

Dispelling Rape Myths

Katie Strub,

Supervisor & Forensic Interviewer,
Allen Child Protection Center
(Waterloo, Iowa)

Tyler J. Buller,

Asst. Iowa Attorney General
(Des Moines, Iowa)

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- These materials are **solely intended for educational use.**
- The views expressed in this presentation do **not** reflect the views of the State of Iowa, the Attorney General of Iowa, the Iowa Department of Justice, or the Allen Child Protection Center.

Warning:

- This presentation, as the title suggests, will address sexual violence and the national conversation surrounding rape.
- Discretion is advised.

What are rape myths?

“Rape myths are stereotypical and erroneous beliefs about sexual assault, women who are victims of sexual assault, and men who perpetrate sexual assault.”

Myths are persistent.

Social-science surveys show that between **25% and 35% of Americans agree with “most” rape myths.**

Why is the way our
culture treats rape and
other sex crimes
fundamentally different
from how we treat every
other violent crime?

**Myth #1:
Rape is rare.**

Prevalence.

U.S. D.O.J. statistics (self-reported victimization by American adults):

- **1 in 5** women
- **1 in 30** men

(but we know men underreport)

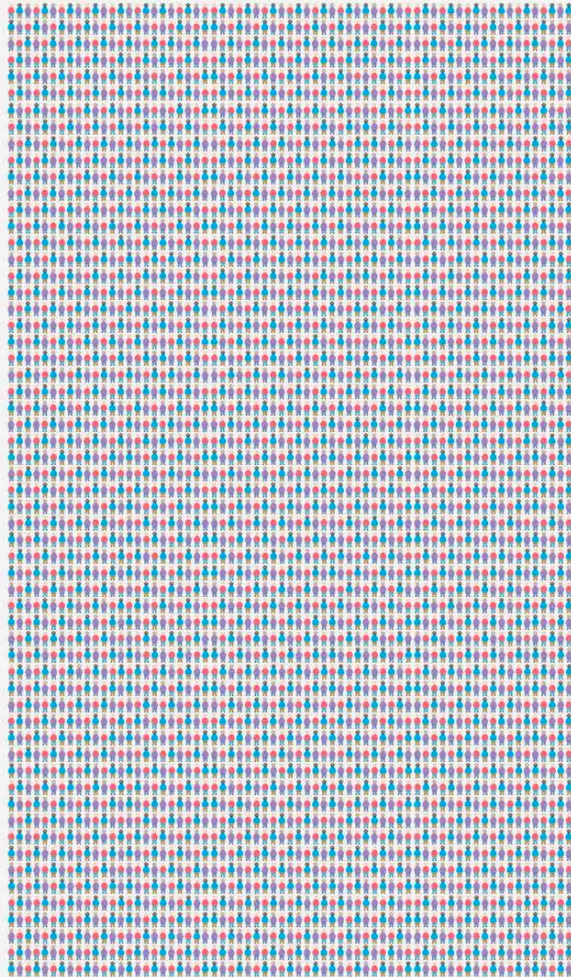
Prevalence.

A majority of all sexual assaults are committed against children:

- **2/3** are against minors;
- **1/3** of those are against children under 11.

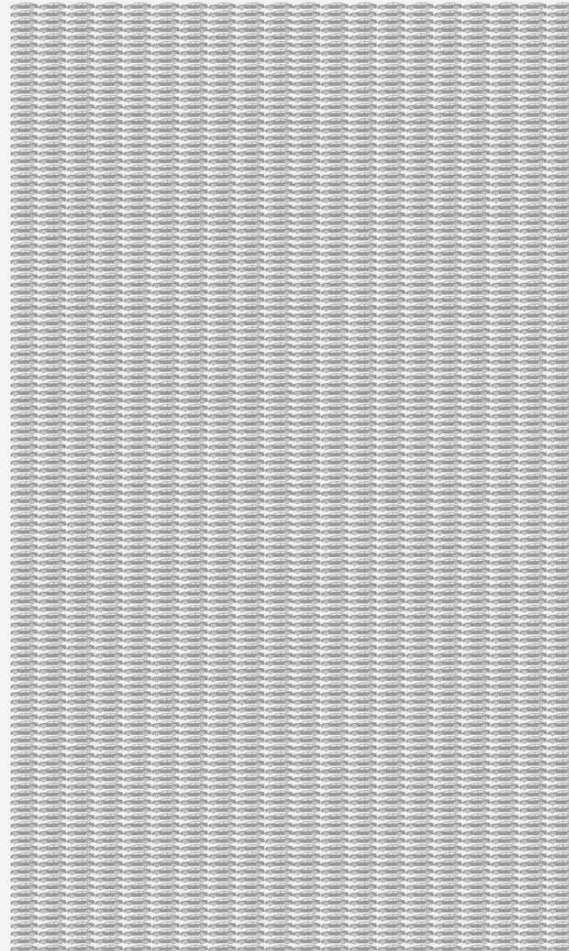
More people are sexually assaulted in the US each year than all **fatal motor vehicle accidents in the past 15 years combined**

627,700



Est. sexual assault victims in 2015

611,174



Motor vehicle deaths (2000 – 2015)

SOURCE: US Department of Justice (NCVS), FBI, CDC, NIJ, RAINN
GRAPHIC: @zccrockett



More people are sexually assaulted in the US each year than **the entire population of Las Vegas, Atlanta, or Miami**

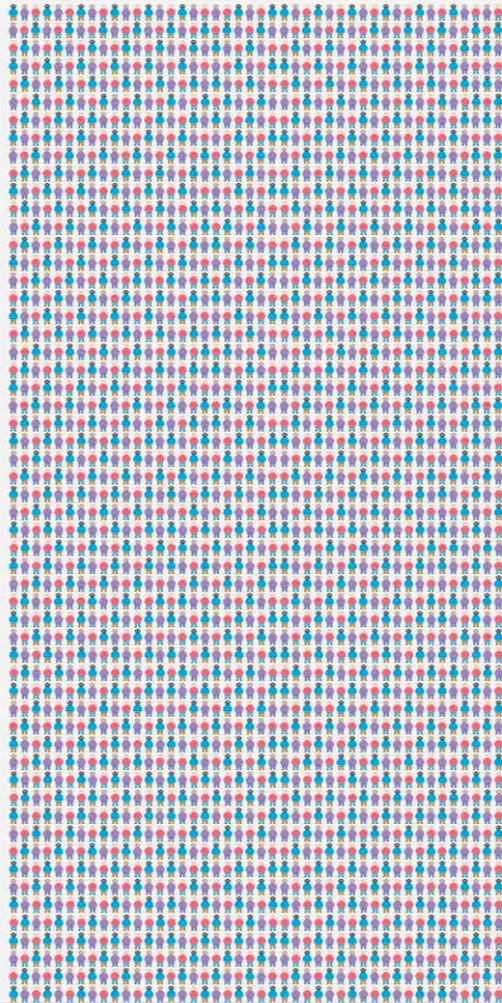


SOURCE: US Department of Justice (NCVS), FBI, CDC, NIJ, RAINN
GRAPHIC: @zccrockett

Vox

More people are sexually assaulted or raped in the US each year than the attendance at the 1969 Woodstock festival

627,700



Est. sexual assault victims in 2015

~400,000



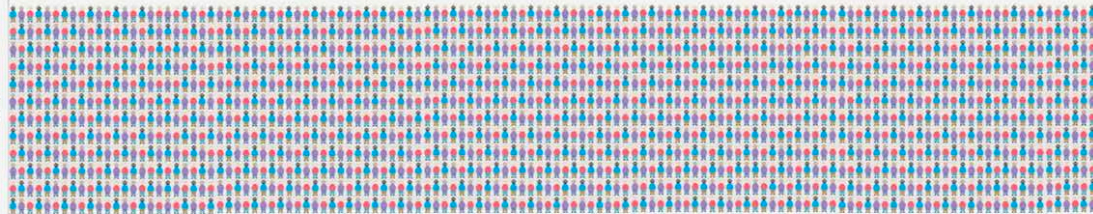
Woodstock attendance in 1969

SOURCE: US Department of Justice (NCVS), FBI, CDC, NIJ, RAINN
GRAPHIC: @zzcrockett

Vox

More people are sexually assaulted in the US each year than **US soldier deaths in WWI, WWII, and the Vietnam War combined**

Est.
sexual
assault
victims
in 2015



627,700

WWII
deaths



405,399

WWI
deaths



116,416

Vietnam
deaths

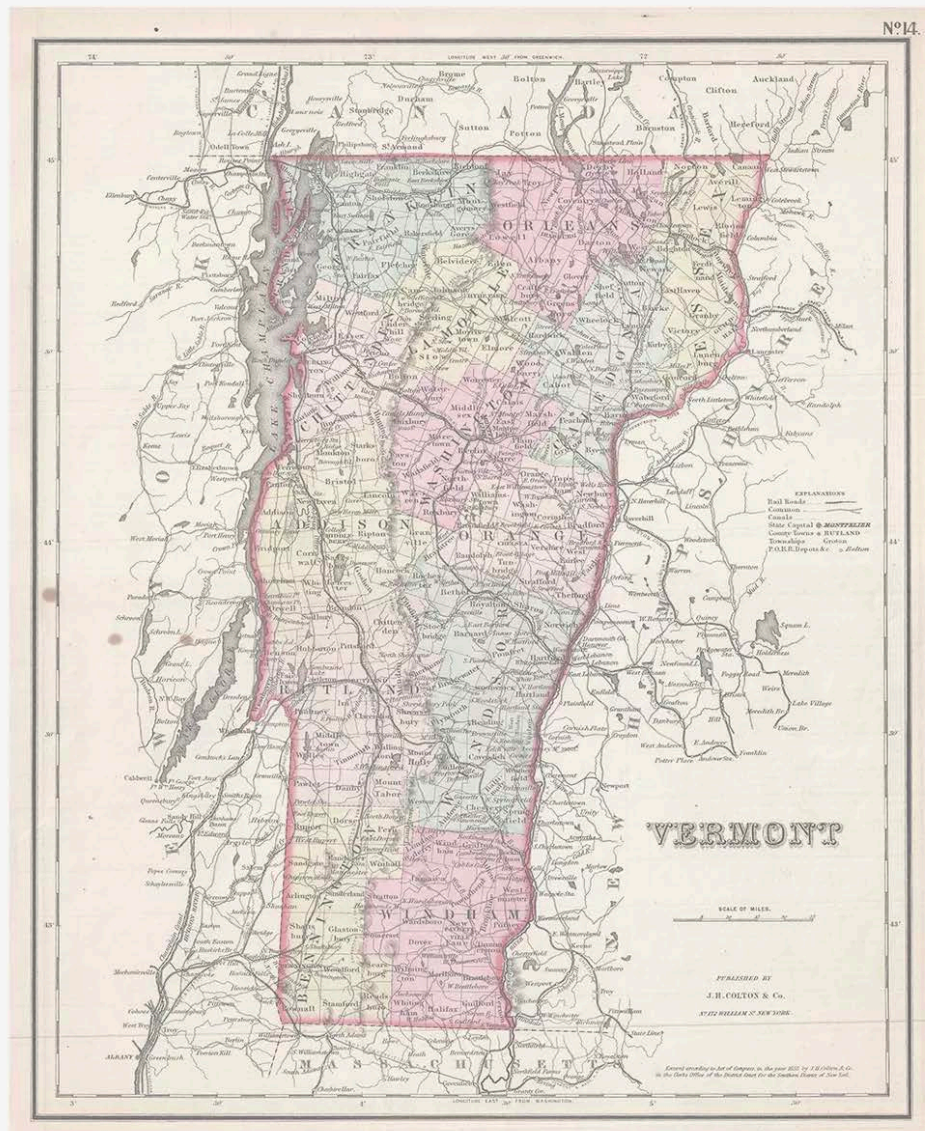


58,209

SOURCE: US Department of Justice (NCVS), FBI, CDC, NIJ, RAINN
GRAPHIC: @zzcrockett

Vox

More people are sexually assaulted in the US each year than **the entire population of Vermont (or Wyoming)**



Population
of Vermont:

626,562

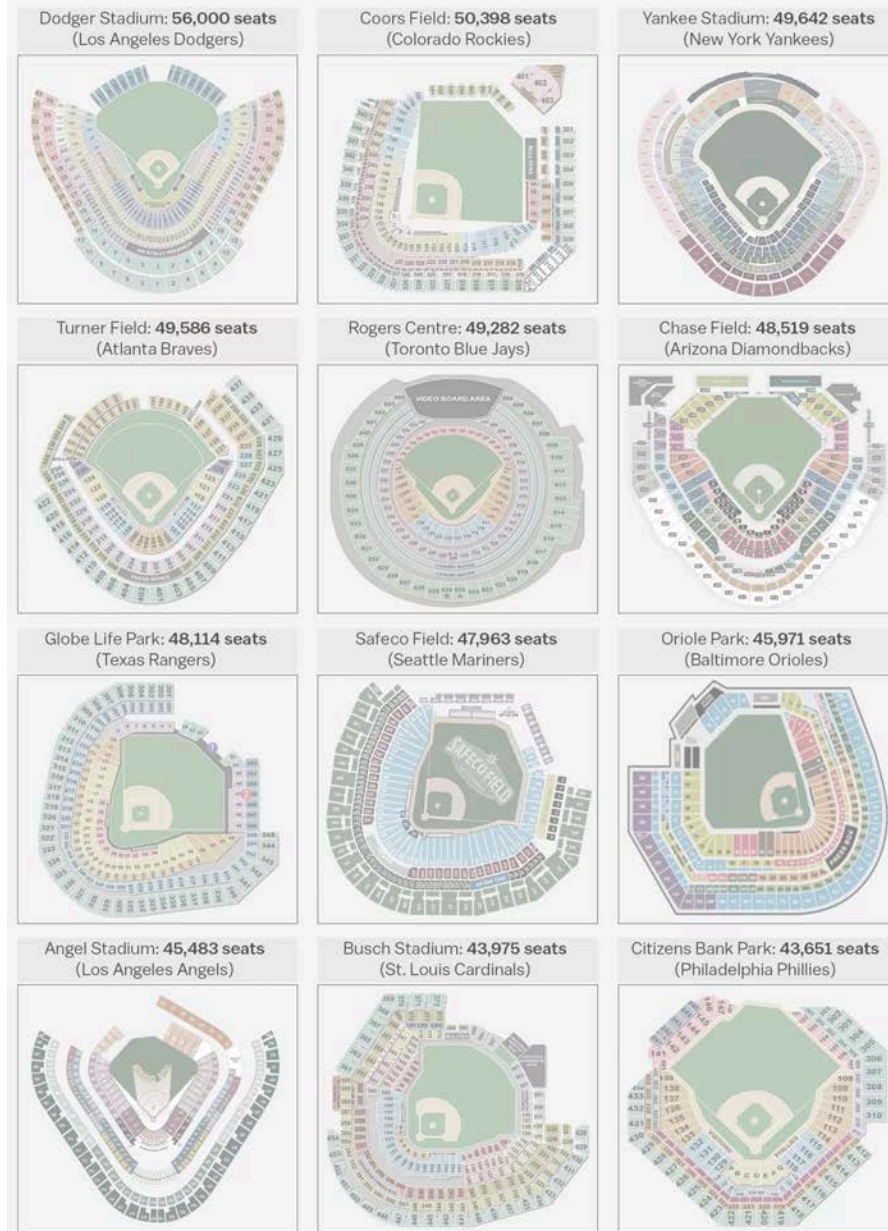
Est. sexual assault
victims in 2015

627,700

SOURCE: US Department of Justice (NCVS), FBI, CDC, NIJ, RAINN
GRAPHIC: @zccrockett

Vox

Enough people are sexually assaulted in the US each year to
fill the 12 biggest Major League Baseball stadiums



SOURCE: US Department of Justice (NCVS), FBI, CDC, NJ, RAINN
GRAPHIC: @zzcrockett

Vox

**Myth #2:
Most rapes end
in court.**

Prosecution rate.

“[R]ape is the least reported, least indicted, and least convicted non-property felony in America.”

OUT OF EVERY 1000 RAPES, 994 PERPETRATORS WILL WALK FREE

310 are reported to policeⁱ



57 reports lead to arrestⁱⁱ



11 cases get referred to prosecutorsⁱⁱ



7 cases will lead to a felony convictionⁱⁱⁱ

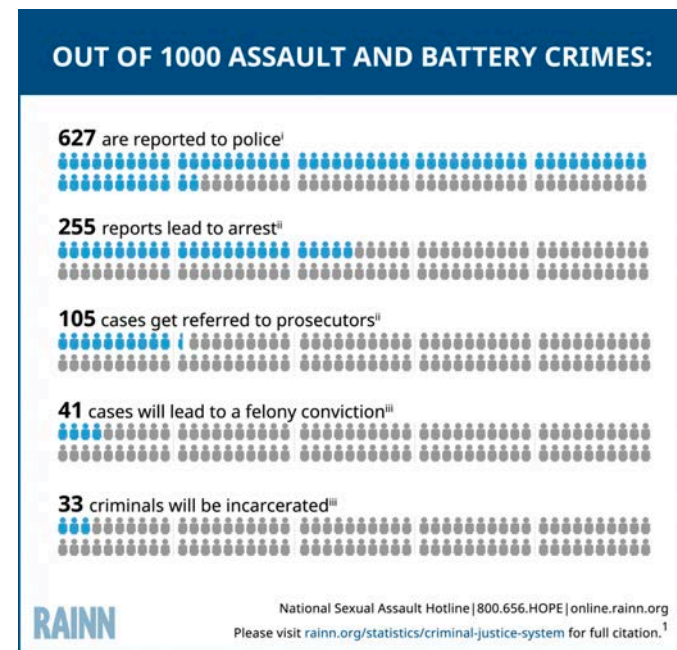
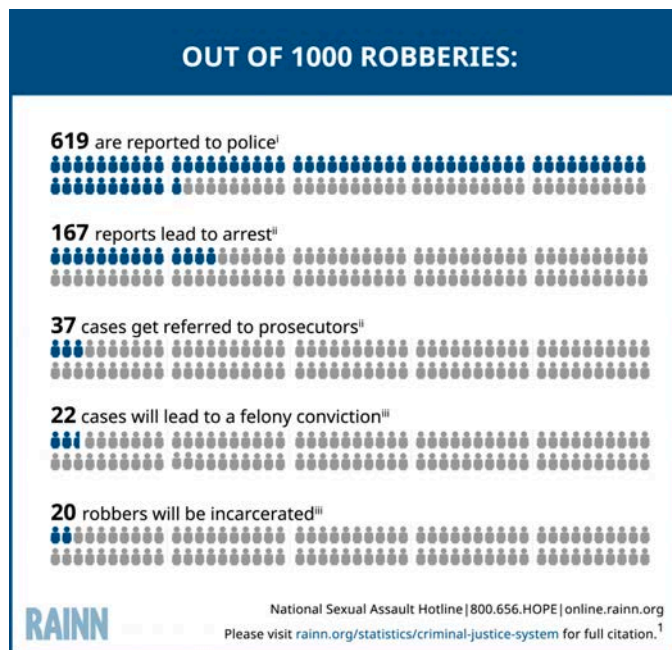


6 rapists will be incarceratedⁱⁱⁱ



Prosecution rate.

The comparable rates for robberies and assaults are more than double.



Myth #3:

**There are usually
witnesses to sex
assaults.**

Third-party witnesses.

- **More than half** of sex crimes are committed in private residences.
- **Only 5–10%** of sex crimes involve third-party or corroborating witnesses.
- Usually, the only witnesses are the victim and the offender.

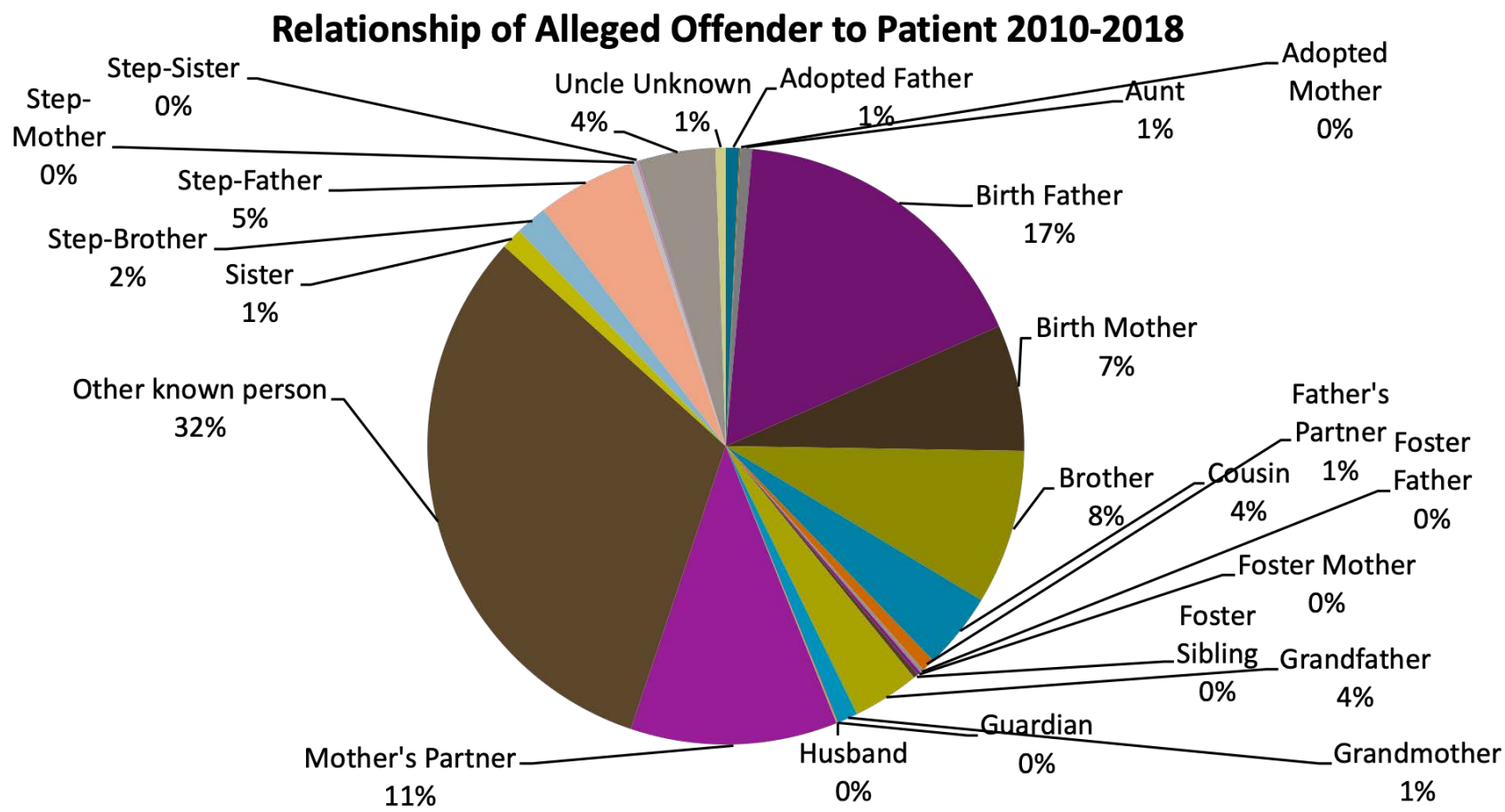
**Myth #4:
Most sexual assaults
are committed by
strangers.**

Most victims know their rapist.

- **Four out of five sex crimes** are committed by acquaintances or intimate partners.
- **College-age victims almost always** know their attackers.
- **90% of children** know their abuser.

Most victims know their rapist.

90% of children know their abuser.



[Data from Allen CPC]

Most victims know their rapist.

How do so many pedophiles get access to kids? **Through “grooming.”**

- A gradual process of trust-building, seduction and desensitizing victims and their families for the purpose of sexual abuse.
- Examples range from **back rubs** to **showing pornography** to **keeping secrets** to **gifts and money**.

**Myth #5:
Victims tell
right away.**

Delayed disclosure.

Most victims delay disclosure:

- **More than half** wait “years” to disclose;
- **Less than one-fifth** within “days”;
- **Less than one-fifth** within “hours.”

Delayed disclosure.

Both adult victims and child victims tend to delay disclosure.



Delayed disclosure.

The reasons for delaying disclosure are **complex and often multi-faceted**—for both adults and children.

Delayed disclosure.

Some common reasons shared by both children and adults:

- A fear they won't be believed.
- Self-blame or thinking they did something wrong.
- Uncertainty about consequences.

Delayed disclosure.

Some common reasons for adults:

- **Fear of the criminal-justice system** (the ordeal of investigation/trial, likelihood their rapist will get away with it).
- **Embarrassment or shame.**
- **Fear of retaliation.**
- **They want to “move on.”**

Delayed disclosure.

Some common reasons for children:

- **Family dynamics.**
- **Mixed emotions** (due to grooming and other reasons).
- **Fear of punishment.**

Delayed disclosure.

Delayed disclosure is not fatal to a case:

- Prosecutors can use **expert witnesses** to educate juries about rape myths;
- Some victims will be able to articulate **why they didn't tell right away**;
- The alternative would be to ignore **the vast majority of child sexual abuse** and the **majority of adult sexual abuse**.

**Myth #6:
False allegations
are common.**

False allegations.

The public perception of false reports differs wildly from the research.

- The public thinks that as many as half of reported sex crimes are false.
- The empirically validated number is **2–8%**.

False allegations.

“[T]here is no empirical data to prove that there are more false charges of rape than of any other violent crime.”

False allegations.

Children do not make false allegations of sexual abuse any more often than adults.

- **Children over 10** are no more suggestible than adults are.

**Myth #7:
Cases can't go
forward without
corroboration.**

Corroboration.

If corroboration was required, virtually no rape cases would result in arrest, prosecution, or conviction.

Corroboration.

Most sex assaults do not result in injury:

- **2/3** of sex-assault victims have no visible injuries;
- **1/4** have minor injuries that do not require treatment;
- **1/20** have moderate injuries;
- **1/100** have severe injuries.

Corroboration.

Despite these statistics,

“The myth that a real victim should be found lying crumpled on the ground in a pool of blood is still alive and well.”

Corroboration.

Corroborate what you can:

- Do **property records** confirm the defendant lived at the address at the time of the assault?
- Do **photos of the location** (furniture, home layout, etc.) match the victim's description?
- Has the victim made **previous consistent statements** to friends or confidants?

**Myth #8:
The “broken”
hymen.**

The hymen

What people think the hymen is:

- “Popping the cherry”
- “Why sex hurts the first time”
- “A virginity detector”

**All of those
myths are
wrong.**

The hymen

What the hymen actually is:

- A semi-flexible membrane that covers some or all of the vaginal opening, with normal variations and changes among different women or over a single woman's life.

The hymen

Why the hymen cannot detect penetration:

- Impossible to link to specific incidences or timeframe;
- In one scientific study, 34 out of 36 **pregnant** teenage girls had “normal” (intact or unremarkable) hymenal tissue.

Questions?

Feel free to contact us:

katherine.strub@unitypoint.org

tyler.buller@ag.iowa.gov