

# What Are Rape Myths?

The term “rape myth” refers to commonly held beliefs about rape which are untrue. The repercussions of rape myth include: victim blaming, under reporting of rape and sexual assault, not holding perpetrators accountable.

## COMMON MYTHS ABOUT SEXUAL ASSAULT

**MYTH:** *Rape is a sexual crime, impulsively committed by a man for sexual gratification.*

**FACT:** Rape is a crime of violence and aggression. It is intended to overpower, degrade, and humiliate the victim. Over 70% of all rapes are planned. Most rapists are heterosexual men with normal sexual relationships, and many are married.

**MYTH:** *Rape doesn't happen very often.*

**FACT:** Rape is the most frequently committed violent crime in America. The F.B.I. estimates that 1 in every 4 women will be raped sometime during her life and that a rape occurs every 2 minutes.

**MYTH:** *Most rapes are committed by a stranger in a dark place at night.*

**FACT:** It is estimated that from 50% to 70% of all rapes are committed by someone the victim knows. Rape can take place anywhere at any time; nearly half of all assaults occur in the victim's home. Many acquaintance rapes occur in the context of a dating relationship.

**MYTH:** *Women report rapes to get even with men or to protect their reputations.*

**FACT:** According to the F.B.I., fewer than 2% of reported rapes are false, which is the same percentage for the false reporting of other crimes.

**MYTH:** *A woman who gets raped deserves it, especially if she agreed to go to the man's home or ride in his car.*

**FACT:** No one, male or female, deserves to be raped. Being in someone's home or car does not mean a woman has agreed to have sex with that person.

**MYTH:** *When men become sexually aroused, they have to have sex or they will explode!*

**FACT:** This notion reduces the image of men to walking genitalia! Sex may be desirable but not essential...no explosions have been recorded.

**MYTH:** *When a woman says “no”, she really means “maybe” or “yes”.*

**FACT:** Although people sometimes do give ambiguous messages, one should never assume that “no” means anything other than “no”. If in doubt, do something really revolutionary: ask! Only “yes” means “yes”.

**MYTH:** *If a woman wears certain types of clothing, she wants sex.*

**FACT:** Wearing sexy clothes or dressing attractively usually means the person simply wishes to look attractive - it may have no connection to wanting to have sex.

**MYTH:** *If a woman is intoxicated or has passed out because of excessive use of alcohol or drugs, it is okay to have sex with her.*

**FACT:** If someone is intoxicated or unconscious, and therefore defenseless, it is no more right to have sex with that person than it is to rob or murder her or him.

**MYTH:** *Rape is a woman's problem.*

**FACT:** Rape is everyone's problem. It affects everyone in our society, not only the individuals who are victimized and their relatives and friends. It is the result of a culture that promotes male dominance and defines women by their sexuality.