

# MYTHS VS FACTS

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Myths, faulty assumptions and stereotypes are very damaging to those who have been the victim of sexual violence. They not only enable perpetrators to excuse their behavior, but they also shift the blame away from the perpetrator and place it on the shoulders of the victim.

Most of us have been taught that we can only be responsible for our own behavior, our own choices and our own actions. Yet, when it comes to sexual violence and rape myths, the victims are often blamed and held responsible for the perpetrator's behaviors, choices and actions.

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## MYTH

If we can keep track of known sex offenders, then our communities will be safe.

## FACT

**98% of sexual assault offenders will never be apprehended, convicted and incarcerated.**

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## MYTH

If you know the offender, sexual assault is not “real rape” and not as potentially damaging as “stranger” rape.

## FACT

**The incident of rape is the most degrading, demeaning and humiliating violation perpetrated by one human being against another. It constitutes loss of control, loss of ownership, and loss of power over the one thing that is yours and no one else's — your body.**

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## MYTH

There are many false reports about sexual assault.

## FACT

**From 2-4% of sexual assault reports are false—the same false report rate as for other felonies. There are many reasons why most sexual assault cases are not reported, including fear that they won't be believed.**

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## MYTH

The victim provokes sexual assault.

She had on a short skirt—and therefore was “asking for it.”

She was out alone late at night.

She had been drinking and flirting.

## FACT

**Someone's actions or dress cannot send a message “asking” for sexual assault. This attitude implies that the offender cannot control himself and it is the fault of the victim that he cannot. In fact, studies show that 71% of sexual assaults are planned in advance. It is preposterous to think someone would ask for or enjoy a physical attack involving risks including venereal disease, pregnancy, injury or even death.**

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## MYTH

It can't happen to me.

## FACT

**One in three women, and one in six men will be the victims of sexual assault in their lifetime. (US Department of Justice)**

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## MYTH

Real men do not get raped. If a man is raped, it is by a homosexual male.

## FACT

**Same sex assault does occur, but it is estimated that less than one percent of men report their rapes. 90% of rapists are heterosexual and only 4% of same sex assaults are homosexual assaults.**

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## MYTH

Strangers commit most sexual assaults. It's not rape if the people involved know each other, have been dating or have previously had sex.

## FACT

**75-80% of sexual assaults are committed by someone the victim knows. For college women, about 90% knew their attacker prior to the assault. Sexual assault can be committed within**

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**any type of relationship including marriage, in dating relationships, by an ex-boyfriend, classmate, friend, acquaintance, family member, neighbor, or co-worker.**

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**MYTH**

Most women say "NO" when they really mean "YES".  
"I don't know" really means "YES."

**FACT**

**If a woman says "NO" it must be respected as a "NO." There is no such thing as "the point of no return." If at any point a person says "NO" or gives an unclear message about what they want, it means stop. If the message is unclear, then clarify. Otherwise, anything short of a clear "YES" is a "NO."**

**MYTH**

It's not sexual assault if it happens after drinking or taking drugs.

**FACT**

**Someone incapacitated by drink or drugs can not give consent. Sexual assault is any non-consensual sex activity. 75% of sexual assaults involve the use of alcohol.**

**MYTH**

All sexual assault victims will report the crime immediately to the police. If they don't report it or delay in reporting, then they must have changed their minds about it, or want revenge.

**FACT**

**A victim may not report the assault to the police for many reasons. It is not easy to talk about being sexually assaulted. They may fear retaliation by the offender, fear not being believed, or fear being blamed for the assault.**

**MYTH**

Someone can only be sexually assaulted if a weapon is involved.

**FACT**

**A weapon is often not involved. The offender often uses physical strength, violence, intimidations or threats. Since most survivors know their perpetrator, they may fear further harm to themselves or their families.**

**MYTH**

A person who has been sexually assaulted will be hysterical.

**FACT**

**Victims may be calm, hysterical, withdrawn, angry, apathetic, in denial or shock. Their reactions may change over time. There is no "right way" to react to being sexually assaulted.**

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## **MYTHS PERPETUATE VIOLENCE**