



# WPSMS

we want surgery to be a safe place to work.

**Myth:** Sexual assault is an act of lust and passion that can't be controlled.

**Fact:** Sexual assault is about power and control and is less motivated by sexual gratification.

**Myth:** If a victim of sexual assault does not fight back, they must have thought the assault was not that bad, or they wanted it.

**Fact:** Many survivors experience a "freeze response" during an assault where they physically cannot move or cannot speak and compliance is common in relationships of trust.

**Myth:** If she didn't say 'no' then it wasn't sexual assault.

**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.

**Myth:** People lie about being raped because they want attention or revenge – or regret having had sex with someone.

**Fact:** False allegations of rape are extremely rare. In fact, most people who are raped or experience another form of sexual violence never tell the police.

**Myth:** People that have been sexually assaulted will be hysterical and crying.

**Fact:** Everyone responds differently to trauma – some may laugh, some may cry, and others will not show any emotions. Victim responses include 're-enactment of trauma' where people return to the perpetrator hoping for remorse or respect.

**Myth:** Wearing revealing clothing, behaving provocatively, or drinking a lot means the victim was "asking for it".

**Fact:** The perpetrator selects the victim; the victim's behaviour or clothing choices do not mean that they are consenting to sexual activity. Restricting people's behaviours does not prevent assault, which happens in every community.

**Myth:** People with disabilities are at low risk for sexual assault.

**Fact:** People with disabilities are victims of sexual assault twice as much as people without disabilities.

**Myth:** If a survivor of sexual assault blames themselves, then it must have been their fault.

**Fact:** It is extremely common for survivors of any abuse to blame themselves, even when they are in no way to blame. Human nature means that we think about being responsible for the things that happen to us. But sexual assault is entirely the fault of the perpetrator.

**Myth:** You've got to tell the police.

**Fact:** This is a difficult path, with significant challenges. It is essential that the survivor has control and support for their own choices.

**Myth:** 'If I say I believe you, that's slander, as neither of us have any proof'.

**Fact:** One of the most powerfully helpful responses to a survivor is to say "I believe you". We normally believe the things people tell us, and we believe people unless we have good reason not to. When people tell us they have been burgled, we usually believe them.

**Myth:** If she'd really been raped then it wouldn't have taken her so long to say something.

**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. Feeling 'numb,' trying to forget and internal denial of a harmful event are all normal responses.

**Myth:** It would be your word against theirs.

**Fact:** Perpetrators do, more often than you think, tell the truth about their own actions. Facts then become subject to denial of harm, denial of another person's perspective, misogynist bias and a 'reimagining' of events, but facts are a good start.

**Myth:** If the police fail to find fault, nobody else will do anything.

**Fact:** The GMC now acknowledge their responsibility for professional standards in an environment of trust, and will investigate sexual violence where the police have not taken an investigation forwards. In 2022 a doctor was struck off after harassing and sexually assaulting a trainee, where the police had failed to find fault. Often several organisations have safeguarding responsibilities, and targeted individuals require support to challenge bias or disinterest.

### **Further Resources:**

[Myths around Sexual Violence - Sexual Violence Help and Advice.](#)

[Myths vs facts | Rape Crisis England & Wales.](#)

[CPS: Tackling Rape Myths & Stereotypes.](#)