

New Survey on Campus Sexual Assault Finds ‘Deeply Disturbing’ Results

Published on Tuesday, September 22, 2015 by [Common Dreams](#) by [Nadia Prupis, staff writer](#)

More than a quarter of female undergraduate students from 27 schools experienced some form of sexual assault or misconduct on campus during their four years at college, according to a new [survey](#) by the Association of American Universities (AAU) released Monday.

AAU sent surveys to all 26 of its member schools, plus Dartmouth College, making it one of the biggest studies ever conducted on campus sexual violence. Out of 150,000 students polled, 27.2 percent of undergraduate women and five percent of undergraduate men at the country’s top universities said they had been victims of non-consensual sexual contact—ranging from touching to penetration, occurring either by force or incapacitation.

Nearly half of the women who responded—13.5 percent—experienced assault by penetration, attempted penetration, or oral sex.

And another 20 percent of overall respondents said sexual assault or misconduct is “very or extremely problematic” on their campus.

The issue garnered renewed attention in the past year after a series of high-profile cases at schools such as the University of Wisconsin, the University of Notre Dame, and [Columbia University](#), among others, led to the formation of the first White House task force on college sexual assault, which urged schools to conduct “campus climate” surveys to [cultivate a better understanding](#) of when and how sexual assault occurs.

According to the AAU's results, the answer is often—and with near impunity. Of the students who said they had been victims of penetration or attempted penetration, only one-quarter said they told law enforcement or other authorities about their experience. A significant percentage said they chose not to report their assaults because they were “embarrassed, ashamed or that it would be too emotionally difficult” or “...did not think anything would be done about it.”

At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, 28 percent of undergraduate women and five percent of men said they had been victims of non-consensual sexual contact, with 13 percent of women also stating they had been assaulted through penetration or attempted penetration.

“This is a health and safety problem, but it is also an educational one that threatens our academic mission. More than half of women who reported experiencing a sexual assault said they suffered academically as well as personally,” said UW chancellor Rebecca Blank.

The new survey bolsters previous studies that have returned similar results. In June, a poll conducted by Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation [found](#) that 20 percent of women and five percent of men who attended a residential college were sexually assaulted during their four-year tenure.

Leaders of the schools said they would undertake serious measures to address the issue. On Monday, Yale University president Peter Salovey [told](#) the *Post* that the findings of the survey were “extremely disturbing.”

Twenty-eight percent of Yale undergrad women and eight percent of Yale undergrad men said they had been sexually assaulted on campus.

In response to the findings, Harvard University president Drew Gilpin Faust said in a letter to the school's community, “These deeply disturbing survey results must spur us to an

even more intent focus on the problem of sexual assault. That means not just how we talk to one another about it, not just what we say in official pronouncements, but how we actually treat one another and live our lives together.”

Added University of Texas at Austin president Gregory L. Fenves, “One sexual assault is too many.”

“It is essential that we foster a campus that does not tolerate sexual assaults while strongly encouraging victims to come forward and report incidents.”

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