

SEXUAL ASSAULT ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES: A LOOK AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS

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ALARMING FIGURES

Why the New 'One in Four' Campus Rape Statistic Is Misleading

'One in four' female undergrads in a new survey of 150,000 students at 27 colleges reported being a victim of sexual assault or misconduct. But read the fine print before you panic.



LIZZIE CROCKER 09.21.15 10:10 PM ET

A new campus sexual assault survey ([PDF](#)) from the Association of American Universities finds that 23 percent of female undergraduates say they have been victims of sexual assault or misconduct, including various sexual offenses, and some



Sexual Violence on College Campuses

- Approximately 1 in 5 college women experience sexual assault (Muehlenhard, Peterson, Humphreys, & Jozkowski, 2017), domestic violence (Krebs et al., 2007), and stalking (Buhi, Clayton, & Surrency, 2008)
- Prevalence rates of undergraduate women experiencing sexual assault range substantially across campuses: 13% to 30% (Cantor et al., 2015).
 - Rationale for wide range: certain types of universities may have higher rates of campus crime (Palmer & Alda, 2016)

Evaluating the One-in-Five Statistic: Women's Risk of Sexual Assault While in College

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In 2014, U.S. president Barack Obama announced a White House Task Force to Protect Students From Sexual Assault, noting that “1 in 5 women on college campuses has been sexually assaulted during their time there.” Since then, this one-in-five statistic has permeated public discourse. It is frequently reported, but some commentators have criticized it as exaggerated. Here, we address the question, “What percentage of women are sexually assaulted while in college?” After discussing definitions of sexual assault, we systematically review available data, focusing on studies that used large, representative samples of female undergraduates and multiple behaviorally specific questions. We conclude that one in five is a reasonably accurate average across women and campuses. We also review studies that are inappropriately cited as either supporting or debunking the one-in-five statistic, we explain why they do not adequately address this question. We identify and evaluate several assumptions implicit in the public discourse (e.g., the assumption that college students are at greater risk than nonstudents). Given the empirical support for the one-in-five statistic, we suggest that the controversy occurs because of misunderstandings about studies’ methods and results and because this topic has implications for gender relations, power, and sexuality; this controversy is ultimately about values.

In 2014, President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden created the White House Task Force to Protect

the phrase “1 in 5” or “one in five” appeared in 709 of them. Clearly this statistic has permeated the popular discussion

Sexual Assault at the University of Arkansas

How should I assess if someone has been sexually assaulted?



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Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment

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Title IX protects the University community from gender discrimination, harassment and misconduct in a school's education programs and activities. Title IX protects the University community in connection with all academic, educational, extracurricular, athletic and other University programs, whether those programs take place on University property, in University transportation, at a class or training program sponsored by the University at another location or elsewhere.

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U of A Definitions: Sexual Assault

An actual or attempted sexual contact with another person without that person's consent. Sexual assault includes, but is not limited to involvement in any sexual contact when the victim is unable to consent; intentional and unwelcome touching of, or coercing, forcing, or attempting to coerce or force another to touch a person's intimate parts (defined as genital area, groin, inner thigh, buttocks, or breast); and sexual intercourse without consent.

Acts defined as sexual assault include rape, date rape, acquaintance rape, and gang rape, but may also include sexual touching of another person against his or her will, and forcing an unwilling person to touch another person sexually.

Sexual assault occurs when such acts are committed either by force, threat, or intimidation, or through the use of the victim's mental or physical helplessness, of which the assailant was aware or should have been aware.

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U of A Definitions: Consent

Consent: Consent is a clear, knowing and voluntary decision to engage in sexual activity.

Because consent is voluntary, it is given without coercion, force, threats, or intimidation. It is given with positive cooperation in the act or expression of intent to engage in the act pursuant to an exercise of free will.

Consent is active, not passive. Silence, in and of itself, cannot be interpreted as consent. Consent can be given by words or actions, as long as those words or actions consist of an affirmative, unambiguous, conscious decision by each participant to engage in mutually agreed-upon sexual activity.

Consent is revocable, meaning consent can be withdrawn at any time. Thus, consent must be ongoing throughout a sexual encounter. Once consent has been revoked, sexual activity must stop immediately.

Consent can be limited, meaning consent to any one form of sexual activity cannot automatically imply consent to any other forms of sexual activity. Use of alcohol or other drugs will never function as a defense to a violation of this Policy. Further, previous relationships or prior consent cannot imply consent to future sexual acts.

Consent cannot be given when a person is incapacitated, such as when a person is physically or mentally unable to make informed, rational judgments, or lacks the ability to understand the “who, what, when, where and how” related to the sexual activity. States of incapacitation include, but are not limited to, unconsciousness and sleep. Where alcohol or drugs are involved, incapacitation is determined by how the alcohol or other drugs have impacted a person’s decision-making capacity, awareness of consequences, and/or ability to make fully informed judgments.



U of A Definitions: Non-Consensual Sexual Contact

Non-consensual sexual contact is any intentional sexual touching, however slight, with any object by a male or female upon a male or a female that is without consent and/or by force. Sexual Contact includes intentional contact with the breasts, buttock, groin, or genitals, or touching another with any of these body parts, or making another touch you or themselves with or on any of these body parts; any intentional bodily contact in a sexual manner, though not involving contact with/of/by breasts, buttocks, groin, genitals, mouth or other orifice.

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U of A Definitions: Non-Consensual Sexual Intercourse

Non-consensual sexual intercourse is any sexual intercourse however slight, by a male or female upon a male or a female that is without consent and/or by force. Intercourse includes vaginal penetration by a penis, object, tongue or finger; anal penetration by a penis, object, tongue, or finger; and oral copulation (mouth to genital contact or genital to mouth contact), no matter how slight the penetration or contact.

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U of A's definition of sexual assault is consistent with other universities and gold standards in the field of sexual assault research

METHODS

- Online sample
- Anonymous data collection
- Data collected from general elective courses

University of Arkansas Data: Demographics

Participant Characteristics

Gender	
Woman	73.7
Man	26.1

Age	
18 – 20	59.0
21-24	29.3
25 and up	11.7

Race	
White	81.5
Black/Africa American	7.0
Asian/Asian American	1.7
Native American	2.9
Pacific Islander	0.6
Bi- or multi-racial	2.2

Participant Characteristics

Year in School	
First year (Freshmen)	9.9
Second year (Sophomore)	43.2
Third year (Junior)	28.7
Fourth year (Senior)	13.6
Fifth year or more (Super Senior) or Grad Student	4.7
Where do you currently live at the U of A	
On campus: residence halls/apartments)	17.3
On campus: Greek-life	10.5
Off campus: rental apartment/house	61.5
Off campus: parent's house	6.6
Off campus: self-owned/pay mortgage	3.4
Some other location	0.6

Participant Characteristics

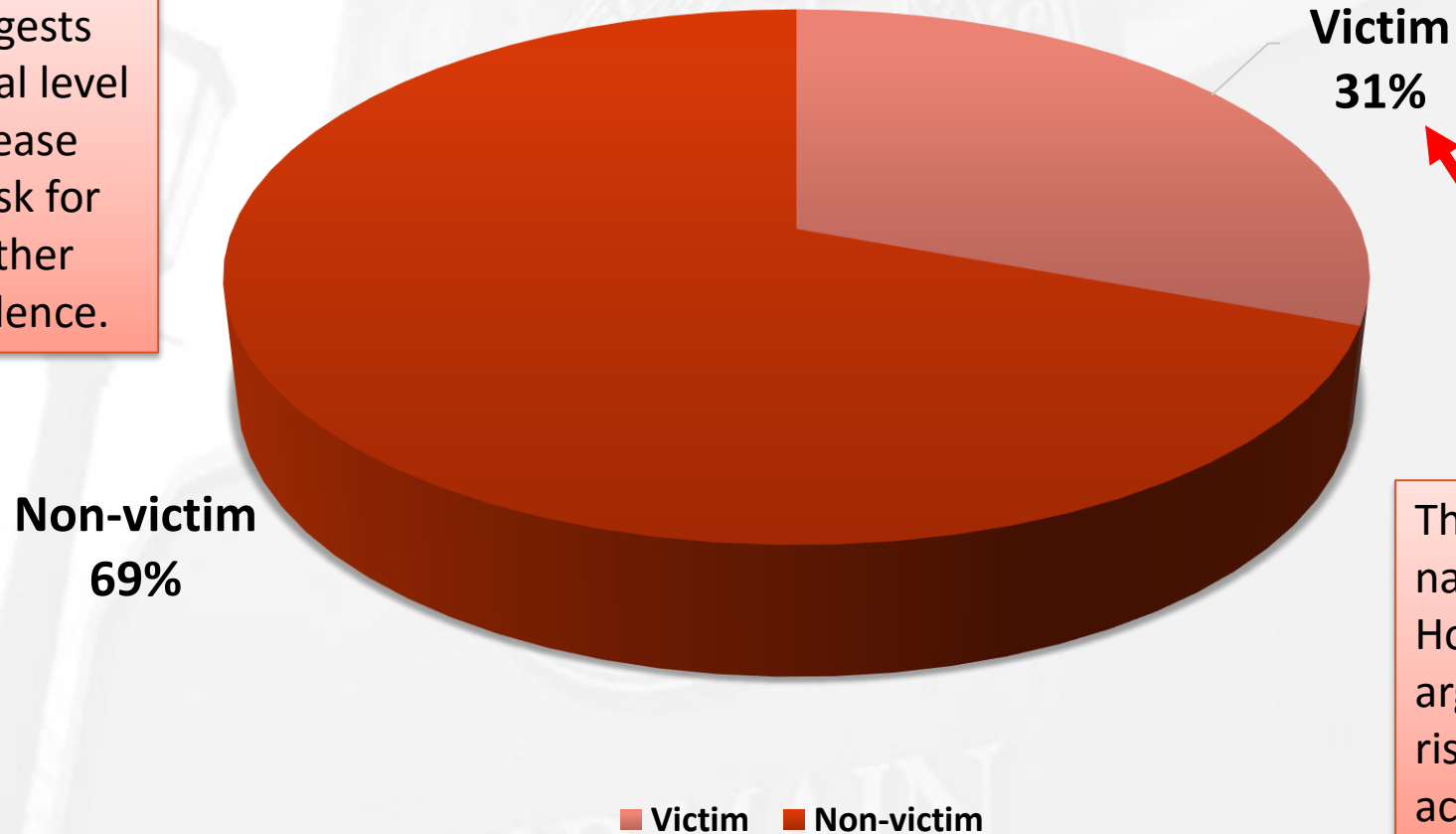
Greek-life Affiliation	
Current member of fraternity or sorority	44.5
Current member NPHC fraternity or sorority	1.6
Former member of a fraternity or sorority, but now disassociated	9.4
Former member of a NPHC fraternity or sorority, but now disassociated	1.2
Not a member, but planning to join a fraternity or sorority	2.2
Not a member, but planning to join a NPHC fraternity or sorority	1.5
Not a member and no plans to join	39.6

University of Arkansas Data:

Sexual Assault experiences by Women

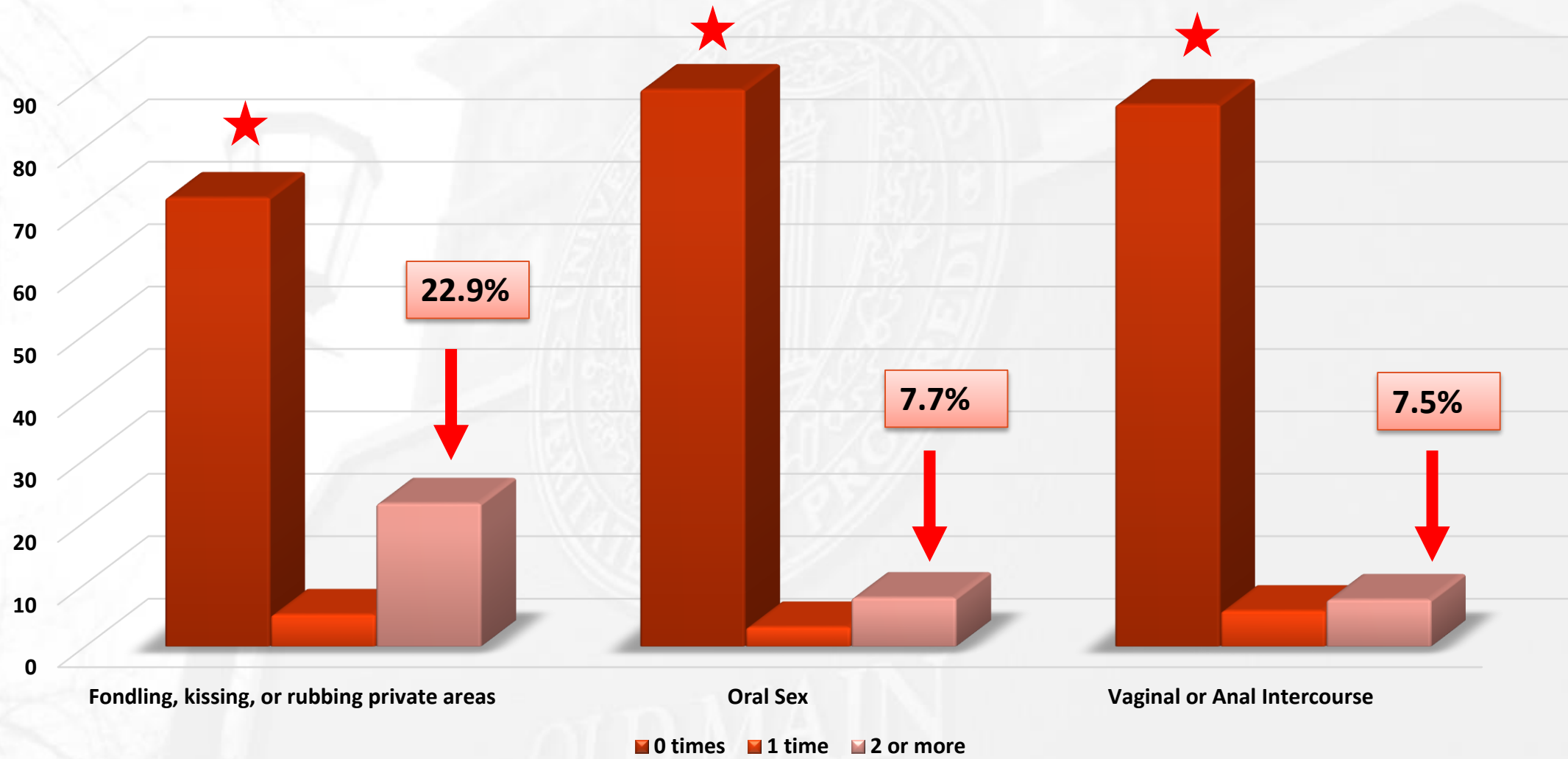
Sexual Assault since coming to University of Arkansas

In fact, research suggests there are institutional level risk factors that increase certain campuses' risk for sexual assault and other intimate partner violence.



This is higher than the national 1-in-5 statistic. However, Cantor et al. argues that sexual assault risk is not evenly distributed across universities.

Completed Sexual Assault since coming to U of A



Completed Sexual Assault since coming to U of A



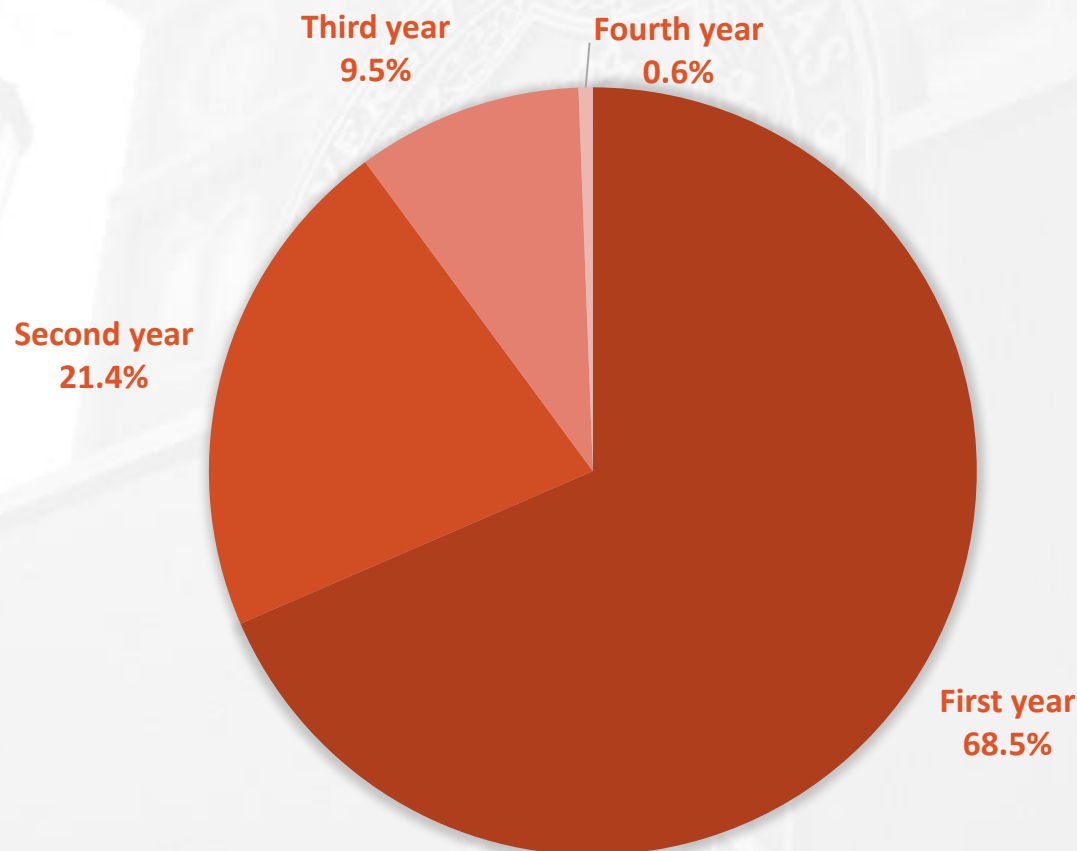
Victimization Experiences

All of these findings are consistent with previous research assessing sexual assault among college women.

- 96% of victims reported a male perpetrator ★
- 22.5% of victims reported two more people assaulted them ★
- 65.1% of victims reported that alcohol was consumed by the perpetrator and themselves ★
- 65.7% reported feeling frightened during the sexual assault
 - An additional 3.6% were passed out

Year in school when Sexual Assault took place

In fact, research suggests women's risk for experiencing sexual assault is highest during the first 6 weeks on campus or from the time between Fall semester starting and Thanksgiving break.



Women's risk for experiencing sexual assault is typically highest in their first year on campus. This finding is consistent with previous research.

Victimization Experiences: Location of Sexual Assault

51.4% of victims reported
SA occurred on campus

40.2% of victims reported
SA occurred off campus

- 31.8% -- party hosted by Greek-life
- 26.3% -- university dorms or apartments
- 30.2% -- off-campus apartments or houses
- 8.4% -- a bar

Previous research
shows these
venues are
associated with
sexual assault

Who did you tell?

- 20.1% of women did not tell anyone about the sexual assault
- Of those that did...
 - 49.2% told their roommate
 - 49.7% told a close friend other than a roommate
 - 13.4% told a romantic partner
 - 7.3% told a parent or guardian
- No one reported telling the U of A or Fayetteville police

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84% of women reported that everyone they told was supportive

University of Arkansas Data:

Perceptions of women who had experienced sexual assault

Perceptions of U of A Responding to Sexual Assault

- **If someone were to report a sexual assault to a campus authority at the U of A, which of the following is likely to occur... (check all that apply):**
 - 47.5%: U of A would take the report seriously
 - 58.1%: U of A would keep knowledge of the report limited to those who need to know in order to respond properly
 - 24.0% U of A would forward the report outside the campus to criminal investigators
 - 35.8%: U of A would take steps to protect the safety of the person making the report
 - 33.5%: U of A would support the person making the report
 - 30.7%: U of A would take corrective action to address factors that may have led to the sexual assault
 - 29.1%: U of A would take corrective action against the offender
 - 17.9%: U of A would take steps to protect the person making the report from retaliation

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Perceptions of Peers' Reactions to Reporting Sexual Assault

- **If someone were to report a sexual assault to a campus authority at the U of A, which of the following is likely to occur... (check all that apply):**
 - 17.3% believe students would label the person making the report a troublemaker
 - 25.7% believe students would support the person making the report
 - 24.6% believe the alleged offender(s) or their associated would retaliate against the person making the report
 - 14.5% believe the educational achievement/career of the person making the report would suffer

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Perceptions of Peers' Reactions to Reporting Sexual Assault

- If someone were to report a sexual assault to a campus authority at the U of A, which of the following would you expect to apply):

- 17.3% believe student would be seen as a troublemaker
- 25.7% believe student would be seen as a victim
- 24.6% believe student would be seen as a person against the person making the report
- 14.5% believe the educational environment of the person making the report would suffer

Given these perceptions, it is not entirely surprising that ~20% of women indicated they had not told anyone about the sexual assault

Recanting Sexual Assaults?

- 2.2% of women reported that they recanted their story about the experience, at a later time, they told someone that it did not happen.

**NO ONE stated:
Because the experience
did not happen**

- Why? (Check all that apply)
 - 1 woman said because the experience happened
 - 2 women said because they wanted to change the story, even though the experience happened
 - 2 women stated because they did not change their story, even though the experience happened
 - 2 women stated they did not want to find out even though the experience happened
 - 1 woman said because the reporting was too difficult, even though the experience happened

University of Arkansas Data:

Sexual Assault Prevention Exposure

Sexual Assault Prevention: Policies and Programming

- Received training in the policies and procedures of sexual assault (e.g., what is defined as sexual assault, how to report an incident, confidential resources, procedures for investigation)
 - 40.9%: Before coming to U of A
 - **53.2%: Since coming to U of A**
- Received any type of training or educational programming aimed at sexual assault prevention
 - 45.5%: Before coming to U of A
 - **59.7%: Since coming to U of A**
- 87.4% of women indicated the trainings or educational programs received at U of A were useful.

Sexual Assault Prevention: Policies and Programming

- 54.5% of women reported they would know where to get help for sexual assault
- 39.6% reported they understand the U of A's formal procedures to address sexual assault complaints
- 42.2% of women have confidence that the U of A administers the formal procedures to address complaints of sexual assault fairly
- 88.8% of women who experienced sexual assault report agreeing with the statement: "I feel safe on campus at the University of Arkansas"

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Campus Sexual Assault

- Sexual assault can be difficult to accurately assess because people have different perceptions on what “*should count*.”

Rates of sexual assault can fluctuate because of how people measure it. When it comes down to it, the rate itself is not controversial. What “should count” as sexual assault is not universally agreed upon.

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Title IX protects the University community from gender discrimination, harassment and misconduct in a school's education programs and activities. Title IX protects the University community in connection with all academic, educational, extracurricular, athletic and other University programs, whether those programs take place on University property, in University transportation, at a class or training program sponsored by the University at another location or elsewhere.

This Policy shall not be construed or applied to restrict academic freedom at the University, nor shall it be construed to restrict constitutionally protected expression.

That is why, for this study, I selected a "Gold Standard" measure that was also consistent with U of A's definitions of sexual assault.



Summary Points

- Sexual assault is a common experience at the University of Arkansas
 - ~ 31% of women experienced some form of sexual assault **since coming to the U of A**
 - This is consistent with other universities demographically similar to U of A (Cantor et al., 2016; Palmer & Alda, 2016)
- I only presented data on **COMPLETED** sexual assaults. The University of Arkansas defines sexual assault as: **An actual or attempted sexual contact** with another person without that person's consent. Thus, these findings may under-estimate women's experiences of non-consensual sexual behavior.
- False reporting of sexual assault is uncommon in the United States
 - A small percentage of women who experienced sexual assault at U of A reported recanting their experience because they felt threatened, afraid, embarrassed, stigmatized, or as though it would negatively impact their interpersonal relationships--**not because the experience did not happen.**

Summary Points

- Gap exist in terms of receiving sexual assault prevention education and knowledge about reporting sexual assaults via the U of A system
 - Overwhelming majority of women who did experience a sexual assault prevention program, found it useful
- Data suggests that some women lack confidence in terms of reporting sexual assault via the U of A system
 - This could help explain the fact that none of the women reported their sexual assault via the U of A system
- Despite the high rates of sexual assault at U of A, an overwhelming majority still feel safe on campus

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QUESTIONS?





Thank You



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UNIVERSITY OF
ARKANSAS

Sexuality Education and
Consent Studies lab

