

DISPELLING THE MYTHS ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE

MYTH	FACT
It wasn't rape, so it wasn't sexual violence.	Sexual assault and sexual violence include different types of sexual activity. Any unwanted sexual contact is sexual violence. A survivor can be severely affected by all forms of sexual violence, including unwanted touching, kissing, or other sexual acts.
Sexual assault can't happen to me or anyone I know.	Sexual assault can and does happen to anyone. People of all socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds are victims of sexual assault. Most sexual assaults happen to women and girls. Young women, Indigenous women, and women with disabilities are at greater risk of experiencing sexual assault. Disabled individuals are over two times more likely to be victims of sexual assault than those who are able-bodied.
Sexual assault is most often committed by strangers. A spouse or significant other cannot sexually assault their partner.	Someone known to the victim, including acquaintances, dating partners, and common-law or married partners, commit approximately 75 per cent of sexual assaults. Sexual assault occurs any time there is not consent prior to sexual activity.
Sexual assault is most likely to happen outside in dark, dangerous places.	Most sexual assaults happen in private spaces like a residence or private home.
It's not a big deal to have sex with someone while they are drunk, stoned or passed out.	If a person is unconscious or incapable of consenting due to the use of alcohol or drugs, they cannot legally give consent. Without consent, it is sexual assault.
Sexual assault only happens to women.	Most sexual assaults are committed against women by men, but people of all genders, from all backgrounds experience assault.

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If the victim didn't scream or fight back, it probably wasn't sexual assault.	When an individual is sexually assaulted, they may become paralyzed with fear and be unable to fight back. The person may be fearful that if they struggle, the perpetrator will become more violent.
If you didn't say no, it must be your fault.	People who commit sexual assault/abuse are trying to gain power and control over their victim. They want to make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for their victim to say no. A person does not need to say the word "no" to make it clear that they did not want to participate. The focus in consent is on hearing a "yes".
If a person isn't crying or visibly upset, it probably wasn't a serious sexual assault.	Every person responds to the trauma of sexual assault differently. They may cry or may be calm. They may be silent or very angry. Their behaviour is not an indicator of their experience. It is important not to judge people by how they respond to assault.
If someone does not have obvious physical injuries, like cuts or bruises, they probably were not sexually assaulted.	Lack of physical injury does not mean that a person wasn't sexually assaulted. An offender may use threats, weapons, or other coercive actions that do not leave physical marks. Also, the survivor may have been unconscious or incapacitated.
If an individual doesn't report to the police, it wasn't sexual assault.	Just because a victim doesn't report the assault doesn't mean it didn't happen. Fewer than one in ten victims report the crime to the police.
If it really happened, the victim would be able to easily recount all the facts in the proper order.	Shock, fear, embarrassment, and distress can all impair memory. Many survivors attempt to minimize or forget the details of violence they have experienced as a way of coping with trauma. Memory loss is also common when alcohol and/or drugs are involved.
Individuals make up stories about being sexually assaulted; most reports of sexual assault turn out to be false.	According to Statistics Canada, fewer than one in 10 sexual assault victims report the crime to the police. Approximately 2% of these sexual assault reports are false. Sexual assault carries such a stigma that many people prefer not to report.

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People who are sexually assaulted “ask for it” by their provocative behaviour or dress.	Nobody deserves to be sexually assaulted. Nobody asks to be sexually assaulted. Sexual assault is always wrong regardless of the survivor's clothing, the amount of alcohol or drugs taken, the relationship between the survivor and the perpetrator, or what the survivor's occupation is.
If you got aroused, got an erection, orgasmed, or ejaculated, you must have enjoyed it.	It is normal for your body to react to physical stimulation. Just because you became physically aroused does not mean that you liked it, wanted it, or consented in any way.

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