



Myths and Facts of sexual assault

Sexual assault is a crime.

It can happen to anyone and is never the fault of the victim.

Myths blame the victim and excuse the perpetrator. Understanding the reality of sexual assault is a major step in decreasing the incidence of sexual assault and helping those who experience this violence to recover.

Why do myths about sexual assault exist?

There are two main reasons for the existence of sexual assault myths.

The first is to excuse the perpetrator for their actions, and the second is to blame the victim.

While we continue to accept these myths, sexual assault will continue to happen and those who experience this violence will continue to be silenced.

24/7 Counselling

NSW Rape Crisis
1800 424 017

1800RESPECT
1800 737 732
1800respect.org.au

Administration

P 02 8585 0333
F 02 9555 5911

rape-dvservices.org.au
info@rape-dvservices.org.au



Myths and Realities

It could never happen to me.

Anyone can be raped.

1 in 5 women in Australia will experience sexual assault at some time in their life. While age is no barrier to experiencing sexual assault, women aged 15 to 24 years are most at risk^b.

Sexual assault is about uncontrolled lust.

Sexual assault is a violent assault. Research shows that most offenders plan their attacks^a.

Women 'ask for it' by the way they dress and behave.

If you have money in your pocket does that mean you want to be robbed? Research shows that sexual assault is not caused by the look or behaviour of the victim^a.

Sexual assault is committed in dark alleys by strangers.

Most victims know their attackers. In 70% of sexual assaults the offender is a family member, friend, work or school colleague. Of the remainder, the offender is usually someone the victim meets socially or dates.

Most sexual assault occurs in the victim's or perpetrator's home, car or workplace. Sexual assault by a stranger accounts for less than 1% of sexual violence and an attack by a stranger in a dark place is even less common^b.

A sex offender is easy to spot.

Sex offenders look perfectly normal. They come from every class, profession, age and culture. They are not confined to any particular group or activity. They are usually 'nice' and social. This is how they gain access to their victim who thinks nothing of inviting them into their home or getting in their car or going out with them^a.

It's not sexual assault if those involved have had sex with each other before.

Forced sex is a sexual assault. Consent must be given for every occasion of intimacy - consent last night does not mean consent tonight and consent to one does not mean consent to others.

If consent is withdrawn that must be respected. Absence of 'no' is not consent. When negotiating a sexual encounter both parties have a responsibility to ensure the other is consenting.

If a person is affected by alcohol or other drugs to the point that they do not know what they are doing, it is sexual assault to have opportunistic sex with them^c.

A husband cannot rape his wife.

Being married does not mean permanent consent. Sexual assault in marriage is a crime.

Men don't get sexually assaulted.

Yes they do.

Sexual Assault in Australia

In Australia, 1 in 3 women will experience domestic violence and 1 in 5 women will experience sexual assault at some time in their lives. It is estimated that 126,000 incidents of indecent or sexual assault occur annually in Australia^d.

However only 15% of sexual assaults are reported to Police, and 1 in 5 women do not tell anyone when they are sexually assaulted^b.

In 70% of sexual assaults the perpetrator is known to the victim, most commonly a family member, friend, or someone the person goes to work or school with. The remainder are usually someone the person met socially or dated.

Most sexual assaults do not involve physical injury/assault.

While sexual assault occurs in all communities, rural women, women with disabilities, women who have a mental illness, women who have drug or alcohol addictions, women who work as sex workers and Aboriginal women experience higher rates of sexual assault than other women.

References

(a) Clark & Quadara. (2010). Insights into sexual assault perpetration: giving voice to victim/survivors' knowledge. Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, Victoria.

(b) ABS (1996). Women's Safety Australia. Australian Bureau of Statistics: Canberra.

(c) National Crimes Act, 1900. Retrieved from http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/ca190082/

(d) ABS (2005) Personal Safety Survey Australia. Australian Bureau of Statistics: Canberra.

Contact Rape & Domestic Violence Services Australia

24/7 Counselling is available via:

Phone: 1800 424 017 (NSW)

Online: www.rape-dvservices.org.au

Those living outside NSW can contact 1800RESPECT:

Phone: 1800 737 732

Online: 1800respect.org.au

A range of factsheets can be downloaded from the website.

If you have questions regarding the material included in this factsheet, please contact administration:

Phone: 02 8585 0333

Email: info@rape-dvservices.org.au