



Know
Before
You
Go

ESTONIA

A Guide to Keep You Safe Abroad

PROVIDED BY:
Pathways to Safety International

Updated May 2019

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.²
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. Always have a backup plan in mind.
5. **Trust your gut**. Many victims have a "bad feeling" right before an assault takes place. It's okay to leave a situation that is making you feel uncomfortable. Stay alert and aware in new social settings and places.



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, loss sense of time, sight, sound, identity, and overall consciousness can be felt within 15 minutes and may last up to 4 hours.³
- Estonia's legal drinking age is 18.⁴ According to OECD's report on Harmful Alcohol Use, Estonia was the largest consumer of alcohol of all member states in 2012, drinking 12.3 liters per adult each year.⁵

CULTURAL INFORMATION:

Major Religions: Orthodox Christian 16.2%, Lutheran 9.9%, other Christian 2.2%, other 0.9%, None 54.1%, Unnown 16.7%⁶

Legal System: The Estonian government is ruled by a Prime Minister, who is the political head of state. Having a civil legal system, court cases in Estonia are heard by judges and lay judges. Court sessions are public, except specific parts of cases in which where a minor or a victim of a crime may request privacy.⁷

Social/Cultural Norms: Estonians are generally formal and reserved until they develop relationships with others; some Americans may find Estonians to be aloof, but they are just being respectful. Singing is important to Estonians, who are known for "singing their way to independence" in 1891.⁸

Gender Equality: In the 2018 Global Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum, Estonia ranked 33rd out of 149 countries in terms of gender equality, compared to the United States which ranked 51st.⁹ Women continue to face discrimination in the labor market and on average earn 30% less than men, the largest gender pay gap in the European Union.¹⁰ However, in 2016, Estonia adopted a Welfare Development Plan for 2016-2023 to address issues of equal economic independence for men and women, gender pay gap, and negative impact of gender stereotypes.¹¹

SEXUAL ASSAULT AND THE LAW: Estonian Context

Estonia's legal code defines rape as having sexual intercourse with a person "against his or her will by using force or taking advantage of a situation in which the person is not capable of initiating resistance or comprehending the situation."¹² Other forms of sexual violence are defined as "satisfaction of sexual desire by violence" and "compelling [a] person to satisfy sexual desire."¹³ Because the laws specifically mention violence or threats of violence and coercion rather than consent, rape is difficult to prove by Estonian law, since most sexual violence occurs between people who know each other. This especially makes marital rape difficult to prove. The punishment for rape, including marital rape is imprisonment up to 15 years.¹⁴

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 and put it in the *paper* bag.
3. **Call a Pathways to Safety International Advocate** internationally toll free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They can help you through the ordeal, honoring your decisions. (*See Resources for contact info.*)

MEDICAL CARE AND REPORTING SEXUAL ASSAULT IN ESTONIA

In Estonia, there are five main hospitals offering standardized services for victims of sexual assault, including Tartu University Hospital and the North Estonia Regional Hospital (See resources). In 2016, a handbook of standardized health care for sexual assault victims was created, forensic examination kits were developed, and health care professional received training to aid victims of sexual assault.¹⁵ To encourage victims to come forward and report sexual crimes against them, law enforcement officials in Estonia have begun setting up special rooms in which victims may give their testimony in front of a recorder so that victims do not have to relive the event multiple times. However, these rooms are only available for female victims. Specialized police officers also must undergo a 5-day special training regarding victims of gender-based violence.¹⁶

LGBTQ CONCERNS



While it is legal for a person in Estonia to change gender, the change requires surgery for a person to be considered legally transgender. Homosexual acts are legal, and civil unions are set to be recognized by the government. However, the bureaucratic process has prevented the laws from being fully implemented during the past two years. Discrimination based on sexuality and gender still exists, but Estonia is more tolerant toward LGBTQ issues compared to its neighboring countries.¹⁷

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION (EC), POST-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS (PEP), AND ABORTION INFORMATION

Q: Are emergency contraception and post-exposure prophylaxis available?

A: EC in the form of a pill is available at any pharmacy over the counter for about \$15. PEP is also available in the country. It is okay to ask for both during an examination, if they are not offered by the medical staff.¹⁸

Q: Is abortion legal in Estonia?

A: Abortions are legal and available on-demand at most clinics up to 11 weeks. After 11 weeks, abortions are only legal when pregnancy complicates a woman's health; the baby to be born may have severe mental or physical disability; the disease or health related problem of a mother prevents to bring up a child; or the pregnant woman is under 15 year old or over 45 year old.¹⁹

RESOURCES

PATHWAYS TO SAFETY INTERNATIONAL

Crisis Line: To call our confidential, toll-free International Crisis Line, first dial the country specific AT&T access code for **Estonia (800-12001)**. Then, at the prompt, enter our phone number: **833-SAFE-833 (833-723-3833)**

Crisis Email: Connect with a Pathways Advocate via email at crisis@pathwaystosafety.org. All crisis emails will be responded to within 24 hours. **For immediate help, please **call** our crisis line.*

Live Chat: Pathways online chat service is available 24/7 on our website at pathwaystosafety.org.

ANTI-VIOLENCE ORGANIZATIONS

ALL OF ESTONIA:

Estonian Women's Shelters Union

Diver cross-10A-9, 10120 Tallinn, Harju County
Hotline: 1492 (phone support, 24/7)

Tallinn: Womens Crisis

Tel: 526 4697
(Several language options; including English)

Tartu: Counselling and Crisis Help Center

Vaksali str. 14, Tartu 50409 Estonia
Tel: (+372) 742 7555

US EMBASSIES/CONSULATES

U.S. Embassy Tallinn

Kentmanni 20, 15099 Tallinn, Estonia
Tel: 372-668-8100

SELECTED LIST OF HOSPITALS

Note: Many of the listed hospitals have a few doctors that are fluent in English.

HIUMAA:

Hiiumaa Hospital
Rahu 2, Kärdla 92414
Tel: 462-2795

KOHTLA:

Puru Hospital
Tervise 1, Kohtla-Järve
Tel: 3311133 or Emergency: 331 1074

NARVA:

Narva Hospital
Haigla tn. 7, Narva 20104
Tel: 357 1835

TALLINN:

North Estonia Medical Center and Outpatient Clinic
J. Sütiste tee. 19, 13419 Tallinn
Tel: (+372) 617 1300 or Emergency: (+372) 617 1300

Sinu Arst Medical Center (private)

Narva mnt. 7, Tallinn 10117
Tel: 6616036

TARTU:

Tartu University Hospital
L. Puusepa 1a, 50406 Tartu
Tel: (372) 731-811
Ambulance Tel: (7)40 88 00

PÄRNU:

Foundation Pärnu Hospital
Ristiku 1, Pärnu 80010
Tel: 44 73101

EMERGENCY POLICE

The emergency equivalent of "911" in Estonia is **112**.

The information in this guide has been gathered from public sources, is for informational purposes only, and is not vetted, endorsed or guaranteed by Pathways to Safety International. Pathways to Safety International is not rendering legal advice by making this guide available, is not a law enforcement agency, and does not engage in law enforcement activity. If you have any legal questions or concerns, you should consult a qualified legal or other professional that can consider the particulars of your specific case. Pathways to Safety International reserves the right to change or make corrections to this guide at any time, and will not be liable for any errors, inaccuracy or omissions contained herein.

REFERENCES

- 1 Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 2010-2014 (2015).
- 2 West Virginia University. "Tips for Prevention." WELLWU. April 6, 2017. Accessed: November 21, 2017. <https://well.wvu.edu/resources/sexual-assault/tips-for-prevention>.
- 3 U.S. Department of Women's Health. "Date rape drugs." April 28, 2017. Accessed: November 21, 2017. <https://www.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/date-rape-drugs>
- 4 "Alcohol Act." Riigi Teataja, Estonia Parliament, 2 Jan. 2005, www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/832173.
- 5 "Report: Estonians stand out for largest alcohol consumption in OECD." Accessed on December 30, 2016. <http://news.err.ee/115844/report-estonians-stand-out-for-largest-alcohol-consumption-in-oecd>
- 6 "Estonia Religions." Index Mundi. June 30, 2015. Accessed July 26, 2016. <http://www.indexmundi.com/estonia/religions.html>
- 7 "General principles of judicial proceedings and the structure of the judicial system." Estonica: Encyclopedia about Estonia. Accessed July 26, 2016. http://www.estonica.org/en/State/Judicial_system/General_principles_of_judicial_proceedings_and_the_structure_of_the_judicial_system/
- 8 "Estonia Guide." Commisceo Global. 2016. Accessed July 25, 2016. <http://www.commisceo-global.com/country-guides/estonia-guide>
- 9 Data Explorer. World Economic Forum. The Global Gender Gap Report. 2018. Accessed May 11, 2019. <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2018/data-explorer/#economy=EST>
- 10 "Country Profile: Estonia." Freedom House, Freedom House. 2016. Web Aug. 10, 2017. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/estonia>
- 11 "Estonia Commits to Reduce Gender Pay Gap." UN Women, United Nations. 2016. Web. Aug. 10, 2017. <http://www.unwomen.org/en/get-involved/step-it-up/commitments/estonia>
- 12 "Violence against Women in Estonia." The Advocates for Human Rights. 2012. Accessed July 26, 2016. <http://www.stopvaw.org/estonia2>
- 13 "Estonia – Sexual Assault (excl. rape)." European Institute for Gender Equality. 2016. Accessed July 26, 2016. <http://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/regulatory-and-legal-framework/legal-definitions-in-the-eu/estonia-sexual-assault-excl-rape>
- 14 "Estonia Human Rights Report 2015." US Department of State, US State Department. 2015. Web. Aug. 8, 2017. <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253055.pdf>
- 15 Part, Kai and Made Laanpere. "Initiation of Services in Healthcare for Victims of Sexual Assault in Estonia." University of Tartu, University of Tartu. 2016. Web. Aug. 10, 2017. http://www.icsor.se/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Initiation-of-services-in-healthcare-for-victims-of-sexual-assault-in-Estonia-Kai-Part_1.pdf
- 16 "Violence against Women in Estonia: A Report to the Human Rights Committee." Office of the Human Rights Committee 2003. 253-255. Accessed July 27, 2016. http://www.omct.org/files/2004/07/2409/eng_2003_06_estonia.pdf
- 17 "LGBT rights in Estonia." Equaldex. 2013. Accessed July 19, 2016. <http://www.equaldex.com/region/estonia>.
- 18 "EC status and availability." International Consortium for Emergency Contraception. 2016. Accessed July 27, 2016. <http://www.cecinfo.org/country-by-country-information/status-availability-database/countries/estonia/>
- 19 "Abortion Law Estonia." Women on Waves. Accessed July 27, 2016. <http://www.womenonwaves.org/en/page/4771/abortion-law-estonia>.