

Eaves information sheet – rape and sexual violence in England and Wales

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- Part 1 – facts and figures
- Part 2 – debunking the myth
- Part 3 – UK law and policy
- Part 4 – Eaves' view
- Part 5 – FAQs
- Part 6 – what you can do
- Part 7 – organisations offering support

Part 1 – facts and figures

- Around one in four women will experience some form of sexual violence in her lifetime¹
- Police recorded 53,540 sexual offences against adults and children in 2007/08². These included:
 - 11,648 reports of rape of a female
 - 41,892 other sexual offences (for example sexual assault, trafficking, grooming)
- In London around 24 sexual offences are reported to police every day
- It is estimated that only 10%-25% of sexual offences are reported to police, and that the numbers of women experiencing violence are probably much higher³
- The Crown Prosecution Service decides whether or not a case will go to court; not the woman or the police
- If a case is taken to court there is a 34% chance that it will result in conviction⁴
- Only 6% of rape cases result in the man being convicted⁵.

Part 2 – debunking the myth

Although dark, lonely streets and strangers might seem more dangerous:

- Most sexual attacks are carried out in the offender or woman's home⁶
- Almost 90% of rapes and sexual assaults are carried out by someone whom the woman knows⁷
- Many women do not have any injuries after rape. Around one-third of women have physical injuries⁸ and around a quarter have vaginal injuries⁹.

Part 3 – UK law and policy

- Rape, sexual assault and abuse are prosecuted under the Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Under this law people must 'actively consent' to sex. This means saying yes or demonstrating that it's ok. Not saying 'no' does not mean that you consented
- You cannot consent to sex if you are being threatened, coerced or forced into it
- You can withdraw consent at any time, including after sex has started
- The law considers vaginal, anal and oral rape, along with assault by penetration (for example by using fingers or an object), equally serious
- The basic sentence for rape of an adult is five years. This may be higher; if, for example, a weapon or violence was used.

Part 4 – Eaves' view

Eaves believes that any sexual act which a woman or child does not understand and fully agree to of her own free will is an act of sexual violence. We believe that a woman is never to blame for rape and abuse, whatever she was wearing, whatever she was doing, whether she'd been drinking or taking drugs, if she agreed to some sexual acts with the person who attacked her or if had been sexually involved with them at any time in the past.

Part 5 – FAQs

- Do women lie about rape?
Women rarely lie about rape. Research in 2005 found that only 3% of allegations were false – about the same amount as any other crime. The media reports false allegations more than it reports rape
- Can a woman consent to sex after she's been drinking then call it rape afterwards?
In legal case law there is a point on drunkenness at which people are considered to be unable to consent to sexual contact. The amount of alcohol needed to reach this point will vary from person to person. You have to wonder who'd want to have sex with someone who's that drunk. The sentence for being drunk should be a hangover, not rape.
- How do women react after rape and sexual violence?
Every woman will react differently; there is no behaviour which can tell you a woman has or hasn't been raped. Feeling depressed, angry, withdrawn, emotional or numb are common responses. Some women may have problems with sleeping or eating and physical or sexual contact, as well as having flashbacks and panic attacks. All of these reactions are very normal, although sometimes women tell us they feel that they are 'going crazy'.

Part 6 – what you can do

- Challenge friends and family when you hear them blame women for rape
- Donate money to Eaves to support the Amina Scheme (see below)
- Volunteer for organisations which support women who have been raped.

Part 7 – organisations offering support

There are lots of charities who can offer help and support. Contact your local Rape Crisis Centre, or if you're in London call the Amina Scheme, a service which can help you meet another woman who has experienced sexual violence for support and help.

^{1, 6 & 7} Homicides, Firearm Offences and Intimate Violence 2005/2006: (Supplementary Volume 1 to Crime in England and Wales 2005/2006), Coleman, K; Jansson, K; Kaiza, P; Reed, E. January 2007

² Table 2.04 Recorded Crime by Offence 1997 to 07/08 pg. 47 Alison Walker, Chris Kershaw and Sian Nicholas (July 2008) Crime in England and Wales 2005/06 Home Office

³ As 1, 4 & 5. SVAAN Member Survey, unpublished. 2007

^{4 & 5} Women's Changing Lives: Priorities for the Ministers for Women One Year On Progress Report, July 2008

⁸ Kelly, L., Lovett, J, & Regan, L. (2005) A Gap or a Chasm? Attrition in reported rape cases, Home Office Research Study 293, London, Home Office.

⁹ Bowyer, L., Dalton., M.E. (1996), 'Female victims of rape and their genital injuries'. *BJOG: An International Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology*, Volume 104, Issue 5, pp 617 – 620, Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists

⁹ Sugar, N., Fine, D., & Eckert, L. O. (2004). 'Physical injury after sexual assault: Findings of a large case series'.