



Sexual Assault Response Services *of Southern Maine*

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MYTHS vs. FACTS

MYTH: Rape is not as common in the U.S. as it is elsewhere.

FACT: The U.S. has the highest rate of sexual assault per capita of any industrialized countries. (1990 U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee).

MYTH: Rape statistics are usually generated by Rape Crisis Centers.

FACT: The most generally cited statistic, that an American is raped every 2 minutes, is derived from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Dept. of Justice.

MYTH: Women are always "crying rape."

FACT: Less than 40% of all sexual assaults were reported to police in 2002. Reasons for not reporting include shame and fear resulting from the attack, fear of going through the court system and/or being confronted by the media. (2002 NCVS)

MYTH: Rape is not common in Maine.

FACT: Rape, as reported to Maine law enforcement agencies, increased 70.7% between 1998-2002. It is the only violent crime category to show an increase in each of the past four years. In Maine, a rape is reported every 22 hours, 24 minutes, more than one *reported* per day. (2002 Uniform Crime Report, Maine Dept. of Public Safety)

MYTH: Sexual assault usually happens to women who are not careful or do not use self-defense.

FACT: Sexual assault happens to women, men and children of all ages and backgrounds.

MYTH: Society is beginning to act to prevent rape.

FACT: Prevention is still seen by society as the victim's responsibility. Society looks at the characteristics of the victim, instead of the attacker, to determine whether the rape is "real" or fabricated.

MYTH: The incidence of child sexual abuse is greatly overstated.

FACT: 44% of rape victims are under the age of 18 - 15% are under the age of 12. (1997 Sex Offenses and Offenders, Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Dept. of Justice).

MYTH: The typical assault is in an alley, after dark, by a stranger.

FACT: Approximately 16% of victims are raped by intimate partners, 48% by acquaintances, and 2% by other relatives. Only about one-third of all rapes are committed by a stranger. (2002 NCVS).

MYTH: People who sexually abuse children are crazy or "sick."

FACT: Offenders usually do not have mental disabilities. 86% are of normal to superior intelligence while only 7% demonstrated a developmental impairment. (1979, Groth, *Men Who Rape*).

MYTH: Date rape does not carry as serious an impact on the victim as stranger rape.

FACT: A Sexual assault of any kind has a serious impact on all victims. It is a violent act over which the victim had no control and were often in fear for their lives. (1992 National Victim Center).

Help, Hope, and Healing