

Rape or sexual assault was the violent crime least often reported to law enforcement .

If you or someone you know is a victim of sexual assault and would like information about help in your area, please call your local sexual assault victim services program for referrals and information on available

services or contact the

Division of Victim Services

Victim Only Helpline: 1-888-996-8816

Phone: 307-777-7200

Fax: 307-777-6683

Email: vssi@state.wy.us

Web Site: vssi.state.wy.us

Wyoming Office of the Attorney General

Division of Victim Services

122 W. 25th, Herschler Bldg
1st Floor West
Cheyenne, WY. 82002

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Sexual Assault Myths & Facts

Myths and Facts about Sexual Violence

MYTH: *Sexual assault is a crime of passion and lust.*

FACT: Sexual assault is a crime of violence. Assailants seek to dominate, humiliate and punish their victims.

MYTH: *You cannot be assaulted against your will.*

FACT: Assailants overpower their victims with the threat of violence or with actual violence. Especially in cases of acquaintance rape or incest, an assailant often uses the victim's trust in him to isolate her.

MYTH: *It is impossible for a husband to sexually assault his wife.*

FACT: Regardless of marital or social relationship, if a woman does not consent to sexual activity, she is being sexually assaulted. In fact, 14% of women are victims of rape committed by their husband.

MYTH: *"It can't happen to me." Rape is an isolated, infrequent event that only happens to certain kinds of people.*

FACT: Anyone can be sexually assaulted. Studies show that sexual assault happens to people of all ages, people of color, lesbians/gays, people with disabilities, and people of every racial, ethnic, religious, economic and social background.

MYTH: *The best way for survivors to get over a sexual assault is to act like it didn't happen, to put it behind them, get on with their lives and be 'normal' again.*

FACT: Speaking out about sexual assault might be an essential part of the healing process for survivors. However, no survivor should ever be forced to speak, publicly or privately. All survivors have a right to support and validation no matter where they are in their individual healing process or how long ago the assault occurred.

MYTH: *A person who has really been assaulted will be hysterical.*

FACT: Survivors exhibit a spectrum of emotional responses to assault: calm, hysteria, laughter, anger, apathy, shock. Each survivor copes with the trauma of the assault in a different way.

MYTH: *Assailants are usually crazed psychopaths who do not know their victims.*

FACT: As many as 80% of all assaults involve acquaintances. An assailant might be someone you know intimately. He/she may be a co-worker, a friend or a family member.

MYTH: *Only young, pretty women are assaulted.*

FACT: Survivors range in age from infancy to old age, and their appearance is seldom a consideration. Assailants often choose victims who seem most vulnerable to attack: old persons, children physically or emotionally disabled persons, substance abusers, and street persons.

MYTH: *It is impossible to sexually assault a man.*

FACT: Men fall victim for the same reasons as women: they are overwhelmed by threats or acts of physical and emotional violence. Also, most sexual assaults that involve a male victim are gang assaults.

MYTH: *As long as children remember to stay away from strangers, they are in no danger of being assaulted.*

FACT: Sadly, children are usually assaulted by acquaintances; a family member or other caretaking adult. Children are usually coerced into sexual activity by their assailant, and are manipulated into silence by the assailant's threats and/or promises, as well as their own feelings of guilt.

MYTH: *All women secretly want to be raped.*

FACT: Women, like all human beings, want a life of dignity and safety. Sexual assault robs a person of dignity and a sense of personal safety. No one wants the physical and emotional pain caused by sexual assault.

MYTH: *Rape is a minor crime affecting only a few women.*

Fact: It is estimated that 1 in 8 women will be raped in her lifetime.

MYTH: *Most rapes occur when people are out alone at night. If people stay at home, then they will be safer.*

FACT: 44% of rapes reported occurred in the victim's home.

MYTH: *Rapists are strangers. If people avoid strangers, then they will not be raped.*

FACT: In 60% of the rapes reported, the rapist was known to the victim.

"Every 90 seconds, a Person over the age of 12 is sexually assaulted"