



# Results of the Rutgers University - New Brunswick

**#iSPEAK**

## Campus Climate Assessment: Results for graduate students

---

Rita C. Seabrook, PhD

Julia O'Connor, MSW, MPH

Julia Cusano, MSW

Sarah McMahon, PhD, *Principal Investigator*

---

APRIL 2019

VAWC@SSW.RUTGERS.EDU | 848-932-4390

In 2018 all Rutgers University–New Brunswick students were invited to participate in a campus climate survey to assess the prevalence of sexual and dating violence among students, as well as students’ perceptions of the university, knowledge of resources related to sexual and dating violence, and disclosure (or non-disclosure) of incidents of sexual and dating violence.<sup>1</sup> The following report presents results on **victimization and awareness of resources for graduate students**.<sup>2</sup> The report is based on data from 5,911 survey respondents (15% graduate women, 6% graduate men, 54% undergraduate women, and 25% undergraduate men).

**Key Findings:**

- 1. Graduate students experience interpersonal violence but are less aware of resources than undergraduates.**

*Rates of sexual violence among graduate students*

Sexual violence was measured by asking students whether they had experienced six types of unwanted sexual contact since coming to Rutgers University – New Brunswick: 1) unwanted sexual contact by physical force, 2) unwanted sexual contact by coercion/threats of force, 3) attempted unwanted sexual contact by physical force, 4) attempted unwanted sexual contact by coercion/threats of force, 5) unwanted sexual contact when incapacitated that the victim is uncertain occurred and, 6) unwanted sexual contact when incapacitated that the victim is certain occurred. Students were also asked whether they had experienced any form of unwanted sexual contact before coming to Rutgers.

Rates of sexual violence for graduate students are presented in Figure 1. Nearly half of graduate women experienced sexual violence before coming to Rutgers University – New Brunswick, and 15% reported at least one experience of sexual violence since coming to Rutgers University – New Brunswick.

---

<sup>1</sup> The survey tool is based on the *Not Alone* toolkit from The White House Task Force to Protect Students From Sexual Assault (2014). Retrieved from <https://www.justice.gov/ovw/protecting-students-sexual-assault>

<sup>2</sup> A full report of the methodology and the responses to all survey questions as well as other reports on specific populations/topics are available on the Center on Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) website.

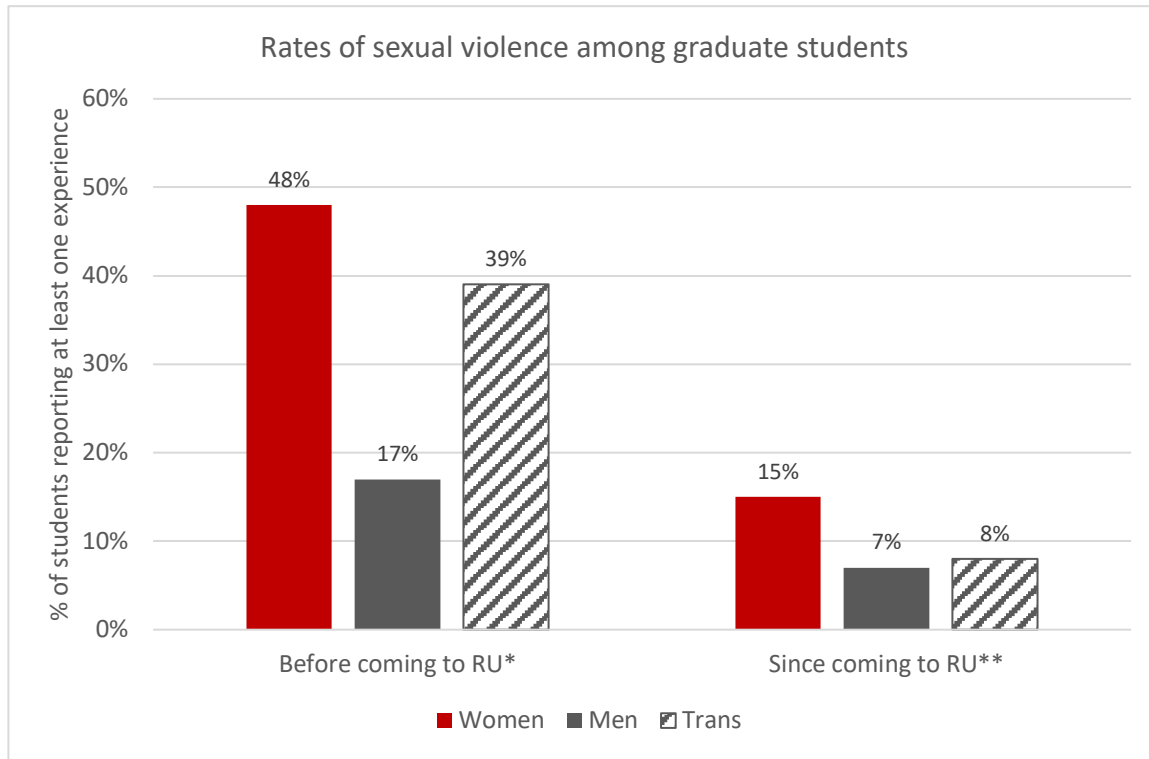


Figure 1. Rates of sexual violence among graduate students.

\*The difference by gender is significant,  $X^2(2) = 49.60, p < .001$ ; \*\*The difference by gender is significant,  $X^2(2) = 7.86, p = .02$ .

*Rates of dating violence among graduate students*

In addition to experiencing sexual violence, graduate students reported experiences with dating violence. Students were asked about four different types of dating violence experienced since coming to Rutgers University–New Brunswick: physical (e.g., pushing, shoving, or grabbing partner), psychological (e.g., saying things to hurt partner’s feelings on purpose), digital (e.g., pressuring partner to respond quickly to calls, texts, or other messages), and financial (e.g., doing things to keep partner from going to job or classes). Rates of dating violence for graduate students are presented in Figure 2.

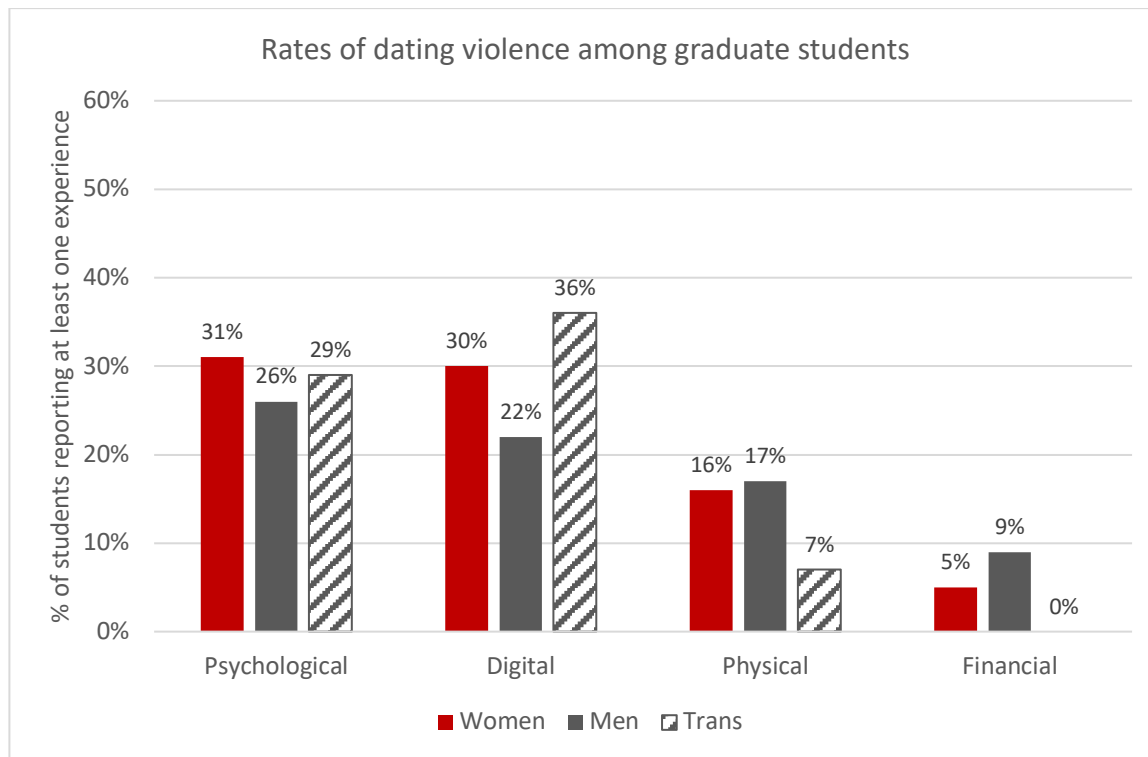


Figure 2. *Rates of dating violence among graduate students.*

Note. There were no significant gender differences in rates of dating violence for graduate students.

*Awareness of resources and knowledge about where to seek help*

Although many graduate students reported experiences with interpersonal violence either before or since arriving at Rutgers University – New Brunswick, graduate students were less aware of the resources available to them than were their undergraduate counterparts.

Figure 3 displays the average awareness for several resources on campus related to interpersonal violence. Graduate students were consistently less aware of resources than undergraduate students were.

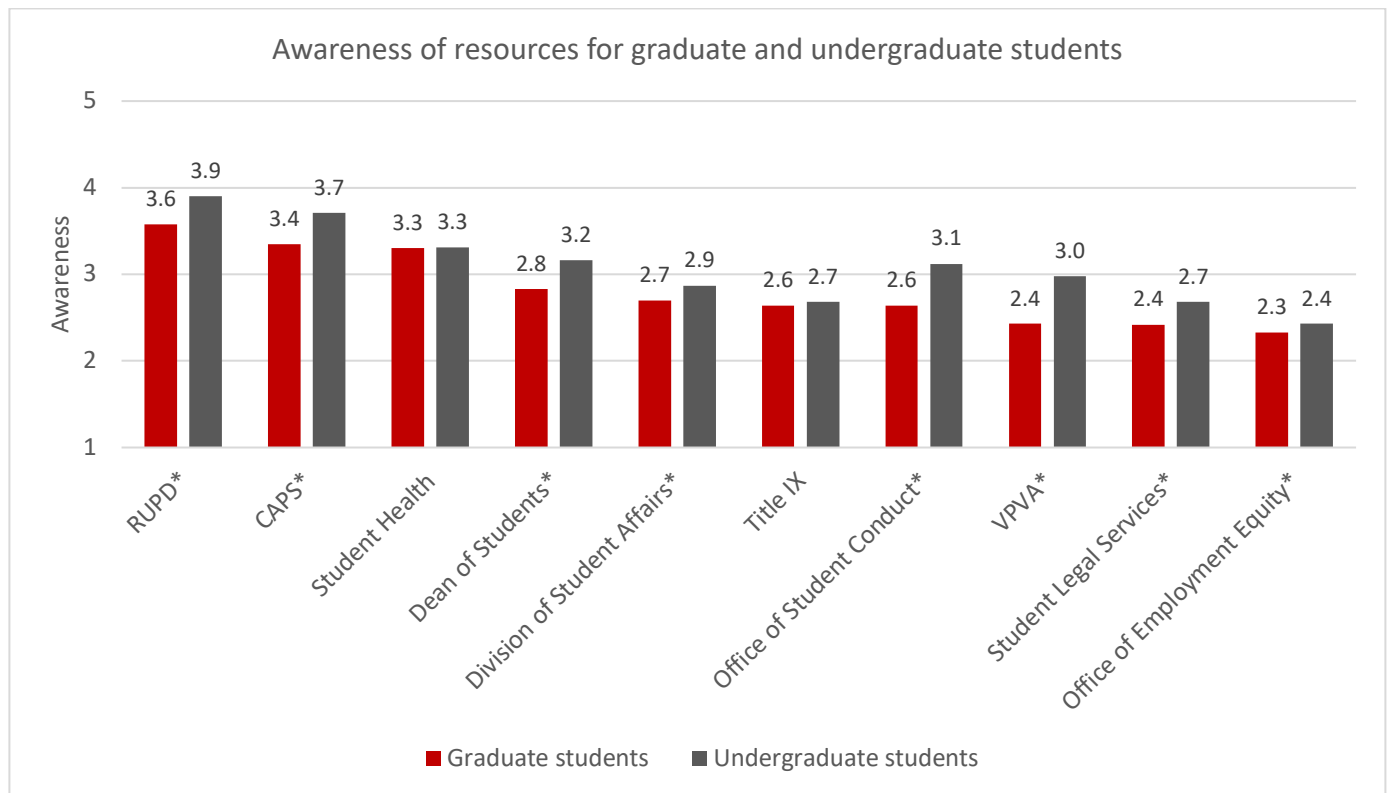


Figure 3. *Awareness of resources for graduate and undergraduate students.*

\*The difference is significant at  $p < .05$ .

In addition to having less awareness of resources than undergraduate students, graduate students were also less knowledgeable about where to seek help if they or a friend experienced interpersonal violence (see Figure 4).

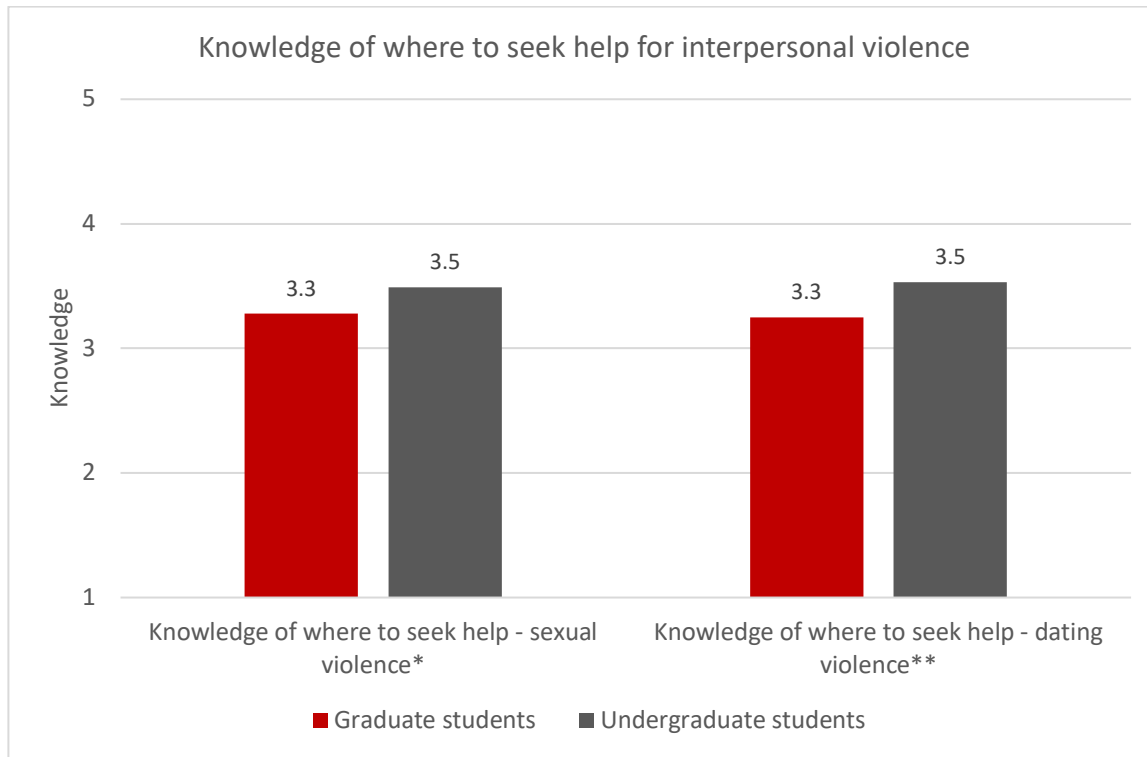


Figure 4. *Knowledge of where to seek help for interpersonal violence between graduate and undergraduate students.*

\*The difference between graduate and undergraduate students is significant,  $F(1,2739) = 15.61, p < .001$ ; \*\*The difference between graduate and undergraduate students is significant,  $F(1,2698) = 24.88, p < .001$ .

## **2. Graduate students perceive the university and fellow students similarly to undergraduate students.**

Students were asked seven questions to assess their perceptions of how the university would handle a report of sexual violence or dating violence. Students were also asked three questions to assess their perceptions of how fellow students would handle a report of sexual violence or dating violence. Scores ranged from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating more positive perceptions of the university/fellow students.

Both graduate and undergraduate students had positive perceptions of the university as demonstrated by their relatively high overall scores (the average score was nearly 4 on a 1 to 5 scale for both sexual and dating violence; see Figure 5). Both graduate and undergraduate students perceived fellow students less positively than they perceived the university, although perceptions of fellow students were still generally positive for both groups (see Figure 5).

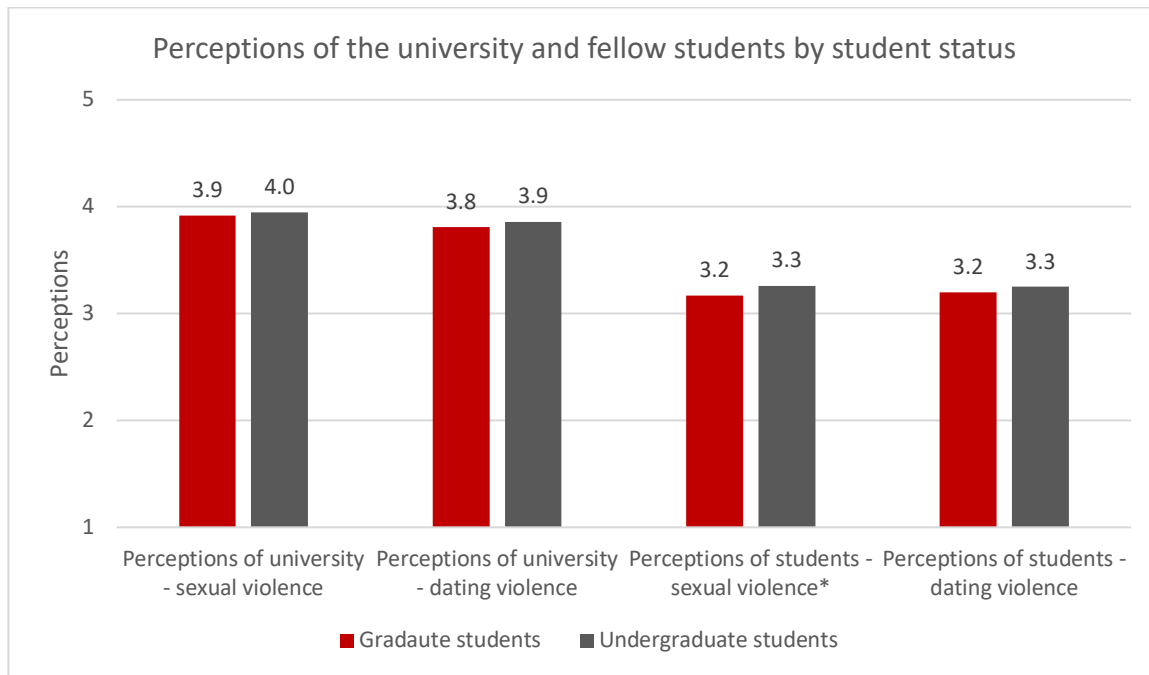


Figure 5. *Perceptions of how the university and fellow students would handle a report of sexual violence and dating violence, after accounting for victimization rates.*

\*The difference is significant,  $F(1,2766) = 4.99, p = .03$ .

### **3. Graduate students are equally as likely as undergraduate students to disclose sexual violence.**

Most students who experienced sexual violence disclosed to someone, and this was true of both graduate and undergraduate students. Specifically, 58% of graduate and 55% of undergraduate students disclosed the most serious incident of sexual violence to someone. However, among those students who did not disclose, graduate students were more likely than undergraduates to say they did not disclose because they did not know the reporting procedures on campus: 32% of graduate versus 15% of undergraduate students cited this as a reason for not disclosing sexual violence.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Conclusion**

Results of the 2018 iSPEAK survey revealed that graduate students do experience sexual and dating violence, yet are less likely to be aware of resources or to be knowledgeable about where to seek help than their undergraduate counterparts. These results suggest that outreach efforts need to be specifically tailored to graduate students.

---

<sup>3</sup>  $X^2(1) = 5.42, p = .02$



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The research team thanks the many members of the Rutgers University–New Brunswick community who contributed to the campus climate assessment project. This report and the project as a whole are the result of the enthusiastic support and participation of administrators, faculty, staff, and students across Rutgers. This report is dedicated to all those who are survivors of sexual and dating violence. We hope our efforts can help contribute to creating campus communities that are free of all forms of violence.

We would especially like to thank the following members of the Rutgers community who provided support to the project:

**Deba Dutta**, PhD, Distinguished Professor, Department of Engineering  
**Felicia McGinty**, EdD, Executive Vice Chancellor for Administration and Planning  
**Cathryn Potter**, PhD, Dean, School of Social Work

Additional thanks goes to the following Rutgers organizations, groups, and individuals:

### **2017-2018 CAMPUS CLIMATE ADVISORY BOARD**

**Loren Linscott**, MS, Director, Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance  
**Felicia McGinty**, EdD, Executive Vice Chancellor for Administration and Planning  
**Sarah McMahon**, MSW, PhD, Director, Center on Violence Against Women and Children; Associate Professor, School of Social Work  
**Jackie Moran**, JD, Director, Office of Student Affairs Compliance & Title IX  
**Judy Postmus**, PhD, Associate Director, Center on Violence Against Women and Children; Associate Dean for Faculty Development and Strategic Initiatives, School of Social Work  
**Rita C. Seabrook**, PhD, Assistant Research Professor, School of Social Work  
**Kaleigh Sosa**, MA, former Training Coordinator, Office of Student Affairs Compliance & Title IX  
**Dayna Weintraub**, PhD, Director of Research and Assessment  
**Julia Cusano**, MSW, Graduate Student, School of Social Work  
**Julia O'Connor**, MPH, MSW, Graduate Student, School of Social Work

### **RUTGERS UNIVERSITY–NEW BRUNSWICK COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND ORGANIZATIONS**

The Arts and Sciences Institutional Review Board – New Brunswick  
The Center on Violence Against Women and Children, School of Social Work, New Brunswick  
Victoria Porterfield & Jessica Brand, Office of Institutional Research and Academic Planning

### **RESEARCH SUPPORT**

Jessica Burnham, Mariel Didato, Lydia Gracey, Simone Snyder, and all the students and staff who provided assistance