



## Rape is only ever enjoyed by rapists (content note for rape)

### Content note: rape

I was absolutely horrified to read [this piece](#) about Cheltenham Councillor, Barbara Driver, who stated that 'when rape is inevitable, lie back and enjoy it'. I work with survivors and have yet to hear one say she 'enjoyed' being raped.

I'm unclear as to whether Driver means that rape is inevitable, *per se*. I would strongly argue that it is most certainly not. Men rape because of their sense of male sexual entitlement, because of misogyny and because they know that they can and do get away with it, due to our deeply ingrained rape culture and patriarchal jurisprudence, thanks to [Lord Hale](#) in part, as well as a culture of disbelief and victim blaming.

Rape and sexual violence are conflated with sex in the public consciousness. Driver's comment has distinct overtones that sexual harassment, assault and rape should be taken as a compliment as they somehow validate the woman's sexual allure and attractiveness. This is complete nonsense and a total myth. However, this is not an uncommon view and has been known to influence the CPS's decision whether or not to prosecute. I have heard of one CPS lawyer who after viewing the police file and video interview of a woman reporting her rape, decided not to prosecute on the basis that she 'was not prepossessing enough to convince a jury that she had been raped.'

If Driver was referring to when women are being raped, then the reality is that the human body overwhelmingly and instinctively responds to threat in fear thus: the '[sympathetic nervous system](#)' creates an adrenalin rush which tells the body to fight or flight whilst the 'parasympathetic nervous system' simultaneously creates a neuron to calm the nervous system that tells the body to relax. The result is that both sides being at full blast at the same time causes the nervous system to be confused and the body freezes.

As a result, the majority of women and children who experience rape and sexual abuse, contrary to popular opinion, will not be covered head to toe in defensive wounds and injuries and consequently, this is why survivors may well question whether in fact what did occur was rape/sexual abuse.

Many people wrongly interpret the body's 'freeze' response with consent and in fact we see defence barristers using this myth as a strategy in court. **This is manifestly not the same as 'lying back' and 'enjoying rape' nor is it consent.** Many survivors internalise these messages and self-blame, feel totally or partially responsible, feel so much guilt and shame for freezing and not doing more to protect themselves by fighting back or running away that this presents yet another of the multitude of barriers to disclosing and/or reporting.

These feelings are further compounded by prevailing notions of masculinity and male sexuality; men are seldom held responsible for their acts of sexual violence towards women and children. Rapists are believed to be unable to control themselves or incapable of stopping once they



reach a degree of sexual arousal, which is a total fallacy. If a child or parent were to interrupt a man in the middle of sex, would he carry on regardless and state 'I've started so I'll finish'? Let us also not forget that studies show how most rapes are planned and premeditated.

Councillor Barbara Driver is not only wrong but utterly misguided. Rape is only ever enjoyed by rapists, as it is the desire for power and control that drives their sexual violence against women and girls.

If you are affected by this piece, you can contact [Rape Crisis England and Wales](#), telephone: freephone helpline 0808 802 9999, 12 - 2.30pm, 7 - 9.30pm or if in Scotland, [Rape Crisis Scotland](#) free on 08088 01 03 02 every day 6pm to midnight.