemption

Applies only to people who are 12 & 13 years old. When someone is 12 or 13 they are able to consent to sexual activity with a person who is LESS than 2 years older than them.

### 12-years-old

- Can consent to sexual activity with someone up to the age of 13.

### 13-years-old

- Can consent to sexual activity with someone up to the age of 14.

## Sexual Exploitation Laws

Sexual contact involving persons under 18 may only happen between individuals with whom there is no relationship of power, trust, authority or dependency.

Sexual contact involving persons under 18 must be in relationships that are non-exploitive. "Exploitation" depends on how the relationship developed, how the partner may have controlled or influenced the young person, or if it involved luring over the internet, prostitution or pornography.



**Listen. Believe. Support.**

[sace.ca](http://sace.ca)

Sources: Criminal Code of Canada, Section 150.1 "Frequently Asked Questions: Age of Consent to Sexual Activity" (Justice Canada).

Available at [justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/other-autre/clp/fag.html](http://justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/other-autre/clp/fag.html)