

MYTHS ABOUT RAPE



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There are many different myths about rape and other forms of sexual violence that can cause serious harm. They can make survivors of sexual violence feel a lot of shame about what happened to them, which can prevent them from seeking the help they need. We want to challenge those myths, because no one should ever feel responsible for what happened to them.

Let's take a look at the most common myths about rape, and the alternate narratives we can use instead.

MYTH #1

People provoke rape by the way they dress or act

Fact: Survivors are often asked what they were wearing, or are told to 'cover-up' in order to protect themselves. Not only does this place the responsibility with the survivor rather than the perpetrator, it also inaccurately suggests that sexual violence is related to clothing, which it is not.

There is never an excuse for rape, and clothing is never an invitation for it.



MYTH #2

People who drink alcohol or use drugs are asking to be raped

Fact: Being vulnerable does not imply consent. If a person is unable to give consent because they are drunk, drugged or unconscious, it is rape. All of the responsibility and blame for committing that crime lies with the perpetrator.

MYTH #3

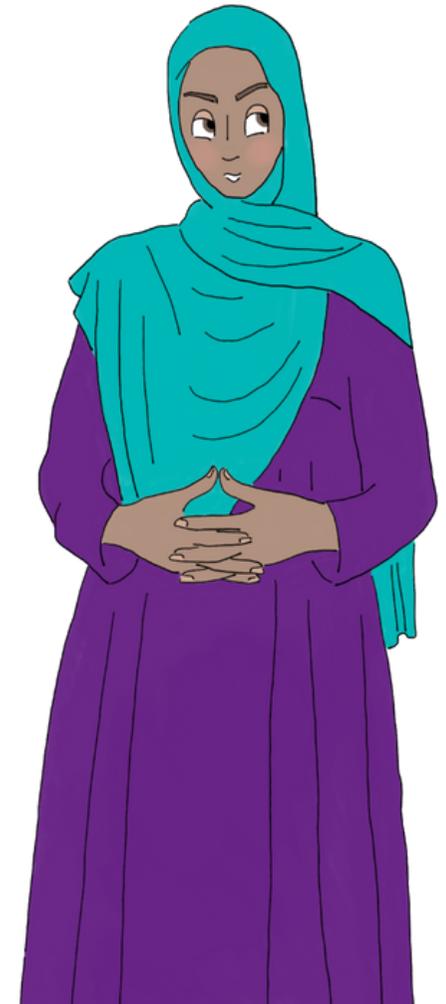
Male rape is an offence that takes only place between gay men

Fact: Sexual violence can happen to anyone, regardless of sexual orientation.

We also know that sexual violence is about violence, power and control so the idea that only men who are attracted to men assault other men is inaccurate and detrimental (both to survivors and the queer community).



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MYTH #4

If they didn't say 'no', shout, fight, or get injured, it wasn't rape

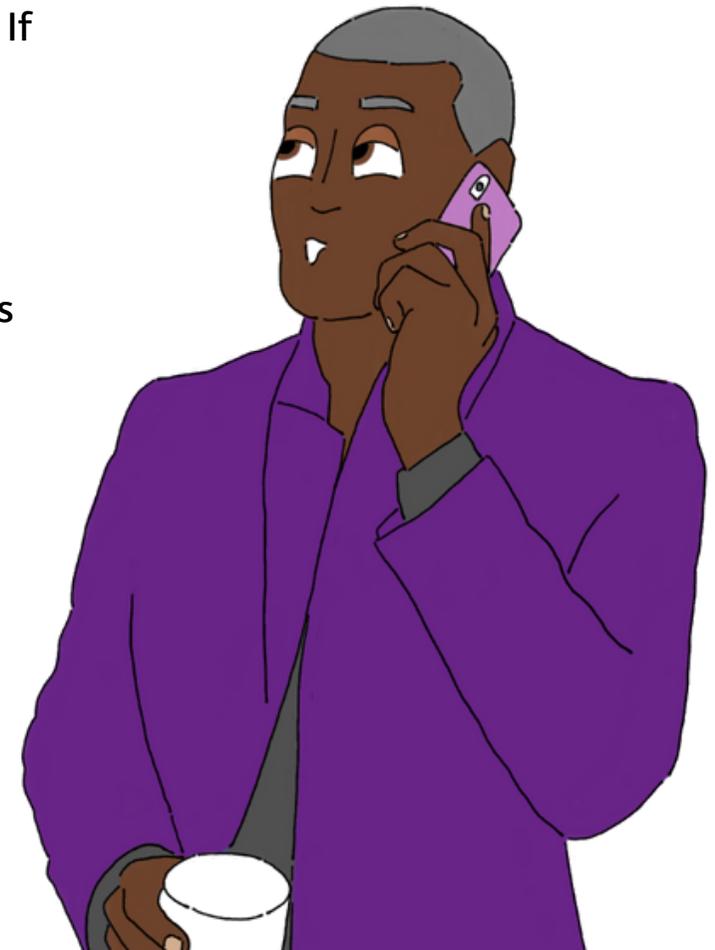
Fact: Not saying 'no' is not the same as someone giving their consent. If someone seems unsure, stays quiet, moves away or doesn't respond, they are not agreeing to sexual activity.

People may react to traumatic situations in a variety of ways. For example, feeling frozen, 'stuck', or unable to speak is one of our body's automatic way of protecting us during a traumatic event.

Non-consensual intercourse doesn't always leave visible signs on the body, so whether or not someone shows signs of injury or 'struggle' should not be used as a way to measure the 'severity' of the situation someone has been through.



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MYTH #6

You can tell if someone has 'really' been raped by how they act

Fact: Reactions to rape are highly varied and individual. Some people may cry or get angry, while others may say and do nothing. Many people experience a form of shock after a rape that leaves them emotionally numb or flat - and apparently calm.

Nobody can ever know for sure how they would react in such a traumatic situation, so it is wrong to make assumptions about anyone else's experiences.

Everyone is unique and so there is no right or wrong way to behave after rape.

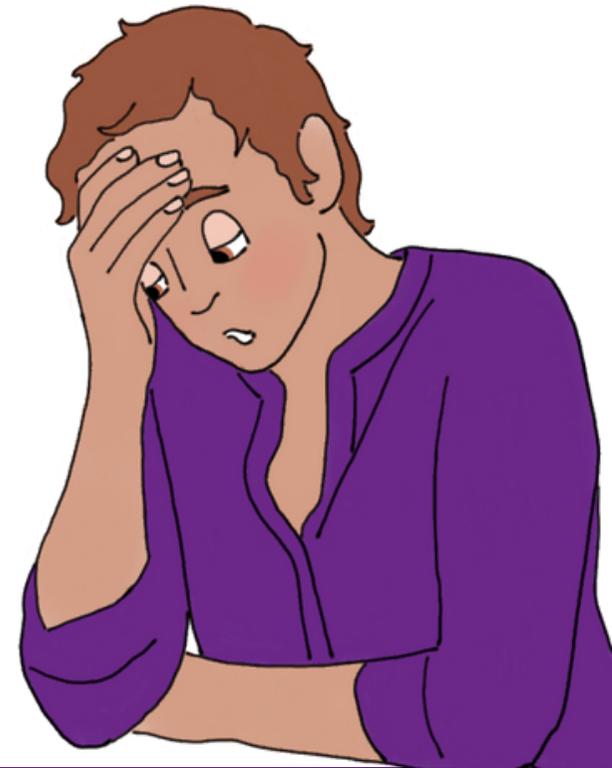
MYTH #7

We shouldn't believe survivors because false rape allegations are so common

Fact: Levels of false reporting are extremely low. In fact, the majority of people who experience sexual violence will never report to the police, and it's harmful myths like these that contribute to this.



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MYTH #9

Sex workers cannot be raped

Fact: Sex workers have the same rights with regards to consent as anyone else; the transactions they negotiate with clients are for consensual activities, not rape.

MYTH #10

Women can't be perpetrators

Fact: A woman can be convicted of a serious offence for sexually assaulting someone. If you were subjected to sexual activity that you didn't consent to, that is assault, regardless of the gender of the perpetrator.

The idea that women cannot be abusive makes many survivors' experiences invisible.

MYTH #11

It's not rape if it's your partner/spouse

Fact: Consent is required for any kind of sexual activity every single time. Consent to one sexual activity does not mean consent to another, and nobody owes it to their partner to have sex just because they are in a relationship. Rape is always rape.



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MYTH #12

If they didn't complain or report immediately, it wasn't rape

Fact: For many people, experiencing rape or another form of sexual violence or abuse can be a very difficult thing to talk about – and it might be a long time before they feel able to. This can be for lots of different reasons. They might feel like they'll be judged or blamed or not believed. Or they might be scared of their perpetrator or another person finding out.

Some survivors may not realise straight away what has happened.

MYTH #13

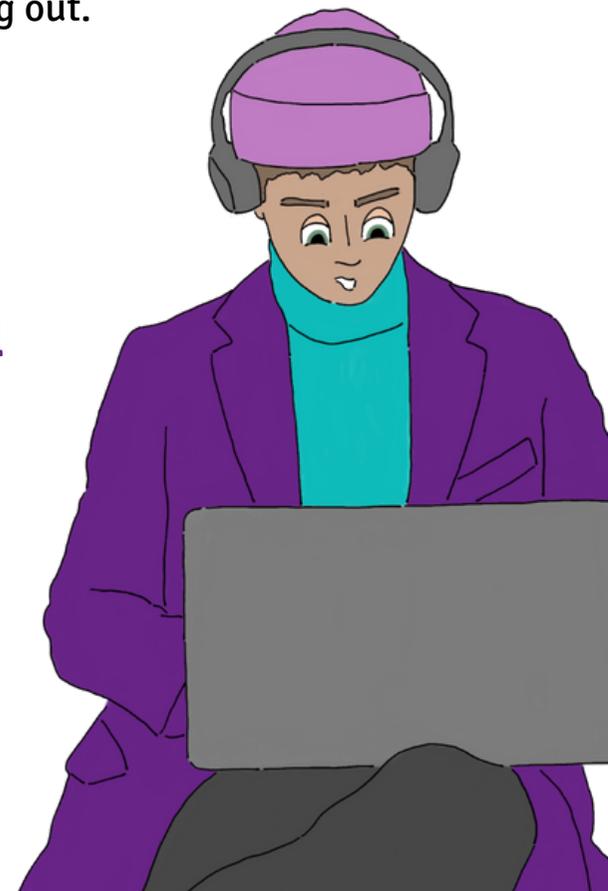
Men should always feel lucky when they engage in sexual activity

Fact: The idea that men who are sexually assaulted, particularly where the perpetrator is a woman, are 'lucky' relies on misogynistic notions of men 'always being up for sex', and women 'always gatekeeping sex'.

This is an invalidating myth that leaves many men fearful that their experience will be laughed off.



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MYTH #14

Rape occurs between strangers in dark alleys

Fact: The majority of rapes are committed by persons known to the survivor. It's important to acknowledge this so that we don't erase or invalidate many survivors experiences.

In addition, the widespread idea that we shouldn't go out alone at night distracts from the true nature of the problem, and places the onus on survivors rather than rapists to change their behaviour.

MYTH #15

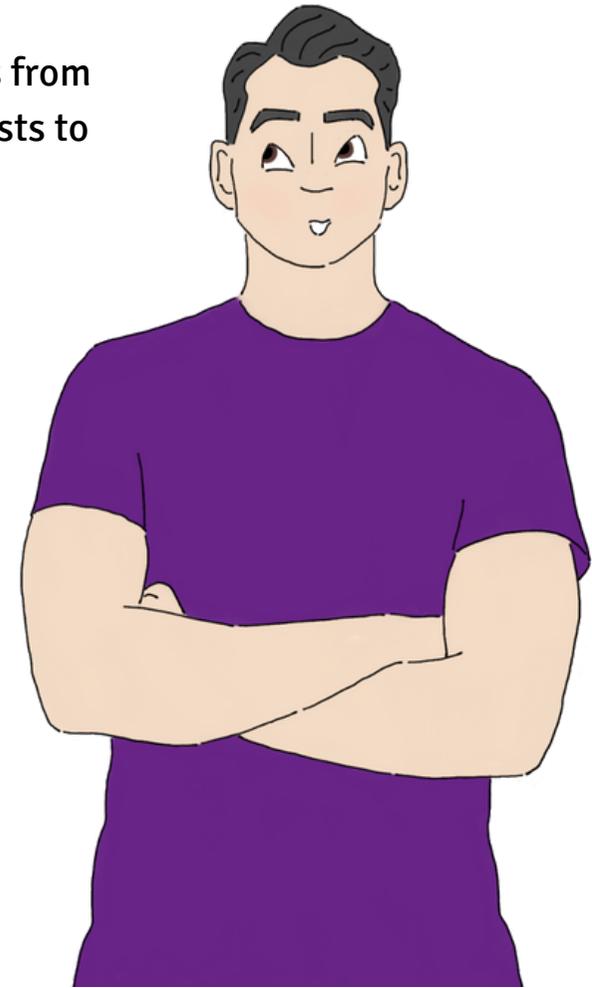
Only young women are at risk

Fact: People of all ages and appearances, of all classes, cultures, abilities, genders, sexualities, races and religions, are raped.

By presenting the idea that only young women are potential victims, we make it harder for others to come forward, and risk making their experiences of sexual violence invisible.



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SUPPORT

We believe that no one should be alone when they have experienced sexual violence. We are here for you whether your experiences were a week ago or fifty years ago.



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We will support you, listen to you and believe you.

CONTACT US

Our friendly **Welcome Team** are here for all of your calls, emails and self-referrals made through our website. They will guide you through our services, and signpost you to make sure you reach the right people.

You can email them on **info@survivorsnetwork.org.uk**, or give us a call on **01273 203380**.

You can also visit our website, www.survivorsnetwork.org.uk, and fill out a referral form on our '[Get Help](#)' webpage so the Welcome Team can get in touch with you.

You will also find additional resources and self-help guides on the '[Resources & Information](#)' tab.

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HELPLINE & EMAIL SUPPORT

Our Helpline & Email Service is open every Monday (7-9pm) & Wednesday (12-2pm) for people of any gender aged 14+. We offer support to survivors, professionals and loved ones/supporters of survivors.

Call us on **01273 720110** or email at **help@survivorsnetwork.org.uk**.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT SERVICES

- [Rape Crisis England and Wales](#) (including National Rape Crisis Helpline - 0808 802 9999)
- [Life Centre](#) - counselling for survivors in West Sussex.
- [Survivors UK](#) - Support for men and non-binary survivors of sexual violence.
- [Mankind](#) - support for male survivors.

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SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE & THEIR PARENTS/CARERS

- NSPCC - 0808 800 5000/ Childline- 0800 1111
- MOSAC - supports all non-abusing parents and carers of survivors.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SUPPORT

- RISE - support for survivors of Domestic Violence in Brighton & Hove.
- Victim Support - practical support for survivors of Domestic Violence in Brighton & Hove.
- Change Grow Live - support for survivors of Domestic Violence in East Sussex.
- Worth Services - support for survivors of sexual and domestic violence in West Sussex.

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SUPPORT FOR MINORITISED COMMUNITIES

- Galop - support for LGBTQ survivors of violence.
- HERSANA CIC - support for Black women and girl survivors of gender-based violence.
- Sompri - support for diverse communities across East Sussex. Working with individuals who have experienced or are currently experiencing domestic violence to access support through signposting, and providing additional advice and information, including how to access local groups and mental health services.
- The Clare Project - support provided by and for trans, non-binary, gender-variant and gender-questioning people in Brighton, Hove and East Sussex.