



students active for ending rape

## facts about the issue

### scope

"Rape is the most common violent crime committed on college campuses."<sup>i</sup>

The National Crime Victimization Survey found that about 3%<sup>ii</sup> of college women are raped each academic year, usually by someone they know. The National College Women Sexual Victimization study estimates about 20 to 25% of college women are victims of sexual assault and attempted during their college years.<sup>iii</sup>

College students, because of their age, are a group at high risk of sexual assault, and some researchers believe college women are more vulnerable than their non-student peers.<sup>iv</sup> The National Crime Victimization Survey found no statistical differences in rape and sexual assault rates between women at college and women of the same age who are not students.<sup>v</sup> The finding of higher risk is based on the National College Women Sexual Victimization survey<sup>vi</sup> which used a different methodology.

"Women ages 16 to 24 experience rape at rates four times higher than the assault rate of all women,"<sup>vii</sup> making the college (and high school) years the most vulnerable for women."<sup>viii</sup>

About 9 in 10 of college women who are victims of rape or attempted rape know their assailant.<sup>ix</sup>

Less is known about the sexual assault of men, but research suggests that up to 10 percent of campus acquaintance rape victims are men, usually raped by other men.<sup>x</sup>

The first few weeks of the first and second years of college is the period when college students are most at risk of being sexually assaulted.<sup>xi</sup>

Only one in five of female college rape victims reported sustaining additional injuries, most often bruises, black eyes, cuts, swelling, or chipped teeth.<sup>xii</sup>

Nearly 70% percent of female victims of attempted rape and 55% of female victims of rape reported using physical force against their assailant to protect themselves. Most also told the person to stop.<sup>xiii</sup>

34% percent of rapes and 45% of attempted rapes of college women take place on campus. Almost 60% of the rapes that take place on campus occur in the victim's residence, 31% occur in another residence, and 10% occur in a fraternity.<sup>xiv</sup>

Private colleges and major universities have higher than national average rates, while religiously affiliated institutions have lower than average rates.<sup>xv</sup> Students at two-year institutions (15.6%) were more likely than those at four-year institutions (11.1%) to report they had been forced during their lifetime to have sexual intercourse.<sup>xvi</sup>

College women fear stranger rape more than acquaintance rape, and do more to protect themselves from it, though acquaintance rape is much more prevalent.<sup>xvii</sup>

In a 1985 survey of 6,159 students from 32 colleges and universities, one out of every 15 male students admitted they had raped, or tried to rape, a female student during the preceding year.<sup>xviii</sup>

In studies in the early 1980s and 1990s, approximately one-third of college men reported they would rape a woman if they knew they would not get caught.<sup>xix</sup>

We do not know how many college rapists repeat their crime, since most go unpunished. Koss et al.'s survey found 187 rapes to have been committed by 96 men.<sup>xx</sup>

### **the problem in New York**

A recent survey of young women between 15 and 24 in New York City found a high prevalence of dating relationships characterized by physical violence (22%), coercion (60%) and forced sexual experiences (27%).<sup>xxi</sup>

In a study of young women aged 14 to 23 who sought health services at the New York Mt. Sinai Adolescent Health Center, approximately 30% of young women reported experiencing sexual assault by a date or acquaintance in the past year.<sup>xxii</sup>

27% of female students at John Jay College have reportedly been sexually violated *in the last year*,<sup>xxiii</sup> according to the campus women's center.

A recent study, pending publication, found sexual assault rates much higher than the national average for college students at a public New York college<sup>xxiv</sup> yet *the 19 CUNY schools, serving 400,000 students, reported only 4 sex offenses in their 2005 reports to the Department of Education.*

At a recent hearing of the Higher Education Committee of the New York City Council, CUNY administrators admitted that there is no system-wide sexual assault policy for the CUNY schools, nor a policy covering intimate partner violence.<sup>xxv</sup>

Prevention education at CUNY schools is often a one-time event,<sup>xxvi</sup> and there is no consistency among schools' programs.

### **impact**

Survivors of sexual assault often suffer academic difficulties and are more likely to leave school.<sup>xxvii</sup>

40% of victims acquire a sexually transmitted disease as a result of rape.<sup>xxviii</sup>

80% of victims suffer chronic physical or mental health problems.<sup>xxix</sup>

## **reporting**

Campus sexual assault is hugely underreported to authorities, with fewer than 5 percent of college women who are victims of rape or attempted rape reporting it to police<sup>xxx</sup>. Part of the problem is that many survivors do not call their experience rape, though it meets the legal criteria,<sup>xxxi</sup> but colleges also often encourage victim blaming through prevention programs that focus exclusively on risk reduction behavior by potential victims (such as avoiding alcohol, going out in groups, carrying a whistle).<sup>xxxii</sup> Drug and alcohol abuse policies that do not include some immunity for victims of sexual assault can also hinder reporting.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Not having access to confidential or anonymous reporting also reduces the number of victims who will come forward, as will a belief that they will not be punished.<sup>xxxiv</sup> Fear of reprisal by the assailant or others also prevents victims from reporting, as does fear of going through the legal process.<sup>xxxv</sup>

Only half of schools included in a recent survey provided the option of anonymous reporting. Less than half tell students how they can file criminal charges.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

## **the law**

Schools are required by federal law to have and to disseminate a written sexual assault policy that addresses prevention of sex offenses and informs students of their rights and services available to them, should they be assaulted.

Federal legislation requiring reporting of crime statistics and mandating certain campus policies was a step forward, but a recent study found only 37% of campuses' reports were fully compliant with the law.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Security on Campus argues that Title IX requires colleges to eliminate the hostile environment caused by campus sexual assault.<sup>xxxviii</sup> Finn (1995) also argues that a college can be held liable for not protecting students against a foreseeable crime, such as acquaintance rape.<sup>xxxix</sup>

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