



**rape and abuse
crisis center**

advocacy, counseling, education.

Myths and Facts about Sexual Assault

Myth #1: Rape is just a sexual act; no big deal.

Fact: Rape is a violent crime committed in a sexual manner. It is the sexual release of anger or control to inflict violence and humiliation on the victim. Whether there is physical force or not, without consent, it is rape. Rape is a socially learned behavior; it correlates with history, gender roles, conditioning, and sexual violence in the media.

Myth #2: Rape is provoked by the victim; people who are raped are asking for it.

Fact: This myth takes away the criminal blame from the rapist and shifts responsibility for the crime to the victim. No man or woman's behavior or attire gives another person the right to rape them.

Myth #3: Only young, beautiful women in mini skirts get raped and only "bad" girls in large cities are raped.

Fact: Rapists choose their victims without regard to physical appearance. Victims are young, old, male, female, married, single, and of any race or economic class. Sexual assaults occur in all areas-cities, suburbs, small towns, and rural areas.

Myth #4: Rape is a rare occurrence.

Fact: Statistics show a sexual assault occurs every 2 minutes in the United States. One in five women and one in 71 men will be a victim of sexual assault during their lifetime.⁶ Sexual assaults are one of the most under-reported crimes with more than half still being left unreported.¹

Myth #5: Sexual assaults occur only among strangers.

Fact: Approximately 2/3 of sexual assaults are committed by someone the victim knows. Amongst juvenile sexual assault victims, 93% knew their attacker.¹

Myth #6: Women are raped when they are out alone at night, primarily in dark alleys.

Fact: Over 50% of all reported sexual assaults occur in the home.¹ Rapes and sexual assaults occur at all times during the morning, day, and night.

Myth #7: Any person could prevent rape if they really wanted to. No one can be raped against their will.

Fact: All victims are traumatized whether there is physical force or not; they feel as if they've lost control, fear the risk of pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and not being believed by family and friends.

24-Hour Crisis Line (701) 293-7273

www.raccfm.com

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F: Education/updated handouts/Myths and Facts about Sexual Assault

Myth #8: Sexual assaults do not happen to men. If men are assaulted, it is a homosexual assault.

Fact: Same sex assaults can and do occur. Many convicted rapists were married or had regular sexual partners at the time of the assault.⁵ However, the frequency of male sexual assault is difficult to estimate for two reasons: 1) Our reluctance to recognize the crime, and 2) the victim's reluctance to report the crime. In our society, men are expected to be in control, powerful, strong, and never afraid.

Myth #9: Rape is an impulsive, uncontrollable act of sexual gratification. Most rapes are spontaneous.

Fact: Seventy-one percent (71%) of rapes are planned in advance.⁵ A rapist has it in their mind to assault someone (anyone), or has a specific person in mind.

Myth #10: Rape does not occur in marriage.

Fact: Rape can and does happen in marriage. Just because two people are married does not mean either of them has given away their right to consent to sexual activity and behavior. Remember, most states have laws prohibiting rape in marriage.

Myth #11: Women frequently "cry rape." There is a high rate of false reporting.

Fact: The FBI reports only 2% of rape reports are given falsely. This is the same report rate for other felonies.

Myth #12: Rapists are abnormal perverts with an unsatisfied sex drive. Only "sick" or "insane" people sexually assault others. The primary motive for rape is sexual.

Fact: Rapists have normal sex drives, are generally sexually active (married or have available sex partners), and exhibit "normal" types of behavior, with the exception of a greater-than-average tendency to be aggressive or violent. Male rapists equate "manhood" with being in control, being aggressive, and carrying out sexual acts. Rape is a way to punish and degrade their victims and the sense of power, discharge of anger, and aggression are often more important than any sexual gratification.

References:

1. Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network: <http://www.rainn.org>
2. Bureau of Justice Statistics: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs>
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/NISVS_FactSheet-a.pdf
4. <http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/jhamlin/3925/myths.html>