REPORTED AND IMPERSONAL PASSIVE

With opinion verbs such as allege, believe, consider, estimate, expect, know, report, say, think, understand a passive construction is used when reporting people’s generalized opinions.

This happens because the action referred to is more important than the subject who is doing the action, usually because it would be a weak subject (they, people).

You can build this kind of sentences following both these structures:

**IT + PASSIVE OPINION VERB + THAT CLAUSE**

**PERSONAL SUBJECT + PASSIVE OPINION VERB + TO INFINITIVE**

Depending on the tense reference in the active sentence, the infinitive may vary into perfect infinitive (to have + pp), present continuous infinitive (to be + -ing form), perfect continuous infinitive (to have been + -ing form), or perfect passive infinitive (to have been + pp).

1. PRESENT REFERENCE
   - People say that Sam is in the UK.
     - *It is said that Sam is in the UK.*
     - *Sam is said to be in the UK.*

2. PAST REFERENCE
   - People know that Shane left Galway last week.
     - *It is known that Shane left Galway last week.*
     - *Shane is known to have left Galway last week.*

3. CONTINUOUS PRESENT/PAST REFERENCE
   - People rumour that George is / was visiting his relatives.
     - *It is rumoured that George is / was visiting his relatives.*
     - *George is rumoured to be visiting / to have been visiting his relatives.*

4. PASSIVE REFERENCE
   - People consider that Jane was badly mistreated.
     - *It is considered that Jane was badly mistreated.*
     - *Jane is considered to have been badly mistreated.*

**ALSO KEEP IN MIND**

★ If the reporting or opinion verb is in the past in the active sentence, it stays the same in the passive sentence:
   - *People thought she had paid too much.*
   - *It was thought that she had paid too much.*
   - *She was thought to have paid too much.*
If the verb clause in the second part of the sentence contains a modal, or a verb form which does not have an infinitive form, you will have to use an alternative equivalent which can become an infinitive.

| Can/could | forms of to be able to |
| Will      | forms of to be going to |
| Must      | forms of to have to |

PRACTICE

EXERCISE 1
Rewrite these sentences using the introductory words given, and one of the constructions above.

1. We know that customs officials confiscated ten foreign passports last week.
   Ten foreign passports ____________________________
2. People say that most small corner shops are losing business with the recession.
   Most small corner shops ____________________________
3. It is expected that tax increases will be announced in tomorrow’s budget.
   Tax increases ____________________________
4. People thought at first that the Crown Prince had been attacked.
   The Crown Prince ____________________________
5. We know that inner-city crime rates are increasing.
   Inner-city crime rates ____________________________
6. They say the star’s wife has had at least two face-lifts.
   The star’s wife ____________________________
7. It is rumoured that the Princess is in hiding in Balmoral Castle in Scotland.
   The Princess ____________________________
8. It is feared that nine crew members were lost overboard.
   Nine crew members ____________________________
9. It was considered that his speech was one of the best.
   His speech ____________________________
10. We can’t deny that we made certain mistakes early on.
    It ____________________________
11. Police reported that a man had been helping them with their investigation.
    A man ____________________________
12. The accused was alleged to have committed fraud.
    It ____________________________
EXERCISE 2
Rewrite each sentence so that it contains the word in capitals.

1. We believe that the government has prepared a plan. HAVE
________________________________________________________________

2. We are thinking of getting someone to paint the outside of the house. PAINTED
________________________________________________________________

3. In the end I was unable to find a garage to service my car. GET
________________________________________________________________

4. People say that Mrs Turner was having business difficulties. BEEN
________________________________________________________________

5. The treasure is thought to date from the 13th century. IT
________________________________________________________________

6. The police towed away Alan’s car. GOT
________________________________________________________________

7. Your hair needs cutting. GET
________________________________________________________________

8. The police believe that a professional thief stole the statue. BEEN
________________________________________________________________

9. Jill’s parents are making her study hard. MADE
________________________________________________________________