

## Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program (VASAP)

### SEXUAL ASSAULT: MYTHS AND FACTS

**MYTH:** ONLY ATTRACTIVE YOUNG WOMEN ARE VICTIMS OF RAPE.

**FACT:** *Women of all ages are equally vulnerable to rape though the victimization rate increases through the teenage years, crests around age 20 and steadily decreases through the remaining years<sup>1</sup>*

**MYTH:** PROFESSIONAL WOMEN AGES 25 TO 29 ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE ASSAULTED THAN WOMEN AGES 18 TO 21.

**FACT:** *Numbers of rapes and sexual assaults for individuals ages 18 to 21 were 2.5 times higher than for individuals ages 25 to 29.<sup>1</sup>*

**MYTH:** SEXUAL ASSAULT IS COMMITTED BY A STRANGER.

**FACT:** *80% of victims know the person who sexually assaults them. Females are more likely to be raped in a private home (their own, that of a neighbor, friend or relative) than any other place.<sup>2</sup>*

**MYTH:** WOMEN WHO DRESS PROVOCATIVELY AND FREQUENTS BARS ARE MORE TO BLAME FOR SEXUAL ASSAULTS THAN WOMEN WHO DRESS CONSERVATIVELY.

**FACT:** *Rape is a crime committed against a victim. The rapist is responsible for the assault not the victim.<sup>2</sup>*

**MYTH:** CHILDREN WHO ARE SEXUALLY ASSAULTED ARE GENERALLY ATTACKED BY A STRANGER.

**FACT:** *More than half of all children who are sexually assaulted under the age of 12 are assaulted by a relative.<sup>2</sup>*

**MYTH:** SEXUAL ASSAULTS ONLY HAPPEN AT NIGHT.

**FACT:** *Though sexual assaults occur at all hours of the day and night, they tend to occur most often between noon and 6 p.m. in a private home.<sup>2</sup>*

**MYTH:** MOST RAPES ARE REPORTED.

**FACT:** *More than two-thirds of all rapes and sexual assaults measured by the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) remained unreported to law enforcement.<sup>2</sup>*

**MYTH:** SEXUAL ASSAULT OCCURS ONLY IN LOWER SOCIOECONOMIC AREAS.

**FACT:** *While sexual assault does occur in upper middle and lower socioeconomic areas it is more prevalent on lower socioeconomic areas.<sup>3</sup>*

**MYTH:** THE MAJORITY OF PERSONS CONVICTED OF RAPE ARE MEMBERS OF MINORITY GROUPS.

**FACT:** *Federal statistics show the characteristics of convicted persons categorized as rapists to be: 99 in 100 are males, 6 in 10 are Caucasian and the average age is the early 30s.<sup>4</sup>*

**MYTH:** RAPISTS ARE RARELY CONVICTED AND SENTENCED TO PRISON.

**FACT:** *Over two thirds of convicted rape defendants received a prison sentence.<sup>4</sup>*

**MYTH:** MOST CONVICTED RAPISTS RECEIVE ONLY A JUDICIAL SLAP ON THE WRISTS.

**FACT:** *For rape defendants sentenced to prison the average term imposed was just under 14 years. 2% of convicted rapists received life sentences.<sup>4</sup>*

**MYTH:** A WOMAN IS RARELY RAPED AND VICTIMIZED MORE THAN ONCE.

**FACT:** *36% of the women raped reported being raped more than once.<sup>8</sup>*

**MYTH:** WOMAN BELIEVE THAT PREVENTING RAPE IS COMPLETELY IN THEIR CONTROL.

**FACT:** *One out of every eight adult woman has been a victim of forcible rape sometime her lifetime.<sup>8</sup>*

**MYTH:** SINCE WOMAN'S LIBERATION WOMAN HAVE BEGUN TO REPORT SEXUAL ASSAULT MORE FREQUENTLY.

**FACT:** *Rape remains the most under-reported violent crime in America. Approximately 84% of rape victims do not report to the police.<sup>8</sup>*

#### **SEXUAL ASSAULT FACTS**

**FACT:** Rape and sexual assault offenders account for just under 5% of the total correctional population in the US.<sup>4</sup>

**FACT:** Sexual assault offenders were substantially more likely than any other category of offender to report having experienced physical or sexual abuse while growing up.<sup>4</sup>

**FACT:** In a 5 year average Montgomery County rates 4th in the state for reported rapes coming in after Baltimore City, Baltimore County and Prince George's County.<sup>5</sup>

**FACT:** Arrests of juveniles accounted for 13% of all violent crimes cleared by arrest more specifically 12% of forcible rapes.<sup>5</sup>

**FACT:** The State of Maryland Crime Index trends report that forcible rapes decreased by 9% between January-September 1996 to January-September 1997.<sup>6</sup>

**FACT:** The Washington Metropolitan Region Crime Index trends which include Montgomery County - forcible rape increase 1.5% from January-September 1996 to January-September 1997.<sup>6</sup>

**FACT:** In 1996, males experienced significantly higher victimization rates than females for all violent crimes except rape/sexual assault.<sup>7</sup>

**FACT:** 50% of rape victims surveyed stated they would be more likely to report rape to the police if there was a law prohibiting the news media from disclosing their names and addresses.<sup>8</sup>

**FACT:** 69% of women raped feel that it is somehow their fault.<sup>8</sup>

**FACT:** 49% of all rape victims reported being fearful of serious injury or death during the rape.<sup>8</sup>

- FACT:** 42% of all agencies interviewed said that more than half of all their sexual assault clients are unwilling to report rape to the police.<sup>8</sup>
- FACT:** 31% of all rape victims develop PTSD at sometime during their lifetime. Rape victims are 6.2 times more likely to develop PTSD than women who have not been victims of crime. (31% vs. 5%).<sup>8</sup>
- FACT:** Rape victims are 4.1 times more likely than non-crime victims to have contemplated suicide. 13% of all rape victims actually attempt suicide.<sup>8</sup>
- FACT:** Rape victims are 5.3 times more likely to have 2 or more major alcohol related problems (20.1% vs. 3.8%) and 3.7 times more likely to have 2 or more serious drug related problems (7.8% vs. 2.1%).<sup>8</sup>
- FACT:** For most rape victims the age at which the first rape occurred was younger than the age which they first became intoxicated or began using marijuana or cocaine.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Perking, C.A., (1997). Age Patterns of Victims of Serious Violent Crime.  
Bureau of Justice Statistics. Pg. 3. NCJ-162031

<sup>2</sup> Craven, D., (1997). Sex Differences in Violent Victimization.1994.  
Bureau of Justice Statistics. Pg. 2. NCJ-164508

<sup>3</sup> Taylor, B.M. (1997). Changes in Criminal Victimization, 1994-95.  
Bureau of Justice Statistics – National Crime Victimization Survey. NCJ-162031

<sup>4</sup> January 1997. Sex offenses and Offenders.  
Bureau of Justice Statistics. NCJ-163931

<sup>5</sup> Snyder 9, 1998. Uniform Crime Report. Preliminary Report: Juvenile Arrest.

<sup>6</sup> January 9, 1998. Uniform Crime Report. Preliminary Report: January to September 1997.

<sup>7</sup> November 19978. NCJ 165812.

<sup>8</sup> Edmunds, C.N., Kilpatrick, D.G., & Seymour, A.K. (1992). Rape in America – A Report to the Nation.  
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