

## INTRODUCTION

The issue of interpersonal violence has gained growing attention as a major problem at colleges and universities throughout the country. In order to address this issue, in the 2014-2015 academic year, Rutgers University–New Brunswick administered a campus climate survey, iSPEAK, as part of a comprehensive assessment process to examine students’ experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors related to sexual violence. *A follow-up survey was conducted in 2018, which is the basis for this report.*<sup>1</sup> Many of the same questions asked in 2014-2015 are included in the current survey (for more information on the survey tool and background, [click here](#)). A dating violence module was added to the 2018 version to assess students’ experiences, perceptions, and beliefs regarding dating violence at the university.

The following report presents results specific to students who live off-campus, as initial analyses reveal that certain students who are less connected to campus have even less awareness of resources (e.g., commuter students). More specifically, the report examines off-campus students’ responses related to victimization, awareness of resources, perceptions of the university response and peers’ response to interpersonal violence, and rates of sexual and dating violence disclosure compared to their on-campus counterparts.<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this report, the term ‘interpersonal violence’ is used to describe various forms of abuse, violence, and harm experienced by our students. The two main types measured in this survey include sexual violence (any form of unwanted, unwelcome, forceful or coercive sexual contact) and dating violence (a pattern of controlling or coercive behavior by one individual to maintain power and control over another in an intimate relationship; it can be physical, sexual, economic, technological, or emotional).<sup>3</sup>

## METHODS

All students enrolled at Rutgers–New Brunswick during the spring semester of 2018 were invited to participate in the iSPEAK survey. Students were notified about the survey through a range of outreach measures, including direct e-mails, a social media campaign, and informational tables in dining halls and **libraries**. The iSPEAK survey opened on April 4, 2018 and closed on May 7, 2018. Participants were recruited over email and were entered into raffles to receive several cash prizes.

The iSPEAK survey was based on the tool provided by the White House Task Force To Protect Students From Sexual Assault (2014) and contained six sections: 1) basic demographics (e.g., gender identity, place of residence on campus); 2) victimization; 3) perceptions of the university response and fellow students’ response to sexual violence; 4) knowledge of what to do in the event of sexual/dating violence; 5) exposure to information about sexual or dating violence before coming to Rutgers and since coming to Rutgers, and awareness of resources on campus; and, 6) bystander intentions.

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<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> Students were considered as living off-campus if they reported living in an off-campus apartment/home alone, with a roommate, or with family.

<sup>3</sup> Definition and typology of violence. (2020, March 19). Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance (VPVA). <http://vpva.rutgers.edu/sexual-violence/>



Surveys were administered by Rutgers University's Office of Institutional Research in order to match student IDs to their administrative records. A total of 7,248 out of 42,317 eligible students (17.1%) accessed the survey. Institutional Research removed 157 responses from students who declined informed consent, 102 students who were under 18 years old, and 62 cases with duplicate student IDs. The official response rate was 14.2% (6,025 out of 42,317 eligible students).

All identifying information was removed before Institutional Research turned over the data to the research team. The research team removed another 114 participants who did not respond to the survey questions. The final analytic sample was 5,911 (14.0% of the eligible student population).

In order to reduce response burden, all participants were randomized to complete either the dating violence module or the sexual violence module. Of the 5,911 participants in the basic analytic sample, 2,976 (50.3%) completed the dating violence module and 2,935 (49.7%) completed the sexual violence module. The following report is based on data from all 5,911 participants, of which, 4,694 students indicated that they live in an off-campus apartment or house and 2,836 indicated that they live on-campus in a Rutgers residence hall, on-campus apartment, or official lettered Greek house. Additional demographic information about the sample is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Participant Demographics**

	All (n=5911)		On-campus residents (n=1217)		Off-campus residents (n=4694)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
<b>Gender Identity</b>						
Man	1804	31	917	33	887	29
Woman	4004	68	1879	66	2122	69
Transgender Man	15	<1	6	<1	9	<1
Transgender Woman	-	-	-	-	-	<1
Non-Binary	72	1	28	1	44	1
Another	11	<1	-	-	8	<1
<i>Missing</i>	3	<1	-	-	-	-
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>						
Black	433	7	265	9	168	5
Asian	1910	32	1038	37	870	28
White	2464	42	1028	36	1435	47
LatinX	779	13	370	13	409	13
Another	294	5	113	4	181	6
<i>Missing</i>	31	<1	22	<1	8	<1

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Note: a dash (-) indicates a cell size of less than 5.

**Key Findings:**

- 1. Compared to their on-campus counterparts, off-campus Rutgers–New Brunswick residents experience similar rates of interpersonal violence but are less aware of resources.**

*Rates of sexual violence among off-campus residents*

Sexual violence was measured using six types of unwanted sexual contact both before and after coming to Rutgers–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. Rates of sexual violence for off-campus and on-campus student residents are presented in Figure 1.

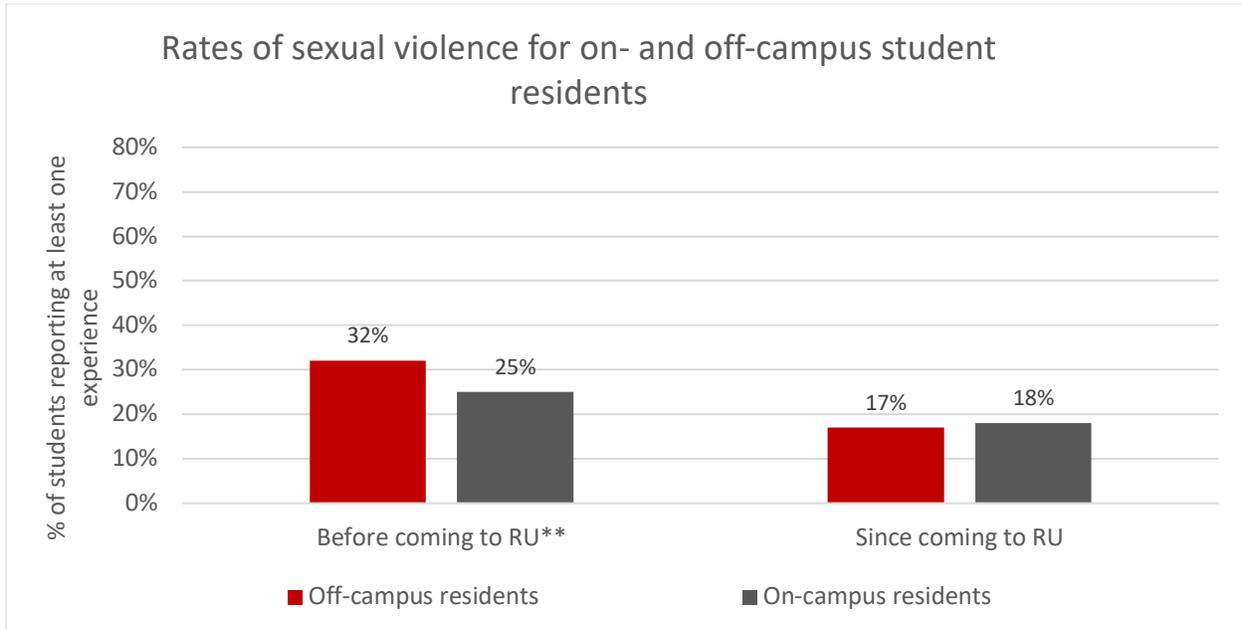


Figure 1. Rates of sexual violence for on- and off-campus student residents

\*\*Sexual violence before coming to Rutgers was significantly different based on students' residence,  $\chi^2(2) = 19.47$ .  $p < 0.001$

About one-third of off-campus residents (32%) experienced sexual violence before coming to Rutgers, compared to 25% of on-campus residents. When examining rates of previous sexual violence among off-campus women residents, 39% of off-campus women experienced sexual violence before coming to Rutgers, compared to approximately 32% of on-campus women.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, approximately 17-18% of students, regardless of residence, experienced at least one attempted or completed act of sexual violence since coming to Rutgers–New Brunswick. For women students, 24% of on-campus residents report an experience of sexual violence since coming to campus compared to about 21% of off-campus women.

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<sup>4</sup> Sexual violence prior to coming to Rutgers was significantly different based on students' residence when looking at women students,  $\chi^2(2) = 13.27$ .  $p < 0.001$



*Rates of dating violence among off-campus residents*

Additionally, students who reported ever having been in a romantic relationship (70% of all students sampled) were asked how frequently they had experienced 52 different unhealthy dating behaviors since coming to Rutgers–New Brunswick. A legal expert reviewed each behavior to determine whether it met the criteria of a violation of the student code of conduct and/or a Title IX violation. Some behaviors met this criteria if they happened at least once (e.g., my partner kicked me) whereas others required a pattern of abuse (e.g., my partner damaged something that belonged to me).<sup>5</sup> These 52 behaviors were then collapsed into four general categories of dating abuse: 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).

Off-campus residents were equally as likely as on-campus residents to report experiencing at least one incident of all four types of dating violence since coming to campus, and this is true when examining differences between on and off-campus women residents as well.

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

Although many off-campus residents reported experiences with interpersonal violence either before or since arriving at Rutgers–New Brunswick, off-campus residents were less aware of the resources available to them than their on-campus counterparts. Figure 2 displays off-campus residents’ awareness of on-campus interpersonal violence resources compared to on-campus students. Overall, both on- and off-campus residents have only an average awareness of on-campus resources regarding interpersonal violence. However, off-campus residents have significantly lower awareness of both the Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance (VPVA) and Title IX compared to on-campus residents.

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<sup>5</sup> For a complete list of the 52 items and the criteria please see the report: [Dating Violence Module](#).

Additionally, students were asked, “If I or a friend experienced dating violence or sexual violence, I know where to get help.” Compared to on-campus residents, off-campus residents were less likely to report they knew where to get help at Rutgers–New Brunswick (see Figure 2).

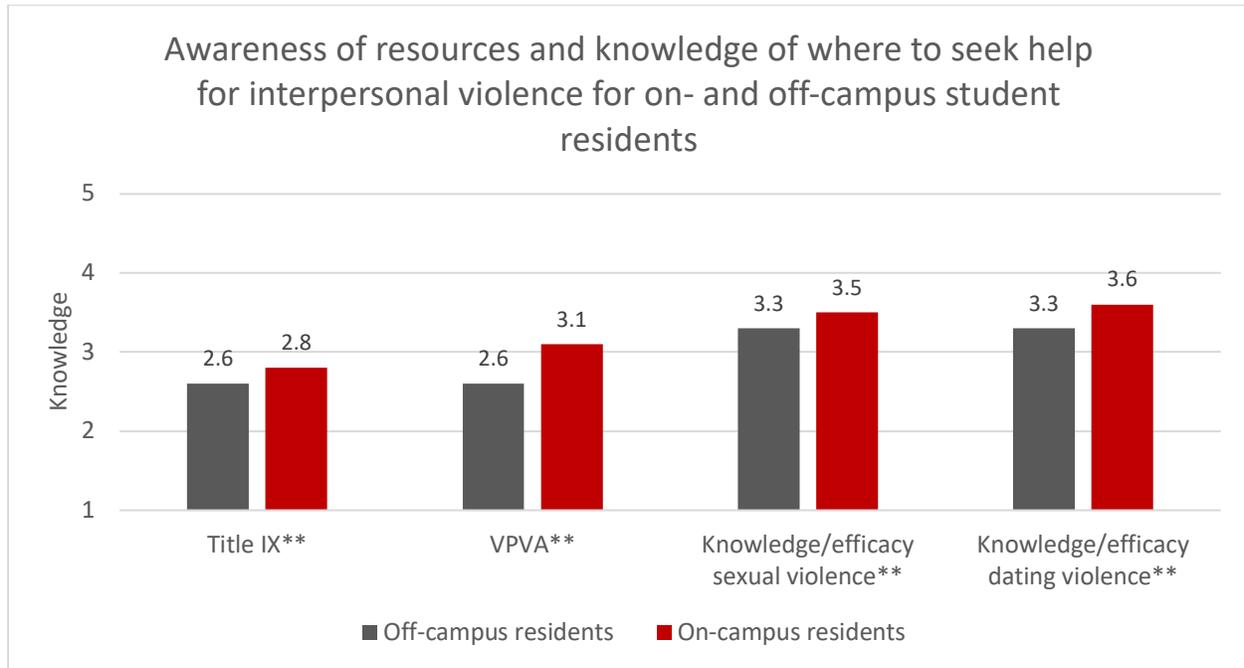


Figure 2. Knowledge of where to seek help for interpersonal violence for on- and off-campus student residents

\*\*Awareness of VPVA is significantly different based on student’ residence,  $t(1, 2631) = -8.83$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*Awareness of Title IX is significantly different based on student’ residence,  $t(1, 2631) = -3.94$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*Knowledge/efficacy sexual violence is significantly different based on student’ residence,  $t(1, 2631) = -4.72$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*Knowledge/efficacy dating violence is significantly different based on student’ residence,  $t(1, 2631) = -6.06$ ,  $p < 0.001$

**2. Off-campus residents are equally as likely to disclose an experience of interpersonal violence as on-campus residents.**

*Disclosing sexual and dating violence*

More than half of students who experienced sexual victimization *since* coming to Rutgers University disclosed to someone regardless of residence location (61-62%). Of the students who disclosed an experience of sexual violence to someone, a large majority (more than 90%) told either a friend or a peer at Rutgers or not at Rutgers, compared to about 14% who told a counselor or therapist on campus, 13% who told the Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance, and about 5% who told a staff member at the Title IX Office.



Similarly, when examining disclosures of dating violence, off-campus residents disclosed their dating violence experiences at equal rates (38%) to on-campus residents (37%). Of the students who disclosed an experience of dating violence to someone, 75% told a either a friend or a peer at Rutgers or not at Rutgers, compared to about 13% who told a counselor or therapist on campus, less than 6% who told the Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance, and about 1% who told a staff member at the Title IX Office.

*Receiving disclosures of sexual and dating violence*

Students were asked, “Since coming to Rutgers, have any other students at Rutgers told you they were a victim of an unwanted sexual experience?” 27% of off-campus residents reported that at least one student at Rutgers disclosed an unwanted sexual experience to them, compared to 34% of on-campus residents; however, the difference becomes more prominent when looking at women students. On-campus women residents reported receiving student disclosures of sexual violence at greater rates (40%) compared to off-campus women residents (30%).<sup>6</sup>

Of those students who reported receiving at least one disclosure of sexual violence from another Rutgers student, more than 60% of off-campus residents reported that they have received two or more disclosures of sexual violence, compared to about 72% of on-campus residents who reported receiving two or more disclosures. As with sexual violence disclosures, on-campus women residents reported receiving student disclosures of dating violence at greater rates (31%) than off-campus women residents (24%).<sup>7</sup>

Students were also asked, “Since coming to Rutgers, have any other students at Rutgers told you they were a victim of dating or domestic violence?” Off-campus residents were less likely to report that at least one student at Rutgers disclosed an experience of dating violence compared to on-campus residents, with about 21% of off-campus residents receiving at least one disclosure compared to about 26% of on-campus residents reporting this. Of the students who reported receiving at least one disclosure of sexual violence from another Rutgers student, about 61% of off-campus residents reported that they have received two or more disclosures of dating violence, compared to about 65% of on-campus residents.

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<sup>6</sup> Receipt of student disclosures is significantly different based on women students’ residence,  $\chi^2(2) = 21.70$ ,  $p < 0.001$

<sup>7</sup> Receipt of student disclosures is significantly different based on women students’ residence,  $\chi^2(2) = 10.40$ ,  $p < 0.001$

**3. Overall, both on- and off-campus residents have positive perceptions of the university’s response to interpersonal violence, but less positive perceptions of their peers’ response.**

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. Perceptions of the university response are slightly more positive than the perceptions of fellow students. There are no significant differences in perceptions between on and off-campus residents.

Both on and off-campus residents 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). However, both on and off-campus residents perceived their fellow students less positively than they perceived the university, with off-campus residents perceiving their peers slightly less positively than on-campus residents in terms of perceived peer response to a report of sexual or dating violence (see Figure 4).

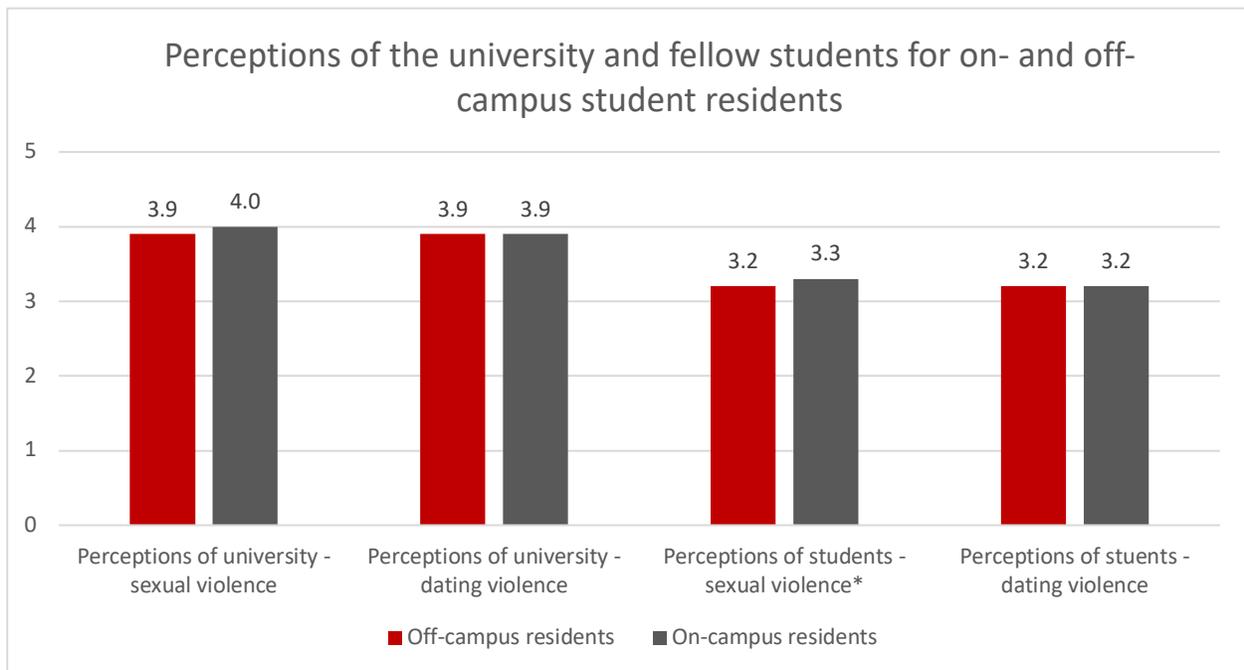


Figure 3. Perceptions of university and fellow students for on and off-campus student residents  
\*Perceptions of peer response to reports of sexual violence was significantly different based on students’ residence,  $t(1, 2631) = -1.97, p < 0.05$

## **CONCLUSION**

Results of the 2018 iSPEAK survey reveal that off-campus residents report experiences with interpersonal violence before arriving to campus at higher rates than on-campus students. They report experiences with interpersonal violence since arriving at Rutgers–New Brunswick at similar rates to on-campus students. They are less aware of the resources available to them compared to their on-campus counterparts. These results suggest that outreach efforts may need to be specifically tailored to off-campus students.

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**Sarah McMahan**, 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

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