

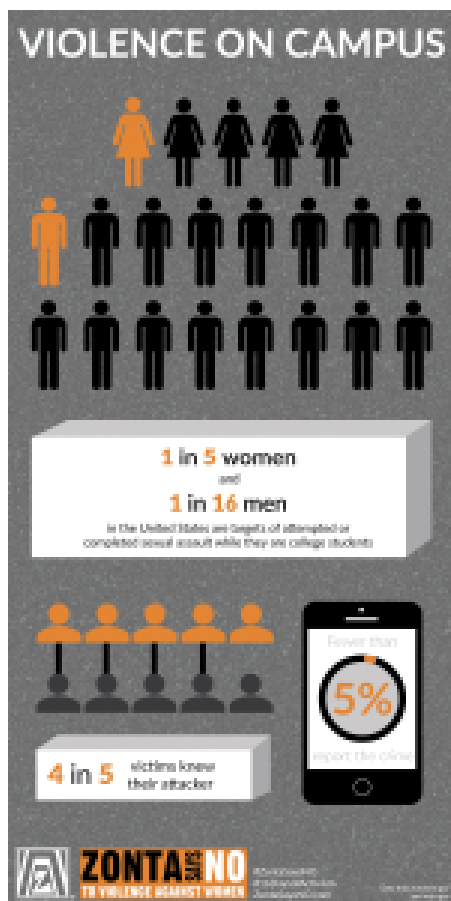


16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Day 10

Eradicate Sexual Assault on College Campuses

Rape and other forms of sexual assault are prevalent on college campuses across the U.S. The American Civil Liberties Union estimates that at least 95% of campus rapes in the U.S. go unreported. This statistic reflects a dire need for increased campus prevention and support systems at our nation's colleges and universities. National Sexual Violence Resource Center ("NSVRC") reports that one in five women will be sexually assaulted in college, as well as one in 20 men, and that statistics from the Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network ("RAINN") report about 23% of college women and 5% of college men "experience rape or sexual assault through physical force, violence, or incapacitation," as have 21% of transgender or gender nonconforming students. The idea that 89% of the about 11,000 campuses included in the report *actually* had no rapes or sexual assaults is ridiculous, and that fact isn't lost on the researchers who collected the data. The researchers say that these numbers "indicate that the annual statistics collected by colleges and universities still do not tell the full story of sexual violence on campus," and that the schools that reported no sexual assaults "have work to do." The stats come from colleges reporting crime data as per the Clery Act, which requires colleges and universities to "provide transparency around campus crime policy and statistics."

Since 2015, there has been more awareness regarding violence on college campuses. The documentary, *The Hunting Ground*, emphasized the issues women who are assaulted face. Women who are sexually assaulted may face health problems that include depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. But they may also have trouble reporting the assault or getting help they are entitled to from the school. Women may also see the person who harmed them regularly in classes, dorms, or other places on campus, which can make it harder to recover from the assault. One study found that among rape survivors who stayed on campus, nearly one in three had academic problems and more than one in five considered leaving school.



Knowing how pervasive rape culture can be on college campuses, it is clear that many schools do not have necessary methods in place for survivors to feel safe reporting their assaults. In fact, the schools that *do* report sexual violence on campus are likely safer for students, because it indicates previous students have felt safe going to campus officials for help. "The extraordinarily high number of zeros suggests some students continue to feel uncomfortable coming forward to report such incidents at some schools," the researchers said in the study. "This should be a cause for concern for colleges and universities. Schools must take an honest look at their processes: Do they facilitate accurate data collection, welcome reporting, provide resources and training to support survivors, and disclose statistics correctly? If not, reforms must be made." Despite under reporting, the statistics are clear that at least 23% of women will be sexually assaulted during their time at college, and 90% of campus sexual assaults are committed by perpetrators that the survivor knows. Studies also indicate that 84% of female survivors report being sexually assaulted during their first four semesters on campus. Disturbingly, the majority of undetected college rapists are likely serial perpetrators, committing an average of 6 rapes each. In addition to sexual assault, 13% of women report being stalked during their time in college, and 43% of dating college women report experiencing violent and abusive dating behaviors including physical, sexual, technology-facilitated, verbal or other forms of controlling abuse.

REPORTING

Less than 12% of college student survivors report the assault to police. Notably, only 7% of survivors of incapacitated sexual assault report to the police. Survivors cite a number of reasons for not reporting: not wanting others to know; lack of proof; fear of retaliation; being unsure of whether what happened constitutes assault; did not know how to report; and fear of being treated poorly by the criminal justice system.

- Of those victims who have called the police, 2 in 3 were afraid to call the police in the future.
- Only 1 in 5 victims actually felt safer after calling the police, and 1 in 3 victims felt less safe.
- Of victims who have called the police, nearly half felt police discriminated against them.
- Of victims who have called the police, 1 in 4 report being arrested or threatened with arrest.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM RESPONSES

- For every 100 rapes committed, approximately two rapists will ever serve a day in prison.
- A plurality of law enforcement officers believe rape myths, which refer to the stereotypical and empirically incorrect beliefs that an individual holds concerning rape, rapists, and the victims of rape. Some examples of rape myths include: only bad girls get raped, “women ask for it,” and women “cry rape” only when they’ve been jilted or have something to cover up.
- Approximately 40% of all assaults that result in a police investigation are prosecuted. Prosecutors were more inclined to prosecute if the suspect had a criminal record; if there was physical evidence; and if there were no questions about the survivor’s character/behavior during the assault.

HEALTH EFFECTS OF VIOLENCE

- 34% of college student survivors have experienced Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.
- 33% of college student survivors have experienced depression.
- Drug or alcohol abuse (often used by survivors to self-medicate) was reported by 40% of college student survivors as opposed to 17% of the general college population.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS

- There are few student survivor-specific estimates of the costs of violence. The White House noted that for rape survivors, studies found that costs ranged from \$87,000 to \$240,776 per rape. These costs include medical treatment, counseling, and harder to quantify impacts on quality of life.
- For student survivors, costs can also include tutoring, lost tuition, and accrued student loan interest if they take a leave of absence.

SOCIAL CONTRIBUTORS TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE

- Minimization – society does not understand the gravity because of under-reporting.
- Trivialization – people are unaware that they know a rape victim.
- Victim blaming – What Were You Wearing? Installation.
- Pressure to be “macho.” Depicts men as aggressive and predatory and women as passive prey.
- Male socialization – right of passage; treating women sex objects.
- Male misperceptions: media implying that sex is focus of life can lead to men thinking women mean “yes” when they say “no.”
- Situational factors: dates where men make all decisions and have all control are more likely to end in an aggressive sex scenario.

We need to demand that all law enforcement personnel who deal with rape victims obtain proper training and dispel rape myths. Society must stop victim blaming and demand respect for all victims. Laws must be enforced, and perpetrators must be held accountable. Take action now.

