



OTTAWA POLICE SERVICE  
SERVICE DE POLICE D'OTTAWA

Working together for a safer community  
La sécurité de notre communauté, un travail d'équipe

# Crime Prevention for Women



## Safety in our city

Ottawa is regarded by many as one of the safest cities in the world, but that's no reason for women to let their guard down. Common sense tells us that the streets of any city are not entirely safe. While the Ottawa Police Service will always be available to respond to crime, we need your active participation to help prevent crime. The police can't do it alone — get informed, get involved and make crime prevention part of your everyday life. Together, we can continue to build a safer Ottawa for all.

## Would you know what to do if...?

- You were being followed?
- You had car trouble while alone on the highway?
- The actions of a spouse or partner left you feeling threatened?
- You arrived home and found your door or window open?
- You were sexually assaulted?

This is just a small sample of the concerns expressed by Ottawa women. While many crimes like break and enters or vandalism don't discriminate between the sexes, most will agree that women are particularly vulnerable to certain types of crime, including sexual assault. The following information provides a good start for raising awareness about crime prevention issues specific to women. Contact your local Community Police Centre or visit the Police Web site at [www.ottawapolice.ca](http://www.ottawapolice.ca) for additional crime prevention tips.

## Don't ignore the facts

**Fact:** Assault can occur anytime and anyplace, and can happen to any woman — a child, grandmother, student, employee, mother, wife — rich or poor.

**Fact:** Those who commit an assault can be anyone — strangers, neighbours, spouses, partners, co-workers, classmates, family members and even friends. In fact, a victim will know her attacker in the majority of cases.

**Fact:** One in every four women in Ontario has been a victim of rape or attempted rape.

**Fact:** The majority of assaults occur in an environment familiar to the victim — home, office, school, dormitory, etc.

**Fact:** No one asks to be a victim of sexual violence. Rape is an aggressive act of violence where sex is used as a weapon in an attempt to hurt and humiliate.

**Fact:** Any type of unwanted sexual contact — from touching to intercourse — is sexual assault, and it's against the law. The Ottawa Police and its partners are there to help.

**Fact:** You can do a lot to reduce your risk of being a victim. Practising the following tips is a good way to start.

## Stay safe — be alert

- Be aware of your surroundings — know who's around you and what's going on. Walk with confidence and purpose. Be wary of isolated spots — basements, laundry rooms, and parking lots.
- Don't let drugs or alcohol cloud your judgement — recent trends like the use of Rhoypnol and other so called date rape drugs are disturbing. Whether at a bar or house party, make arrangements with trusted friends to look out for each other, limit your beverage intake, only accept food or beverages from a trusted source and never leave that food or beverage unattended.
- Make sure your home is not an easy target for criminals. See the pamphlet called *Crime Prevention at Home* and take advantage of Ottawa Police's Home Security Inspection Program where, at your request, police representatives will visit your home (house, condo, apartment, etc.) to provide a free safety audit — assessing ways to make your home safer.
- Take advantage of or get involved in other Ottawa Police crime prevention programs like Neighbourhood Watch, Child Print or Operation Identification.
- If you come home and see a door ajar or a window broken, call the police immediately. NEVER enter the dwelling.
- If you have car trouble on the highway, raise the hood — this will bring official assistance. If a stranger stops to assist you, use caution. If concerned, get back in the car. Speak through a slightly lowered window and ask that person to get assistance for you.
- If you think you're being followed, change directions and look for open stores, restaurants or a lighted home, flag down a taxi or police officer. Call the police as soon as possible.

- **Above all, trust your gut feeling.** If your instincts tell you that another person's actions are threatening or an environment is unsafe, then leave immediately. If you feel uncomfortable or uneasy, remove yourself!

## How would you react?

It's unpleasant and even frightening to think about, but the best way to prevent or survive an assault is to plan in advance how you would react in the face of a potential assault — whether it be a purse snatching, verbal abuse, sexual assault, attempted murder, etc. Would you run and scream, or would you try to fight back? Some would-be attackers will immediately give up if their target shows the slightest sign of resistance. Others will become more incensed and more violent if their victims try to fight back. Sometimes, the attacker is only after your purse or other valuables. Other times, the attacker is someone you know — spouse, partner, boyfriend, co-worker, friend, etc. Whatever your decision, know that it's not your fault and that resources are available to help you. Be confident and be prepared to follow through.

## What to do if the unthinkable happens

If you or a woman you know is a victim of crime — from a stolen purse to physical violence — report it to the police immediately. Try to remember points of identification about the attacker (e.g., complexion, body build, height, weight, age, type of clothing). If possible write down the information while it's still fresh in your memory, and do not dispose of any physical evidence, such as hair or skin samples.

The Ottawa Police also has specialized sections that may be of service:

- Partner Assault Unit — 236-1222, ext. 5407
- Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Unit — 236-1222, ext. 5944



See the "Red Pages" in the Ottawa telephone directory or visit the Police Web site at [www.ottawapolice.ca](http://www.ottawapolice.ca) for a full list of Ottawa Police services and contact information.



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# Make the Right Call!

Every call is important, but not all calls are life-threatening, and not all calls are police emergencies. Whatever the case, we're here to help. You have a role to play: "Make the Right Call."

## 9-1-1

Life-threatening emergency  
or crime in progress

## 230-6211

TTY 232-1123

Other emergencies

## 236-1222

Community Police Centres  
and all other enquiries

