



# Dynamics of Sexual Assault

## *What Does Sexual Assault Really Look Like?*

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### **Course Description**

Much of the thinking about sexual assault has not changed in the last 20-30 years, because this thinking continues to reflect a number of myths and misconceptions about rape, rape victims, and rape perpetrators. This module will examine those myths and misconceptions, the reasons for them, and how they affect the investigation of sexual assault. It will conclude with an examination of the actual characteristics of sexual assaults.

**Estimated time for completion:** 5 hours

### **OVW Grant Funding**

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### **Expert Contributions**

OLTI training content is created and updated with input from professionals in a variety of disciplines, including law enforcement, prosecution, health care, victim advocacy, and related fields. Please see the acknowledgements page of each module, for a list of the individuals who served as contributing authors or expert reviewers.

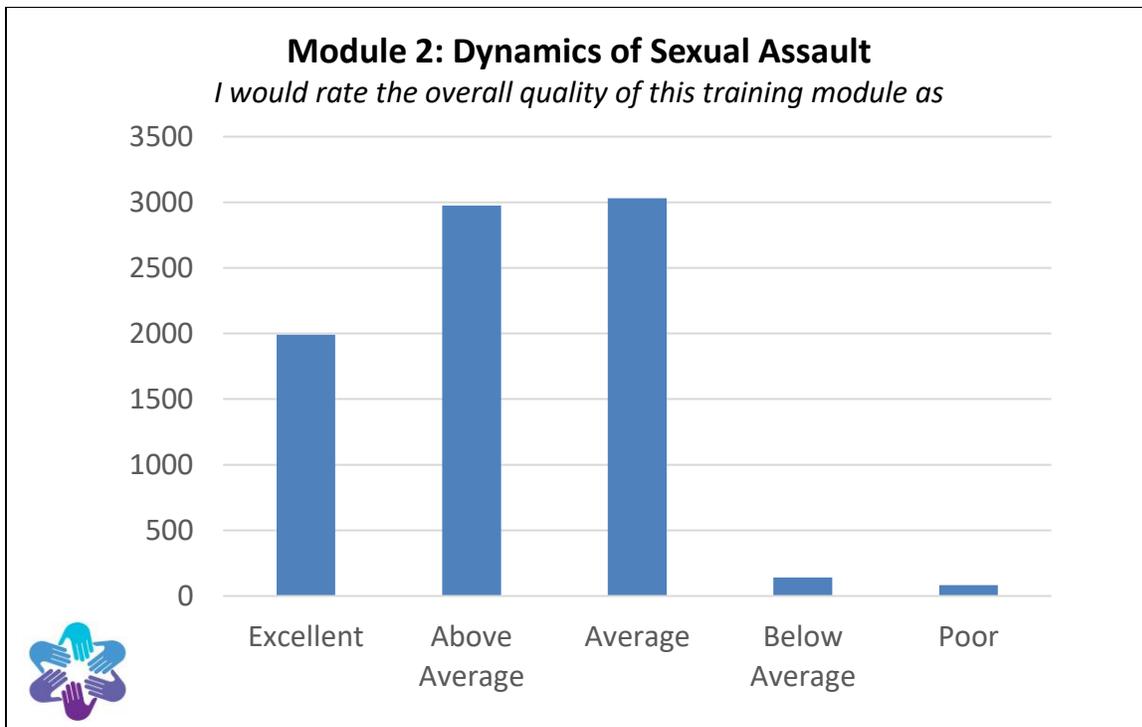
### **Course Evaluations**

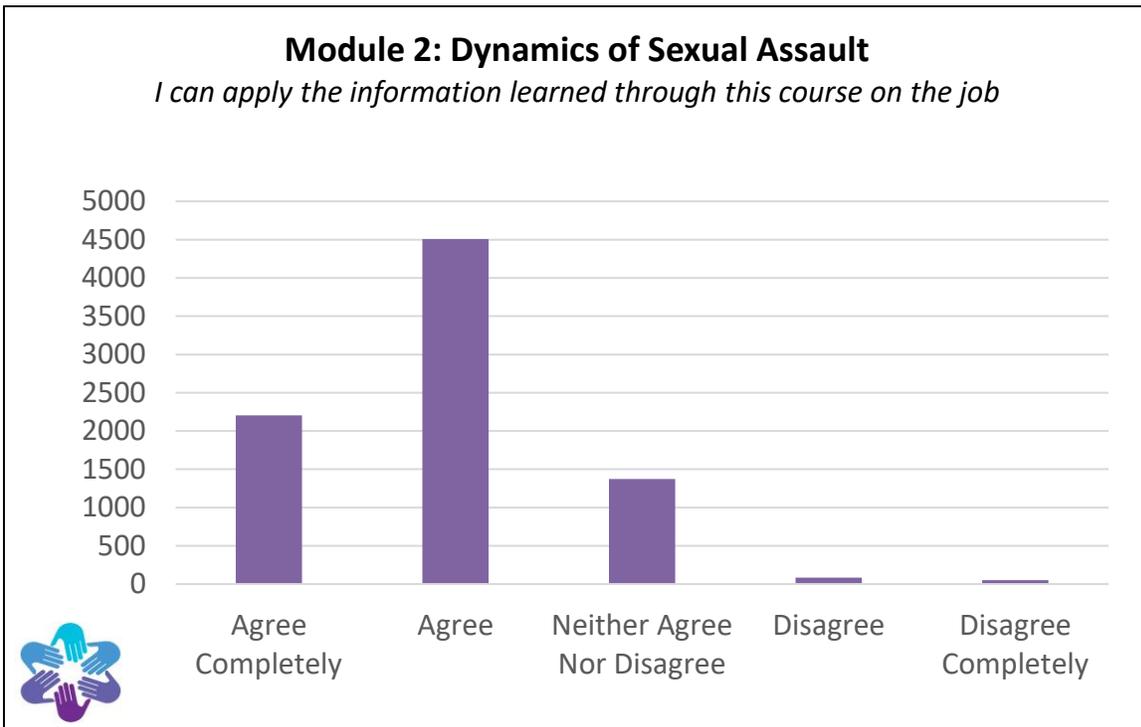
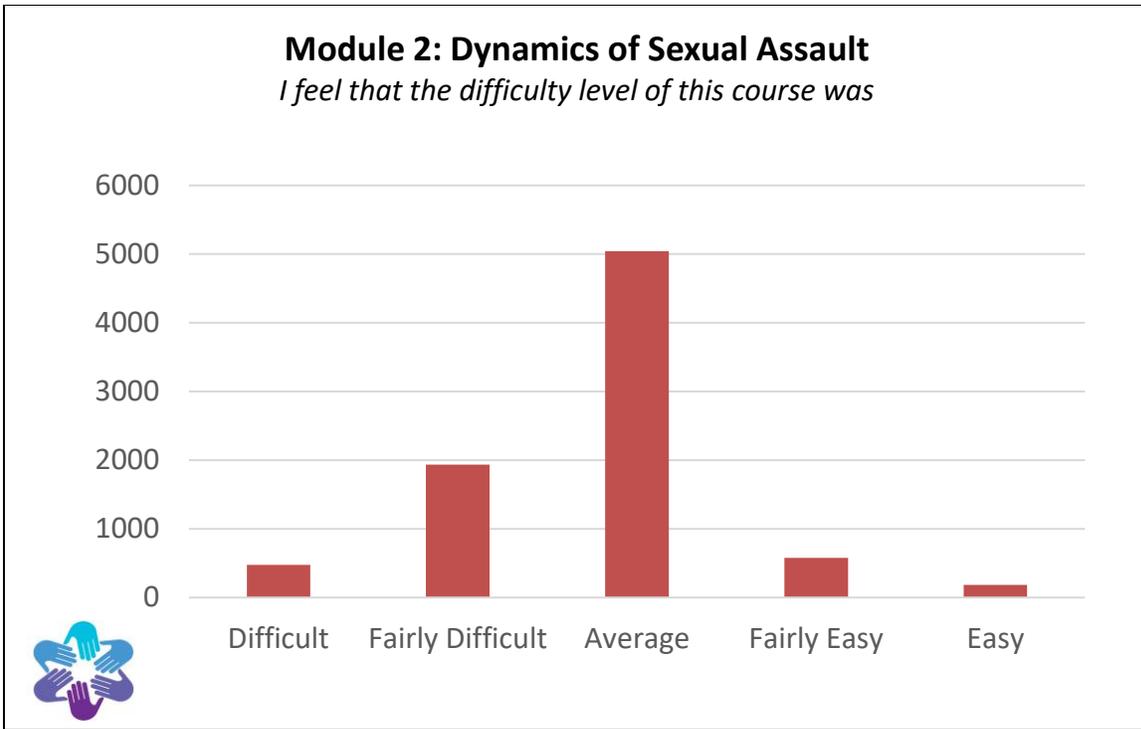
At the end of each module participants are asked a number of questions, including the overall quality of the module, as well as its difficulty. They are also asked to indicate how likely they are to apply the information they learned on the job. Their responses are summarized in the following charts, and illustrated with the quotes.

***What did you find most helpful in this module?***

The clear cut definitions of the terms were very useful in the way that it was easier to grasp the concepts due to the through explanations.

The information about what a "real" sexual assault looks like (i.e., against a person who is vulnerable, that there isn't any injury, that the offender is more often than not known to the victim, etc.) was particularly valuable. As a sexual assault investigator I can identify with the problem of stereotypes affecting investigations. This module was an excellent reminder of what the truth looks like. Also, the statistics were particularly helpful (even if I only remember the gist).





**82% “agree completely” or “agree” that they can apply what they learned on the job.**

## **Course Objectives**

At the end of this training module, the learner will be able to:

- Recognize the common misconceptions or stereotypes that society holds about what constitutes “real rape”
- Understand the reasons for these stereotypes, including:
  - Sexual assaults that were reported in the past looked like the stereotype
  - The media tends to portray sexual assaults that fit the stereotype
  - We prefer to keep the issues simple, and not re-examine our assumptions
  - We want to feel safe from the threat of sexual assault
- Recognize the consequences of societal misconceptions of what constitutes “real rape,” including:
  - Victims are not believed
  - Cases are not investigated appropriately
  - Sexual assaults that look like the stereotype are more likely to be prosecuted
  - Offenders may repeat their crime
- Understand the actual incidence and prevalence of sexual assault
- Recognize the actual characteristics of sexual assault, including those of victims and perpetrators, their relationships, and the dynamics of the crimes

## **Course Outline**

- I. Introduction
- II. Misconceptions About Sexual Assault: Stereotypes of “Real Rape”
- III. Reasons for the Misconceptions: Why We Have Stereotypes of “Real Rape”
  - a. Because the sexual assaults that were reported in the past looked like the stereotype
  - b. The media tends to portray sexual assaults that fit the stereotype
  - c. We prefer to keep the issues simple, and not re-examine our assumptions
  - d. We want to feel safe from the threat of sexual assault
- IV. Impact of the Misconceptions: Why Do They Matter?
  - a. Victims are not believed
  - b. Cases are not investigated appropriately
  - c. Sexual assaults that look like the stereotype are more likely to be prosecuted
  - d. Offenders may repeat their crime
- V. Research Related to Sexual Assault
  - a. The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS)
  - b. The National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS)

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- c. The National Women's Study
  - d. UCR and National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS)
- VI. Sexual Assault Incidence, Prevalence, and Characteristics
  - a. How many women are sexually assaulted?
  - b. How many men are sexually assaulted?
  - c. Some specialized populations have higher victimization rates
  - d. The bottom line on sexual assault prevalence
- VII. Characteristics of Sexual Assault: What does it really look like?
  - a. Most sexual assault victims are female; Yet many men are victimized as well
  - b. Almost all sexual assault perpetrators are male
  - c. Very few victims are sexually assaulted by a stranger
  - d. Most female victims of sexual assault are under 25 years old
  - e. Few sexual assault victims report the crime; even fewer do so immediately
  - f. Many women are repeatedly victimized by sex offenders
- VIII. Other Key Findings
  - a. Alcohol and/or drugs are involved in many sexual assaults
  - b. Overlap of sexual violence and intimate partner violence
  - c. Most sexual assaults do not result in visible physical injury
  - d. Most sexual assaults are committed without severe physical violence
  - e. Most sexual assaults do not involve a weapon
  - f. More women describe "physically struggling" during the sexual assault
  - g. Many victims have a continued relationship or even sex with the perpetrator