

# HSU's Safer Campus Survey Results

---

In October 2012, Humboldt State University's Sexual Assault Prevention Committee (SAPC) launched a three year Department of Justice grant-funded project to prevent and respond to sexual assault, intimate partner violence and stalking at HSU. One of our first priorities was to design and implement a survey on students' experiences of these forms of violence. In Fall 2013, all HSU students were invited to take the survey, and 1629 students completed it, resulting in a 20% response rate.

## Interpretation of the Data

While the response rate was very high, it is important to remember that response bias is expected in any voluntary survey. We cannot determine whether survivors of these forms of violence were more or less likely to participate in the survey, and thus we cannot deduce that the percentages reported in the survey are representative of the campus community as a whole, nor can we compare these percentages to studies from other campuses or national averages. While the results are not generalizable, they offer extremely valuable information about the scope and types of violence experienced by the respondents, and they highlight the unfortunate reality that sexual assault, intimate partner violence and stalking are serious issues at HSU.

*Not Alone*, the White House Task Force report on sexual assault on college campuses, states, "When a school tries to tackle the problem – by acknowledging it, drawing attention to it, and encouraging survivors to report – it can start to look like a dangerous place. On the flip side, when a school ignores the problem or discourages reporting (either actively or by treating survivors without care), it can look safer.... Schools have to get credit for being honest – and for finding out what's really happening on campus....[A] school that is willing to get an accurate assessment of sexual assault on its campus is one that's taking the problem – and the solution – seriously."

The results of this survey offer important points for reflection and action in our community:

- 1) they make visible students' experiences of sexual assault, intimate partner violence and stalking;
- 2) they enable the campus to more effectively prevent and respond to these forms of violence; and
- 3) they provide the SAPC with a baseline for evaluating our efforts to prevent and respond to violence in our campus community.

## Methodology

Mary Sue Savage, the Prevention Coordinator for the DOJ grant, worked with other campus and community members of the Sexual Assault Prevention Committee to review existing college survey instruments and to design a survey for HSU students. Gay Hilton and Michael Le in Institutional Research designed a process for ensuring anonymity for respondents. An invitation to take an anonymous online survey was sent to all students who were at least 18 years of age and enrolled at Humboldt State University in Fall of 2013 (census).

## Key findings

Most incidents of violence reported in this survey were caused by acquaintances, friends, and/or partners in a relationship, and the majority of these incidents were not reported to the police or campus officials. Our data shows large disparities between women's and men's experiences of harm, and we also highlight harm experienced by trans\* students and students who chose not to identify their gender.<sup>1</sup> While the number of respondents changed from question to question, roughly 1,108 women, 510 men, and 51 trans\* students, as well as 17 students who did not specify their gender identity, participated in the survey.

**Please note that this report contains explicit descriptions of violence.**

---

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this report the category women refers to cisgender women (women who were assigned female/ the feminine gender at birth) and cisgender men (men who were assigned male/ the masculine gender at birth). The category trans\* includes trans/transgender men, trans/transgender women, as well as those who identify as gender queer or otherwise outside the binary categories of men/women.

## Sexual Assault

22% of women, 11% of men, and 28% of trans\* students surveyed, as well as 33% of students who did not specify their gender, reported experiences of sexual assault.

- 99 students (87 women; 5 men, 5 trans\*, 2 unspecified) reported penetration without consent;
- 36 students (22 women; 11 men; 3 trans\*) reported oral contact with genitals without consent;
- 187 students (148 women; 34 men; 4 trans\*, 1 unspecified) reported someone committed sexual acts upon them while they were drunk, drugged, passed out or asleep.

Among first year student respondents, 22 women, 4 men, and 1 trans\* student experienced a sexual assault incident in their first 2-3 months at HSU.

## Intimate partner violence

26% of women, 18% of men, and 43% of trans\* students surveyed, as well as 53% of students who did not specify their gender, reported experiences and dynamics commonly found within intimate partner violence.

- 26 students (25 women, 1 man) reported being choked or strangled;
- 26 students (14 women, 9 men, 2 trans\*, 1 unspecified) reported being kicked, bit, burned or hit;
- 97 students (74 women, 14 men, 8 trans\*, 1 unspecified) reported that their partners made threats to physically harm them or someone they love;
- 87 students (69 women, 13 men, 4 trans\*, 1 unspecified) reported their partner made them have sex when they did not want to;
- 167 students (117 women, 37 men, 10 trans\*, 3 unspecified) reported their partner kept track of them and demanded to know where they were.
- Additional reports of harm include: pushing, slapping, shoving; insults and put downs; controlling budget, clothing, friends; keeping someone from leaving a space; destroying things; using a weapon against them.

## Stalking

21% of women, 8% of men, and 32% of trans\* students surveyed, as well as 35% of students who did not specify their gender, reported experiencing stalking while at HSU.

- 103 students (80 women, 14 men, 7 trans\*, 2 unspecified) reported that someone repeatedly followed them;
- 72 students (54 women, 11 men, 4 trans\*, 3 unspecified) reported that someone tracked or monitored their location or actions;
- 205 students (167 women, 26 men, 9 trans\*, 3 unspecified) reported that someone engaged in repeated, unwanted communication (written, email, social media, texting, including hacking into personal sites, and leaving unwanted gifts).

## Sexual Harassment

46% women, 16% men, and 63% trans\* students surveyed, as well as 53% of students who did not specify their gender, reported experiencing sexual harassment while at HSU.

Forms of harm included: kissing and touching without consent; whistles and cat calls; inappropriate questions about their sexual life; unwanted sexual phone calls, texts or social media posts; unwanted exposure of genitals, masturbation, sexual motions or gestures.

This project was partially supported by Grant No. 2012-WA-AX-0004 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusion, and recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.