



# Rape and Sexual Assault Victimization Among College-Age Females, 1995–2013

Sofi Sinozich, *BJS Intern*

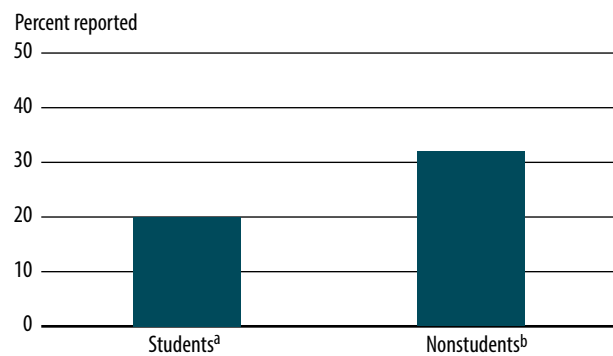
Lynn Langton, Ph.D., *BJS Statistician*

For the period 1995–2013, females ages 18 to 24 had the highest rate of rape and sexual assault victimizations compared to females in all other age groups. Within the 18 to 24 age group, victims could be identified as students enrolled in a college, university, trade school or vocational school or as nonstudents. Among student victims, 20% of rape and sexual assault victimizations were reported to police, compared to 32% reported among nonstudent victims ages 18 to 24 (figure 1).

This report describes and compares the characteristics of student and nonstudent female victims of rape and sexual assault, the attributes of the victimization, and the characteristics of the offender. The findings are from the Bureau of Justice Statistics' (BJS) National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), which collects information on nonfatal crimes reported and not reported to police against persons age 12 or older. Rape and sexual assault are defined by the NCVS to include completed and attempted rape, completed and attempted sexual assault, and threats of rape

**FIGURE 1**

**Rape or sexual assault victimizations against females ages 18 to 24 reported to police, by post-secondary enrollment status, 1995–2013**



Note: Includes only reports to the police, not to other officials or administrators. See table 8 for estimates and appendix table 9 for standard errors.

<sup>a</sup>Includes female victims ages 18 to 24 enrolled part time or full time in a post-secondary institution (i.e., college or university, trade school, or vocational school).

<sup>b</sup>Includes female victims ages 18 to 24 not enrolled in a post-secondary institution.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 1995–2013.

## HIGHLIGHTS

This report uses the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) to compare the rape and sexual assault victimization of female college students and nonstudents. For the period 1995–2013—

- The rate of rape and sexual assault was 1.2 times higher for nonstudents (7.6 per 1,000) than for students (6.1 per 1,000).
- For both college students and nonstudents, the offender was known to the victim in about 80% of rape and sexual assault victimizations.
- Most (51%) student rape and sexual assault victimizations occurred while the victim was pursuing leisure activities away from home, compared to nonstudents who were engaged in other activities at home (50%) when the victimization occurred.
- The offender had a weapon in about 1 in 10 rape and sexual assault victimizations against both students and nonstudents.
- Rape and sexual assault victimizations of students (80%) were more likely than nonstudent victimizations (67%) to go unreported to police.
- About a quarter of student (26%) and nonstudent (23%) victims who did not report to police believed the incident was a personal matter, and 1 in 5 (20% each) stated a fear of reprisal.
- Student victims (12%) were more likely than nonstudent victims (5%) to state that the incident was not important enough to report.
- Fewer than 1 in 5 female student (16%) and nonstudent (18%) victims of rape and sexual assault received assistance from a victim services agency.

## Comparing the NCVS and other surveys that measure rape and sexual assault in a college-age population

The NCVS is one of several surveys used to study rape and sexual assault in the general and college-age population. In addition to the NCVS, the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) and the Campus Sexual Assault Study (CSA) are two recent survey efforts used in research on rape and sexual assault. The three surveys differ in important ways in how rape and sexual assault questions are asked and victimization is measured. Across the three surveys, the measurement differences contribute, in part, to varying estimates of the prevalence (the number of unique persons in the population who experienced one or more victimizations in a given period) and incidence (the number of victimizations experienced by persons in the population during a given period) of rape and sexual assault victimization.

Although conducted at different times, with different samples and reference periods, both NISVS and CSA produced prevalence rates that were substantially higher than the NCVS victimization and prevalence rates. Based on 2011 NISVS data, 2% of all females experienced unwanted sexual contact during the prior 12 months.<sup>1</sup> The 2007 CSA findings suggested that 14% of females ages 18 to 25 who were enrolled in two colleges and surveyed in the United States had experienced a completed sexual assault since entering college.<sup>2</sup> In comparison, in 2010 the NCVS showed that 1% of females age 12 or older experienced one or more rape or sexual assaults in the prior year.<sup>3</sup> For the period 2007–13, the NCVS victimization rate was 4.7 per 1,000 for females ages 18 to 24 who were enrolled in post-secondary schools (not shown).

Several of the key measurement differences that contribute to the different estimates include (see *Appendix 1*)—

- **Survey context and scope.** The NCVS is presented as a survey about crime, while the NISVS and CSA are presented as surveys about public health. The NISVS and CSA collect data on incidents of unwanted sexual contact that may not rise to a level of criminal behavior, and respondents may not report incidents to the NCVS that they do not consider to be criminal.

- **Definitions of rape and sexual assault.** The NCVS, NISVS, and CSA target different types of events. The NCVS definition is shaped from a criminal justice perspective and includes threatened, attempted, and completed rape and sexual assault against males and females (see *Methodology*). The NISVS uses a broader definition of sexual violence, which specifically mentions incidents in which the victim was unable to provide consent due to drug or alcohol use; forced to penetrate another person; or coerced to engage in sexual contact (including nonphysical pressure to engage in sex) unwanted sexual contact (including forcible kissing, fondling, or grabbing); and noncontact unwanted sexual experiences that do not involve physical contact.<sup>4</sup> The CSA definition of rape and sexual assault includes unwanted sexual contact due to force and due to incapacitation, but excludes unwanted sexual contact due to verbal or emotional coercion.<sup>5</sup>

- **Question wording.** The three surveys use different approaches to asking about experiences with rape and sexual assault. The NCVS uses a two-phased approach to identifying incidents of rape and sexual assault. Initially, a screener is administered, with cues designed to trigger the respondent's recollection of events and ascertain whether the respondent experienced victimization during the reference period. The screener questions are short and worded specifically about experiences with rape and sexual assault. For instance, "Incidents involving forced or unwanted sexual acts are often difficult to talk about. Have you been forced or coerced to engage in unwanted sexual activity by (a) someone you didn't know before, (b) a casual acquaintance? OR (c) someone you know well?"

The screener is then followed by an incident form that captures detailed information about the incident, including the type of injury, presence of a weapon, offender characteristics, and reporting to police.

Even if the respondent does not respond affirmatively to the specific screeners on rape and unwanted sexual contact, the respondent could still be classified as a rape or sexual assault victim if a rape or unwanted sexual contact is reported during the stage-two incident report.

*(Continued on next page)*

<sup>1</sup>Breiding, M.J., Smith, S.G., Basile, K.C., Walters, M.L., Chen, J., & Merrick, M.T. (2014). Prevalence and characteristics of sexual violence, stalking, and intimate partner violence victimization — National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, United States, 2011. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, Surveillance Summaries*, 63(8), 1–18. Retrieved from [http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss6308a1.htm?s\\_cid=ss6308a1\\_e#Table1](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss6308a1.htm?s_cid=ss6308a1_e#Table1)

<sup>2</sup>Krebs, C.P., Lindquist, C.H., Warner, T.D., Fisher, B.S., & Martin, S.L. (2007). The Campus Sexual Assault (CSA) study. Final report to the National Institute of Justice, grant number 2004-WG-BX-0010, document number 221153. Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/221153.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>*Measuring the Prevalence of Crime with the National Crime Victimization Survey*, NCJ 241656, BJS web, September 2013.

<sup>4</sup>National Research Council. (2014). *Estimating the incidence of rape and sexual assault*. Panel on Measuring Rape and Sexual Assault in Bureau of Justice Statistics Household Surveys, C. Kruttschnitt, W.D. Kalsbeek, and C.C. House, Editors. Committee on National Statistics, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. Retrieved from [http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record\\_id=18605&page=R1](http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=18605&page=R1), p. 86.

<sup>5</sup>Krebs, C.P., Lindquist, C.H., Warner, T.D., Fisher, B.S., & Martin, S.L. (2007). The Campus Sexual Assault (CSA) study. Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/221153.pdf>, p. 1–3.

## Comparing the NCVS and other surveys that measure rape and sexual assault in a college-age population (continued)

Unlike the NCVS, which uses terms like rape and unwanted sexual activity to identify victims of rape and sexual assault, the NISVS and CSA use behaviorally specific questions to ascertain whether the respondent experienced rape or sexual assault. These surveys ask about an exhaustive list of explicit types of unwanted sexual contact a victim may have experienced, such as being made to perform or receive anal or oral sex.

- Mode and response rates.** Collection mode and response rates can impact data quality. The NCVS uses in-person and telephone interviews to collect data and has an 88% person and 74% overall response rate. The 2011 NISVS uses random-digit dialing with a 33% response rate. The 2007 CSA is a self-administered survey with 33% to 43% response rates.

Despite the differences that exist between the surveys, a strength of the NCVS is its ability to be used to make comparisons over time and between population subgroups. The differences observed between students and nonstudents are reliable to the extent that both groups responded in a similar manner to the NCVS context and questions. Methodological differences that lead to higher estimates of rape and sexual assault in the NISVS and CSA should not affect the NCVS comparisons between groups.

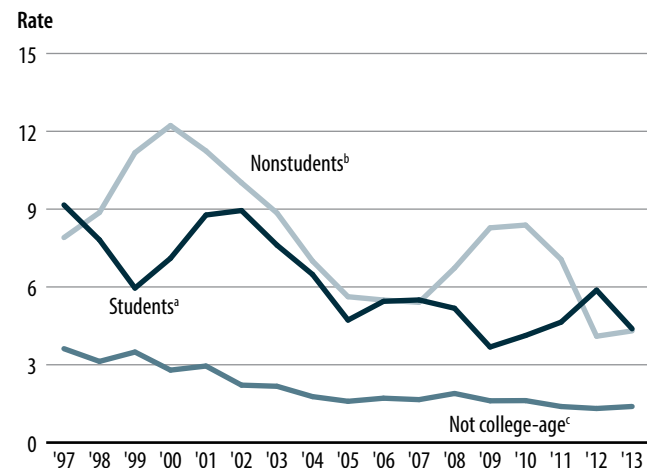
As a result, the differences in the NCVS between student and nonstudent rates and variations in the characteristics of student and nonstudent victimizations should not be affected by the methodological differences impacting the overall level of rape and sexual assault victimization in the NCVS. Because the CSA only collects data from a student population, and student status cannot be identified in the NISVS, the magnitude of difference between these subgroups cannot be ascertained.

or sexual assault (see *Methodology*). Unless otherwise noted, this report presents aggregate estimates of rape and sexual assault victimization for the period 1995 through 2013. Aggregating data across the period increases the reliability and precision of estimates and facilitates comparisons of detailed victimization characteristics.

### Females ages 18 to 24 had higher rates of rape and sexual assault than females in other age groups

From 1997 to 2013, females ages 18 to 24 consistently experienced higher rates of rape and sexual assault than females in other age brackets (figure 2). In 2013, college-age females had a similar rate of rape and sexual assault regardless of enrollment status (about 4.3 victimizations per 1,000), while the victimization rate for not college-age (ages 12 to 17 and 25 or older) females was 1.4 victimizations per 1,000. For both students and nonstudents ages 18 to 24, the 2013 rates of rape and sexual assault were not significantly different from their respective rates in 1997. During the period, the rates for students did not differ significantly from one year to the next, though rates in the high years of 2001 and 2002 were slightly higher than in the low year of 2009. For nonstudents, there was more fluctuation. The rates of rape and sexual assault victimization for nonstudents were significantly higher for the period 1999–2001 than for the periods 2005–07 and 2012–13.

**FIGURE 2**  
Rate of rape or sexual assault for females, by age and post-secondary enrollment status, 1997–2013



Note: Estimates based on 3-year rolling averages centered on the most recent year. See appendix table 1 for estimates and standard errors.

<sup>a</sup>Per 1,000 females ages 18 to 24 enrolled part time or full time in a post-secondary institution (i.e., college or university, trade school, or vocational school).

<sup>b</sup>Per 1,000 females ages 18 to 24 not enrolled in a post-secondary institution.

<sup>c</sup>Per 1,000 females ages 12 to 17 and age 25 or older.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 1995–2013.

## Rate of rape and sexual assault victimization was 1.2 times higher for nonstudents than students

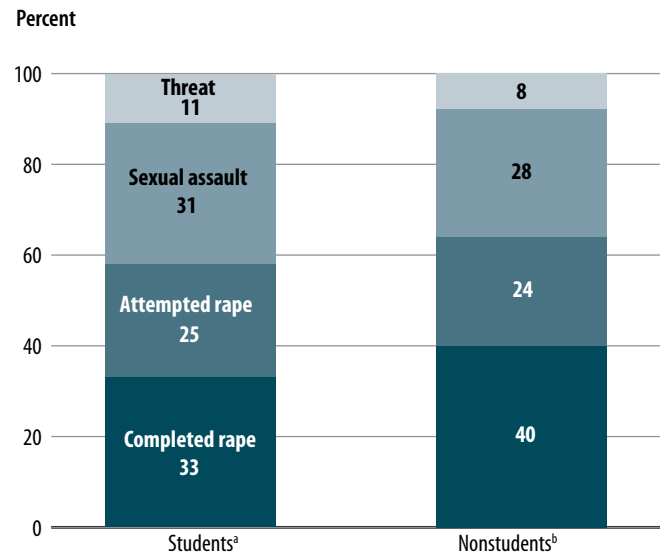
For the period 1995–2013, females ages 18 to 24 not enrolled in a post-secondary school were 1.2 times more likely to experience rape and sexual assault victimization (7.6 per 1,000), compared to students in the same age range (6.1 per 1,000) (**table 1**). Nonstudents (65,700) also accounted for more than double the number of rape and sexual assault victimizations as students (31,300).

The rate of completed rape for nonstudents (3.1 per 1,000) was 1.5 times higher than for students (2.0 per 1,000). However, there was no significant difference in the rates of female students and nonstudents who experienced attempted rape or other sexual assault. This suggests that differences in the rates of completed rape largely accounted for differences in the overall rates of rape and sexual assault between students and nonstudents.

Among female student victims ages 18 to 24, a third (33%) of the rape and sexual assault victimizations involved completed rape, while 2 in 5 nonstudent (40%) female victims experienced completed rape (**figure 3**). The majority of student (56%) and nonstudent (52%) victims experienced attempted rape or other sexual assault.

**FIGURE 3**

**Type of rape or sexual assault experienced by female victims ages 18 to 24, by post-secondary enrollment status, 1995–2013**



Note: Excludes a small number of female victims ages 18 to 24 with unknown enrollment status (less than 1%). The average annual population was 5,130,004 for students and 8,614,853 for nonstudents. See appendix table 2 for standard errors. See *Methodology* for definitions.

<sup>a</sup>Includes female victims ages 18 to 24 enrolled part time or full time in a post-secondary institution (i.e., college or university, trade school, or vocational school).

<sup>b</sup>Includes female victims ages 18 to 24 not enrolled in a post-secondary institution.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 1995–2013.

**TABLE 1**

**Rape or sexual assault victimization against females ages 18 to 24, by post-secondary enrollment status, 1995–2013**

	Students <sup>a</sup>		Nonstudents <sup>b</sup>		Ratio of nonstudent to student rate
	Average annual number	Rate <sup>c</sup>	Average annual number	Rate <sup>d</sup>	
Total	31,302	6.1	65,668 ‡	7.6 †	1.2
Completed rape	10,237	2.0	26,369	3.1 †	1.5
Attempted rape	7,864	1.5	15,792	1.8	1.2
Sexual assault	9,714	1.9	18,260	2.1	1.1
Threat of rape or sexual assault	3,488	0.7	5,247	0.6	0.9

Note: Detail may not sum to total due to rounding. Excludes a small number of female victims ages 18 to 24 with unknown enrollment status (less than 1%). The average annual population was 5,130,004 for students and 8,614,853 for nonstudents. See appendix table 2 for standard errors. See *Methodology* for definitions.

† Nonstudent estimates are significantly different from student estimates at the 95% confidence level.

‡ Nonstudent estimates are significantly different from student estimates at the 90% confidence level.

<sup>a</sup>Includes females ages 18 to 24 enrolled part time or full time in a post-secondary institution (college or university, trade school, or vocational school).

<sup>b</sup>Includes females ages 18 to 24 not enrolled in a post-secondary institution.

<sup>c</sup>Per 1,000 female students ages 18 to 24.

<sup>d</sup>Per 1,000 females ages 18 to 24 not enrolled in a post-secondary institution.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 1995–2013.

## Rates of other violence among college-age females

Across all types of violent crime, female students had a lower victimization rate than nonstudents (**table 2**). For the period 1995–2013, the rate of violent victimization was 1.6 times higher for nonstudents (73.1 per 1,000) than students (46.3 per 1,000). For both students and nonstudents, the rate of rape and sexual assault was lower than the rate of aggravated and simple assault, but higher than the rate of robbery.

**TABLE 2**

**Rate of violent victimization among females ages 18 to 24, by post-secondary enrollment status, 1995–2013**

	Students <sup>a</sup>	Nonstudents <sup>b</sup>	Ratio of nonstudent to student rates
<b>Violent crime</b>	46.3	73.1 †	1.6
<b>Serious crime</b>	17.8	25.8 †	1.5
Rape and sexual assault	6.1	7.6 †	1.2
Robbery	3.3	5.6 †	1.7
Aggravated assault	8.3	12.5 †	1.5
<b>Simple assault</b>	28.5	47.3 †	1.7

Note: Excludes a small percentage of females ages 18 to 24 with unknown enrollment status (less than 1%). See appendix table 3 for standard errors.

† Nonstudent estimates are significantly different from student estimates at the 95% confidence level.

<sup>a</sup>Per 1,000 females ages 18 to 24 enrolled part time or full time in a post-secondary institution (i.e., college or university, trade school, or vocational school).

<sup>b</sup>Per 1,000 females ages 18 to 24 not enrolled in a post-secondary institution.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 1995–2013.

## Rape and sexual assault victimization among male students

For the period 1995–2013, the rate of rape and sexual assault victimization was lower for males ages 18 to 24 than for females, regardless of enrollment status (**table 3**). College-age male victims accounted for 17% of rape and sexual assault victimizations against students and 4% against nonstudents. However, the rate of rape and sexual assault victimization for nonstudents (0.3 per 1,000) was a fifth of the rate for students (1.4 per 1,000). Due to the relatively small number of sample cases of male victims, this report focuses exclusively on females. Estimates of male rape and sexual assault victimization from the NCVS cannot be further disaggregated by victim and incident characteristics.

**TABLE 3**

**Rape and sexual assault victimization, by sex of victim and post-secondary enrollment status, 1995–2013**

Sex of victim	Students <sup>a</sup>			Nonstudents <sup>b</sup>			Ratio of nonstudent to student rate
	Average annual number	Percent of victimizations	Rate <sup>c</sup>	Average annual number	Percent of victimizations	Rate <sup>c</sup>	
Male	6,544	17%	1.4	2,866	4% †	0.3 †	0.2
Female	31,302	83	6.1	65,668	96 †	7.6 †	1.2

Note: Excludes a small percentage of victims with unknown enrollment status (less than 1%). See appendix table 4 for standard errors.

† Nonstudent estimates are significantly different from student estimates at the 95% confidence level.

<sup>a</sup>Includes victims ages 18 to 24 enrolled part time or full time in a post-secondary institution (i.e., college or university, trade school, or vocational school).

<sup>b</sup>Includes victims ages 18 to 24 not enrolled in a post-secondary institution.

<sup>c</sup>Per 1,000 persons ages 18 to 24.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 1995–2013.

**Female students were more likely to experience rape or sexual assault victimization away from home, while nonstudents were more likely to be at home**

For both students and nonstudents, about 70% of rape and sexual assault victimizations occurred either at the victim's home or the home of another known person (table 4).<sup>6</sup> A greater percentage of the victimizations against students (29%) than nonstudents (17%) occurred at the home of a known person, such as a friend, relative, or acquaintance. In comparison, nonstudents (50%) experienced a greater proportion of rape and sexual assaults at their homes than students (38%). There were no significant differences between the percentages of students and nonstudents victimized in other places, including commercial areas, at school, or on public transportation.

The majority (51%) of student rape and sexual assault victimizations occurred while the victim was away from home pursuing leisure activities or traveling from place to place. Nonstudents (50%) were more likely than students (31%) to be sleeping or pursuing other activities at home when the victimization occurred. Nearly two-thirds of both student (65%) and nonstudent (64%) victims experienced the victimization at night (from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m.).

<sup>6</sup>In the NCVS, the victim's home is defined as the location of residence at the time of the interview.

**TABLE 4**

**Location, victim activity, and time of day of the rape/sexual assault victimization among females ages 18 to 24, by post-secondary enrollment status, 1995–2013**

	Students <sup>a</sup>	Nonstudents <sup>b</sup>
<b>Location where crime occurred</b>	100%	100%
At or near victim's home <sup>c</sup>	38	50 †
At or near home of friend/relative/acquaintance	29	17 †
Commercial place/parking lot or garage	16	15
School <sup>d</sup>	4!	2!
Open areas/public transportation/other <sup>e</sup>	13	16
<b>Activity when crime occurred</b>	100%	100%
Traveling to or from other place/shopping or errands/leisure activity away from home	51	29 †
Sleeping/other activities at home <sup>c</sup>	31	50 †
Working or traveling to work	10!	16 ‡
Attending school or traveling to school <sup>d</sup>	5!	2! ‡
Other/unknown	3!	4
<b>Time of day</b>	100%	100%
Daytime (6 a.m. – 6 p.m.)	33	35
Night (6 p.m. – 6 a.m.)	65	64
Unknown	3!	1!

Note: Detail may not sum to total due to rounding. Excludes a small percentage of female victims ages 18 to 24 with unknown enrollment status (less than 1%). See appendix 5 for standard errors.

! Interpret with caution; estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases, or coefficient of variation is greater than 50%.

† Nonstudent estimates are significantly different from student estimates at the 95% confidence level.

‡ Nonstudent estimates are significantly different from student estimates at the 90% confidence level.

<sup>a</sup>Includes female victims ages 18 to 24 enrolled part time or full time in a post-secondary institution (i.e., college or university, trade school, or vocational school).

<sup>b</sup>Includes female victims ages 18 to 24 not enrolled in a post-secondary institution.

<sup>c</sup>In the NCVS, the victim's home is defined as the location of residence at the time of the interview.

<sup>d</sup>Includes schools at any educational level regardless of whether the victim was a student at the location.

<sup>e</sup>Includes locations such as an apartment yard; a park, field, or playground not on school property; a location on the street other than that immediately adjacent to home of the victim, a relative, or friend; in a station or depot for bus or train; on a plane; or in an airport.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 1995–2013.



### About 1 in 10 rape and sexual assault victimizations against college-age females involved a weapon

For the period 1995–2013, the offender had a weapon in about 1 in 10 rape and sexual assault victimizations against female students (11%) and nonstudents (12%) (table 5). There were no significant differences between students and nonstudents in the percentage of rape and sexual assault victimizations in which a weapon was present.

There was also no significant difference in the percentage of student and nonstudent victims who sustained a physical injury during the rape and sexual assault victimization. The majority of student (57%) and nonstudent (63%) victims suffered an injury (e.g. cuts, bruises, internal injuries, broken bones, gunshot wounds, or rape-related injuries) during the victimization. About 4 in 10 students (40%) and nonstudents (37%) who were injured during the victimization received medical treatment for their injuries.

### More than 3 in 4 student victims of rape and sexual assault knew the offender

College-age female victims knew their offender in about 80% of rape and sexual assault victimizations, regardless of their enrollment status (table 6). Nonstudents (34%) were more likely than students (24%) to experience rape or sexual assault committed by an intimate partner (i.e., a former or current spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend). For student victims, offenders were more likely to be friends or acquaintances (50%) than intimate partners (24%). Among nonstudent victims, there was no significant difference in the percentage of rape and sexual assault committed by friends or acquaintances (37%) or intimates (34%). About 1 in 5 rape and sexual assault victimizations among students (22%) and nonstudents (20%) were committed by a stranger.

**TABLE 5**

**Presence of weapon and injury to victim in rape or sexual assault victimizations against females ages 18 to 24, by post-secondary enrollment status, 1995–2013**

	Students <sup>a</sup>	Nonstudents <sup>b</sup>
<b>Involving weapons</b>	100%	100%
No weapon	82%	84%
Weapon	11 †	12
Don't know	7	4
<b>Involving injuries</b>	100%	100%
No injury	43%	37
Injury	57	63
Treatment for injuries <sup>c</sup>	100%	100%
No treatment	60	63
Any treatment	40	37

Note: Detail may not sum to total due to rounding. Excludes a small percentage of female victims ages 18 to 24 with unknown enrollment status (less than 1%). See appendix table 6 for standard errors.

! Interpret with caution; estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases, or coefficient of variation is greater than 50%.

<sup>a</sup>Includes females ages 18 to 24 enrolled part time or full time in a post-secondary institution (i.e., college or university, trade school, or vocational school).

<sup>b</sup>Includes female victims ages 18 to 24 not enrolled in a post-secondary institution.

<sup>c</sup>Includes female victims ages 18 to 24 who were injured during the victimization.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 1995–2013.

**TABLE 6**

**Victim–offender relationship in rape or sexual assault victimizations against females ages 18 to 24, by post-secondary enrollment status of victim, 1995–2013**

Victim–offender relationship	Students <sup>a</sup>	Nonstudents <sup>b</sup>
<b>Stranger</b>	22%	20%
<b>Nonstranger</b>	78%	80%
Intimate partner <sup>c</sup>	24	34 †
Relative	2 †	1 †
Well-known/casual acquaintance	50	37 †

Note: Detail may not sum to total due to rounding. Excludes a small percentage of victimizations in which the victim-offender relationship, number of offenders, or victim enrollment status was unknown. See appendix table 7 for standard errors.

! Interpret with caution; estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases, or coefficient of variation is greater than 50%.

† Nonstudent estimates are significantly different from student estimates at the 95% confidence level.

<sup>a</sup>Includes female victims ages 18 to 24 enrolled part time or full time in a post-secondary institution (i.e., college or university, trade school, or vocational school).

<sup>b</sup>Includes female victims ages 18 to 24 not enrolled in a post-secondary institution.

<sup>c</sup>Includes former or current spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 1995–2013.

**Similar percentages of student (47%) and nonstudent (40%) victims perceived that the offender was drinking or using drugs**

In the NCVS, victims of rape and sexual assault are asked to provide information about the perceived characteristics of their offenders. For the period 1995–2013, more than 90% of rape and sexual victimizations of female students (95%) and nonstudents (92%) were committed by a single offender, rather than a group of offenders (table 7). Regardless of the victim’s enrollment status, more than half of female victims perceived that the offender was white. However, because the NCVS did not collect information on the Hispanic origin of the offender prior to 2012, Hispanic offenders make up an unknown portion of the white, black, and other race of offender categories. There were no significant differences between students and nonstudents in the race of the offender.

For both students and nonstudents, the vast majority of offenders were male. However, a male was the offender in a greater percentage of female student victimizations (97%) than nonstudent victimizations (91%).

There was no difference in the distribution of offender age among female student and nonstudent victims. More than half of all offenders were perceived to be between the ages of 21 and 29 in victimizations involving both students (51%) and nonstudents (53%). Student victims (25%) were less likely than nonstudent victims (36%) to believe that the offender was not under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of the rape or sexual assault. However, about a quarter of student (28%) and nonstudent (24%) victims did not know whether the offender was using drugs or alcohol.

**TABLE 7**  
**Perceived offender characteristics in rape and sexual assault victimizations against females ages 18 to 24, by post-secondary enrollment status of victim, 1995–2013**

Offender characteristic	Students <sup>a</sup>	Nonstudents <sup>b</sup>
<b>Number of offenders</b>		
One	95%	92%
Two or more	5!	5
Unknown	--!	3!
<b>Age<sup>c</sup></b>		
18–20	17%	13%
21–29	51	53
30 or older	23	23
Mixed group	2!	3
Unknown	7	7
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	97%	91% †
Female	1!	3! †
Mixed group/unknown	2!	5! †
<b>Race<sup>d</sup></b>		
White	63%	60%
Black	19	22
Other/mixed group <sup>e</sup>	10	12
Unknown	8	7
<b>Alcohol/drug use</b>		
Yes	47%	40%
No	25	36 †
Don't know/unknown	28	24

Note: See appendix table 8 for standard errors.

--Less than 0.5%.

! Interpret with caution; estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases, or coefficient of variation is greater than 50%.

† Nonstudent estimates are significantly different from student estimates at the 95% confidence level.

<sup>a</sup> Includes female victims ages 18 to 24 enrolled part time or full time in a post-secondary institution (i.e., college or university, trade school, or vocational school).

<sup>b</sup> Includes female victims ages 18 to 24 not enrolled in a post-secondary institution.

<sup>c</sup> Detail may not sum to total due to small portion of offenders age 17 or younger.

<sup>d</sup> Prior to 2012, victims were not asked about perceived Hispanic origin of offenders, so Hispanic offenders make up an unknown portion of the white, black, and other race of offender categories.

<sup>e</sup> American Indian, Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander, persons of two or more races, and mixed groups that may include persons of any race.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 1995–2013.



**A greater percentage of student (80%) than nonstudent (67%) rape and sexual assault victimizations were not reported to police**

For the period 1995–2013, rape and sexual assault victimizations against female students (80%) were more likely to go unreported to police, compared to victimizations against nonstudents (67%) (table 8). Regardless of enrollment status, rape and sexual assault victimizations were more likely to go unreported than other types of violent crime (not shown). The NCVS does not directly collect information about whether victims reported to other officials or administrators.

The reasons for not reporting a rape or sexual assault victimization to police varied somewhat between students and nonstudents. A greater percentage of nonstudent (19%) than student (9%) victims stated that they did not report to police because the police would not or could not do anything to help. Nonstudent victims were also more likely to state that they had reported to a different official.<sup>7</sup> Student victims (12%) were more likely to state that the victimization was not important enough to report, compared to nonstudent victims (5%). About a quarter of student (26%) and nonstudent (23%) victims who did not report to police believed the incident was a personal matter, and 1 in 5 (20% each) stated a fear of reprisal.

**No significant difference in the proportion of student and nonstudent victims who received assistance from a victim service agency**

Fewer than 1 in 5 female student (16%) and nonstudent (18%) victims of rape and sexual assault received assistance from a victim services agency for the period 1995–2013 (table 9). Victim service agencies include public or privately funded organizations that provide victims with support and services to aid their recovery, offer protection, guide them through the criminal justice system process, and assist with obtaining restitution. There was no significant difference in the proportion of victims who received assistance based on enrollment status.

<sup>7</sup>The NCVS does not ask victims for information about the types of other officials to which they may have reported.

**TABLE 8**  
**Rape or sexual assault victimizations against females ages 18 to 24 reported and not reported to police and reasons for not reporting, by post-secondary enrollment status, 1995–2013**

	Students <sup>a</sup>	Nonstudents <sup>b</sup>
Reported <sup>c</sup>	20%	32% †
Not reported	80%	67% †
Reason for not reporting		
Reported to different official	4% †	14% †
Personal matter	26	23
Not important enough to respondent	12	5 †
Police would not or could not do anything to help	9	19 †
Did not want to get offender in trouble with law	10	10
Advised not to report	-- †	1 †
Fear of reprisal	20	20
Other reason	31	35

Note: Detail may not sum to total due to multiple reasons for not reporting. About 0.4% of student and 0.6% of nonstudent victims did not know or did not report whether the victimization was reported to police. See appendix table 9 for standard errors.

--Less than 0.5%.

† Interpret with caution; estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases, or coefficient of variation is greater than 50%.

† Nonstudent estimates are significantly different from student estimates at the 95% confidence level.

<sup>a</sup>Includes female victims ages 18 to 24 enrolled part time or full time in a post-secondary institution (i.e., college or university, trade school, or vocational school).

<sup>b</sup>Includes female victims ages 18 to 24 not enrolled in a post-secondary institution.

<sup>c</sup>Includes only reports to the police, not to other officials or administrators. The NCVS does not collect information on victim reporting to parties other than law enforcement.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 1995–2013.

**TABLE 9**  
**Receipt of assistance from a victim service agency among female rape or sexual assault victims ages 18 to 24, by post-secondary enrollment status, 1995–2013**

	Students <sup>a</sup>	Nonstudents <sup>b</sup>
Received assistance	16%	18%
Did not receive assistance	83	82

Note: Detail does not sum to total due to a small percentage of victims who did not know whether assistance was received. Excludes a small percentage of female victims ages 18 to 24 with unknown enrollment status (less than 1%). See appendix table 10 for standard errors.

<sup>a</sup>Includes female victims ages 18 to 24 enrolled part time or full time in a post-secondary institution (i.e., college or university, trade school, or vocational school).

<sup>b</sup>Includes female victims ages 18 to 24 not enrolled in a post-secondary institution.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 1995–2013.

**Among females living in rural areas, the rate of rape and sexual assault victimization was almost 2 times higher for nonstudents (8.8 per 1,000) than students (4.6 per 1,000)**

For the period 1995–2013, there were no significant differences in the student and nonstudent rates of rape and sexual assault for black non-Hispanics, Hispanics, or persons of other races (table 10). However, among white non-Hispanic females, the rate of victimization was 1.4 times higher for nonstudents (9.2 per 1,000) than for students (6.7 per 1,000). Among female students, the rate of rape and sexual assault was slightly higher for whites (6.7 per 1,000) than for Hispanics (4.5 per 1,000), but did not differ significantly from the rate for blacks (6.4 per 1,000).

The rate of rape and sexual assault was 1.6 times higher for females ages 18 to 19 not enrolled in college (10.4 per 1,000) than for female students in the same age group (6.6 per 1,000). Among females ages 20 to 21, the rate of victimization was 1.5 times higher for nonstudents (8.9 per 1,000) than students (5.8 per 1,000). There was no significant difference in the rate of rape and sexual assault for students and nonstudents ages 22 to 24.

Among female college students there were no significant differences in the rate of victimization by age. However, among nonstudents, the rate of victimization was lower for females ages 22 to 24 (5.4 per 1,000) than for females ages 18 to 21.

Nonstudents in the South were slightly more likely (1.4 times) to experience rape and sexual assault, compared to female students in the South. Across other regions of the country, there were no significant differences in the student and nonstudent victimization rates.

Female students in the Midwest (8.3 per 1,000) had a higher rate of rape and sexual assault, compared to students in the Northeast (5.2 per 1,000) and South (4.7 per 1,000). Similarly, among nonstudents, females in the Midwest had a higher rate of victimization than in any other region of the country.

In rural areas, the rate of rape and sexual assault was 1.9 times higher for college-age nonstudents (8.8 per 1,000) than students (4.6 per 1,000). Nonstudents in urban areas (8.7 per 1,000) also had a slightly higher rate of victimization (1.3 times), compared to students in urban areas (6.6 per 1,000). In suburban areas, there was no significant difference in the rate of rape and sexual assault between female students (6.0 per 1,000) and nonstudents (6.3 per 1,000). Among female students, there was no significant variation in rape and sexual assault rates across urban, suburban, and rural areas. Among nonstudents, females living in suburban areas had the lowest victimization rates.

**TABLE 10**  
Rate of rape and sexual assault against female victims ages 18 to 24, by demographic characteristics and post-secondary enrollment status, 1995–2013

Victim characteristic	Students <sup>a</sup>	Nonstudents <sup>b</sup>	Ratio of nonstudent to student rate
<b>Age</b>			
18–19	6.6	10.4 †	1.6
20–21	5.8	8.9 †	1.5
22–24	6.0	5.4	0.9
<b>Race/Hispanic origin</b>			
White <sup>c</sup>	6.7	9.2 †	1.4
Black <sup>c</sup>	6.4	6.2	1.0
Hispanic	4.5	4.5	1.0
Other <sup>c,d</sup>	3.7 †	5.9	1.6
<b>Region<sup>e</sup></b>			
Northeast	5.2	4.1	0.8
Midwest	8.3	11.0	1.3
South	4.7	6.5 ‡	1.4
West	5.9	8.0	1.4
<b>Location of residence</b>			
Urban	6.6	8.7 ‡	1.3
Suburban	6.0	6.3	1.0
Rural	4.6	8.8 †	1.9

Note: Detail may not sum to total due to rounding. See appendix table 11 for standard errors.

! Interpret with caution; estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases, or coefficient of variation is greater than 50%.

† Nonstudent estimates are significantly different from student estimates at the 95% confidence level.

‡ Nonstudent estimates are significantly different from student estimates at the 90% confidence level.

<sup>a</sup>Per 1,000 females ages 18 to 24 enrolled part time or full time in a post-secondary institution (i.e., college or university, trade school, or vocational school).

<sup>b</sup>Per 1,000 females ages 18 to 24 not enrolled in a post-secondary institution.

<sup>c</sup>Excludes persons of Hispanic or Latino origin.

<sup>d</sup>Includes American Indian, Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander, and persons of two or more races.

<sup>e</sup>Includes data from 1996 through 2013 because information about region was not collected prior to 1996.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 1995–2013.

## Methodology

### Survey coverage

The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) is an annual data collection conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). The NCVS is a self-report survey in which interviewed persons are asked about the number and characteristics of victimizations experienced during the prior 6 months. The NCVS collects information on nonfatal personal crimes (rape or sexual assault, robbery, aggravated and simple assault, and personal larceny) and household property crimes (burglary, motor vehicle theft, and other theft) both reported and not reported to police. In addition to providing annual level and change estimates on criminal victimization, the NCVS is the primary source of information on the nature of criminal victimization incidents.

Survey respondents provide information about themselves (e.g., age, sex, race and Hispanic origin, marital status, education level, and income) and whether they experienced a victimization. The NCVS collects information for each victimization incident about the offender (e.g., age, sex, race and Hispanic origin, and victim-offender relationship), characteristics of the crime (including time and place of occurrence, use of weapons, nature of injury, and economic consequences), whether the crime was reported to police, reasons the crime was or was not reported, and victim experiences with the criminal justice system.

The NCVS is administered to persons age 12 or older from a nationally representative sample of households in the United States. The NCVS defines a household as a group of persons who all reside at a sampled address. Persons are considered household members when the sampled address is their usual place of residence at the time of the interview and when they have no usual place of residence elsewhere. Once selected, households remain in the sample for 3 years, and eligible persons in these households are interviewed every 6 months either in person or over the phone for a total of seven interviews.

All first interviews are conducted in person with subsequent interviews conducted either in person or by phone. New households rotate into the sample on an ongoing basis to replace outgoing households that have been in the sample for the 3-year period. The sample includes persons living in group quarters, such as dormitories, rooming houses, and religious group dwellings, and excludes persons living in military barracks and institutional settings such as correctional or hospital facilities, and persons who are homeless.

### NCVS measurement of rape and sexual assault

This report focuses on rape and sexual assault victimizations, including completed, attempted, and threatened rape or sexual assault. Because of the sensitive nature of the topic, measuring the extent of these victimizations is often difficult, and best practices are still being determined. For the NCVS, survey respondents are asked to respond to a series of questions about the nature and characteristics of their victimization. The NCVS classifies victimizations as rape or sexual assault, even if other crimes, such as robbery or assault, occur at the same time. The NCVS then uses the following rape and sexual assault definitions:

- **Rape** is the unlawful penetration of a person against the will of the victim, with use or threatened use of force, or attempting such an act. Rape includes psychological coercion and physical force, and forced sexual intercourse means vaginal, anal, or oral penetration by the offender. Rape also includes incidents where penetration is from a foreign object (e.g., a bottle), victimizations against males and females, and both heterosexual and homosexual rape. Attempted rape includes verbal threats of rape.
- **Sexual assault** is defined across a wide range of victimizations separate from rape or attempted rape. These crimes include attacks or attempted attacks usually involving unwanted sexual contact between a victim and offender. Sexual assault may or may not involve force and includes grabbing or fondling.

The measurement of rape and sexual assault presents many challenges. Victims may not be willing to reveal or share their experiences with an interviewer. The level and type of sexual violence reported by victims is sensitive to how items are worded, which definitions are used, the data collection mode, and a variety of other factors related to the interview process. In addition, the legal definitions of rape and sexual assault vary across jurisdictions. The NCVS presents one approach to measuring and enumerating these incidents as well as other forms of violence and property crime.

### Comparison of NCVS and National Center for Education Statistics student population statistics

This report focused on females ages 18 to 24, which account for about 32% of the total population enrolled in post-secondary institutions.<sup>8</sup> To assess whether the NCVS estimates of the college student population accurately reflect the actual population of students, NCVS weighted counts of enrolled students were compared to data collected through the National Center for Education Statistics' (NCES) Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

<sup>8</sup>National Center for Education Statistics.

From 1997 to 2011, the years of available NCES data, the NCVS estimates of the female population of college students were significantly lower than the NCES estimates in 9 of the 15 years (table 11). In the years in which the NCVS estimate differed from the IPEDS population count, the NCVS female student population was about 10% lower.

### Nonresponse and weighting adjustments

In 2013, 90,630 households and 160,040 persons age 12 or older were interviewed for the NCVS. Each household was interviewed twice during the year. The response rate was 84% for households and 88% for eligible persons. Victimization that occurred outside of the United States were excluded from this report. In 2013, less than 1% of the unweighted victimizations occurred outside of the United States and were excluded from the analyses.

Estimates in this report use data from the 1995 to 2013 NCVS data files, weighted to produce annual estimates of victimization for persons age 12 or older living in U.S. households. Because the NCVS relies on a sample rather than a census of the entire U.S. population, weights are designed to inflate sample point estimates to known population totals and to compensate for survey nonresponse and other aspects of the sample design.

The NCVS data files include both person and household weights. Person weights provide an estimate of the population represented by each person in the sample. Household weights provide an estimate of the U.S. household population represented by each household in the sample. After proper adjustment, both household and person weights are also typically used to form the denominator in calculations of crime rates.

Victimization weights used in this analysis account for the number of persons present during an incident and for high-frequency repeat victimizations (i.e., series victimizations). Series victimizations are similar in type but occur with such frequency that a victim is unable to recall each individual event or describe each event in detail. Survey procedures allow NCVS interviewers to identify and classify these similar victimizations as series victimizations and to collect detailed information on only the most recent incident in the series.

The weight counts series incidents as the actual number of incidents reported by the victim, up to a maximum of 10 incidents. Including series victimizations in national rates results in large increases in the level of violent victimization; however, trends in violence are generally similar, regardless of whether series victimizations are included. In 2013, series incidents accounted for about 1% of all victimizations and 4% of all violent victimizations. Weighting series incidents as the number of incidents up to a maximum of 10 incidents

**TABLE 11**  
Number of female students ages 18 to 24 enrolled in post-secondary institutions according to the NCVS and NCES, 1997–2011

Year	Estimate	National Crime Victimization Survey		Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System
		Lower confidence level	Upper confidence level	
1997	4,090,000	3,687,000	4,494,000	4,409,000
1998	4,122,000	3,755,000	4,489,000	4,571,000
1999	4,498,000	4,028,000	4,967,000	4,769,000
2000	4,441,000	4,035,000	4,847,000	4,959,000
2001	4,513,000	4,028,000	4,997,000	5,186,000
2002	4,874,000	4,292,000	5,456,000	5,467,000
2003	5,074,000	4,610,000	5,538,000	5,602,000
2004	5,139,000	4,606,000	5,671,000	5,713,000
2005	5,217,000	4,680,000	5,755,000	5,683,000
2006	5,297,000	4,783,000	5,810,000	5,864,000
2007	5,611,000	5,136,000	6,087,000	5,994,000
2008	5,658,000	5,195,000	6,121,000	6,208,000
2009	5,781,000	5,320,000	6,241,000	6,580,000
2010	6,262,000	5,781,000	6,743,000	6,685,000
2011	6,222,000	5,710,000	6,735,000	6,723,000

Note: See appendix table 12 for standard errors.

Sources: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 1997–2011; and National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System, 1997–2011.

produces more reliable estimates of crime levels, while the cap at 10 minimizes the effect of extreme outliers on rates. Additional information on the series enumeration is detailed in the report *Methods for Counting High-Frequency Repeat Victimization in the National Crime Victimization Survey* (NCJ 237308, BJS web, April 2012).

### Standard error computations

When national estimates are derived from a sample, as with the NCVS, it is important to use caution when comparing one estimate to another estimate or when comparing estimates over time. Although one estimate may be larger than another, estimates based on a sample have some degree of sampling error. The sampling error of an estimate depends on several factors, including the amount of variation in the responses and the size of the sample. When the sampling error around an estimate is taken into account, the estimates that appear different may not be statistically different.

One measure of the sampling error associated with an estimate is the standard error. The standard error can vary from one estimate to the next. Generally, an estimate with a small standard error provides a more reliable approximation of the true value than an estimate with a large standard error. Estimates with relatively large standard errors are associated with less precision and reliability and should be interpreted with caution.

To generate standard errors around numbers and estimates from the NCVS, the Census Bureau produced generalized variance function (GVF) parameters for BJS. The GVFs take into account aspects of the NCVS complex sample design and represent the curve fitted to a selection of individual standard errors based on the Jackknife Repeated Replication technique. The GVF parameters were used to generate standard errors for each point estimate (e.g., counts, percentages, and rates) in this report.

BJS conducted tests to determine whether differences in estimated numbers, percentages, and rates in this report were statistically significant once the sampling error was taken into account. Using statistical programs developed specifically for the NCVS, all comparisons in the text were tested for significance. The primary test procedure was the Student's t-statistic, which tests the difference between two sample estimates. Differences described as higher, lower, or different passed a test at the 0.05 level of statistical significance (95% confidence level). Differences described as somewhat, slightly, or marginally different, or with some indication of difference, passed a test at the 0.10 level of statistical significance (90% confidence level). Caution must be taken when comparing estimates not explicitly discussed in this report.

Data users can use the estimates and the standard errors of the estimates provided in this report to generate a confidence interval around the estimate as a measure of the margin of error. The following example illustrates how standard errors can be used to generate confidence intervals:

According to the NCVS, for the period 1995–2013, the rate of rape and sexual assault for female students ages 18 to 24 was 6.1 per 1,000 persons (see table 1). Using the GVFs, it was determined that the estimated victimization rate has a standard error of 0.56 (see appendix table 2). A confidence interval around the estimate was generated by multiplying the standard errors by  $\pm 1.96$  (the t-score of a normal, two-tailed

distribution that excludes 2.5% at either end of the distribution). Therefore, the 95% confidence interval around the 6.1 estimate is  $6.1 \pm (0.56 \times 1.96)$  or (5.0 to 7.2). In other words, if different samples using the same procedures were taken from the U.S. female student population, 95% of the time the rape and sexual assault rate would fall between 5.0 and 7.2 per 1,000 persons.

In this report, BJS also calculated a coefficient of variation (CV) for all estimates, representing the ratio of the standard error to the estimate. CVs provide a measure of reliability and a means to compare the precision of estimates across measures with differing levels or metrics. In cases in which the CV was greater than 50%, or the unweighted sample had 10 or fewer cases, the estimate was noted with a “!” symbol. (Interpret data with caution. Estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases, or the coefficient of variation is greater than 50%.)

### Methodological changes to the NCVS in 2006

Methodological changes implemented in 2006 may have affected the crime estimates for that year to such an extent that they are not comparable to estimates from other years. Evaluation of 2007 and later data from the NCVS conducted by BJS and the Census Bureau found a high degree of confidence that estimates for 2007 through 2013 are consistent with and comparable to estimates for 2005 and previous years. The reports, *Criminal Victimization, 2006*, NCJ 219413, December 2007; *Criminal Victimization, 2007*, NCJ 224390, December 2008; *Criminal Victimization, 2008*, NCJ 227777, September 2009; *Criminal Victimization, 2009*, NCJ 231327, October 2010; *Criminal Victimization, 2010*, NCJ 235508, September 2011; *Criminal Victimization, 2011*, NCJ 239437, October 2012; *Criminal Victimization, 2012*, NCJ 243389, October 2013; and *Criminal Victimization, 2013*, NCJ 247648, September 2014, are available on the BJS website.



# Appendix 1

## Differences between the NCVS and other surveys measuring rape and sexual assault in a college-age population

The NCVS is one of several surveys used to study rape and sexual assault in the college-age population. In addition to the NCVS, two recent survey efforts used in research on rape and sexual assault of college students are the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) and the Campus Sexual Assault Study (CSA). Each of these surveys has a different purpose and methodological approach than the NCVS. Depending on which of the three data sources are used, researchers will generate different estimates of the prevalence and frequency of rape and sexual assault victimization. Some of these differences include—

- Survey context and scope.** In a 2014 report on the measurement of rape and sexual assault in the NCVS and other federal surveys, the National Research Council (NRC) of the National Academies of Sciences described survey context as “a major contributor of differences in the estimates of rape and sexual assault” across different data collections.<sup>9</sup> Survey context refers to how the survey is described to respondents through notification letters, survey questions, or the interviewer. The NCVS is an omnibus survey designed to collect information on experiences with a broad range of crimes. It is likewise presented to respondents as a survey about criminal victimization. Because victims of rape or sexual assault may not consider their victimization a crime, this context could discourage or suppress recall and reporting of those incidents.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, because the NCVS covers a wide range of criminal victimization, the number of screening questions related to rape and sexual assault are limited.

<sup>9</sup>National Research Council. (2014). *Estimating the incidence of rape and sexual assault*, p. 96.

<sup>10</sup>Krebs, C.P., Lindquist, C.H., Warner, T.D., Fisher, B.S., & Martin, S.L. (2007). The Campus Sexual Assault (CSA) study. Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/221153.pdf>, p. 15.

In comparison, the NISVS focused on sexual violence, stalking, and intimate partner violence and was presented as a survey collecting data on a range of behaviors that impact public health. This public health perspective may encourage respondents to recall and report on experiences that they may not typically think of as criminal victimization. It also may result in the collection of incidents that may not be considered criminal behavior. Similarly, the CSA study focused specifically on rape and sexual assault, also from a public health and safety perspective.

- Definitions of rape and sexual assault.** The NCVS, NISVS, and CSA define rape and sexual assault slightly differently. The NCVS definition is shaped from a criminal justice perspective and includes threatened, attempted, and completed rape and sexual assault against males and females (see *Methodology*). Penetration due to coercion is included in the definition of rape, but the survey does not specifically ask about incidents in which the victim was unable to provide consent because of drug or alcohol consumption. Because the NISVS is focused on rape and sexual assault from a public health perspective, the scope of sexual violence included in NISVS is broader than the definitions used in the NCVS. In NISVS, sexual violence includes threatened, attempted, or completed rape, including incidents in which the victim was unable to provide consent due to drug or alcohol use; forced penetration of another person; sexual coercion, which includes nonphysical pressure to engage in sex; unwanted sexual contact, including forcible kissing, fondling, or grabbing; and noncontact unwanted sexual experiences, which do not involve physical contact.<sup>11</sup> The CSA definition of rape and sexual assault included unwanted sexual contact due to force and due to incapacitation, but excluded unwanted sexual contact due to verbal or emotional coercion.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup>National Research Council. (2014). *Estimating the incidence of rape and sexual assault*, p. 86.

<sup>12</sup>Krebs, C.P., Lindquist, C.H., Warner, T.D., Fisher, B.S., & Martin, S.L. (2007). The Campus Sexual Assault (CSA) study. Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/221153.pdf>, p. 1–3.

**TABLE 12**  
Summary of major methodological differences among the NCVS, NISVS, and CSA

	NCVS (2013)	NISVS (2011)	CSA (2007)
<b>Purpose</b>	To gather information on victims of crime both reported and not reported to police in the United States	To gather information related to the public health consequences of intimate partner violence; sexual violence; and related behaviors, such as stalking	To gather data on the prevalence and consequences of rape and sexual assault against college students
<b>Population surveyed</b>	Representative sample of persons age 12 or older residing in households in the United States	Representative sample of adults in the United States	Stratified random sample of students at two large public universities
<b>Survey scope</b>	A range of violent and property crimes	Sexual violence, stalking, and intimate partner violence	Rape and sexual assault
<b>Data collection mode</b>	In-person and telephone interviews	Random digit dialing	Self-administered, web-based
<b>Response rate</b>	88% person; 74% combined	33%	33% to 43% for males and females at each of the two schools
<b>Bounded estimates to control for telescoping</b>	Yes	No	No



- **Longitudinal versus cross-sectional design.** Both the CSA and NISVS were cross-section data collections administered to the sample a single point in time that asked about events that occurred during a specified reference period. The NCVS is a longitudinal survey administered seven times to the same sampled household, with questions asked about events occurring since the last interview. Longitudinal surveys like the NCVS have the advantage of bounding the reference period and ensuring that events occurring outside of that reference period are not included in estimates. Since research has suggested that traumatic events, such as rape and sexual assault, may be particularly prone to telescoping (i.e., the reporting of events occurring outside of a reference period as though they occurred within the specified period), unbounded surveys may have artificially high incident rates due to events occurring outside of the reference period being telescoped in.

- **Question wording.** The language and ordering of questions in a survey may affect whether a respondent indicated that an incident occurred. The three surveys used different approaches to asking about experiences with rape and sexual assault. The NCVS used a two-phased approach to identifying incidents of rape and sexual assault. Initially, a screener was administered, with cues designed to trigger the respondent's recollection of event and ascertain whether the respondent experienced victimization during the reference period. The screener questions directly focused on rape and sexual assault were—

- (Other than any incidents already mentioned), has anyone attacked or threatened you in any of these ways:... (e) any rape, attempted rape, or other type of sexual attack;
- Incidents involving forced or unwanted sexual acts are often difficult to talk about. (Other than any incidents already mentioned), have you been forced or coerced to engage in unwanted sexual activity by (a) someone you didn't know before, (b) a casual acquaintance? OR (c) someone you know well?

Even if the respondent did not respond affirmatively to these specific screeners on rape and unwanted sexual contact, the respondent could still be classified as a rape or sexual assault victim if a rape or unwanted sexual contact was reported during the stage-two incident report.

Unlike the NCVS which used terms like rape and unwanted sexual activity to identify victims of rape and sexual assault, the NISVS and CSA used behaviorally specific questions to ascertain whether the respondent experienced rape or sexual assault. For example, one question on the NISVS survey read:

- When you were drunk, high, drugged, or passed out and unable to consent, how many people ever...

- had vaginal sex with you? By vaginal sex, we mean that {if female: a man or boy put his penis in your vagina} {if male: a women or girl made you put your penis in her vagina}.
- {if male} made you perform anal sex, meaning that they made you put your penis into their anus? made you receive anal sex, meaning they put their penis into your anus?
- made you perform oral sex, meaning that they put their penis in your mouth or made you penetrate their vagina or anus with your mouth?
- made you receive oral sex, meaning that they put their mouth on your {if male: penis} {if female: vagina} or anus?<sup>13</sup>

Questions on the CSA used similar behaviorally specific cues to identify victims of rape and sexual assault.

- **Survey mode.** The NCVS, NISVS, and CSA used different modes of administration. The CSA study was a self-administered web survey sent via email to students at the participating colleges. Self-administered surveys are not subject to interviewer effects, but may result in lower response rates or confusion over question wording that could otherwise be clarified by an interviewer. The NISVS was a random digit dialing telephone survey. Telephone surveys exclude respondents without a phone, may be subject to sampling bias because of multiple phones associated with particular households or individuals, and may be subject to nonresponse bias due to low response rates.<sup>14</sup> The NCVS used a multimode design that begins with an initial in-person interview, followed by telephone follow-ups every 6 months for the 3.5 years the household is in the sample. While respondents can develop rapport with the interviewer and familiarity with the survey questions, the NCVS may be more subject to interviewer effects than the CSA or NISVS.

- **Population surveyed.** The NCVS and NISVS were administered to a national sample of noninstitutionalized persons, meaning that findings are generalizable to the noninstitutionalized U.S. population of persons ages 18 to 24 with some exceptions. The NCVS uses a household-based sample, so persons who are homeless are excluded from the scope. The NISVS was administered using random digit dialing, which excludes persons without a telephone. In comparison, the CSA was administered to a stratified random sample of students at two large public universities.<sup>15</sup> Because of the limited population included

<sup>13</sup>National Research Council. (2014). *Estimating the incidence of rape and sexual assault*, p. 89.

<sup>14</sup>National Research Council. (2014). *Estimating the incidence of rape and sexual assault*, p. 102.

<sup>15</sup>Krebs, C.P., Lindquist, C.H., Warner, T.D., Fisher, B.S., & Martin, S.L. (2007). The Campus Sexual Assault (CSA) study. Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/221153.pdf>, p. 3–11.

in the CSA, it should not be assumed that findings from the survey are representative of the population of persons ages 18 to 24 or even to college students specifically.

- **Survey response rates and bias.** Surveys with low response rates have an increased potential for nonresponse bias compared to surveys with higher response rates.<sup>16</sup> Nonresponse bias means that those who participated in the survey may differ in important ways from those who did not participate, which could in turn impact the survey findings. In 2013, the NCVS had an 88% response rate for eligible persons and a combined persons and household response rate of 74%, while the 2011 NISVS had an overall response rate of 33.1%, and the CSA response rate was between 33% and 43% for males and females at the two schools.<sup>17,18</sup>

Measuring rape and sexual assault victimization is an evolving field. BJS is currently engaged in a variety of projects exploring ways to improve the measurement of rape and sexual assault through the NCVS and related surveys.

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<sup>16</sup>National Research Council. (2014). *Estimating the incidence of rape and sexual assault*, p. 127.

<sup>17</sup>Breiding, M.J., Smith, S.G., Basile, K.C., Walters, M.L., Chen, J., & Merrick, M.T. (2014). Prevalence and characteristics of sexual violence, stalking, and intimate partner violence victimization — National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, United States, 2011. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, Surveillance Summaries*, 63(8). Retrieved from [http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss6308a1.htm?s\\_cid=ss6308a1\\_e](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss6308a1.htm?s_cid=ss6308a1_e)

<sup>18</sup>Krebs, C.P., Lindquist, C.H., Warner, T.D., Fisher, B.S., & Martin, S.L. (2007). The Campus Sexual Assault (CSA) study. Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/221153.pdf>, p. 3-3.

## APPENDIX TABLE 1

Estimates and standard errors for figure 2: Rate of rape or sexual assault for females, by age and post-secondary enrollment status, 1997–2013

	Estimates			Standard errors		
	Students ages 18–24 <sup>a</sup>	Nonstudents ages 18–24 <sup>b</sup>	Non-college-age females <sup>c</sup>	Students ages 18–24 <sup>a</sup>	Nonstudents ages 18–24 <sup>b</sup>	Non-college-age females <sup>c</sup>
1997	9.2	7.9	3.6	2.9	2.0	0.5
1998	7.8	8.9	3.1	2.9	2.3	0.5
1999	6.0	11.2	3.5	2.1	2.3	0.4
2000	7.1	12.2	2.8	2.3	2.5	0.4
2001	8.8	11.2	3.0	2.7	2.3	0.4
2002	8.9	10.0	2.2	2.7	2.2	0.3
2003	7.6	8.8	2.2	2.4	2.1	0.3
2004	6.5	7.0	1.8	2.4	2.0	0.3
2005	4.7	5.6	1.6	1.9	1.6	0.3
2006	5.4	5.5	1.7	2.1	1.7	0.3
2007	5.5	5.4	1.7	1.8	1.5	0.3
2008	5.2	6.7	1.9	2.1	2.0	0.3
2009	3.7	8.3	1.6	1.5	2.1	0.3
2010	4.1 !	8.4	1.6	1.8	2.3	0.3
2011	4.6	7.1	1.4	1.7	1.9	0.3
2012	5.9	4.1	1.3	2.0	1.4	0.3
2013	4.4	4.3	1.4	1.4	1.2	0.2

Note: Estimates based on 3-year rolling averages centered on the most recent year.

! Interpret with caution; estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases, or coefficient of variation is greater than 50%.

<sup>a</sup>Includes female victims ages 18 to 24 enrolled part time or full time in a post-secondary institution (i.e., college or university, trade school, or vocational school).

<sup>b</sup>Includes female victims ages 18 to 24 not enrolled in a post-secondary institution.

<sup>c</sup>Includes females ages 12 to 17 and age 25 or older.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 1995–2013.

## APPENDIX TABLE 2

Standard errors for table 1 and figure 3: Rape or sexual assault victimization against females ages 18 to 24, by type of victimization and post-secondary enrollment status, 1995–2013

	Students		Nonstudents	
	Average annual number	Rate	Average annual number	Rate
Total	10,416	0.6	15,603	0.5
Completed rape	5,755	0.3	9,499	0.3
Attempted rape	5,014	0.3	7,230	0.2
Sexual assault	5,599	0.3	7,808	0.2
Threat of rape or sexual assault	3,292	0.2	4,064	0.1

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 1995–2013.

## APPENDIX TABLE 3

Standard errors for table 2: Rate of violent victimization among females ages 18 to 24, by type of violence and post-secondary enrollment status, 1995–2013

	Students	Nonstudents
Violent crime	2.5	2.8
Serious violence	1.0	1.1
Rape and sexual assault	0.6	0.5
Robbery	0.5	0.5
Aggravated assault	0.6	0.7
Simple assault	1.8	2.0

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 1995–2013.

## APPENDIX TABLE 4

Standard errors for table 3: Rape and sexual assault victimization, by sex of victim and post-secondary enrollment status, 1995–2013

	Students			Nonstudents		
	Average annual number	Percent of victimizations	Rate	Average annual number	Percent of victimizations	Rate
Male	4,557	2.7%	0.3	2,976	1.0%	0.1
Female	10,416	2.9	2.9	15,603	1.2	0.5

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 1995–2013.

## APPENDIX TABLE 5

Standard errors for table 4: Location, victim activity, and time of day of the rape/sexual assault victimization among females ages 18 to 24, by post-secondary enrollment status, 1995–2013

	Students	Nonstudents
<b>Location where crime occurred</b>		
At or near victim's home	3.9%	3.0%
At or near home of friend/relative/acquaintance	3.6	2.1
Commercial place/parking lot or garage	2.8	2.0
School	1.5!	0.7!
Open areas/public transportation/other	2.6	2.0
<b>Activity when crime occurred</b>		
Traveling to or from other place/shopping or errands/leisure activity away from home	4.1%	2.6%
Sleeping/other activities at home	3.7	2.9
Working or traveling to work	2.2!	2.0
Attending school or traveling to school	1.7!	0.8!
Other/unknown	1.3!	1.0
<b>Time of day</b>		
Daytime (6 a.m. – 6 p.m.)	3.7%	2.8%
Night (6 a.m. – 6 p.m.)	3.9	2.9
Unknown	1.2!	0.6!

! Interpret with caution; estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases, or coefficient of variation is greater than 50%.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 1995–2013.

## APPENDIX TABLE 6

Standard errors for table 5: Presence of weapon and injury to victim in rape or sexual assault victimizations against females ages 18 to 24, by enrollment status, 1995–2013

	Students	Nonstudents
<b>Involving weapons</b>		
No weapon	3.2%	2.2%
Weapon	2.4!	1.8
Don't know	2.0	1.1
<b>Involving injuries</b>		
No injury	4.0%	2.9%
Injury	4.0	2.8
Treatment for injuries		
No treatment	4.0%	2.9%
Any treatment	3.9	2.8

! Interpret with caution; estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases, or coefficient of variation is greater than 50%.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 1995–2013.

## APPENDIX TABLE 7

Standard errors for table 6: Victim–offender relationship in rape or sexual assault victimizations against females ages 18 to 24, by post-secondary enrollment status of victim, 1995–2013

Victim–offender relationship	Students	Nonstudents
Stranger	3.2%	2.3%
Nonstranger	3.4%	2.4%
Intimate partner	3.4	2.7
Relative	0.9!	0.5!
Well-known/casual acquaintance	4.1	2.8

! Interpret with caution; estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases, or coefficient of variation is greater than 50%.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 1995–2013.

## APPENDIX TABLE 8

Standard errors for table 7: Perceived offender characteristics in rape and sexual assault victimizations against females ages 18 to 24, by post-secondary enrollment status, 1995–2013

	Students	Nonstudents
<b>Number of offenders</b>		
One	1.9%	1.7%
Two or more	1.6!	1.1
Unknown	~	1.0!
<b>Age</b>		
18–20	2.9%	1.9%
21–29	4.1	3.0
30 or older	3.3	2.4
Other mixed group	1.0!	0.8
Unknown	1.9	1.3
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	1.4%	1.7%
Female	0.6!	0.9!
Mixed group/unknown	0.9!	1.2!
<b>Race</b>		
White	3.9%	2.9%
Black	3.1	2.4
Other/mixed group	2.3	1.8
Unknown	2.0	1.3
<b>Alcohol/drug use</b>		
Yes	4.0%	2.9%
No	3.4	2.8
Don't know/unknown	3.6	2.4

~Not applicable.

! Interpret with caution; estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases, or coefficient of variation is greater than 50%.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 1995–2013

**APPENDIX TABLE 9**

**Standard errors for figure 1 and 8: Rape or sexual assault victimizations against females ages 18 to 24 reported and not reported to police and reasons for not reporting, by post-secondary enrollment status, 1995–2013**

	Students	Nonstudents
Reported	3.1%	3.7%
Not reported	2.4%	2.8%
Reason for not reporting		
Reported to different official	1.5!	2.3
Personal matter	3.8	2.9
Not important enough to respondent	2.7	1.4
Police would or could not do anything to help	2.4	2.6
Did not want to get offender in trouble with law	2.6	1.9
Advised not to report	~!	0.6!
Fear of reprisal	3.5	2.7
Other reason	4.1	3.3

~Not applicable.

! Interpret with caution; estimate based on 10 or fewer sample cases, or coefficient of variation is greater than 50%.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 1995–2013.

**APPENDIX TABLE 10**

**Standard errors for table 9: Receipt of assistance from a victim service agency among female rape or sexual assault victims ages 18 to 24, by post-secondary enrollment status, 1995–2013**

	Students	Nonstudents
Received assistance	2.8%	2.2%
Did not receive assistance	3.1	2.3

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 1995–2013.

**APPENDIX TABLE 11**

**Standard errors for table 10: Rate of rape and sexual assault against female victims ages 18 to 24, by demographic characteristics and post-secondary enrollment status, 1995–2013**

	Students	Nonstudents
<b>Age</b>		
18–19	1.0	1.0
20–21	0.8	1.0
22–24	0.9	0.6
<b>Race/Hispanic origin</b>		
White	0.7	0.7
Black	1.4	1.0
Hispanic	1.1	0.7
Other	1.2	1.6
<b>Region</b>		
Northeast	1.1	0.8
Midwest	1.2	1.2
South	0.8	0.7
West	1.0	1.0
<b>Location of residence</b>		
Urban	0.8	0.8
Suburban	0.8	0.6
Rural	1.2	1.1

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 1995–2013.

**APPENDIX TABLE 12**

**Standard errors for table 11: Number of female students ages 18 to 24 enrolled in post-secondary institutions according to the NCVS and NCES, 1997–2011**

Year	National Crime Victimization Survey
1997	204,417
1998	185,721
1999	237,939
2000	205,519
2001	245,489
2002	294,786
2003	235,086
2004	269,608
2005	272,300
2006	260,057
2007	240,618
2008	234,551
2009	233,346
2010	243,656
2011	259,479

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 1997–2011.



The Bureau of Justice Statistics of the U.S. Department of Justice is the principal federal agency responsible for measuring crime, criminal victimization, criminal offenders, victims of crime, correlates of crime, and the operation of criminal and civil justice systems at the federal, state, tribal, and local levels. BJS collects, analyzes, and disseminates reliable and valid statistics on crime and justice systems in the United States, supports improvements to state and local criminal justice information systems, and participates with national and international organizations to develop and recommend national standards for justice statistics. William J. Sabol is acting director.

This report was written by Sofi Sinozich, BJS intern, and Lynn Langton, Ph.D. Jennifer L. Truman verified the report.

Jill Thomas and Lynne McConnell edited the report. Barbara Quinn produced the report.

December 2014, NCJ 248471



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