

myths & facts

Classism

Myth: Women on welfare have large families and have “kids for money.”

Fact: The typical welfare family is a mother and two children, slightly less than the size of the average family in the United States. The U.S. is the only industrial nation other than South Africa and Japan that does not provide families with an automatic grant for every child.

-Bertha Capen Reynolds Society, Abramovitz and Newdom

Myth: Few women on welfare are white.

Fact: Of all women on family assistance, 4% are African-American, 38% are white, 16% are Latina, 2.7% are Asian, 1.3% are Native American and 1.5% are of unknown race.

-Bertha Capen Reynolds Society, Abramovitz and Newdom

Myth: Once on welfare always on welfare. Welfare is a trap from which few escape.

Fact: More than half of women on welfare stay on the rolls for less than one year.

-Bertha Capen Reynolds Society, Abramovitz and Newdom

Religion

-Islam and Muslim

Myth: Muslims don't believe in Jesus.

Fact: Muslims do accept Jesus as a biblical prophet. They believe he performed miracles; believe in the virgin birth and accept Jesus as a prophet of Allah. Muslims do not accept Jesus as “the son of God.”

-www.themodernreligion.com

Myth: Islam encourages polygamy.

Fact: Polygamy is allowed under strict conditions. A man must treat all his wives exactly the same. (This means giving each wife the exact same amount of time, money, love, etc.) Since this is nearly impossible to do, most men do not practice this ancient custom.

-www.themodernreligion.com

Myth: Muslims don't eat meat.

Fact: Muslims are allowed to eat meat that is slaughtered a specific way.

-www.themodernreligion.com

Ableism

-Mental Disability

Myth: People who have a mental illness are violent.

Fact: People receiving treatment for mental illness are more likely to be the victim of crime than the perpetrator. Most violent crimes are committed by people who are not mentally ill.

-Shalom House, Inc.

Myth: People with mental illness need constant assistance.

Fact: Many people with mental illnesses live independently in their own houses or apartments, manage their own money, arrange their own social activities and hold jobs.

-Shalom House, Inc.

Myth: Mental illness is most common among economically poor people.

Fact: Mental illness does not discriminate based on economic status, social standing, ethnicity or race. Anyone can develop a mental illness.

-Shalom House, Inc.

-Physical Disability

Myth: People with disabilities live very different lives than non-disabled people.

Fact: Overall, people with disabilities live the same as non-disabled people. Some ways of doing things are adapted depending on the type and severity of the disability.

-Goldstein, Winkler and Chun

Myth: Considerable expense is necessary to accommodate workers with disabilities.

Fact: Most workers with disabilities require no special accommodations and the cost for those who do is minimal. The President's Committee's Job Accommodation Network reports that 78% of accommodations cost less than \$1,000.

-President's Committee's Job Accommodation Network

Myth: If workers with disabilities can't or won't do the job, you can't get rid of them.

Fact: If clear performance expectations are established and a performance problem occurs, employers may terminate the employment agreement following the company's usual guidelines.

-Community Involvement Council

Ageism

Myth: To be old is to be sick.

Fact: Today, only 5% of all older people live in a long-term care facility. Not only is this percentage down from a high of 6.3% in 1982, it also means that 95% of older people are living independently.

-“Successful Aging: the MacArthur Foundation Study,” Rowe and Kahn

Myth: The majority of older people (age 65+) are senile.

Fact: About 10% of older people have some form of dementia or severe mental illness. Another 10% have some mild or moderate cognitive impairment. The majority have neither.

-“The Facts on Aging Quiz”, Erdman B. Palmore

Myth: The elderly don't pull their own weight.

Fact: Two-thirds of older people work for pay or volunteer in churches, hospitals and other organizations.

-“Successful Aging: the MacArthur Foundation Study,” Rowe and Kahn

Racism

-Refugees

Myth: Refugees do not pay income taxes.

Fact: Every individual living in the United States with refugee status is subject to the same federal, state and local income tax laws as native-born citizens. There are no "grace periods" or exemptions. All refugees are subject to all other taxes as well (i.e. property tax, sales tax, etc.)

-Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association, Inc.

Myth: Refugees have more rights than citizens.

Fact: Refugees have fewer rights than citizens. For example, a refugee cannot vote, hold a government job or travel with a U. S. passport. These rights are afforded only to citizens. A refugee can apply for citizenship only after residing in the United States for five years.

-Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association, Inc.

Myth: The United States is the only country to accept refugees.

Fact: There are 24 countries worldwide involved in refugee resettlement. The major resettlement countries include: Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States. Before individuals can enter the United States under refugee status, they must prove that should they return to their homeland they will face persecution. A low standard of living does not qualify as persecution.

-Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association, Inc. & Iowa Department of Human Services

-Immigrants

Myth: Immigrants abuse the Social Security and welfare systems.

Fact: Immigrants contribute more in taxes than they receive in benefits. In 1999, the U.S. Census Bureau reported fewer than one in seven foreign-born householders received welfare benefits.

-Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights

Myth: Immigrants take jobs away from Americans.

Fact: Immigrants create at least as many jobs as they fill. Numerous studies show that immigrants are more likely to be self-employed and start new businesses than the native-born. Immigrants also fill jobs that native-born are either unwilling or unable to undertake, especially in the labor-intensive service/industrial sectors.

-Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights

Myth: The United States is being overrun with illegal immigrants.

Fact: The estimated number of illegal immigrants living in the United States ranges from 5 to 8 million. This accounts for approximately 2% of the U.S. population.

-Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights

Sexism

Myth: Gays and lesbians can be identified by certain mannerisms and physical characteristics.

Fact: Gays and lesbians come in as many different colors, sizes and shapes as do heterosexuals.

-Moses & Hawkins; Masters, Johnson & Kolodny

Myth: Only a few people are gay or lesbian.

Fact: Most reliable estimates of the current gay and lesbian population in America range from 10 to 20% of the American population.

-Bell & Weinberg, Darty & Potter

Myth: Homosexuality is a sign of emotional disturbance.

Fact: For nearly two decades the American Psychiatric Association has not listed sexual orientation among its diagnostic criteria for mental disorders.

-Masters, Johnson & Kolodny