



Know  
Before  
You  
Go

## JAPAN

# A Guide to Keep You Safe Abroad

Provided by Sexual Assault Support and  
Help for Americans Abroad (SASHAA)

*Updated June 2017*



**SASHAA**  
Sexual Assault Support &  
Help for Americans Abroad

Let's be perfectly clear, the number one way to prevent sexual assault is to **not rape**. While the responsibility of ending sexual gender-based violence is on the perpetrators, this guide will offer general safety tips, country-specific information, and resources to help prevent and prepare travelers for the possibility of sexual assault abroad.

## GENERAL SAFETY TIPS:

1. Use the **buddy system** and travel with friends!
2. Be aware of **social and cultural norms**. For example, looking at someone in the eyes when you speak to them is perfectly normal in the U.S., but in another country that could signify you're interested in the person.
3. **Recognize controlling behavior** when entering a relationship. Most rape survivors recall feeling "uncomfortable" about some of their partner's behaviors such as degrading jokes/language or refusal to accept "no" as an answer, whether in a sexual context or otherwise.<sup>2</sup>
4. **Avoid secluded places** where you could be more vulnerable. Meet new people in public spaces and let a trusted friend know where you'll be beforehand.
5. **Trust your gut**. Many victims have a "bad feeling" right before an assault takes place.



## ALCOHOL AND DRUG AWARENESS:

- Always watch your drink being poured and carry it yourself, even to the bathroom.
- "Drug-facilitated sexual assault drugs," also referred to as club drugs or roofies may turn your drink slightly salty, bright blue, or cloudy. Effects such as distorted judgment, lost sense of time, sight, sound, identity, and consciousness can be felt within 15 minutes and may last up to 4 hours.<sup>3</sup>
- Japan's legal drinking age is 20.<sup>4</sup> Drinking is considered an important way to bond and connect with people, but remember to pace yourself according to your limits and take time to socialize.<sup>5</sup>

## CULTURAL INFORMATION:

**Major Religions:** Shinto 83.9%, Buddhism 71.4%, Christianity 2%, Other 7.8% (Note: total is more than 100% because many people adhere to both Shinto and Buddhist beliefs.)<sup>5</sup>

**Legal System:** Japan has multiple courts, including district, summary, family, high, and supreme. One to three judges and layperson judges preside over each case.<sup>6</sup>

**Social/Cultural Norms:** In Japan, the family unit is of utmost importance, with elders receiving the most respect. Although the younger generations are becoming increasingly "westernized," older generations might still adhere to strict traditions. The Japanese tend to be more formal in their interactions with other people than Americans are accustomed, and non-verbal communication—such as body language and posture—are extremely important.<sup>7</sup>

**Gender Equality:** A 2015 survey by the World Economic Forum ranked Japan 101st out of 142 countries in terms of gender equality. Compared to most countries, women in Japan have had very little female parliamentary and government representation.<sup>8</sup>



## Sexual Assault and the Law: Japanese Context

The Japanese Penal Code defines rape as forced—through assault or intimidation—sex with a woman. By this definition, men cannot be raped and marital rape. However, “forcible indecency” is a crime that can happen to any sex or gender, and includes any forced sexual acts.<sup>9</sup> Under both definitions, consent is not the difference between assault and sex; what makes an act rape or assault in Japanese law is violence or the threat of violence. Many women have tremendous difficulty bringing an assault to trial, and especially to conviction. In Japanese, there are two words for rape: *tsūjō* (common/usual) rape, a violent rape perpetrated by somebody who was not known to the victim and *fushizen* (unnatural/unusual) rape, in which the offender is already known to the victim in some way, and overt physical violence is often lacking.”<sup>10</sup>

### If You Experience Sexual Assault...

Don't blame yourself! **Sexual assault is never the fault of the victim.** You may be unsure of how to proceed, and that's okay. First, consider taking the following actions:

1. If you are in a safe place, **call someone you trust** to be with you. If you are not safe, call someone you trust to come and get you.
2. Do **self-collection of evidence**. Put all of the clothes you were wearing, bed sheets, and so on in a paper bag. If you have any injuries, **take pictures**. If there is semen present, collect what you can in a hotel glass or cup and put it in the paper bag.
3. **Call a SASHAA advocate** internationally toll free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They can help you through the ordeal, honoring your decisions. (See Resources)

### Medical Care and Reporting Sexual Assault in Japan

Medical examinations include clinical and gynecological exams, as well as biological samplings. If possible, seeking medical attention before reporting to the police is preferable. Several women who have spoken out about their experience with reporting to the police have reported that interrogations take several hours, and a victim cannot leave even to get medical attention during the preliminary interviews. Some STI/STDs require time-sensitive treatment, and timely evidence collecting is crucial to a successful case.<sup>11</sup> In the past, victims have experienced victim shaming and blaming when reporting to the police, as well as persuasion to not press charges.<sup>12</sup>

#### LGBTQ VICTIM CONCERNS



Homosexuality is legal, but same-sex marriage is not recognized by the government. While it is legal for a person in Japan to change gender, the change requires surgery for a person to be considered legally transgender. There are no laws in place against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender.<sup>13</sup>

#### POST EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS, EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION, AND ABORTION

##### Q. Are post exposure prophylaxis and emergency contraception available?

**A:** While emergency contraception is technically available in the form of the “morning-after-pill,” not many Japanese doctors are aware of or prescribe the medication, and it can cost upwards of 90 USD.<sup>12</sup> PEP is available in the country, but it can be costly and you may need to ask for it during an examination.<sup>13</sup>

##### Q: Is abortion legal in Japan?

**A:** Abortion is legal up to 24 weeks to preserve a woman's life or health, in cases of rape or incest, or for economic or social reasons. Abortion always requires a surgical procedure in Japan.<sup>14</sup>

## Resources

### SASHAA

#### SASHAA International Crisis Line:

To call our confidential, toll-free, International Crisis Line first dial the country specific AT&T access code for **Japan (KDDI: 00-539-111, Softbank Telecom: 00-663-5111, NTT: 0034-811-001)**. Then, at the prompt, enter our phone number: **866-USWOMEN (866-879-6636)**.

#### Crisis Email:

To reach a SASHAA advocate, you can email us at [crisis@866uswomen.org](mailto:crisis@866uswomen.org). All crisis emails will be responded to within 24 hours. However, if you need to get in touch with us immediately, please call the international toll-free crisis line.

#### Live Chat:

SASHAA online chat services are available 24/7 at our website <https://sashaa.org>.

## ANTI-VIOLENCE HOTLINES

#### Tokyo Rape Crisis Center

Tel: 81-3-3207-3692

Website: <http://www.tokyo-rcc.org>

#### Women's Hotline Yokohama

Tel: (04) 4271-0091 (English and Chinese)

#### International Friend (Gay Support) Tokyo

Tel: (03) 5693-4569

#### International Lesbian Community Tokyo

Tel: (03) 3410-7184

## U.S. EMBASSIES/CONSULATES

#### Tokyo (Embassy):

1-10-5 Akasaka, Minato-ku, Tokyo 107-8420

Tel: 03-3224-5000

#### Fukuoka (Consulate):

5-26 Ohori 2-chome, Chuo-ku, Fukuoka 810-0052

Tel: 092-751-9331

#### Nagoya (Consulate):

Nagoya International Center Bldg. 6F

1-47-1 Nagono, Nakamura-ku, Nagoya 450-0001

Tel: 052-581-4501

#### Naha (Consulate):

U.S. Consulate General Naha

2-1-1 Toyama, Urasoe City, Okinawa

Tel: 098-876-4211

#### Osaka (Consulate):

2-11-5, Nishitenma, Kita-ku, Osaka 530-8543

Tel: 06-6315-5900

#### Sapporo (Consulate):

Kita 1-jo Nishi 28-chome, Chuo-ku,

Sapporo 064-0821, Japan

Tel: 011-641-1115

## HOSPITALS

*Note: Most medical professionals are not fluent in English. Call 03-5285-8088 in Tokyo (9:00 - 20:00), or 06-4395-0555 in Osaka (Mon-Fri, 9:00 - 17:00) for English-speaking assistance.*

#### Fukuoka:

Fukuoka Sekijuu Hospital (Red Cross Hospital)

3-1-1 Okusu, Minami-ku 815-0082

Tel: 092-521-1211

#### Okinawa:

U.S. Naval Hospital (USNH)

PSC 482, FPO AP 96362-1600

Tel: 098-911-5111 (English-speaking staff available)

#### Osaka:

Osaka Red Cross Hospital

5-30 Fudegasaki-cho, Tennoji-ku, Osaka 543-8555

Tel: 06-6774-5111 (English-speaking staff available)

#### Sapporo:

Shiritsu Sapporo Byouin (Sapporo General Hospital)

Kita 11-jo Nishi 13-chome, Chuo-ku, Sapporo

Tel: 011-726-2211

#### Tokyo:

St. Luke's International Hospital

9-1 Akashi-cho, Chuo-ku, Tokyo 104-8560

Tel: 03-3541-5151 (English-speaking staff available)

#### Tokyo Medical University Hospital

6-7-1 Nishi Shinjuku, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160-0023

Tel: 03-3342-6111

## POLICE

**Emergency police: 110**

**Medical/Ambulance: 119**

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## References

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- <sup>2</sup> West Virginia University. "Some Tips on Acquaintance Rape Prevention." WELLWVU: The Student's Center of Health. May 20, 2016. Accessed June 28, 2016. [http://well.wvu.edu/sexual\\_assault/some-tips-on-acquaintance-rape-prevention](http://well.wvu.edu/sexual_assault/some-tips-on-acquaintance-rape-prevention).
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- <sup>4</sup> International Alliance for Responsible Drinking (IARD). Minimum Legal Age Limits. Accessed January 3, 2016. <http://www.iard.org/policy-tables/minimum-legal-age-limits/>
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- <sup>6</sup> "Japan." Religion Facts. Updated November 10, 2015. Accessed July 20, 2016. <http://www.religionfacts.com/japan>
- <sup>7</sup> "The Japanese Judicial System." Japanese Federation of Bar Associations. Accessed July 19, 2016. [http://www.nichibenren.or.jp/en/about/judicial\\_system/judicial\\_system.html](http://www.nichibenren.or.jp/en/about/judicial_system/judicial_system.html)
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- <sup>10</sup> "Current Legal Framework: Rape and Sexual Assault in Japan." IMPOWR. November 23, 2013. Accessed July 25, 2016. <http://www.impowr.org/content/current-legal-framework-rape-and-sexual-assault-japan>.
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- <sup>12</sup> Cartelle, Karryn. "Victims finally learning to speak out against Japan's outdated rape laws" Japan Times. April 21, 2008. Accessed July 25, 2016. <http://www.japantoday.com/category/lifestyle/view/victims-are-finally-learning-to-speak-out-against-japan%E2%80%99s-outdated-rape-laws>
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- <sup>14</sup> Oshima, Sumiko. "Emergency contraception is here, but where?" Japan Times. 1999. Accessed July 25, 2016. <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/1999/06/23/national/emergency-contraception-is-here-but-where/#.V5Z1xLgrKM8>
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- <sup>16</sup> "Termination and Abortion." AnglInfo. Accessed July 19, 2016. <https://www.anglinfo.com/japan/how-to/page/japan-healthcare-pregnancy-birth-termination-abortion>.