



Nearly a quarter of college women say they were assaulted, survey finds

Administrations, students call for changes

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By **Matt Rocheleau**

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About 23 percent of undergraduate women said they have been the victim of sexual assault or misconduct since entering college, according to results released Monday from a major nationwide survey of 27 schools, including Harvard and six other Ivy League institutions.

The results of [the survey](#) of 150,000 students, which was commissioned by the Association of American Universities, appear to confirm prior studies suggesting that, nationally, roughly one in five or one in four women are sexually assaulted while in college.

The numbers varied widely among the schools, and some colleges decided to release campus-specific results on their own. At Harvard, the rate of sexual assaults was somewhat higher than the rate among all 27 schools, with 25.5 percent of undergraduate women surveyed saying that they had experienced “nonconsensual penetration or sexual touching involving physical force or incapacitation,” since entering college.

Harvard President Drew G. Faust called the results “deeply disturbing.”

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“Sexual assault is intolerable, and we owe it to one another to confront it openly, purposefully, and effectively,” Faust wrote in a campuswide letter Monday. “This is *our* problem.”

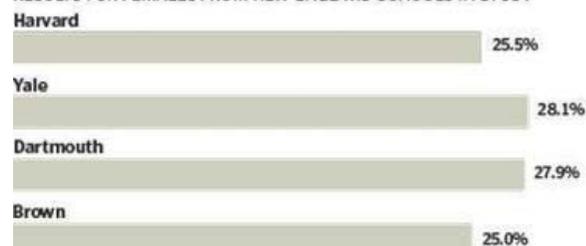
Sexual assault on campus

Percentage of undergraduates reporting sexual contact involving physical force or incapacitation since entering college:

OVERALL RESULTS FROM 27 SCHOOLS IN STUDY



RESULTS FOR FEMALES FROM NEW ENGLAND SCHOOLS IN STUDY



RESPONSE RATES: Overall study, 19.3%; Undergraduate women: Harvard, 62.8%; Yale, 61.8%; Dartmouth, 47.6%; Brown, 41.8%

SOURCE: Association of American Universities

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Opinion: Don't expect students to follow new sexual consent rules

These policies are difficult to reconcile with the realities of sexual interactions.

We-Consent dating app takes 'yes' for an answer

At [Brown](#), 25 percent of undergraduate women surveyed said they had been sexually assaulted since enrolling in college. At [Dartmouth](#), it was 27.9 percent. At [Yale](#), the figure was 28.1 percent.

Because of the variation among schools, the authors of the AAU survey cautioned that applying the overall percentage as a global standard would be “at least oversimplistic, if not misleading.” Still, the

survey is one of the largest, if not the largest, ever effort to try to estimate the prevalence of sexual violence among college students in the United States and reignited concern over how to curb sexual violence on campuses.

Like Faust, leaders at other local Ivy League schools that participated in the study sent campuswide letters Monday saying more must be done to change the culture on their campuses.

Brown President Christina Paxson urged students, faculty, and staff to help the school's efforts to address sexual violence.

"Every instance of sexual assault at Brown is an egregious violation of our community values," she wrote.

Dartmouth President Phil Hanlon said that the findings confirmed administrators' "understanding that sexual assault and harassment are significant challenges at Dartmouth and on campuses across the nation."

"We must make progress on these very serious issues of student safety and campus climate," he wrote.

Yale President Peter Salovey called the results "profoundly troubling" and said the school must "redouble" its efforts to combat sexual violence.

The AAU, which represents 62 leading public and private research universities in the United States and Canada, last fall hired research firm Westat to work with college researchers and administrators to design and implement the survey, which was administered at the end of this past spring semester. All the participating schools except Dartmouth are AAU members.

Previous surveys, including federally funded studies in 2000 and 2007, have involved just several thousand students. A few colleges, including MIT and Rutgers, have also surveyed their own students on the topic.

Those studies have found similar assault rates as the AAU study — between 17 and 20 percent of undergraduate women saying they had been assaulted while in college, though some of the studies' methodology and the definitions used in them, differ.

Until recently, many schools had been hesitant to conduct such surveys. But, amid heightened concern over rising reports of campus assaults, colleges have been urged by advocates, members of Congress, and the White House to poll their students anonymously because victims are more likely to reveal that they were assaulted if they do not have to identify themselves.

And, as the surveys have found, the majority of sexual assaults are never reported to authorities.

The AAU survey found that the crime was reported to either campus officials or law enforcement just five to 28 percent of the time, depending on the specific type of behavior.

Of the more than 779,000 targeted by the survey, 19.3 percent responded, a rate that the study's authors noted could mean that the results might be somewhat skewed, though not necessarily.

“The leaders of our universities are deeply concerned about the impact of these issues on their students,” AAU President Hunter Rawlings said in a statement. “Their participation in this and other climate surveys is an important part of their efforts to combat sexual assault.”

Sexual assault on campus

Percentage of women undergraduates reporting sexual contact involving physical force or incapacitation since entering college.

College	%
University of Michigan	30.3
University of Southern California	29.7
Yale University	28.1
Dartmouth College	27.9
The University of Wisconsin-Madison	27.6
University of Missouri-Columbia	27.2
University of Pennsylvania	27.2
Harvard University	25.5
Brown University	25
Michigan State University	24.8
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	24.3
University of Oregon	24.2

The Ohio State University	24
University of Virginia	23.8
University of Minnesota, Twin Cities	23.5
Average of all 27 colleges	23.1
Columbia University	22.7
Cornell University	22.6
Washington University in St. Louis	22.6
The University of Arizona	22.1
Purdue University	21.9
University of Pittsburgh	21
University of Florida	20.3
Case Western Reserve University	20
Iowa State University	19.3
The University of Texas at Austin	18.5
Texas A&M University	14.8
California Institute of Technology	12.7

SOURCE: Association of American Universities

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