

## Rape Myths

**Rape myths are prejudiced, stereotyped and false beliefs around the issue of sexual assault and rape.**

**Rape myths serve to minimise awareness around rape and its prevalence, push blame onto victims and excuse the rapists.**

**It is vitally important that, when dealing with the issues of rape, sexual violence and sexual abuse, the media take care not to perpetuate these myths during their coverage.**

### **Victim Blaming**

**Myth:** If someone drinks a lot or take drugs they shouldn't complain if they end up being raped or sexually assaulted.

**Fact:** If a person is unconscious or incapacitated by alcohol or drugs, they are unable to give their consent to sex. Sex without consent is rape. No-one asks or deserves to be raped or sexually assaulted.

**Myth:** Women are most likely to be raped after dark by a stranger, so women shouldn't go out alone at night.

**Fact:** Only around 10% of rapes are committed by 'strangers'. Risk of rape shouldn't be used as an excuse to control women's movements and restrict their rights and freedom.

**Myth:** When it comes to sex, women and girls sometimes 'play hard to get' and say 'no' when they really mean 'yes'.

**Fact:** Everyone has the legal right to say 'no' to sex and to change their mind about having sex at any point of sexual contact; if the other person doesn't stop, they are committing sexual assault or rape.

**Myth:** If a woman is wearing revealing or sexy clothing she 'asked for it'.

**Fact:** What somebody is wearing has nothing to do with whether they are consenting to sex or not. Sex without consent is rape. A woman should be able to wear what she likes without fear of being attacked.

**Myth:** Women who are raped often deserve it - particularly if they entered a man's home or got in his car.

**Fact:** Nobody deserves to be raped, ever. Entering someone's home or car is not consenting to sex. Sex without consent is rape.

**Myth:** Women are able to avoid rape by 'fighting off' the rapist.

**Fact:** Many people who are sexually attacked are unable to move or protest due to fear, shock or because they are incapacitated. Fighting can also sometimes endanger the victim further. People react to sexual violence in many different ways and none of those reactions are wrong.

**Myth:** Some women secretly want to be raped.

**Fact:** Fantasies are not the same as reality. Whatever women fantasise about, all sexual activity needs to be consensual.

**Myth:** A man should be able to defend himself against sexual assault.

**Fact:** Many men who are sexually attacked are unable to move or protest due to fear, shock or because they are incapacitated. Fighting can also sometimes endanger them further. People react to sexual violence in many different ways and none of those reactions are wrong.

**Myth:** Men who are sexually assaulted or raped by a man must be gay.

**Fact:** Rape and sexual assault are about violence and control, not desire. Being the target of rape has nothing to do with a man's sexuality.

## Excusing the Perpetrator

**Myth:** People who were sexually abused as children are likely to become abusers themselves.

**Fact:** The vast majority of those who are sexually abused as children will never perpetrate sexual violence against others.

**Myth:** Once a man is sexually aroused he cannot help himself; he has to have sex.

**Fact:** Men can control their urges to have sex just as women can. Rape is an act of violence and control, not sexual gratification.

**Myth:** Alcohol, drugs, stress or depression can turn people into rapists.

**Fact:** Drugs and alcohol, stress and depression are never the cause of rape or sexual assault. It is the attacker who is committing the crime, not the drugs and/or depression. There are no excuses.

**Myth:** He's not that type

**Fact:** There is no 'typical' rapist. Rapists are people who have chosen to commit a terrible crime – they are somebody's son, husband, father, brother... There are no excuses for rape.

**Myth:** Men who rape men or boys must be gay.

**Fact:** Men who rape other men do so as an expression of power or control. A man's sexuality does not cause him to rape.

**Myth:** Women do not assault or rape people.

**Fact:** The majority of sexual assaults and rapes are committed by men against women and children but women do perpetrate sexual violence.

## Minimising Rape

**Myth:** It's only rape if someone is physically forced into sex and has the injuries to show for it.

**Fact:** Sometimes people who are raped sustain internal and/or external injuries and sometimes they don't. Many people who are sexually attacked are unable to move or speak from fear, shock or because they are incapacitated.

**Myth:** If two people have had sex with each other before, it's always OK to have sex again.

**Fact:** Consent must be given and received every time two people engage in sexual contact

**Myth:** Men don't get raped.

**Fact:** Men also experience rape and sexual assault. Rape is an act of violence and control, and both men and women can be victims.

**Myth:** If a man pays for a dinner or date, a woman is expected to reciprocate with intercourse.

**Fact:** Who pays for dinner is irrelevant, and nobody should be obliged to reciprocate anything. Coercing or pressuring someone into sex after paying for a date is illegal.

**Myth:** Prostitutes cannot be raped.

**Fact:** Sex workers have the same rights with regards to consent as anyone else: the transactions they negotiate with clients are for consensual activities, not rape.

**Myth:** Stealthing is a sex trend, it is not that serious.

**Fact:** Stealthing is the removal of a condom without the other person's consent. This negates consent. Stealthing is rape.

**Myth:** Men are less affected by sexual assault than women.

**Fact:** Rape and sexual assault can be traumatic for anyone who experiences them. Gender has nothing to do with a person's reaction.

## Denial of the Prevalence of Rape

**Myth:** Most rapes are committed by strangers.

**Fact:** In reality, most rapes are committed by friends, family, or other individuals known to the victim.

**Myth:** Rapists are paedophiles, monsters or animals.

**Fact:** It is unhelpful to name rapists in this way, as it suggests that the men are subhuman and so excuses or diminishes their behaviour. Rapists are people who have chosen to commit a terrible crime – they are often somebody's son, husband, father, brother... There are no excuses for rape.

**Myth:** Rapists are psychotic, evil or mentally ill.

**Fact:** Rapists are usually ordinary people who have chosen to commit a terrible crime. There are no excuses for rape.

**Myth:** Men of certain races and backgrounds are more likely to commit sexual violence.

**Fact:** There is no typical rapist. People who commit sexual violence come from every economic, ethnic, racial, age and social group.

**Myth:** Only young, 'attractive' women and girls are raped.

**Fact:** People of all ages and appearances, and of all classes, cultures, abilities, genders, sexualities, races and religions, are raped. Rape is an act of violence and control, and has nothing to do with the perceived 'attractiveness' of a victim.

## Myths Directed at LGBT+ People

**Myth:** Abuse in same-sex relationships is 'mutual'

**Fact:** There is nothing fair or mutual about partner abuse. Dismissing partner abuse as 'a lover's quarrel' trivialises the abuse. There are no excuses for abuse, sexual assault or rape in a same-sex relationship.

**Myth:** Sexual abuse doesn't happen in same-sex relationships.

**Fact:** People in same-sex relationships are just as likely to experience sexual abuse and rape as straight people. LGBT people can find it difficult to seek support because of additional stereotypes and prejudice they face.

**Myth:** Trans people can't be raped

**Fact:** Statistically, trans and intersex people are more likely to experience sexual abuse and rape, but it is difficult for them to get support because of additional stereotypes and prejudice they face.

**Myth:** Men who are sexually assaulted or raped by a man must be gay.

**Fact:** Rape and sexual assault are about violence and control, not desire. Being the target of rape has nothing to do with a man's sexuality.

**Myth:** Men who rape men or boys must be gay.

**Fact:** Men who rape other men do so as an expression of power or control. A man's sexuality does not cause him to rape.

## Myths Around Reporting

**Myth:** 'Real' victims report rape immediately.

**Fact:** People often don't report rapes immediately because of societal pressure, the fear of not being believed and trauma. Telling someone about what has happened can be incredibly difficult.

**Myth:** People often lie about being raped because they regret having sex with someone or out of spite or for attention.

**Fact:** False allegations of rape are very rare. In fact, the vast majority of survivors choose not to report to the police.

**Myth:** It didn't go to court, so the person must've been lying

**Fact:** The evidence shows that false allegations of rape are no more common than false allegations of any other crime. Cases may not proceed to court because of high evidential requirements, but this does not mean that the survivor was lying. Talking about rape and sexual violence can be really scary and it takes a lot of courage to do it.