



Women and Relationship Violence

February 2002

Purpose

This survey dealt with relationship violence issues for women. One goal was to determine the proportion of students who personally experienced relationship violence. Another goal was to look at specific behaviors defining stalking, relationship violence, and sexual assault situations.

Implications/Highlights

Approximately one-tenth of the respondents said they had personally experienced stalking, relationship violence, and sexual assault; nearly two-thirds (65%) reported being the victim of one or more specific 'coercing' behaviors.

Participation Rate

Total Survey Response: N = 1569

Phone: N = 723 of 1227 contacted (61%)

Web: N = 846 of 2050 email invitations (41%)

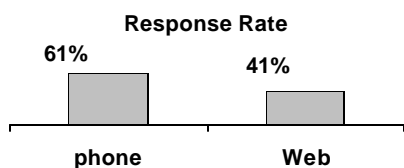


Figure 1. Participation rate

Findings

Half the students (52%) thought sexual assault was a serious problem on campus; fewer thought relationship violence (27%) and stalking (12%) were acute concerns.

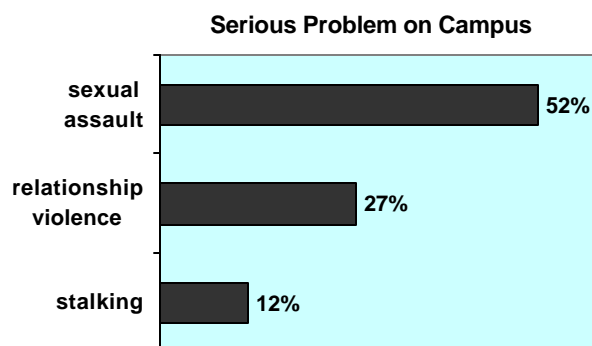


Figure 2. More students thought sexual assault was a serious campus problem than those who thought relationship violence or stalking were critical concerns

*Statistically significant at the .05 level

Ten percent of the respondents said they had personally experienced sexual assault ; 12% said they had been stalked and 9% said they had encountered relationship violence.

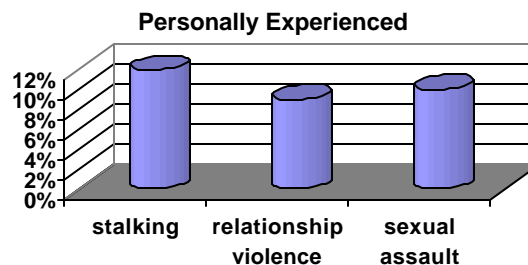


Figure 3. Approximately one-tenth of the respondents had personal experiences with stalking, relationship violence, or sexual assault

Students reported that these experiences impacted them academically and personally.

Impact of Encounters

12%	missed classes
13%	got lower grades
1%	deferred a grade
5%	dropped a class
9%	considered leaving school
29%	changed their daily routine

Individual students elaborated on how they changed their daily routine or activities.

- took a different route to class/work
- ate at a different commons
- stopped partying with certain people
- quit working
- looked down hallways and sidewalks
- didn't want to leave my room
- stopped answering phone/door
- no more extra curricular activities
- came to class late/left class early
- depressed/sleep a lot
- switched class sections
- became preoccupied with threat
- refuse to go anywhere alone
- lost interest in hobbies, friends, family, school
- think ahead and avoid places he may be
- became focused on my own self-worth
- think all guys have hidden motives
- started taking medication

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Student Affairs

Students were asked how often since coming to college they had encountered specific experiences related to stalking, relationship violence, and sexual assault.

Stalking

One-fourth reported having been followed (26%) and having received unwanted personal email notes (26%.) Almost half (47%) said they had been pursued by someone they had tried to discourage, 20% had been frightened by an unwelcome person showing up at their residence, classroom, or workplace, and 6% received unwanted personal gifts.

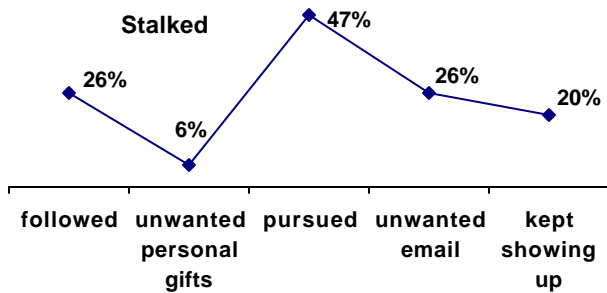


Figure 4. Students reported being stalked

Relationship Violence

Students reported fewer relationship violence behaviors on the part of someone with whom they were involved.

- 35% consistently verbally belittled
- 13% pushed or shoved
- 11% verbally threatened
- 4% slapped or punched
- 1% kicked
- 1% confronted with a weapon used to coerce

Sexual Assault

Students were asked how often since they started at Penn State someone pressured them to have sexual interactions.

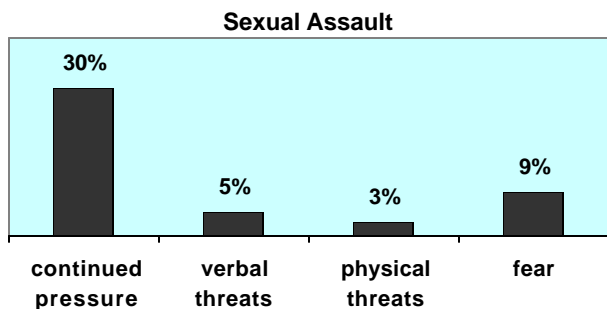


Figure 5. Respondents reported facing continued pestering, fear, verbal and physical threats in an attempt to pressure them to have sexual interactions

Fewer first year students than sophomores, juniors, or seniors indicated being pressured to have sex. *

More of those who responded over the Web than over the phone said they had been pressured to have sex. *

Individual students further elaborated on pressures to have sex.

- being groped at parties
- raped while passed out/stoned
- pressure to drink more
- held me down
- said sex or no future relationship
- put something in my drink
- begging
- trying to make me feel guilty for refusing

Most of the stalking, relationship violence, and sexual assault behaviors were initiated by boyfriends (26%) or acquaintances (26%.) Undergraduates were more likely than graduate students to report their boyfriends initiated these actions.*

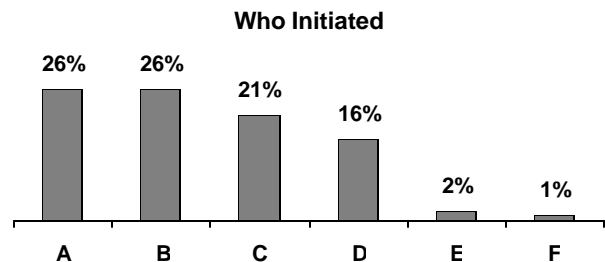


Figure 6. Most of the relationship violence behaviors were initiated by boyfriends and acquaintances

- A boyfriends
- B acquaintances
- C strangers
- D friends
- E family/roommates
- F teachers/spouses

One-fourth (27%) of those who encountered stalking, relationship violence, or sexual assault discussed their experiences with no one; few went for professional help on campus [counselors 4%, health services 2%, judicial affairs 1%, or women’s center 1%] or in the community [police 4% or women’s resource center 1%.]

Students reported that worry about retaliation was a major reason they hesitated to seek help or discuss their situations. Minority students were more likely than non-minority students to fear their family might find out. *

Obstacles to Seeking Help

41%	worry about retaliation
40%	fear of being labeled
38%	fear family would find out
31%	concern about being taken seriously
30%	unaware of resources
24%	prior bad experience
15%	fear of police in general

Individual students did discuss their experiences with:

- friends or roommates
- RAs and other residence life staff
- family
- co-workers
- boyfriends
- friends who knew the perpetrator
- faculty member
- psychologist on campus

*Statistically significant at the .05 level.