



501 SE Hawthorne Boulevard, Suite 250
Portland, Oregon 97214
(503) 988-3701 phone
(503) 988-3990 fax

Myths and Facts About Sex Offenders

- Myth: “Most sexual assaults are committed by strangers.”
 Fact: Most sexual assaults are committed by someone known to the victim or the victim’s family, regardless of whether the victim is a child or an adult.

Approximately 60% of boys and 80% of girls who are sexually victimized are abused by someone known to the child or the child’s family (Lieb et al., 1998).

- Myth: “The majority of sexual offenders are caught, convicted, and in prison.”
 Fact: Only a fraction of those who commit sexual assault are apprehended and convicted for their crimes (National Crime Victimization surveys indicate that only 32% of sexual assaults were reported to police). Most convicted sex offenders eventually are released to the community under probation or parole supervision.

- Myth: “Most sex offenders re-offend.”
 Fact: Reconviction data indicate that this is not the case. Further, re-offense rates vary among different types of sex offenders and are related to specific characteristics of the offender and the offenses.
- Child molesters had a 13% reconviction rate for sexual offenses (Hanson and Bussiere, 1998).
 - Rapists had a 19% reconviction rate for sexual offenses (Hanson and Bussiere, 1998).

- Myth: “Sexual offense rates are higher than ever and continue to climb.”
 Fact: Despite the increase in publicity about sexual crimes, the actual rate of reported sexual assault has decreased slightly in recent years.

- Myth: “Treatment for sex offenders is ineffective.”
 Fact: Treatment programs can contribute to community safety because those who attend and cooperate with program conditions are less likely to re-offend than those who reject intervention.

Treatment outcome research indicates that there is a small, yet significant treatment effect – an 8% reduction in the recidivism rate for offenders who participated in treatment (Hall, 1995). Research also demonstrates that sex offenders who fail to complete treatment

Multnomah County Department of Community Justice

Myths and Facts about Sex Offenders

programs are at increased risk for both sexual and general recidivism (Hanson and Bussiere, 1998).

- Myth: “All sex offenders are male.”
- Fact: The vast majority of sex offenders are male. However, females also commit sexual crimes.

- Myth: “Sex Offenders commit sexual crimes because they are under the influence of alcohol.”
- Fact: It is unlikely that an individual who otherwise would not commit a sexual assault would do so as a direct result of excessive drinking.

- Myth: “Children who are sexually assaulted will sexually assault others when they grow up.”
- Fact: Most sex offenders were not sexually assaulted as children and most children who are sexually assaulted do not sexually assault others.

- Myth: “The cost of treating and managing sex offenders in the community is too high—they belong behind bars.”
- Fact: One year of intensive supervision and treatment in the community can range in cost between \$5,000 to \$15,000 per offender, depending on treatment modality. The average cost for incarcerating an offender is significantly higher, approximately \$22,000 per year, excluding treatment costs.

Further Resources

A Very Touching Book . . . For Little People and Big People. By Jan Hindman (www.janhindman.com), Alexandria and Associates.

Identifying Child Molesters: Preventing Child Sexual Abuse by Recognizing the Patterns of the Offenders. By Carla van Dam, Ph. D., Haworth Press (800) 429-6784

Predators: Pedophiles, Rapist, and Other Sex Offenders. Who They Are, How They Operate, and How We Can Protect Our Children. By Anna C. Salter, Ph.D., Basic Books (www.basicbooks.com)

Adapted from:

The Center for Sex Offender Management (CSOM), United States Department of Justice, “Myths and Facts About Sex Offenders,” www.csom.or/pubs/mythsfacts.html