

Misconceptions of Sexual Assault

MISCONCEPTION

REALITY

They
"asked for it".

No person ever wants or asks to be sexually assaulted. The idea that any person deserves to be raped because they dress or behave "provocatively" shifts responsibility away from the perpetrator and onto the victim. It reinforces the idea that "good" people aren't raped and that "bad" people are. Every person has the right to dress and behave as they choose without having to fear sexual assault.

Most people are
raped by
strangers lurking in
dark streets.

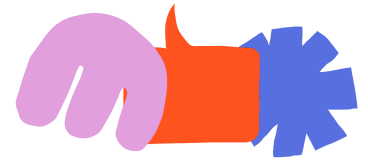
Both women and men are more likely to experience sexual assault by a known person than by a stranger. The most common perpetrator for both male (88%) and female (60%) victims of family and domestic related sexual assault was a family member who was not an intimate partner. In addition, 67% of sexual assaults mostly occurred in the home. (ABS 2021)

Sexual assault is
an unusual
occurrence and
rape is rare

Sexual assault is all too common. Sexual harassment such as leering, touching, pinching and suggestive remarks is an everyday occurrence for many people. Almost two-thirds of victim-survivors were under the age of 18 when the sexual assault occurred. There were six times more female victim-survivors of sexual assault than male victim-survivors. Over a third of sexual assaults were recorded as family and domestic violence-related. (ABS 2021)

Victims make up
stories about
rape.

There is no evidence that many people make false reports of sexual offences. The rate of false allegations of sexual offences is very low. A range of studies show approximately 5% of rape allegations are proven false. This misconception about false allegations is harmful for society and harmful for victims of sexual offences. It contributes to under-reporting and victims wrongly fear they will be met with disbelief and blame if they report. (police.vic.gov.au 2019)



MISCONCEPTION

Only young stereotypically "attractive" people are raped.

Rapists are sex-crazed people.

People who are drunk are responsible for their own rape.

People enjoy being raped.

REALITY

Sexual assault prevalence rates were higher for younger women, women in financial hardship, women living with disability, and women experiencing lower levels of life satisfaction. Women and men who experienced sexual abuse before the age of 15 were more likely to experience sexual assault as adults. (ABS 2021)

The overwhelming majority of rapists are ordinary people from a range of socio-economic classes, occupations and nationalities. All people can control their sexual urges if they wish to and no sexual urge ever gives a person the right to rape another. Most rapes are, in fact, premeditated and well-planned. They are rarely spontaneous, uncontrollable sexual acts.

The law assumes a 'heavily intoxicated' person is incapable of consenting to the act. Many offenders are opportunistic and will take advantage of victims who are already drunk and incapacitated. The media often focuses on date-rape drugs such as Rohypnol, however alcohol is the most common drug of choice that offenders intentionally use to incapacitate a victim before committing a sexual offence. (police.vic.gov.au 2019)

No-one enjoys sexual assault. Rape is about power not sex and, as such, is an expression of hostility and aggression intended to humiliate and degrade the victim. Sexual assault always involves coercion, manipulation, and/or threatened or actual injury, mutilation or death. In the short term victims can suffer terror, shock, illness and physical injury. In the long term it can mean loss of self-esteem, ongoing psychological problems, breakdown of relationships and economic hardship.