

Sexual Violence Myths & Facts

There is a lot of information that circulates about sexual violence and the people affected by it. The following myths are common:

Myth: Sexual assault is an act of lust and passion that can't be controlled.

Fact: Sexual assault is about power and control and is not motivated by sexual gratification.[\[1\]](#)

Myth: If a victim of sexual assault does not fight back, they must have thought the assault was not that bad or they wanted it.

Fact: Many survivors experience tonic immobility or a “freeze response” during an assault where they physically cannot move or speak.[\[2\]](#)

Myth: A lot of victims lie about being raped or give false reports.

Fact: Only 2-8% of rapes are falsely reported, the same percentage as for other felonies.[\[3\]](#)

Myth: A person cannot sexually assault their partner or spouse.

Fact: Nearly 1 in 10 women have experienced rape by an intimate partner in their lifetime.[\[4\]](#)

Myth: Sexual assaults most often occur in public or outdoors.

Fact: 55% of rape or sexual assault victimizations occur at or near the victim's home, and 12% occur at or near the home of a friend, relative, or acquaintance.[\[5\]](#)

Myth: Rape does not happen that often.

Fact: There is an average of 293,066 victims ages 12 or older of rape and sexual assault each year in the U.S. This means 1 sexual assault occurs every 107 seconds.[\[6\]](#)

Myth: People that have been sexually assaulted will be hysterical and crying.

Fact: Everyone responds differently to trauma- some may laugh, some may cry, and others will not show any emotions.[\[7\]](#)

Myth: Men are not victims of sexual violence.

Fact: 1.5% of all men have been raped and 47% of bisexual men have experienced some form of unwanted sexual contact in their lifetime.⁴

Myth: Wearing revealing clothing, behaving provocatively, or drinking a lot means the victim was “asking for it”.

Fact: The perpetrator selects the victim- the victim's behavior or clothing choices do not mean that they are consenting to sexual activity.[\[8\]](#)

Myth: If a parent teaches a child to stay away from strangers they won't get raped.

Fact: 60% of child sexual abuse cases are perpetrated by someone the child knows outside the family, and 30% are assaulted by family members.[\[9\]](#)

Myth: Being sexually assaulted by someone of the same gender can make a person gay or lesbian.

Fact: The assault is typically not based on the sexual preferences of the victim or rapist, and therefore does not necessarily change the victim's sexual orientation.[\[10\]](#)

Myth: People with disabilities are at low risk for sexual assault.

Fact: People with disabilities are victims of sexual assault twice as much as people without disabilities.⁶

Myth: Sex workers cannot be raped because they are selling sex.

Fact: Sex workers have the right to give and withhold consent to any sexual activity, and therefore, can be raped just like anyone else.[\[11\]](#)

Myth: Getting help is expensive for survivors of assault.

Fact: Services such as counseling and advocacy are offered for free or at a low cost by sexual assault service providers.[\[12\]](#)

Myth: There is nothing we can do to prevent sexual violence.

Fact: There are many ways you can help prevent sexual violence including intervening as a bystander to protect someone who may be at risk.[\[13\]](#)

<https://www.ourresilience.org/what-you-need-to-know/myths-and-facts/>