

Sexual Assault Myths and Facts

1. **Myth:** It will not happen to you.

Fact: Anyone can be a victim of rape. This crime has no boundaries. People hold strongly to this myth because it offers them a false sense of security.

2. **Myth:** Only women can be sexually assaulted.

Fact: Men can also be victim of sexual assault. Men have been victimized by individual male assailants, gang rape by a group of male assailants, or in some instances, by a woman.

3. **Myth:** Sexual Assault is a sexual crime, where the attacker is seeking sexual gratification

Fact: Sexual assault is a crime of violence in which sex is used as a weapon. The assailant attacks the victim seeking power and control.

4. **Myth:** Most sexual assaults are perpetrated by strangers.

Fact: In 80% of sexual assault the victim knew the perpetrator. Stranger assault does occur, but it accounts for 20% and is the least common type.

5. **Myth:** If a sexual assault victim has no physical injuries and isn't showing visible signs of trauma, they are ok.

Fact: Being sexually assaulted changes a person's self-perception, their feelings about trusting others, how they relate to their partner and how they feel about their own body. Emotional pain can take months or even years to heal. There is no right way to react to sexual assault, everybody copes differently.

6. **Myth:** Most sexual assaults occur in places other than a private home, such as a dark alley or park.

Fact: More than half of reported sexual assaults occur in private homes with the majority being in the victim's home. Another common location is the perpetrator's car.

7. **Myth:** Women often falsely accuse men of sexual assault to get back at them or because they feel guilty about having sex.

Fact: Although false reporting does exist, it is very rare. Sometimes victims choose to recant their statements not because it is false but often because they feel embarrassed, ashamed or that they won't be believed.

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

Fact: People believe this myth so they do not have to admit they too could be victim. The thought process being, "I do not dress sexy, so I will never be raped". The fact is that a woman has a right to dress in any way she chooses. No victim has asked to be sexually assaulted. It is important to remember that sexual assault is the responsibility of the perpetrator, not the victim.

9. **Myth:** If women would only fight, they could avoid being sexually assaulted.

Fact: When faced with fear people react in a variety of ways. Rapists often mentally overpower a victim by using threats of violence, deaths, or injury to the victim's children or loved ones. ALL victims do the best they can to live through and survive the attack.

10. **Myth:** A person who has been drinking alcohol, using drugs, or dancing seductively is asking to be sexually assaulted.

Fact: No one asks to be sexually assaulted. For sex to be legal, both parties must be of age and consenting. Both parties must be able to mentally, emotionally, physically and verbally choose to engage in the sexual activity. The sexual appearance and or seductive behaviors of a person DO NOT equal consent.

11. **Myth:** If sexual assault is not reported to the police right away, nothing can be done.

Fact: Sexual assault can be reported to the police at any time. It is never too late to report a sexual assault.

12. **Myth:** Once a person engages in a sexual activity, he or she cannot change his or her mind.

Fact: Everyone has the right to have control over what happens to her or his body. People can choose with whom, when and for how long any activity takes place. No matter how deep the level of intimacy, even if the couple is actively engaged in sex, either person has the right to change her or his mind and stop the activity at any time.

13. **Myth:** Women say “no” but they really mean “yes”.

Fact: If a person says “no” to sexual intimacy, it should never be assumed that the statement means anything else. A person may feel he or she is getting mixed messages but that is not an excuse for her or him to commit sexual assault.

14. **Myth:** Sexual assault does not happen very often in Nova Scotia.

Fact: Nova Scotia has the highest rate of sexual assault per capita in Canada.

15. **Myth:** It is not sexual assault if the couple is dating or is married.

Fact: Unwanted sexual activity in any relationship qualifies as sexual assault.

16. **Myth:** Perpetrators of sexual violence come largely from certain races or backgrounds.

Fact: Men and women of all races, ethnicities, ages, sexual orientations, economic and social classes are represented among assailants.

17. **Myth:** Most sexual assaults are reported to the police.

Fact: 88% of sexual assaults are not reported to police.

18. **Myth:** Only attractive young women are sexually assaulted.

Fact: Nobody is immune to sexual assault. Women and men, children and seniors, people with different abilities, people who have been sexually assaulted are found everywhere.

19. **Myth:** Sexual activity begins in the genital area.

Fact: The organ in the body where sexual activity begins is the brain.

20. **Myth:** Sex workers / prostitutes cannot get sexually assaulted.

Fact: If a sex worker or prostitute has not consented to the sexually activity it is sexual assault.