

Myth: Someone who's willingly drunk lots of alcohol or taken drugs shouldn't complain if they end up being raped or sexually assaulted.

Fact: In law, consent to sex is when someone agrees by choice and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice. If a person is unconscious or incapacitated by alcohol or drugs, they are unable to give their consent to sex. Having sex with a person who is incapacitated through alcohol or drugs is rape. No-one asks or deserves to be raped or sexually assaulted; 100% of the responsibility lies with the perpetrator. Everyone has the right to live their life free from the fear and experience of sexual violence.



Myth: If two people have had sex with each other before, it's always OK to have sex again.

Fact: If a person is in a relationship with someone or has had sex with them before, this does not mean that they cannot be sexually assaulted or raped by that person. Consent must be given and received every time two people engage in sexual contact. It is important to check in with our sexual partners and make sure that anything sexual that happens between us is what we both want, every time.

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Myth: It's only rape if someone is physically forced into sex and has the injuries to show for it.

Fact: Sometimes people who are raped sustain internal and/or external injuries and sometimes they don't. Someone consents to sex when they agree by choice and have the freedom and capacity to make that choice. There are lots of circumstances in which someone might not have freedom or capacity to consent to sex. For example, rapists will sometimes use weapons or threats of violence to prevent a physical struggle. Sometimes they will take advantage of someone who isn't able to consent, because they are drunk or asleep, for example. Many people who are sexually attacked are unable to move or speak from fear and shock. They may be in a coercive or controlling relationship with their rapist, and/or too young to be able to consent (under 16). Sex without consent is rape. Just because someone doesn't have visible injuries doesn't mean they weren't raped.



Myth: People who were sexually abused as children are likely to become abusers themselves.

Fact: This is a dangerous myth, which is sometimes used to try and explain or excuse the behaviour of those who rape and sexually abuse children. It is offensive and unhelpful to adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse. The vast majority of those who are sexually abused as children will never perpetrate sexual violence against others. There is no excuse for sexual violence against children or adults.

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Sexual Violence Services in Teesside

MYTH BUSTERS

Myth: Women are most likely to be raped after dark by a stranger, so women shouldn't go out alone at night.

Fact: Only around 10% of rapes are committed by 'strangers'. Around 90% of rapes are committed by known men, and often by someone who the survivor has previously trusted or even loved. People are raped in their homes, their workplaces and other settings where they have previously felt safe. Rapists can be friends, colleagues, clients, neighbours, family members, partners or exes. Risk of rape shouldn't be used as an excuse to control women's movements and restrict their rights and freedom.

Myth: People often lie about being raped because they regret having sex with someone or out of spite or for attention.

Fact: Disproportionate media focus on false rape allegations perpetuates the public perception that lying about sexual violence is common when in fact the opposite is true. False allegations of rape are very rare. The vast majority of survivors choose not to report to the police. One significant reason for this is the fear of not being believed. It's really important we challenge this myth so those who've experienced sexual violence can get the support and justice they need and deserve.



Myth: Only young, 'attractive' women and girls, who flirt and wear 'revealing' clothes, are raped.

Fact: People of all ages and appearances, and of all classes, cultures, abilities, genders, sexualities, races and religions, are raped. Rape is an act of violence and control; the perceived 'attractiveness' of a victim has very little to do with it. There is no excuse or mitigation for sexual violence and it is never the victim/survivor's fault. What someone was wearing when they were raped or how they behave is irrelevant.

Myth: Men of certain races and backgrounds are more likely to commit sexual violence.

Fact: There is no typical rapist. People who commit sexual violence come from every economic, ethnic, racial, age and social group.

Myth: Alcohol, drugs, stress or depression can turn people into rapists.

Fact: Drugs and alcohol are never the cause of rape or sexual assault. It is the attacker who is committing the crime, not the drugs and/or alcohol. Likewise, stress and depression don't turn people into rapists or justify sexual violence. There are no excuses.



Myth: Once a man is sexually aroused he cannot help himself; he has to have sex.

Fact: Men can control their urges to have sex just as women can; no-one needs to rape someone for sexual satisfaction. Rape is an act of violence and control, not sexual gratification. It cannot be explained away and there are no excuses.

Myth: Men don't get raped and women don't commit sexual offences.

Fact: The majority of sexual assaults and rapes are committed by men against women and children but women do perpetrate sexual violence. Often people who've been sexually assaulted or abused by a woman are particularly fearful that they will not be believed or that their experiences won't be considered 'as bad' as being raped by a man. This can make it especially difficult for these survivors to access services or justice.

We believe all survivors of sexual violence deserve specialist support.

In law, the offence of Rape is defined as non-consensual penetration with a penis. Non-consensual penetration with something other than a penis is defined as Sexual Assault by Penetration. For those who've experienced sexual violence that involved penetration by something other than a penis, whoever the perpetrator was, these legal definitions can feel restrictive, and as if their experience is not considered as serious.

When we work with survivors, we are led by them, encourage them to name and frame their own experiences, and use the language that they find most meaningful and representative, rather than strict legal terminology.

Source: Rape Crisis England and Wales website

Myth: When it comes to sex, women and girls sometimes 'play hard to get' and say 'no' when they really mean 'yes'.

Fact: Everyone has the legal right to say 'no' to sex and to change their mind about having sex at any point of sexual contact; if the other person doesn't stop, they are committing sexual assault or rape. When it comes to sex, we must respect the wishes of our sexual partner and believe what they tell us about what they do and don't want.

