

Researchers find campus sexual violence significantly affects academics

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Sexual assault on a college campus can cause a considerable number of physical and emotional issues for the victim. While much needed programs, and past studies, have predominately focused on the mental health effects of such violent acts on students, new research by the University of New Hampshire shows that aggressive sexual acts can also adversely impact school work and overall college experience.

"We know from counselors and advocates that school work suffers for these students, but there hasn't been a large body of research that helps support and sustain the important programs on campus to help these victims," said Victoria Banyard, a professor of psychology and part of the Prevention Innovations Research Center at UNH, as well as the study's lead author. "When it comes to discussions about helping address specific issues for these students, there is much more research about services that help victims with emotional stressors than research to document academic ones."

The study, recently published in the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, found students who experienced [sexual violence](#) on campus had significantly lower academic efficacy, higher stress, lower institutional commitment, and lower scholastic conscientiousness than other students.

Researchers used questionnaires to survey 6,482 students (men and women) from eight universities in New England. They identified stressors around four areas of sexual [violence](#); unwanted sexual contact, unwanted sexual intercourse, [intimate partner violence](#), and stalking. The

study measured four academic outcomes that are important for college success and that might be impacted by sexual violence including academic efficacy, collegiate stress, institutional commitment, and scholastic conscientiousness. Overall, there were significant findings for three of the four forms of victimization, across all four of the academic measures.

Past studies show approximately 19 to 25 percent of women will experience attempted or complete rape while enrolled in college and approximately 20 to 50 percent of students will experience intimate partner violence during their college years. Sexually victimized students, before or during [college](#), are more likely to drop classes, change residences and have lower GPAs. Because of that, universities are increasingly being confronted with the question of how to attend to the needs of these students.

"We hope this study will better help universities and counselors devote resources to programs that will help victims physically, mentally, and also academically," said Ellen Cohn, professor of psychology and co-author of the study. "Universities strive to offer a higher education to their students and when violence like this happens, it affects their overall mission."

More information: Victoria L. Banyard et al. Academic Correlates of Unwanted Sexual Contact, Intercourse, Stalking, and Intimate Partner Violence: An Understudied but Important Consequence for College Students, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* (2017). [DOI: 10.1177/0886260517715022](https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260517715022)

Provided by University of New Hampshire

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