



Myths about Rape

Myth 1: Rape is provoked by the victim. Women invite rape with their appearance or behavior. Women who are drunk are asking for it.

Fact: A study conducted in Philadelphia by Dr. Menachem Amir indicated that 60 to 70 percent of rapes are at least partially planned beforehand by the rapist; the victim is often threatened with bodily harm if she resists. The problem with this myth is the way it takes the criminal blame from the rapist and shifts the responsibility for the crime to the victim. Walking and dressing in a way that is socially defined as attractive does not give someone else the right to commit a crime. Buying someone dinner and drinks does not imply sexual consent. No person's behavior, state of intoxication, dress, or agreement to date gives another individual any level of sexual "rights," let alone the right to commit rape.

Myth 2: It won't happen to me; only other types of women get raped. Only "bad" girls get raped. Only young, beautiful women are raped.

Fact: A victim of sexual assault is a crime victim, a victim of violence. Victims are of every age, shape, race and social class; for example, 1 out of 10 adult men are sexually assaulted, 1 out of 7 boys are sexually abused (see <http://www.raap.org/stats.htm>). Read the newspaper: You will see stories of elderly, of handicapped, of male, of child victims. Women do not "ask" to be raped, regardless of what they are wearing or doing.

Myth 3: Women are raped when they are out alone at night, primarily in dark alleys, so if women stay at home they'll be safe.

Fact: The majority of rapes are committed by acquaintances of the victim, in situations where the victim feels secure. Some rapes occur during home invasions. Any woman, regardless of place of residence, social or economic class, age, appearance, or other factors, can be a victim of rape. Among college women, most rapes occur in victim or rapist's home. Most rapes occur in or around the woman's house by someone she knows. Women are raped while engaging in everyday activities, such as sleeping, studying, working, shopping, or driving their cars. Regardless of activity, age, class, race, marital status, or occupation, all women are vulnerable to rape.

Myth 4: Sexual assault occurs only among strangers. If I avoid strangers, I will not be raped.

Fact: 1996 stats show: 67.5% of victims know their perpetrator. 1994: 28% of victims are raped by husbands or boyfriends, 35% by acquaintances, 5% by other relatives (see <http://www.raap.org/stats.htm>). When considering these statistics, it is important to remember that a woman is more apt to report being raped by a stranger than to press charges against a friend or relative.

Myth 5: Any woman could prevent the rape if she really wanted to. No woman can be raped against her will.

Fact: About 1 out of every 16 rape/sexual-assault victims reported that a firearm was present during the commission of the offense. Most victims (84%) reported that the offender used no weapon. However, the primary reaction of almost all women to the rape was fear for their lives. In view of a rape victim's fear of injury or death, the loss of control over her life and body, and the humiliation that she undergoes-- it is amazing that so many people still believe the preposterous myth that victims really enjoy rape or are responsible for being raped. The newest form of rape occurs with the use of drugs (GHB, ecstasy, Roofies etc.) which, alone or combined with alcohol, take away a person's ability to function and greatly impairs ability to remember. Rape drugs are also very dangerous as an overdose can kill.

Myth 6: Rape occurs only in large cities.

Fact: Although the reported number of assaults is higher in urban areas, sexual assault does happen in every area of the city, the suburbs and rural areas. 1993 National Victimization Survey statistics showed that: 66% of rapes occur between 6 pm and 6 am, 60% happen in own home or non-stranger home, and 50% happen within 1 mile of victim's home. On college campuses in the U.S. which are about the size of K-State—about 10,000 women—350 rapes typically take place in a year (<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/pubs-sum/182369.htm>).

Myth 7: Most rapes involve black men and white women.

Fact: 1996 statistics (<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/soo.htm>) suggest that most rapes involve a rapist and victim of the same race and socioeconomic class. Among victims 18 to 29 years old, two thirds had a prior relationship with the rapist. Four datasets (the FBI's UCR arrests, State felony court convictions, prison admissions, and the National Crime Victimization Survey) show a remarkable similarity in the characteristics of those categorized as rapists: 99 in 100 are male, 6 in 10 are white, and the average age is the early thirties.

Myth 8: Rape is an impulsive, uncontrollable act of sexual gratification. Most rapes are spontaneous (that is, a sexually frustrated man sees an attractive women and just can't control himself).

Fact: Amir found that 71 percent of all rapes were planned; the rapist had it in his mind to rape a woman (any woman) or he had a specific woman in mind. Eleven percent of rapes were partially planned; a rapist took advantage of a woman when she was alone, drunk etc. Only 16 percent were spontaneously or "explosive: rapes where the rapist had no prior intent to commit rape. **Most rapists have access to consensual sex; rape is an act of power and control.**

Myth 9: Rapists are abnormal perverts or men with an unsatisfied sex drive. Only "sick" or "insane" men rape women. The primary motive for rape is sexual.

Fact: Rapists have a normal sex drive, are generally sexually active and exhibit "normal" types of behavior, with the exception of a greater-than-average tendency toward expression of violence. Studies show the major motive for rape is aggression, not sex. Rapists can be married or have available sexual partners.

Myth 10: Rape is a minor crime, affecting few women. Its significance is over-exaggerated.

Fact: The FBI has reported that in 1994 rapes and sexual assaults in the US totaled 433,000. Some criminologists have estimated that only 10 percent of all rapes are reported. Therefore, one can assume that more than a half-million women are raped every year. Rape also affects all men—by lowering the level of trust women feel around men in general, and by injuring friends, family, and partners of men.

Myth 11: Women say "no" when they mean "yes."

Fact: In order to have legal, valid consent to have sexual activity, an unintoxicated, clear, mindful "yes" must be communicated. Either party engaged in sexual activity has the legal right to stop **at any point.** **There is no "point of no return."**

Myth 12: Women frequently cry, "rape" that is, there is a high rate of false reporting.

Fact: Studies show that only two percent of rape calls are determined false reports, which is no more than in the reporting of other felonies.

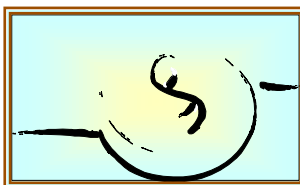
Myth 13: Date rape is not that serious; women get over rape quickly, with no lasting trauma.

Fact: Women and men are deeply affected by the invasion of intimacy and theft that is involved in sexual assault. Healthy, competent individuals are traumatized by assault and must deal with issues involving depression, anxiety, fear, relationship difficulties, physical illness, and other problems, both short- and long-term.

Myth 14: Rape is a natural, inherent part of the human condition.

Fact: Rape is not a natural act for men. A study by anthropologist Peggy Reeves Sanday found that in cultures with a high incidence of rapes, the economic, religious, and political structures are controlled by men. In Sanday's study of 44 societies that were not patriarchal, there was virtually no rape.

Adapted by the K-State Women's Center from: Myths and Facts About Assault by the Department of Social Services, Missouri Division of Health, Section of Maternal and Child Health, Jefferson City, M) 65101. Around 1985, material has been updated using US Dept of Justice Statistics 1996 from <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/soo.htm> and using statistics from <http://www.raap.org/ststas.htm>.



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