

RAPE MYTHS

Myth: Sexual assault is an impulsive, uncontrollable act of passion. The victim is irresistible to the rapist.

Fact: Rape is an act of violence, not of sexual desire. The majority of rapes are planned: the place arranged, enticement used, or the victim deliberately sought and coerced into sexual relations.

It is the vulnerability of the victim that attracts the sexual predator. Victims range from infants to the elderly. Anyone, regardless of age, sex, physical appearance, marital status, ethnic, religious or socio-economic background can be raped.

Myth: Sexual assault occurs only in large cities.

Fact: Rapes have been reported all across the country -- in large cities and small towns. While more sexual assaults occur in large cities, this is due solely to a greater population. Victims who live in rural areas may not have the same anonymity in a small town and access to services that she would have in a larger community. Survivors of sexual violence in these communities may therefore be less likely to tell anyone, report it to the police or seek support.

Myth: Women are sexually assaulted when they are out alone at night. If women stay home they will be safe.

Fact: Studies show that the majority of sexual assaults are committed in either the victim's home or the offender's home.

Myth: Most rapists hide in dark alleys, waiting for a stranger to walk past.

Facts: The majority of reported rapes occur either in the victim's home or the home of the attacker. In many cases, the victim met the offender in a public place and then was coerced into accompanying the rapist to the place of the assault.

Most rape victims know their attacker at least casually. In many cases, offenders were well known to the victim and were in relationships that one would normally trust, i.e. boyfriend, family friend, close neighbor or relative.

Myth: Most sexual assaults involve a black man raping a white woman.

Fact: In 93% of assaults, the rapist and victim are of the same race. In 3.3% of sexual assault cases, black men did rape white women, while in 3.4% of the cases, white men raped black women.

Myth: Most rapists are poor.

Fact: Rape crosses all class lines. People have been raped by doctors, lawyers, police officers, and other authority figures. Because of their social and financial positions, these offenders are seldom prosecuted for the acts of violence, and their actions are seldom publicized.

Myth: No person can be sexually assaulted against his or her will.

Fact: Rape is a crime of violence, not sexual passion. In many cases, some type of force is used, such as choking, beating, roughness, or use of a weapon. Often, the victim is threatened with death if he or she resists. Confronted with the fear of being beaten or killed, many victims do not attempt to fight an attacker. While a victim may not resist an attack due to socialization and fear of violence, this lack of resistance should not be equated with consent for the attack. Many mugging victims hand over their wallets willingly to maintain their safety, but they did not ask to be mugged.

Myth: Sexual assault is provoked by the victim. Victims ask for it by their actions, behaviors, or by the way they dress.

Fact: To say that someone wants to be raped is the same as saying that people ask to be mugged or robbed. In fact, most rapes are at least partially planned in advance and the victim is often threatened with death or bodily harm if he or she resists. Sexual assault is not a spontaneous crime of sexual passion. It is a violent attack on an individual using sex as a weapon. Sex is used to defile, degrade and destroy a victim's will and control over his or her own body. For the victim, it is a humiliating, near death situation. No person would ask for or deserve such an attack.

Myth: Only "bad girls" get sexually assaulted.

Fact: Sexual assault occurs in all segments of our society. Most rapists choose their targets without regard to physical appearance or lifestyle. Victims are of every type, race, and socio-economic class, young and old alike.

Myth: Most rapes are reported by women who "change their minds" afterwards or who want to "get even" with a man.

Fact: FBI statistics show that only 3% of rape calls are false reports. This is the same false-report rate that is usual for other kinds of felonies.

Myth: Women have rape fantasies and secretly desire rape. If you are going to be raped, you might as well relax and enjoy it.

Fact: When people have sexual fantasies of seduction, they choose the circumstances and characteristics of their seducer. They are in control. In rape, the victim is never in control. There is a big difference between fantasy and reality.

Rape is neither relaxing nor enjoyable. Again, victims often submit without struggle due to fear of physical force, or because the assailant is armed with a deadly weapon. Victims' responses to rape reflect the violence and intense trauma of the event. After being raped:

- 42% reported feeling afraid of men.
- 28% said it affected their sex lives.
- 27% felt less independent or more afraid of being on their own.
- 28% said it damaged their trust in male-female relationships.
- 18% felt worthless or lost self-respect.
- 17% felt hostile toward men.
- 10% sustained physical injuries.
- 7% reported suicidal impulses.
- 5% suffered nightmares.

Myth: Rapists are crazy, deranged, abnormal perverts. They are lonely men without female partnership.

Fact: Rape is not a crime of spontaneous passion. Studies show that 60 to 70% of all sexual assaults are planned. Most rapists are married and having consensual sexual relations while assaulting other women. Rapists themselves do not describe their motivation in terms of sexual gratification, but in terms of hatred and conquest. Sex is used as a weapon to inflict violence, humiliation, and degradation on a victim. Indeed, rapists have said that rape is "lousy sex."

Sexual offenders come from all educational, occupational, racial and cultural backgrounds. They tend to test differently from the normal, well-adjusted male only in having a greater tendency to express violence and rage.

Myth: Men cannot be raped.

Fact: Sexual assault, no matter the gender of the perpetrator or victim, is a form of violence where sex is used to demean and humiliate another person. Current statistics indicate that one in six men are sexually assaulted or abused in their lifetime. Typically, the perpetrator is a heterosexual male. Sexual assault of males is thought to be greatly underreported.