



February 2008

EMBARGOED UNTIL 2PM TUESDAY 19 FEBRUARY

New report proves media perpetuate rape myths

A new report shows that low rape conviction rates, high attrition rates and women's decisions not to report rape because they fear they will be disbelieved are related to the media misrepresenting rape.

The report – *Just Representation? Press reporting and the reality of rape* – was published by London-based violence-against-women research agency the Lilith Project, run by homeless women's charity Eaves, and will be released at a seminar on Tuesday 19 February.

Some key findings:

- The press is highly selective in its reporting of rape
- It disproportionately reports stranger rapes (54.4% of cases, as against only 8-17% of total rapes, according to the BCS)
- A high proportion of cases selected for reporting in the press involve one or more aggravating factors such as excessive additional violence (grievous bodily harm, murder), the use of a weapon or intoxicants, abduction and kidnapping, and/or multiple assailants
- The most common form of rape, rape by a current or former partner, is severely under-represented in press reports (2% of cases compared with 56% in BCS)
- Rapes that take place in public spaces are over-represented in the press (54.4% of cases, in contrast to 13% of cases in BCS)

All of this amounts to a profile of rape and sexual assault which, rather than reflecting the reality of sexual violence and its pervasive and gender-based character, reinforces myths and stereotypes of 'real rape' in the public imagination. This has been shown, by Professor Liz Kelly and other researchers, to influence decision-making at every stage of the criminal justice process and contributes to high attrition rates, low conviction rates and women's decisions not to report rape because they fear they will be disbelieved.

The report analysed articles from five mainstream tabloids and five mainstream broadsheets, plus the BBC Online service, throughout 2006:

Daily Express
Daily Mail
Daily Mirror
Daily Record
Daily Telegraph
The Guardian
The Independent
The Scotsman
The Sun
The Times
BBC Online

The report will be released on **Tuesday 19 February, 2pm, at YWCA Central Club, 44 Portland Place, London W1B 1NE** at an afternoon seminar where the issue will be discussed. A few places are available to the media on a first-come, first-served basis; to reserve a place please call Sarah Edwards on 020 7840 7952, or email sarah.edwards@eaveshousing.co.uk.

For further information about the report, more key findings or to request an interview with Eaves chief executive Denise Marshall, please contact Eaves Communications Officer Anna Bowden on 020 7840 7126 or at anna.bowden@eaveshousing.co.uk.