



Sexual Assault: Myths and Facts



Sexual Assault is a term referring to a spectrum of assault-rape, attempted rape, incest indecent exposure, child molestation, acquaintance/date rape, and forced sexual contact. All are against the law.

“Myths” are false beliefs that society holds about sexual assault.

MYTH: *It will not happen to me.*

FACT: Anyone can be a victim of rape. This crime knows no boundaries. People hold strongly to this myth because it offers them a false sense of security. The truth is, people of all ages, races, socioeconomic groups, and religious affiliations have been victims of rape.

MYTH: *Only women can be raped.*

FACT: Men can also be victims of rape. Faced with a gun or knife, most people will think only of surviving and not of the actual sexual assault. Men have been victimized by individual male assailants, gang raped by a group of male assailants, or in rare instances, by a woman.

MYTH: *Rape is a sexual crime, where the attacker is seeking sexual gratification.*

FACT: Rape is a crime of violence in which sex is used as the weapon. The rapist attacks the victim seeking power and control. Satisfaction is gained from dominating, humiliating, and degrading the victim. Rape is never a crime of passion.

MYTH: *Most rapes are interracial.*

FACT: Statistics show that you are much more likely to be raped by a person of the same racial background.

MYTH: *If women would just fight, they could avoid being raped.*

FACT: When faced with fear, people react in a variety of ways. Rapists often mentally overpower a victim by using threats of violence, death, or injury to the victim's children or loved ones. When faced with a gun or knife, most people freeze. ALL victims do the best they can to live through and survive the attack. Fighting vs. not fighting is an individual decision that must be made in a split second. It does not help to second guess any actions made at the time of the attack. No one plans to be raped. Many rapes that do not involve weapons often involve some type of coercion, either subtle or blatant. If an assailant were to threaten a family member or loved one, most people would consent to save the lives of those they love. Whatever the situation, if a person lives through a victimization, she or he did the right thing.

MYTH: *Rape happens in dark alleys, by strange men who jump out of bushes.*

FACT: Although some rapes do happen in dark, secluded areas, the majority of rapes happen in and around your home. Statistics also show that “stranger rapes” are few in number. It is much more likely that you will know your assailant. A rapist can be anybody.

MYTH: *Rapists are usually outcasts from society.*

FACT: Most rapists appear to be “normal” men in our society. Most rapists are young and are either married or having ongoing, “normal” sexual relationships. Rapists come from all races, religions, and socioeconomic groups.

When you have experienced sexual assault, it is normal to have many fears and anxieties about what happened. Knowing the facts about sexual assault may enable you to deal more effectively with your concerns.





MYTH: *Rapists are easily identifiable by their physical appearance, actions, or words.*

FACT: There is no standard mental or physical profile that defines a rapist. A rapist can be someone of any age, race, economic background, belief system, or culture. Although the stereotype of the deranged stranger rapist abounds in our society, stranger rapes only make up around 20% of all sexual assaults, and even then, the stranger may not be a mentally disturbed person. The vast majority of rapists are people the victim/survivor knows, people she/he sees in day-to-day life.

MYTH: *If a woman dresses sexy, she is asking for "it".*

FACT: Again, people believe this myth so that they do not have to admit they, too, could become a victim. The thought process being, "I do not dress sexy, so I will never be raped." The fact is that a woman has the right to dress in any way she chooses. Her choice of clothing in NO WAY grants permission or invites rape. This thought process can also be applied to other myths, such as "She was raped because of the places she goes, the people she hangs out with, or the amount of makeup that she wears." No victim has ever asked to be raped. It is important to remember that rape is the responsibility of the rapist, not the victim.

MYTH: *Women fantasize about being raped.*

FACT: It is true that we all fantasize. Fantasies are situations in which we have control to continue or end at any given moment. Rape, on the other hand, is a situation in which we are not in control. It is important to remember that rape is an undesirable, aggressive act with a person with whom we are not in a consenting sexual relationship.

MALE SURVIVORS' MYTH: *Males who are sexually abused do not suffer to the same extent as female victims.*

FACT: Sexual abuse is a crime of violence, and all victims suffer. Male victims experience the same reactions to the crime as female victims do. Some of these reactions include:

- Self-blame,
- Fear,
- Anger,
- Relationship problems,
- Questions about sexuality,
- Addictions, and
- Trust issues.

Not everyone will experience all of these reactions, nor will they experience them to the same extent.

MYTH: *Males are only abused by homosexual men.*

FACT: The majority of sexual offenders are heterosexual males. Females can also assault males, most often as young children, and teens and/or in dating relationships using coercion or threats to enforce compliance.

MYTH: *Males assaulted by another male are, or become, homosexuals.*

FACT: Sexual abuse is not an act of sex, passion, or desire; it is a crime of violence. The sexual orientation of the victim is not changed by such an attack.

MYTH: *A strong man can't be raped. He must have consented.*

FACT: Being strong is not defense against rape and just because a man did not fight off his attacker does not mean he consented. Surprise, a weapon, threats, being outnumbered, or frozen by fear make fighting back impossible for most victims.

MYTH: *Men do not usually know their assailant.*

FACT: Although men are sometimes sexually assaulted by strangers, it is more common for them to know their attacker. Men have been raped by strangers, acquaintances, family members, teachers, colleagues, youth leaders, and others.





Hate Crimes

Hate crimes against transgender individuals often involve sexual assault and may intersect with factors like race. According to the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP):

- Acts of hate violence, including harassment, stalking, vandalism, and physical and sexual assault, are frequently driven by expressions of transphobia, biphobia, and homophobia, and aim to convey a message to LGBTQ communities. LGBTQ individuals may face additional bias due to their membership in other marginalized groups based on factors like race, class, incarceration history, immigration status, or ability. Belonging to multiple traditionally marginalized communities can increase the risk of severe violence.
- In the NCAVP's 2009 report on hate violence, 50% of victims in violent hate crimes against LGBTQ individuals were transgender women, often accompanied by sexual assault or genital mutilation. In 2009, 17% of reported violent hate crimes against LGBTQ people targeted those who identified as transgender, with most being transgender women, transgender men, genderqueer, gender-questioning, or intersex.
- People of color are more likely to be victims of hate crimes, with 53% of LGBTQ hate crime victims in 2009 being people of color. Of the 22 anti-LGBTQ hate crime murders documented that year by NCAVP, 79% of the victims were people of color. In the case of transgender individuals, particularly transgender women, who were victims of the 2009 murders, the majority were people of color. Similarly, a significant proportion of gender non-conforming individuals who were murdered were also people of color.

Sexual Violence and LGBTQ+ Persons

The Numbers

Data illustrating the incidence of sexual violence among transgender individuals reveals alarmingly elevated levels of sexual abuse and assault. A significant portion of transgender people face sexual abuse or assault during their lifetime. Numerous reports suggest that transgender survivors may encounter sexual assault rates as high as two-thirds, frequently accompanied by physical violence or abuse. Consequently, it is evident that a substantial proportion of transgender individuals live with the repercussions of trauma and the constant apprehension of potential re-victimization.

The Victims

Sexual violence is disproportionately prevalent in certain subpopulations within the transgender community, encompassing transgender youth, transgender people of color, individuals with disabilities, homeless individuals, and those engaged in the sex trade. As an illustration, the 2011 *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey* revealed that a significant percentage of transgender youth reported sexual assault experiences in K-12 settings involving peers or educational staff. Additionally, a noteworthy percentage of African-American transgender individuals surveyed experienced workplace-related sexual assaults, and a substantial portion of homeless transgender individuals faced assault incidents while seeking refuge in shelters.



Intimate Partner Violence

The 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey revealed higher lifetime prevalence of sexual violence against bisexual women compared to heterosexual women, and similar trends for lesbian and heterosexual women. Studies suggest that 20-35% of LGBTQ couples experience domestic violence, with 50% of surveyed transgender individuals experiencing violence from their primary partner after coming out. LGBTQ youth report a 30% incidence of dating violence, while heterosexual students report 9%.

Unfortunately, only one in five LGBTQ victims of intimate partner violence or sexual assault seek assistance from service providers.

See Something, Say Something, Do Something!

**Let's Talk, We Can
Help.**



**Victim Connect Resource
Center**, call or text 1-855-4VICTIM
(855-484-2846) 888-511-3522 or
[chat online.](#)

**The California Partnership to
End Domestic Violence**

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