



Evaluating the Rutgers CARES Program:

An Initiative of the Office
for Violence Prevention and
Victim Assistance at Rutgers
University, New Brunswick

Results Summary for the 2021-2022 Academic Year

Report prepared by:

Esther Bennett, MSS, LSW

Roxanna S. Ast, MSW, MSc

Principal Investigator:

Sarah McMahon, MSW PhD

RUTGERS

School of Social Work

**CENTER FOR RESEARCH
ON ENDING VIOLENCE**

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Rutgers CARES

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The Center for Research on Ending Violence (REV) at the Rutgers University School of Social Work has been conducting an extensive evaluation of a project funded by the Attorney General’s Victims of Crime Act grant (AG-VOCA). Part of this evaluation includes assessing programs and workshops offered through the office of Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance (VPVA) on New Brunswick campus. The purpose of this evaluation was to assess student knowledge, awareness, and confidence after attending the RUTGERS CARES training provided through the Rutgers University–New Brunswick’s victim services office (VPVA), in the Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 semesters. This evaluation is one of many efforts to examine the effectiveness of the programs and services implemented as part of the AG–VOCA project.

Rutgers CARES

Rutgers CARES is a workshop developed by the Rutgers University-New Brunswick Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance (VPVA).

Rutgers CARES was created by the Rutgers-New Brunswick VPVA staff and is an acronym for Creating Allies to provide Resources and Empower Survivors. The goal of the CARES program is to increase awareness and knowledge of dating and sexual violence issues, in addition to helping student peers support and informally respond to survivors of interpersonal violence at Rutgers.

The CARES program aims to increase student knowledge of the prevalence of dating and sexual violence on campus, while providing a deeper understanding of how traumatic experiences impact survivors. Along with this goal, CARES intends to prepare students to be effective peer supports for anyone experiencing interpersonal violence.

**Rutgers
CARES**

Creating
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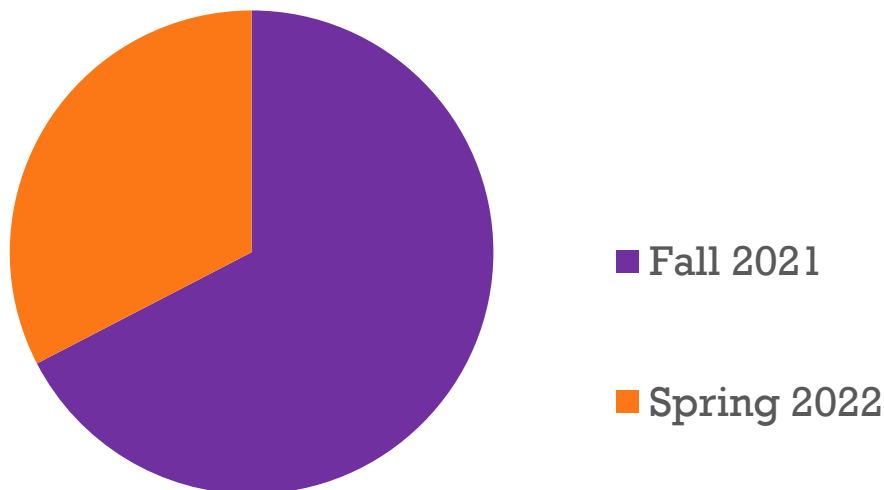
Overview

The Rutgers CARES program was evaluated with the implementation of a post-test online survey. The survey was developed based on a prior, in-depth evaluation using focus groups. The survey was administered to attendees in the Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 semesters via an online link that was emailed to all participants at the conclusion of the program. Though pre-test data was not collected, summary statistics of post-test surveys provide important insight into who attended the workshop, as well as their level of knowledge and self-efficacy for workshop topics after participation. In the following, post-test results are summarized.

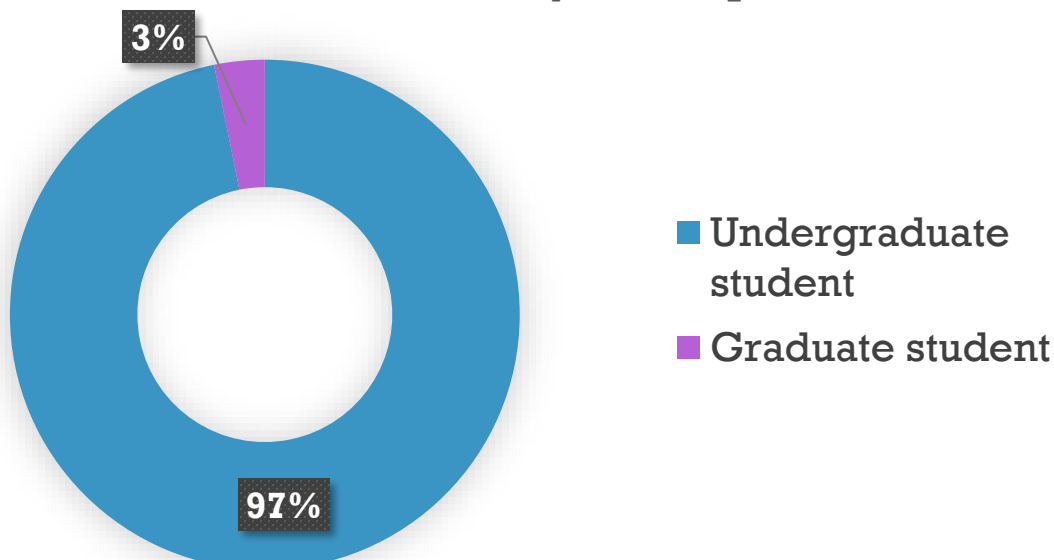
Demographics

Sample: 92 individuals completed the survey. The majority of respondents were undergraduates, while only 3% were graduate students.

Survey Participants by Semester



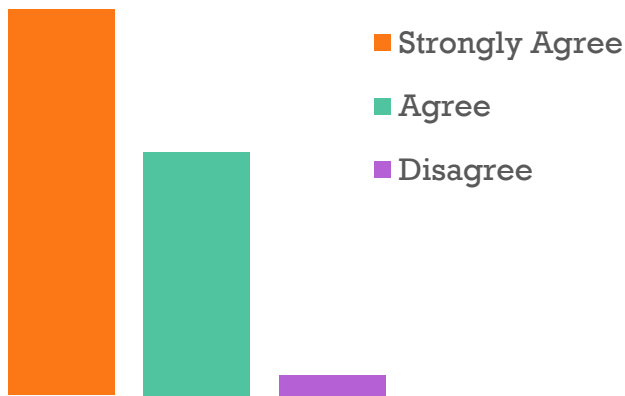
Survey Participant Affiliation



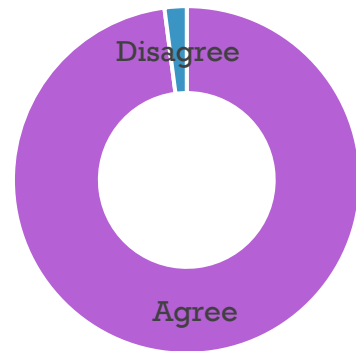
Assessing Knowledge, Awareness, and Confidence

Using focus groups and content taken directly from the CARES program, the survey measure was designed to assess student knowledge of the impact of sexual and dating violence, as well as awareness of campus resources, and confidence with supporting a peer survivor of violence. Results are visualized below and represent how strongly students agreed or disagreed with various statements about their knowledge, awareness, and confidence after participating in the CARES program.

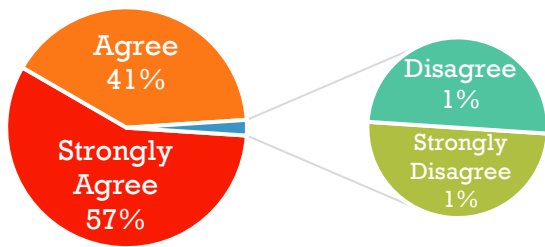
Increased Knowledge of Dating and Sexual Violence Prevalence



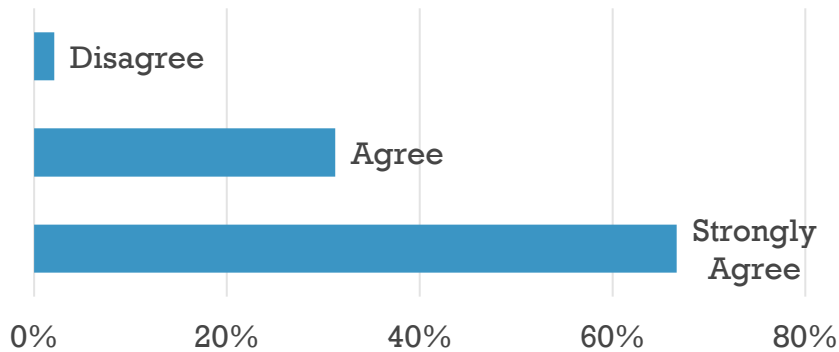
Most Respondents Agreed Their Knowledge of Sexual Trauma Increased



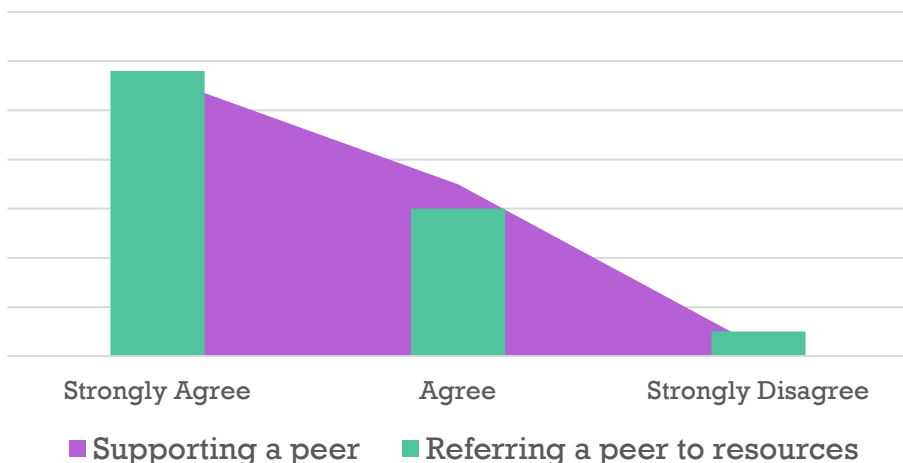
Increased Confidence to Identify Dating and Sexual Violence



Increased Awareness of Campus Resources



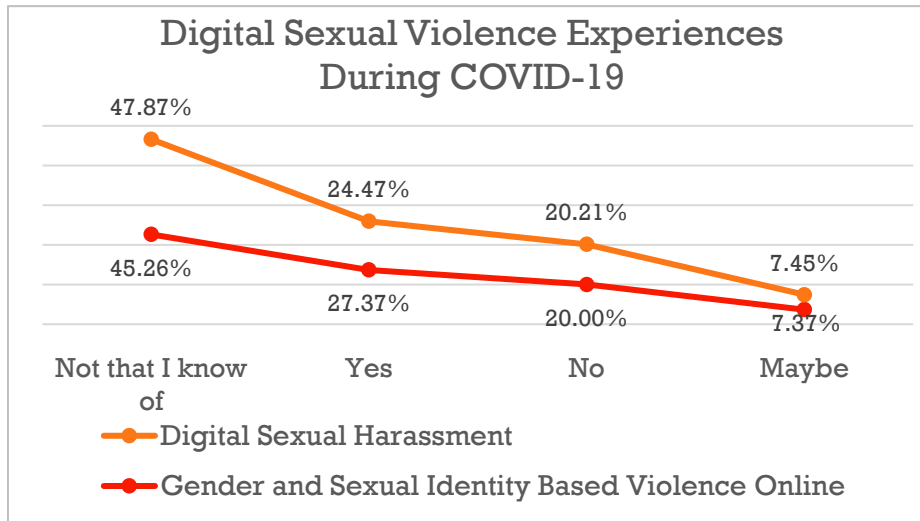
Increased Confidence to Support a Peer



Key Finding: Overall nearly 70% of respondents strongly agreed that they are more aware of campus resources after attending the CARES training, and 58% strongly agreed that they felt confident to refer a friend to these resources.

COVID-19 Impact and Conclusions

The post-test survey also included a few questions about the prevalence of digital sexual harassment and other forms of online sexual violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. Key findings are visualized, and overall survey conclusions are bulleted below.



Key Finding: Almost 70% of students reported that the COVID-19 pandemic has made it more difficult for victims to disclose experiences of dating and sexual violence due to privacy concerns.

COVID-19 Negatively Impacted Dating and Sexual Violence Disclosure



Key Takeaways:

- Most survey responses were from CARES attendees during the Fall 2021 semester
- Attendees were more likely to be undergraduate students. Tailored recruitment for graduate students may be necessary to increase diversity by affiliation and reach a broader student population.
- Attendees reported high levels of knowledge, awareness, and confidence in the key content areas after taking the workshop.
- About 25% of respondents reported known experiences of digital sexual violence since the start of COVID-19 underscoring the importance of incorporating support structures and education/prevention around this issue.
- The lack of a pre-test survey is the primary limitation of this evaluation. It is recommended that pre-test surveys be administered before the start of the training.
- Additionally, administering a 2-month follow-up survey could help evaluate whether students utilize the skills learned to support a peer survivor.