

#RAPEMYTHS



Our society holds harmful myths about sexual violence that retraumatize survivors and prevent justice. The goal of the Representation Project's #RapeMyths campaign is to raise awareness of common myths about sexual assault and survivors. Together, we can create a world where survivors are believed and supported, and receive the justice they deserve.

MYTH #1

FALSE RAPE ACCUSATIONS ARE COMMON.

The Facts

False rape accusations are rare— only 2% - 6%, and similar to false reports of other crimes.¹ In fact, the majority of rape and sexual violence survivors never report the crime to law enforcement.

MYTH #2

“REAL” RAPE IS A STRANGER JUMPING OUT OF THE BUSHES AT NIGHT.

The Facts

Most rape is perpetrated by someone known to the survivor. Over 75% of rapes are committed by an acquaintance, friend, or family member,² and over half occur at or near the survivor's home.³

MYTH #3

IF THEY DON'T FIGHT BACK, IT WASN'T RAPE.

The Facts

Research shows it is completely normal for survivors to experience a temporary paralysis during the assault,⁴ so few rape survivors fight back. Freezing is a common response and survival mechanism in the face of sexual assault.

MYTH #4

IF THEY WAITED TO REPORT A RAPE, THEY MUST NOT HAVE BEEN RAPED.

The Facts

Most victims never report this crime to authorities. Two-thirds (66%) of rape crimes are never reported to law enforcement⁵ and reporting often happens many years after the crime because of the stigma and fear of retaliation survivors face.⁶

MYTH #5

IF THEY CAN'T REMEMBER ALL THE DETAILS, THEY MUST NOT HAVE BEEN RAPED.

The Facts

Disassociation is a common response to traumatic events like rape and often causes central memories of the trauma or the order of events to become inaccessible to the person who experienced it.⁷

MYTH #6

THE VICTIM BROUGHT THIS RAPE ON THEMSELF.

The Facts

Rape is a felony, the only one we commonly blame on the victim. Wearing revealing clothing or getting drunk does not justify perpetration of a crime. The rapist is solely and wholly responsible for their criminal behavior.

MYTH #7

IF THEY DIDN'T SAY “NO,” IT WASN'T RAPE.

The Facts

Consensual sex requires consent, not the absence of protest. If someone seems unsure, stays quiet, moves away, or freezes, they are not agreeing to sexual activity. Consent must be clear and affirmative.

MYTH #8

“REAL” SURVIVORS DON'T HAVE CONTACT WITH THEIR RAPIST AFTER THE RAPE.

The Facts

Many survivors are in contact with their rapist after the crime— because they are family members, to avoid additional violence, or as a way to help make sense of what happened.

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2. US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 2010-2016 (2017).
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4. Möller, A., Söndergaard, HP, Helström, L. (2017). Tonic immobility during sexual assault – a common reaction predicting post-traumatic stress disorder and severe depression. *Acta Obstet Gynecol Scand*, 96: 932– 938.
5. Klemmer, K., Neill, D. B., & Jarvis, S. A. (2021). Understanding spatial patterns in rape reporting delays. *Royal Society open science*, 8(2), 201795.
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7. Torkin Manes LLP Barristers & Solicitors, Busting Sexual Assault Myths (Still), (2019). [https://www.torkinmanes.com/PDFGeneration/PrintablePublications/busting-sexual-assault-myths-\(still\).pdf](https://www.torkinmanes.com/PDFGeneration/PrintablePublications/busting-sexual-assault-myths-(still).pdf)