

Myths and Facts

Sexual assault is a crime.

It can happen to anyone and is never the fault of the person who has experienced the violence.

Myths exist only to blame the victim for what has happened and give excuses to the perpetrator for their actions and behaviour.

Understanding the reality of sexual assault is a major step in reducing the incidence and impacts of sexual assault. It will also help those who experience such violence to seek assistance in their recovery and justice for the crimes that have been committed against them.

Contact Details

1800RESPECT (24/7)

NSW Rape Crisis (24/7)

Sexual Assault Counselling Australia

Rape & Domestic Violence Services Australia

1800 737 732

1800 424 017

1800 211 028

Administration
02 8585 0333

1800respect.org.au

nswrapecrisis.com.au

sexualassaultcounselling.org.au

rape-dvservices.org.au

info@rape-dvservices.org.au

Myths and Realities



**Rape &
Domestic Violence
Services Australia**

It could never happen to me.

Anyone can experience sexual assault.

1 in 5 women in Australia will experience sexual assault at some time in their life. 7% of all people who experience sexual assault are adult men. 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 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 person meets socially or dates.

Most sexual assaults occur 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 establish trust and are then able to manipulate the person into a location where they can commit their act without interruption or witnesses.

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

Forced sex is 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 physical 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 17% of sexual assaults are reported to Police, and many do not tell anyone when they are sexually assaulted^b.

Most sexual assaults do not involve physical injury/assault.

While sexual assault occurs in all communities, rural women, people with disabilities, people 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: 1800RESPECT:

Phone: 1800 737 732

Online: 1800respect.org.au

A range of factsheets can be downloaded from www.rape-dvservices.org.au

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

Phone: 02 8585 0333

Email: info@rape-dvservices.org.au