

PERSONAL VICTIMIZATION OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Crime Victims' Institute • Criminal Justice Center • Sam Houston State University

...from the Director

This report is based on the victimization experiences of a sample of college students at seven Texas universities in 2007. Students were invited to complete an online survey about their experiences during the past two years. This study was conducted because previous research has shown that persons between 16 and 30 years of age are at the highest risk for personal victimization. Of particular importance was the information given about victimization in dating, cohabitating and marital relationships. Because the sample was drawn from Texas college students, the results have specific relevance for policymakers and victim assistance efforts at the state and local levels, and at college campuses across the state. It is our hope that the findings reported here will increase understanding of the conditions and situations that contribute to personal victimization among college students and lead to constructive ways to both prevent it and assist those who are victimized.



**Glen Kercher, Director
Crime Victims' Institute**



MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Crime Victims' Institute is to

- conduct research to examine the impact of crime on victims of all ages in order to promote a better understanding of victimization
- improve services to victims
- assist victims of crime by giving them a voice
- inform victim-related policymaking at the state and local levels.

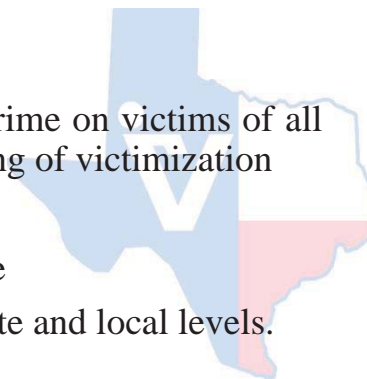


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Personal Victimization of College Students

Executive Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore aspects of personal victimization among college students in Texas. Findings were reported and discussed regarding the extent of personal victimization, factors increasing or decreasing the likelihood of personal victimization, and situational issues pertaining to the consequences of being victimized.

Some of the more noteworthy findings are:

- Approximately 26% of respondents reported being a personal crime victim within the past two years.
- The percentage of females experiencing personal victimization was substantially higher than the percentage for males. Further investigation revealed that the measures of stalking and sexual assault victimization accounted for the overall higher rate for females.
- Respondents living with a roommate or roommates were much more likely to be victims compared to respondents living alone.
- Respondents who grew up in a household headed by only the biological father and those raised primarily by their grandparents were significantly more likely to report being a victim compared to all other categories.
- Exposure to and involvement in violence is associated with personal victimization. Respondents experiencing violence between parents as children and respondents engaging in violent/personal crime were significantly more likely to be victims of personal crime compared to other respondents.
- Respondents who spent more time taking safety precautions to prevent victimization were more likely to have been victimized compared to those spending less time doing such things.
- Respondents who were personal crime victims had higher levels of fear of victimization compared to non-victims.
- Personal crime victims reported spending more time partying than non-victims.

Personal Victimization of College Students in Texas

In June of 2003, Carlton Dotson, a student-athlete playing basketball at Baylor University, shot and killed his teammate and friend, Patrick Dennehy in Waco, Texas (“Dotson-Dennehy Timeline,” 2005, June 15). This unprecedented act led to a 35-year prison sentence for the mentally disturbed Dotson, shattered dreams for the Dennehy family, and an athletic program and university decimated by scandal. This tragedy, taking place in and around the largest Baptist University in the world, made national and international headlines for weeks.

On April 16, 2007, Seung-Hui Cho, a student at Virginia Tech University, shot and killed more than thirty fellow students on campus in one of the deadliest mass killings the United States has ever witnessed (Hauser & O’Connor, 2007, April 16). Also mentally disturbed, Cho took his own life shortly after the spree of murders, but his actions sparked many university officials to change the way they handle mentally-ill students and campus security.

Although very rare, heinous events such as the two mentioned above are what many people think of when considering violence in and around college campuses. The fact is that college students are generally safer than same-aged individuals who are not college students (Baum & Klaus, 2005). However, there are many issues related to personal and violent victimization of college students that warrant the attention of researchers, policymakers, service providers, and the general community.

The purpose of this report is to shed light on the personal victimization experiences of college students in Texas. This study is based on a survey of college students from seven public universities across Texas, including a host of measures pertaining to personal victimization of college students. This report is the first of several reports based on the data collected. For this study, several measures were incorporated in order to better understand the extent and nature of personal victimization among Texas college students. These measures included lifetime experience of personal victimization; personal victimization over the past two years; family background measures; lifestyle factors; criminal behavior; and demographic data.

Overview and Review of the Literature

Personal Victimization

As mentioned, the present study is limited to criminal victimization experiences of a personal nature.¹ Such forms of victimization may or may not be violent, but must involve some form of interpersonal exchange between the victim and offender. Although many different criminal acts can be considered personal, this discussion is limited to such things as: having something taken by force (i.e., robbery); an attempt made to take something by force; being physically attacked (with or without a weapon); being coerced to engage in unwanted sexual activity (i.e., sexual assault or rape); an attempt made to forcibly engage in unwanted sexual activity; and being stalked.² It must also be mentioned that the assumption was that each of these acts was serious enough to be a violation of criminal law.

The Nature and Extent of Personal Crime Victimization

Based on estimates from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), approximately 45 out of every 1,000 American adults between the ages of 20 and 24 experience violent victimization over a year's time (Catalano, 2006; Rand & Catalano, 2007). The rate of violent victimization increases for those younger than 20 and drastically *decreases* as individuals get older. These national estimates provided by the NCVS are collected annually based on surveys of individuals age 12 and older.

Although the NCVS provides consistent estimates of victimization over time, the reports generally do not separate adults from children for those between 16 and 19 years old. In addition, these estimates are based solely on violent offenses, providing results for nonviolent personal victimizations in separate reports.

Characteristics of the victims. Based on the estimated annual violent victimization rate of approximately 22 out of every 1,000 individuals, one could be misled to think that every person has about a 2% chance of being a victim of violence during a year. However, these rates can differ dramatically based on individual and environmental characteristics as demonstrated by the age differences discussed above (Catalano, 2006; Rand & Catalano, 2007; Rennison, 2001). Indeed, studies have consistently found the following individual and environmental characteristics increase the likelihood of personal/violent victimization:

- Male gender
- Lower annual household income
- Living in an urban area
- Never being married
- Being African American

These characteristics are not causes of victimization. The fact that someone is male, of lower income, and/or African American does not mean that victimization is inevitable. Certain demographic characteristics are associated with victimization indirectly.

For example, males have higher violent victimization rates than females because they put themselves in environments conducive to violent crime more often than women. Many criminologists have argued that people are often victimized because their lifestyle and daily routines place them in situations conducive to criminal activity (Cohen & Felson, 1979). Such situations include staying out late, going to places where more crimes occur, and engaging in criminal activity (Lauritson & Heimer, 2008).

Although males are more likely to be victims of murder, aggravated assault, simple assault, and robbery, females are more likely to be victims of sexual assault and stalking (Catalano, 2006; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). The fact that women are more likely to experience certain forms of personal victimization indicates that lifestyle factors cannot account for all forms of personal victimization. Such explanations include a feminist version of the lifestyles explanation (Mustaine & Tewksbury, 2002) and theories that focus on the role of male dominance and the need to exercise power over females (Brewster, 2003).

Personal Victimization of College Students

Being a college student is usually unlike anything before or after life on campus, and most of the experiences are helpful in shaping young adults' maturity. However, many of the circumstances inherent in the typical college experience are ideal for violent and personal crime

(Fisher, Sloan, Cullen, & Lu, 1998). Many of the daily activities, lifestyles, and demographic characteristics associated with college students are also associated with a higher risk for violent victimization.

One demographic feature particularly important is the age of most students. Studies have consistently found that the peak age of violent victimization is approximately 20 years old, which is, for many college students the halfway point for attaining their degree (Fisher et al., 1998; Perkins, 1997). However, the victimization rate for college students is lower than the rate for nonstudents of the same age (Baum & Klaus, 2005). Also, most college students are unmarried, which is associated with higher victimization rates (Fisher et al., 1998).

Although many theories of victimization emphasize lifestyle factors of potential victims, such issues may be even more important when studying the college student population. The lifestyle/routine activities perspective (Cohen & Felson, 1979) of crime and victimization essentially claims that a number of things must be present for crime to take place: a willing offender; an appropriate target for the offender; and the absence of suitable protection against victimization, such as the presence of watchful neighbors (Cohen & Felson, 1979). First, the typical college experience can lead students to become suitable targets for victimization. The increase in time spent away from home and closer to criminals (particularly at night), public use of drugs and alcohol, and participation in criminal behavior all produce more chances to be victimized (Fisher et al., 1998). Many students live in small dorms, often sharing a room with one or more people they do not initially know.

Finally, as people leave home for college, they also leave many of the protections against being victimized (Fisher et al., 1998). Instead of having parents and other guardians around to protect these young people from harm, new students are left largely to their own devices at college. Because college students tend to be less careful than older adults, the lack of other guardians leaves them open for victimization.

Research Methodology

The purpose of this report is to examine the nature of personal crime victimization among Texas college students. Using a sample of college students from seven universities, we present information on the extent of personal crime victimization, as well as factors influencing the likelihood of personal victimization.

Data Collection

Results presented in this report were based on an online survey of college students from seven public universities in Texas. Schools were initially chosen in order to achieve a sample representative of all Texas college students. With cooperation from each university's administration, the email addresses of every student that had given permission for the release of this information at each school were obtained. Half of the students at each university were sent an email with a description of the study and a link to the survey. Figure 1 shows the distribution of college student respondents across the state.

Before respondents could begin the survey, they were asked several screening questions

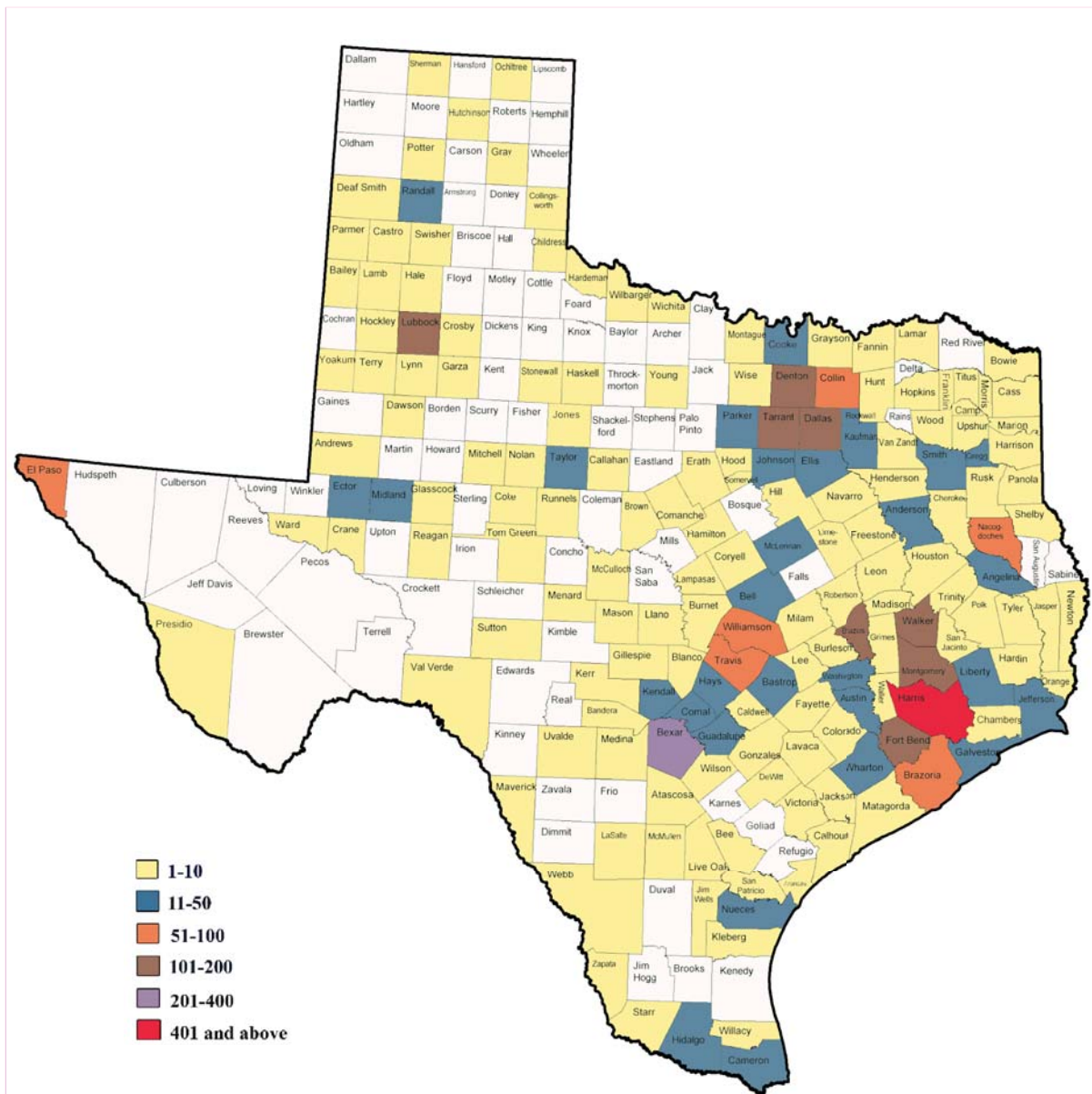


Figure 1. Distribution of College Student Respondents

to minimize the number of invalid surveys completed. In a series of questions, respondents were asked to confirm the following:

- They were at least 18 years old
- They were currently a student at a Texas university
- They had not already taken the survey

Respondents were also required to acknowledge that the survey included questions of a personal nature, as well as give informed consent before beginning. Respondents not meeting the criteria or failing to give consent were not allowed to continue the survey. This resulted in an initial sample of 4,669 cases. However, 105 cases were excluded due to missing values for all variables, and 277 more cases were excluded due to extensive missing information on critical measures. After an additional case was removed because of highly unlikely responses, the final sample size was 4,286. Finally, for most of this study, our analysis is limited to undergraduate students, which reduces the sample size to 3,894.

Variables Studied

Personal Victimization. Most victimization items were adapted from the National Youth Survey (NYS: Elliott, Huizinga, & Menard, 1989). Respondents were asked about personal victimization experiences in two ways. First, they were asked if they *ever* experienced the following:

- Had something taken directly from them by force (robbery)
- Someone *attempted* to take something directly by force (attempted robbery)
- Been attacked, injured, or beaten up by someone without the use of a weapon (aggravated assault)
- Been attacked, injured, or beaten up with a weapon (aggravated assault with a weapon)
- Forced or coerced into doing something sexually without consent (sexual assault)
- An attempt to force or coerce into doing something sexually without consent (attempted sexual assault)
- Been stalked by someone³ (Appendix A – survey)

Second, if respondents reported ever experiencing any of these things, they were asked how many times it occurred during the past 24 months.

Issues associated with victimization experiences. If respondents reported ever experiencing victimization, they were asked several follow-up questions. Because these questions require some accuracy in recalling specific events, only responses from those who experienced a particular act within the past two years were included in the analysis. Each of these items was measured for all seven specific acts. First, respondents were asked if they required medical attention because of being victimized (asked for each type of victimization). Second, respondents were asked who the perpetrator was (stranger, family member, friend, acquaintance/coworker, significant other, did not know, or other). Third, respondents were asked if they reported the most recent incident to the police. Finally, respondents were asked if they were under the influence of drugs or alcohol during the victimization (not asked for the stalking item).

Lifestyle measures. Past research indicates a strong link between lifestyle factors and experiencing personal victimization.⁴ Listed below are the lifestyle measures used in this study:

- Type of housing while at school (dorm, on-campus apartment, off-campus apartment, off-campus house, or off-campus with family)
- Co-ed dorm or single-sex (if applicable)
- Whether or not respondents live with a roommate or roommates
- Sorority or fraternity membership
- Time spent partying on or near campus per week
- Safety precautions: Respondents were asked to indicate how often (never, sometimes, frequently, or always) they took the following safety precautions
 - ◊ Carried a firearm
 - ◊ Carried mace
 - ◊ Carried keys defensively
 - ◊ Asked someone to walk you to your destination

- ◊ Asked someone to watch your property
- ◊ Attended a campus crime awareness program
- ◊ Used any campus-sponsored crime-prevention service
- ◊ Avoided specific areas of campus during the day for fear of being victimized
- ◊ Avoided specific areas of campus at night
- ◊ Lock your doors when you leave your room, but not your building
- ◊ Lock your vehicle doors when you park on or near campus
- Fear of crime: Respondents were asked to rate on a scale of zero to five (zero being not afraid at all and five being very afraid) the level of fear they have of being victimized for the following types of criminal acts:
 - ◊ Being assaulted
 - ◊ Having your car stolen
 - ◊ Being robbed
 - ◊ Having your home burglarized
 - ◊ Having your property damaged by vandals
 - ◊ Being sexually assaulted

Family history. Questions were asked about family history that may be associated with personal victimization, such as:

- The composition of respondents' parental unit during childhood:
 - ◊ Both biological parents
 - ◊ One biological parent and one step-parent
 - ◊ Only the biological mother
 - ◊ Only the biological father
 - ◊ Grandparent or grandparents
 - ◊ Other
- Whether or not violence between respondents' parents took place in the household

Participation in personal criminal acts. Questions were asked about involvement in personal criminal acts over the past 24 months. As with the victimization items, most criminal behavior measures were adapted from the NYS (Elliott et al., 1989), with the exception of stalking variables (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998; 2000). Respondents were separated based on whether or not they reported involvement in any of the following behaviors:

- Using force to get something(s) from someone (robbery)
- Attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting him/her (aggravated assault)
- Engaged or tried to engage in sexual behavior against someone's will (sexual assault)
- Paid someone for sexual relations (prostitution)
- Been paid for sexual relations (prostitution)
- Stalked anyone

Results

Descriptive Information

Characteristics of Respondents. General demographic information is shown in Figures 2 - 6 for gender, race/ethnicity, relationship status, employment status, and academic standing. Gender, race, and relationship status were overrepresented by females, Whites, and single (never married) respondents respectively. Although the relationship status results were not surprising, males, African Americans, and Hispanics were underrepresented when compared with enrollment statistics for the schools involved in this study. Regarding employment status, the bulk of respondents reported being employed part-time (47.6%) or not employed at all (42.7%). The breakdown for academic standing did not deviate much from population information for the schools, though the percentage in each classification increased from lowest (freshman) to highest (senior). Finally, the average age of respondents was 21.7.

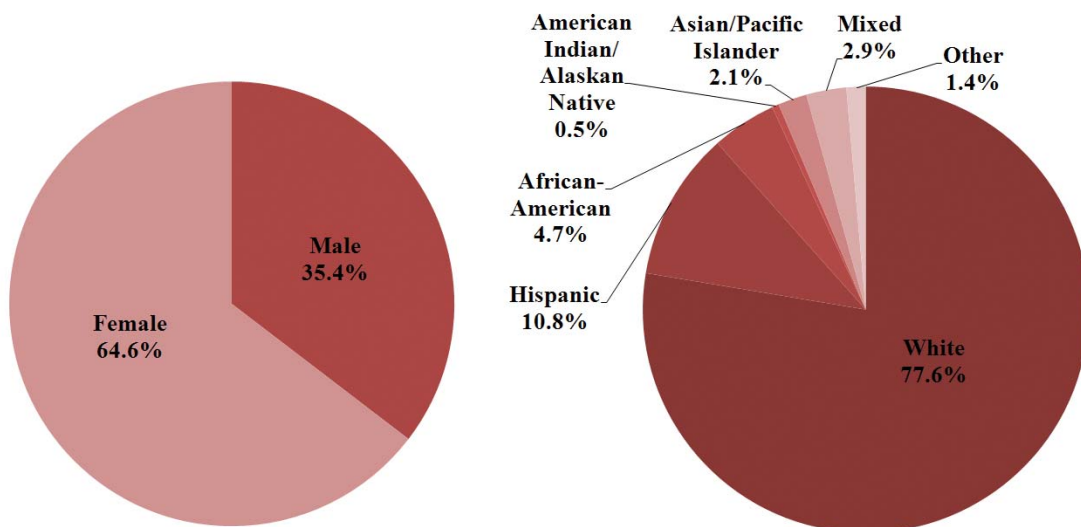


Figure 2. Gender of Respondents

Figure 3. Race/Ethnicity of Respondents

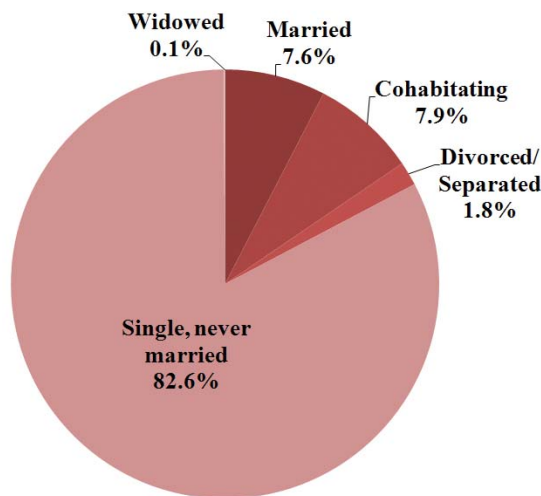


Figure 4. Relationship Status of Respondents

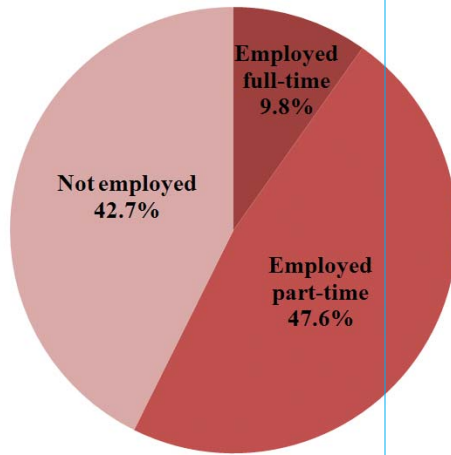


Figure 5. Employment Status of Respondents

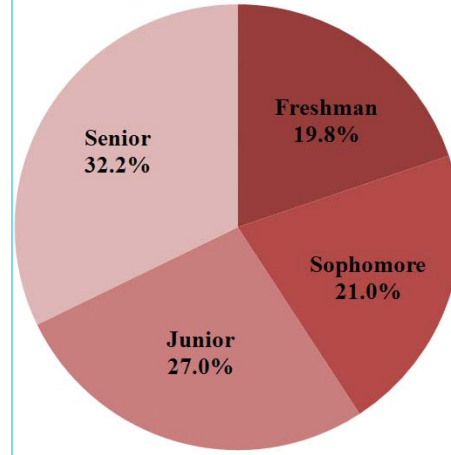


Figure 6. Academic Standing of Respondents

Lifestyle Factors

Basic statistics on lifestyle factors can be found in Figures 7 - 10, with percentages on factors relating to living arrangements, activities associated with campus life, and safety precautions.⁵ Regarding living arrangements, respondents were more likely to report living in an off-campus apartment (32.8%), dorm (27.2%), or off-campus house (20.1%). Among those living in dorms, 63.2% reported living in a co-ed dorm. In addition, most respondents (69.4%) reported that they lived with at least one roommate, while a minority of participants (12.4%) stated that they were in a fraternity or sorority.

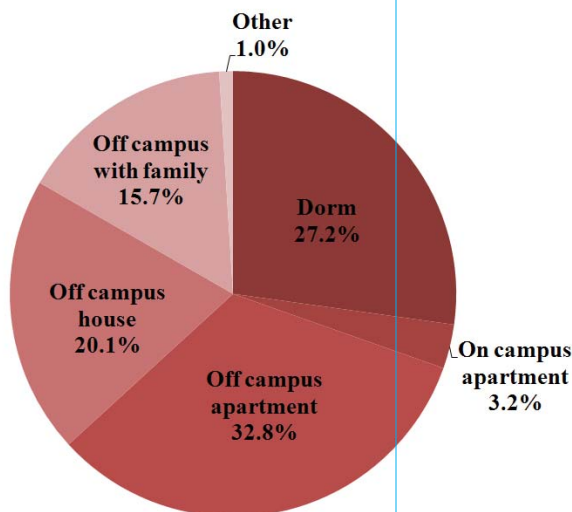


Figure 7. Living Arrangements While at School

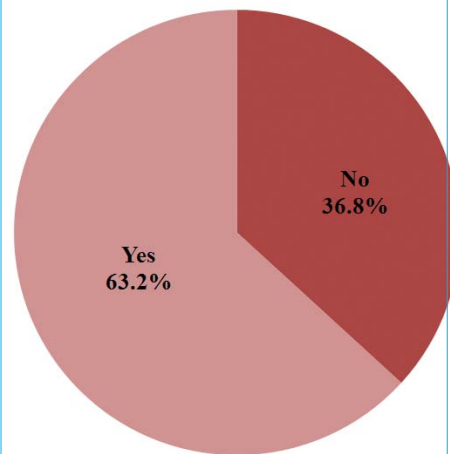


Figure 8. Respondents Living in a Co-ed Dorm

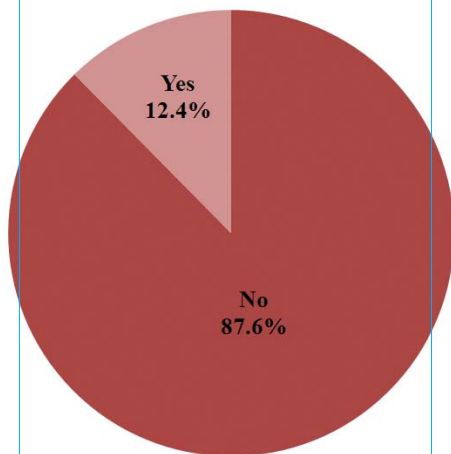


Figure 9. Respondents a Member of a Fraternity or Sorority

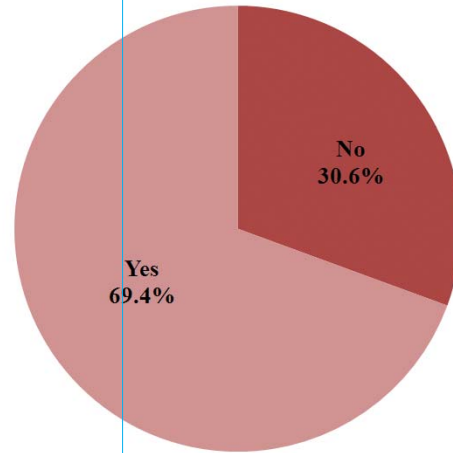


Figure 10. Respondents Living with Roommates

Family Background

Descriptive information for several family background items are also shown in Figures 11 and 12. Most respondents reported being raised primarily by both biological parents (76.7%), followed by 10.9% being raised by only their biological mother. Approximately 15% claimed they witnessed violence between their parents when they were growing up.

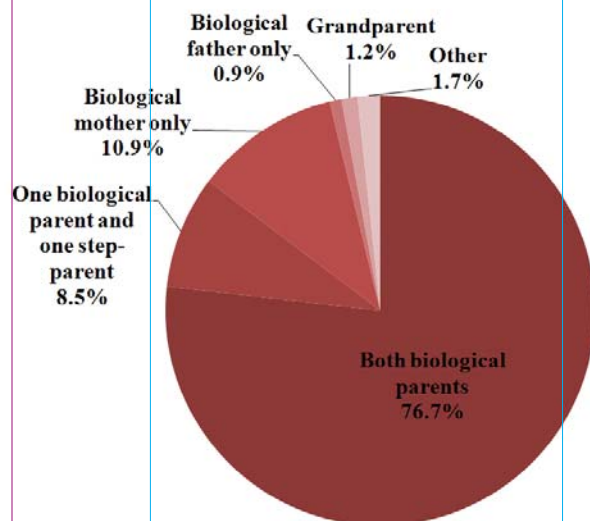


Figure 11. Primary Caregiver of Respondents

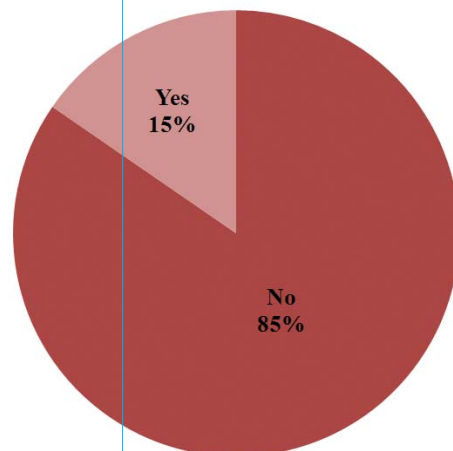


Figure 12. Respondents Witnessed Physical Violence Between Parents

Personal Victimization

Information on lifetime experiences and prevalence over the past 24 months for personal victimization is shown in Figures 13 and 14, respectively. Overall, 43.1% (n=1678) of respondents claimed experiencing at least one of the personal victimizations in their lifetime, while 26.2% were victimized within the past two years. When asked about lifetime victimization, attempted sexual assault was the most reported, followed by stalking. When asked about victimization in the past two years, the largest proportion of victims reported stalking victimization, followed by attempted sexual assault, and completed sexual assault. The type of victimization reported the least was being attacked with a weapon.

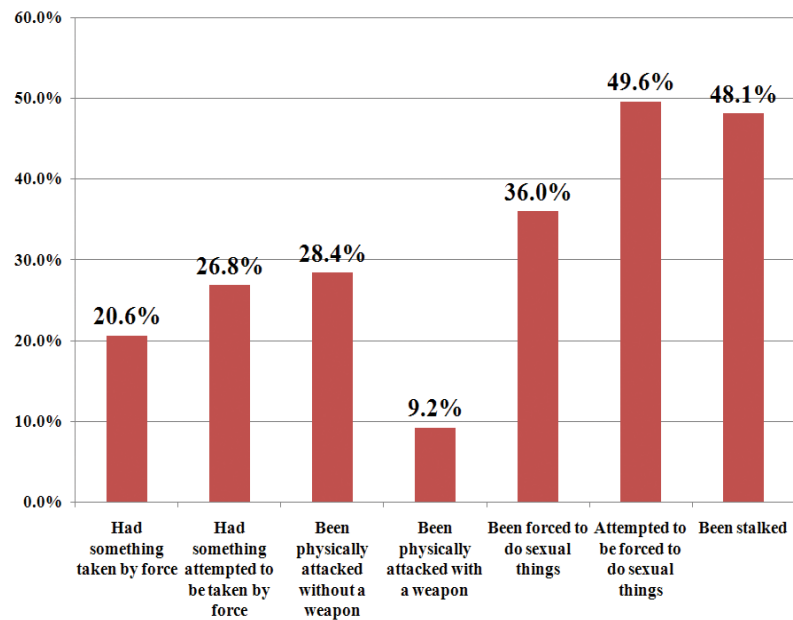


Figure 13. Type of Personal Victimization Over Lifetime

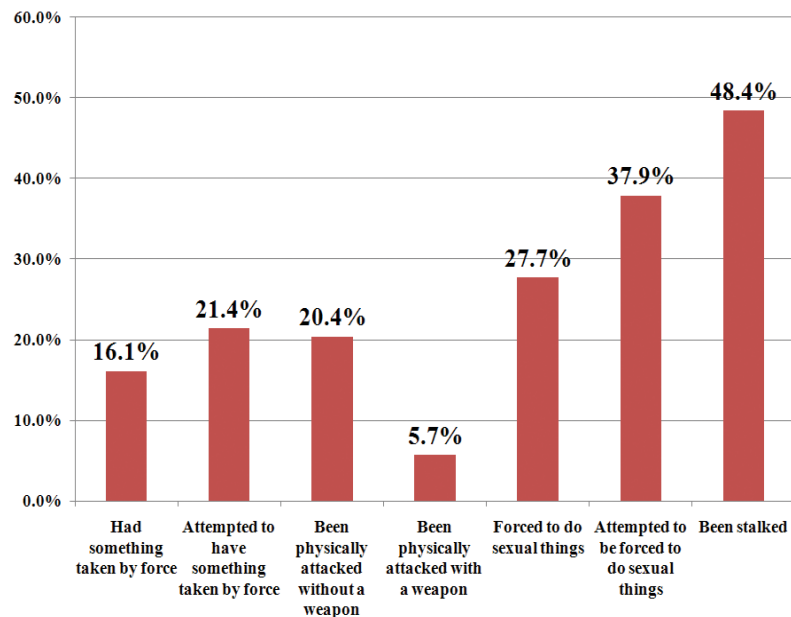


Figure 14. Type of Personal Victimization Over Past Two Years

Unfortunately, design differences between the present study and prior published research on college student victimization limit the ability to make comparisons. There appears to be no prior research addressing lifetime prevalence of personal victimization among college students. It was also difficult to compare the two-year victimization prevalence numbers with other studies. First, most previous research has used a one-year or six-month time frame rather than two years. Results based on two years would likely show higher rates compared to results from shorter time frames. Second, many studies of college student victimization use a measure of violent victimization, excluding nonviolent personal victimization. In general, the addition of non-violent personal victimization into a measure of violent victimization leads to inflated rates. Third, studies that *do* incorporate personal victimization rarely include a measure of stalking. Behavioral measures of stalking such as the one used in this study, tend to result in a relatively high percentage of respondents reporting victimization.

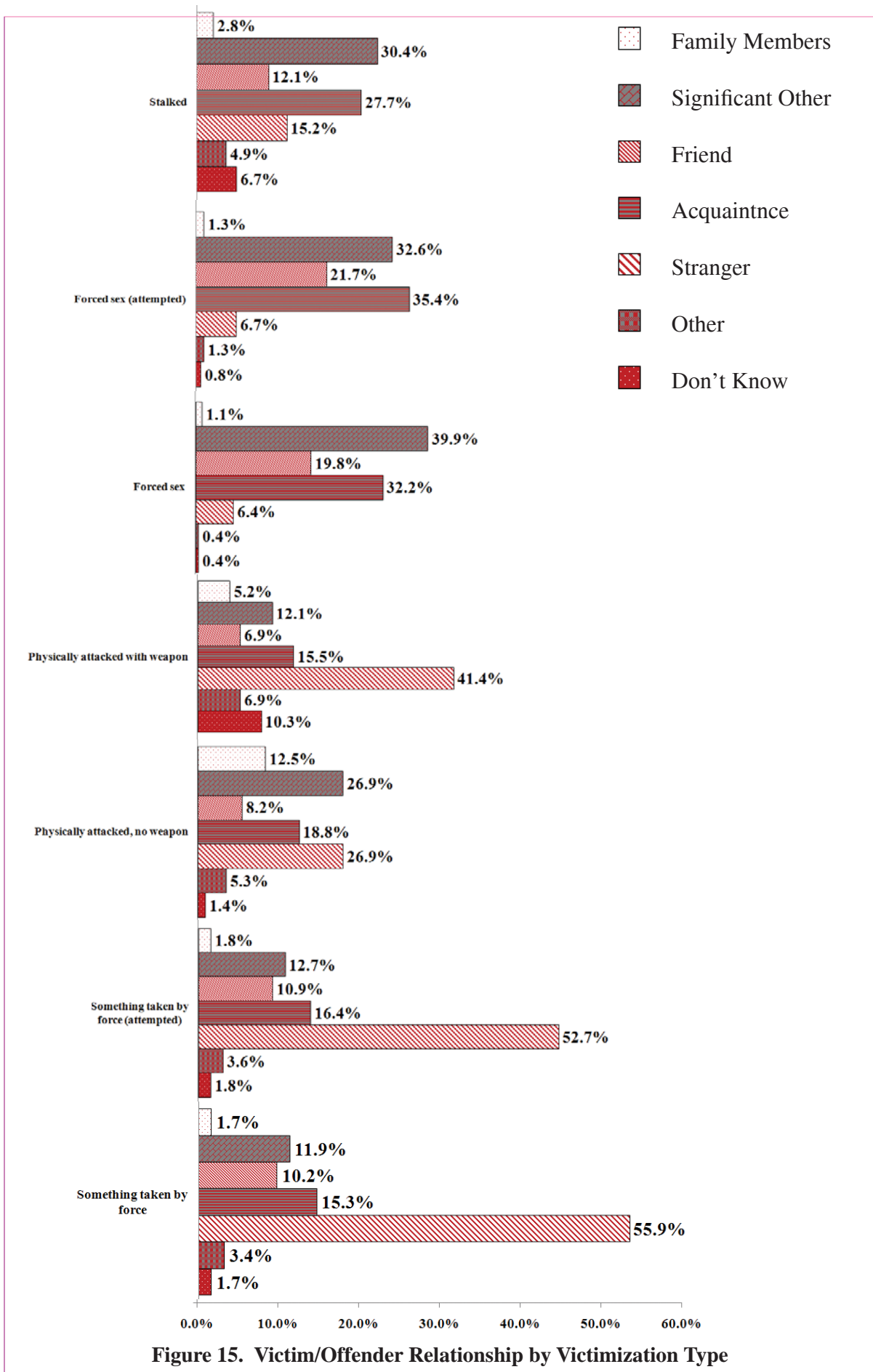
Despite these limits, relative differences in victimization prevalence could be looked at for individual types of personal victimization. For instance, the finding that a higher percentage of respondents were sexual assault victims rather than robbery victims is consistent with Baum and Klaus (2005). Similar differences were also found for sexual assault and aggravated assault. The results of this study show a higher rate of stalking victimization that is also consistent with other studies (e.g., Wilcox, Jordan, & Pritchard, 2007).

Measures Associated with Victimization Experiences

Relationship with the offenders. This section is limited to information from respondents who reported a personal victimization that occurred within the past 24 months. First, a breakdown of the victims' relationships with the offenders for each type of victimization revealed that strangers were the most likely offenders for robbery (completed and attempted), physical assault without a weapon (tied with significant other at 26.9%), and physical assault with a weapon (Figure 15). The most common response for completed sexual assault was significant other (39.9% compared to 32.2% for acquaintance), but the most common response for attempted sexual assault was acquaintance (35.4% compared to 32.6% for significant other). Finally, the most likely victim-offender relationship for stalking was significant other at 30.4%, just higher than acquaintance (27.7%).

These results are generally consistent with previous research where comparisons can be made (e.g., Baum & Klaus, 2005; Wilcox et al., 2007). Similar to Baum and Klaus (2005) and Wilcox et al. (2007), results show that victims of sexual assault and stalking were more likely to know the offender, while strangers were the most likely offenders for robbery.

Assistance sought and needed. Among the victims of personal crime, only 133 respondents (18.5%) reported the most recent victimization to the police, and only 87 (8.5%) stated they needed medical attention because of the victimization. Although these numbers seem low, they may have been impacted by the inclusion of stalking, which is often not reported, and does not necessarily involve physical contact. In fact, Baum and Klaus (2005), in their study of victimization among college students, found that about 35% of the victims reported their victimization to the police. However, in the present study, the percentage of respondents who reported violent victimization to the police does not change when excluding stalking from the analysis. These differences could be due to the way violent victimization was measured, items, the timing of questions, or the makeup of the samples.



Under the influence of substances. Fewer than 37% (n=260) of victims claimed they were under the influence of drugs and alcohol during their victimization. Those who experienced attempted sexual assault were the most likely to be under the influence (54.2%), followed by victims of sexual assault (41.5%) (Figure 16). Of the victims of physical assault without a weapon, 26.5% were under the influence. There is little existing research on the extent to which being under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol impacts the likelihood of personal victimization in general. However, the results here indicate that victims were more likely to be under the influence during attempted sexual assault and completed aggravated sexual assault as compared to robbery. Prior research has found that drug/alcohol consumption (particularly for females) is a risk factor for sexual assault victimization (Daigle, Fisher, & Cullen, 2008).

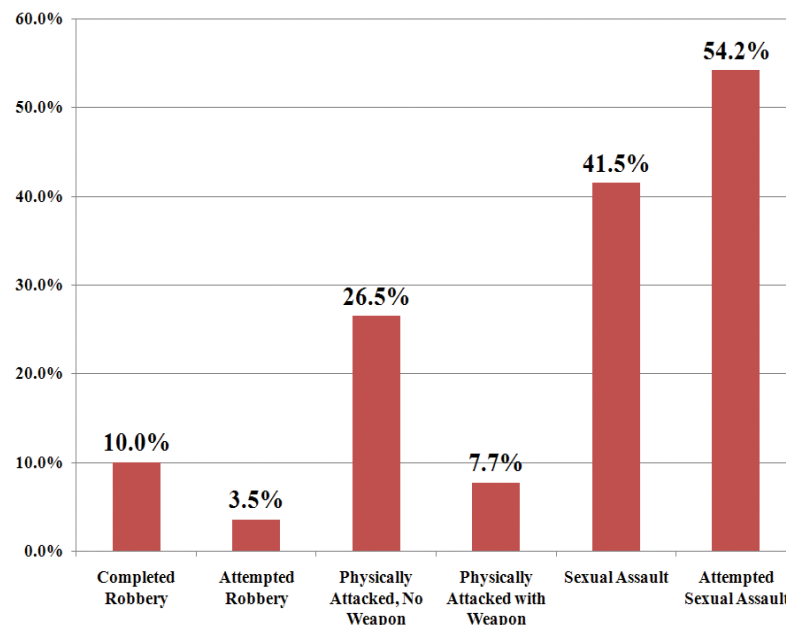


Figure 16. Victims Under the Influence of Alcohol and/or Drugs for each Type of Victimization

Differentiating Victims and Non-Victims

Comparisons were made via bi-variate statistical techniques: chi-square analysis was used when predictor variables were categorized (e.g., gender and race); t-tests were used when the predictor variable was not categorized (e.g., age and the fear of crime scale). The victimization measure used for comparisons was the binary prevalence variable for personal victimization over the past 24 months.

Demographic differences. Comparisons based on demographic factors are shown in Figures 17 and 18. Only two demographic characteristics were associated with an increased likelihood of victimization compared to others;

- gender
- cohabitation

Gender. The finding that females were more likely to be personal crime victims is inconsistent with the extant literature on *violent* victimization among college students (Figure 17). Indeed, most studies indicate that males are more likely to be victims of violent crime in general (Baum & Klaus, 2005). However, females are more likely to be victims of sexual assault and stalking, suggesting that the gender differences found in this study are accurate. Indeed, when stalking was excluded from analysis, a higher percentage of males were victims.

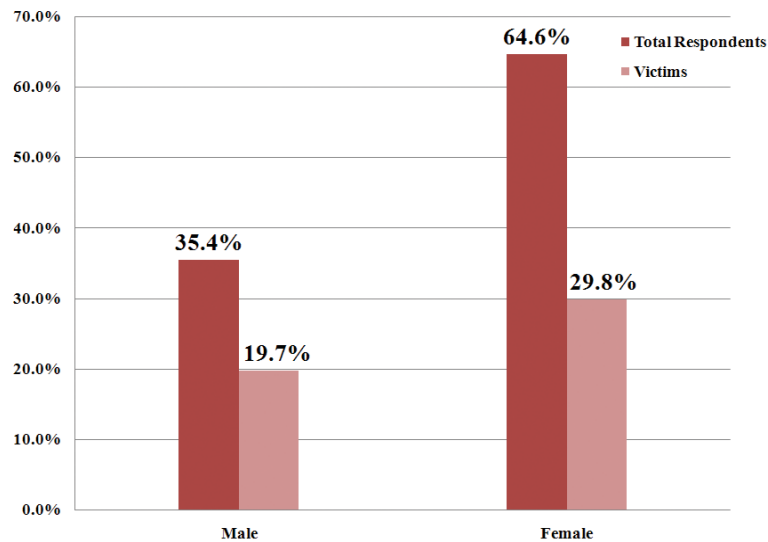


Figure 17. Victimization by Gender

Relationship status. Differences in personal victimization based on relationship status show the greatest differences between married and cohabitating respondents (Figure 18). Overall, cohabitating respondents were the highest percentage of victims, married respondents were the lowest, and single/never married and divorced/separated respondents were in the middle. Most prior research has found the opposite, with married and cohabitating individuals being the least likely to report victimization (Wittebrodd & Nieuwbeerta, 2000). However, most of these studies do not include stalking and are not based on college student samples. Typically, cohabitating females are most at risk of stalking victimization in college (Gover, Kaukinen, & Fox, 2008; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). These factors accounted for the discrepancies between the present study and prior research.

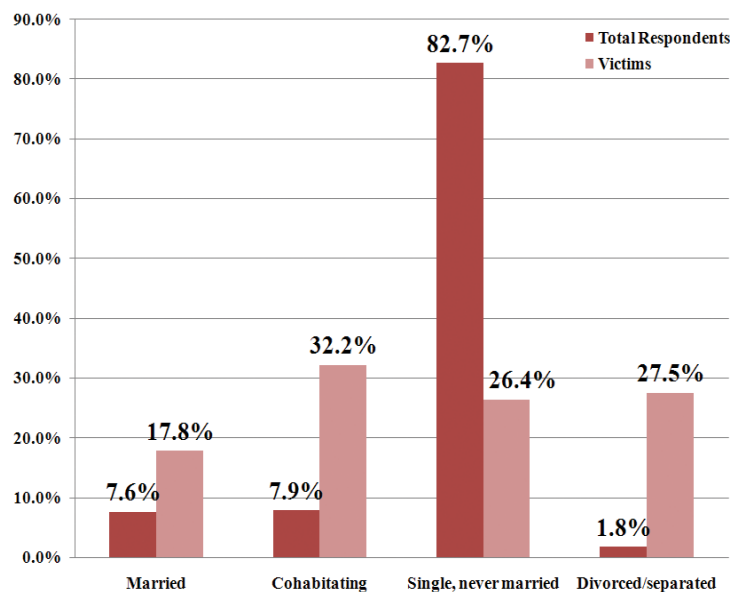


Figure 18. Victimization by Relationship Status

Characteristics not found to be related to victimization. As mentioned, there were no significant differences based on:

- race/ethnicity
- employment status
- academic standing
- age

That is, the percentage of victims across categories did not vary significantly (Figures 19 - 21). These findings were expected. The existing research on race and violent victimization among college students has shown significant race differences for certain types of victimization in certain situations, but not for violence in general (Mustaine & Tewksbury, 2007). Similarly, prior research has reported a higher rate of property victimization among employed college

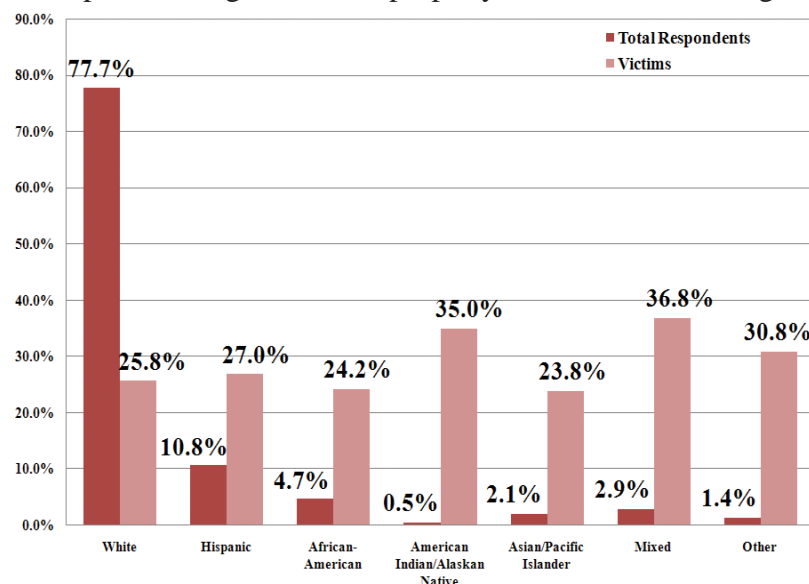


Figure 19. Victimization by Ethnicity

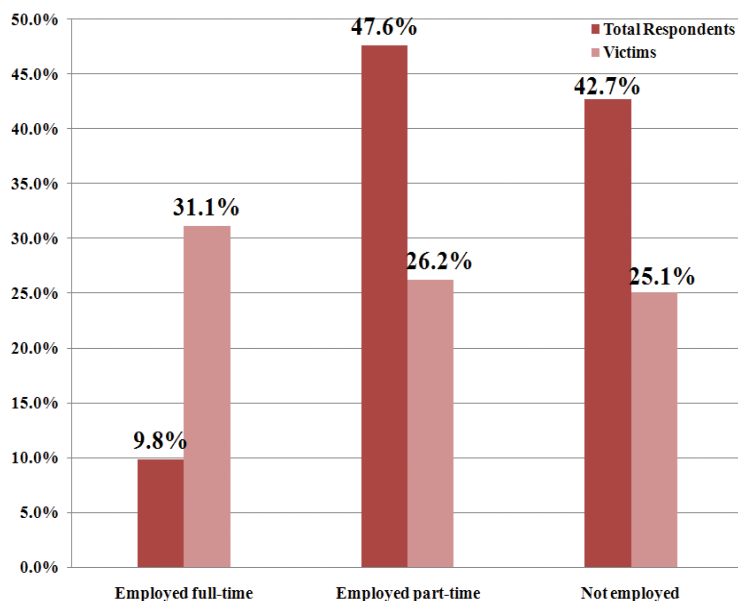


Figure 20. Victimization by Employment Status

students, but not for violent crimes (Mustaine & Tewksbury, 1998). The fact that most college students work for a limited amount of time, usually twenty hours per week or less, may also reduce the impact of employment status on victimization likelihood for this population. Finally, the range of age for most college students is limited to about four years, meaning that most students have similar ages. Such little variation renders age and academic standing (which is closely tied to age) less meaningful in this context.

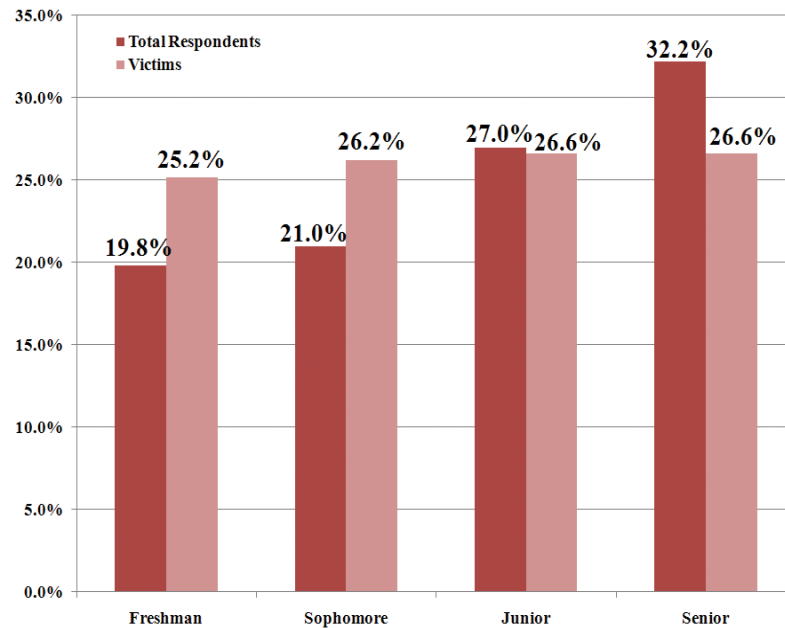


Figure 21. Victimization by Academic Standing

Lifestyle and victimization. Figures 22 - 25 show differences in personal victimization prevalence based on lifestyle and family background measures. Group differences in victimization were statistically significant for four categorical predictor variables. Among statistically significant results, respondents were more likely to have been victimized if

- they had a roommate
- were raised only by a biological father
- witnessed violence between parents as a child
- committed a personal crime during the past 24 months

Regarding differences based on continuous measures, victims tended to take more safety precautions, have higher levels of fear of crime, and spend more time partying during the week compared with non-victims. All of the mean differences were statistically significant.

The finding that respondents living with one or more roommates were more likely to be victimized than those living alone is consistent with the argument that roommates are more likely to be potential offenders rather than protectors against victimization (Fisher et al., 1998). However, the results here cannot be taken as conclusive evidence for such an argument. It is also conceivable that living with roommates results in greater interaction with other students which can increase the time at risk.

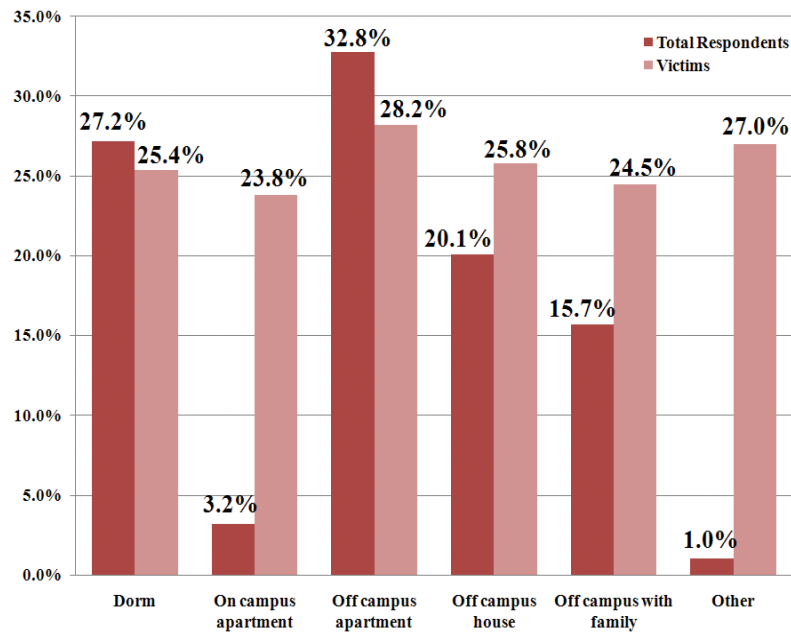


Figure 22. Victimization by Living Arrangements

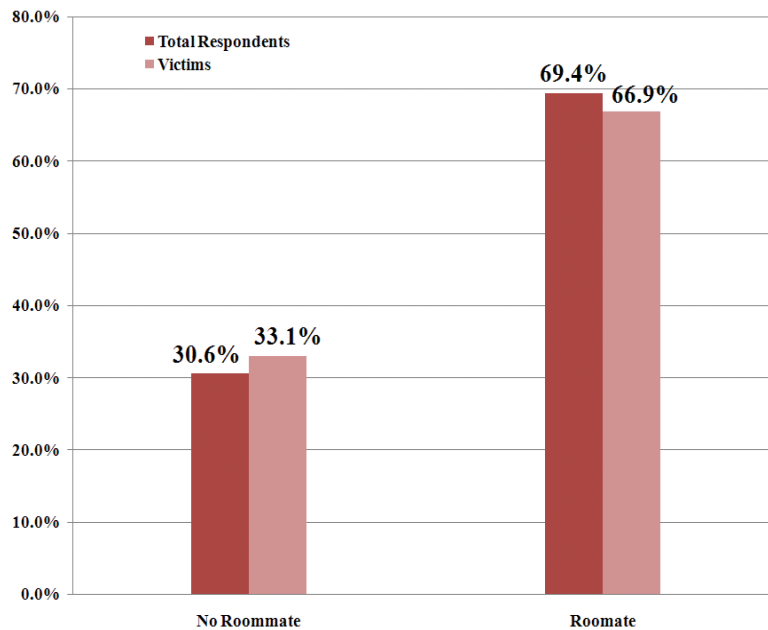


Figure 23. Victimization While Living With or Without a Roommate

The likelihood of personal victimization was also influenced by the makeup of respondents' guardians during childhood. Respondents raised by only their biological father or grandparent(s) were significantly more likely to be victims.

Respondents raised by both biological parents, biological mother only, or a biological parent and step-parent were the least likely victims. Although it is well established that growing up in a two-parent household is associated with lower risk for violence exposure (e.g., Fagan, 2003; Lauritsen & Davis Quinet, 1995), the high percentage of victims for those raised by

grandparents was mildly surprising. Although there has been little mention of differences between those raised in father-only households and those from mother-only households, the contrast found here was unexpected.

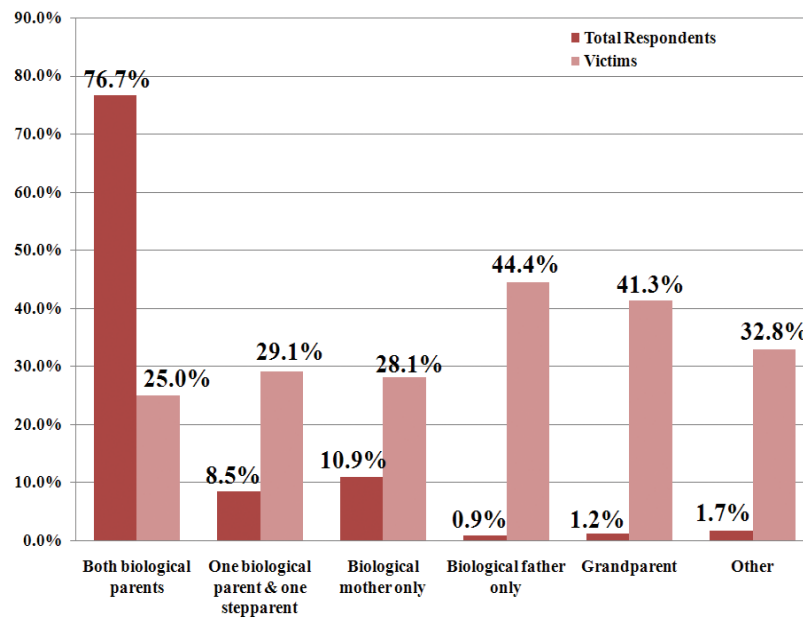


Figure 24. Victimization and Primary Caregiver Growing Up

A finding that was not surprising was the higher percentage of victims among respondents who witnessed violence among their parents as children. Also consistent with the literature was the finding that respondents involved in criminal behavior were much more likely to be victims compared to respondents not involved in crime (e.g., Daday, Brody, Crandall, & Sklar, 2005; Schreck, 1999). All three mean comparisons were significant.

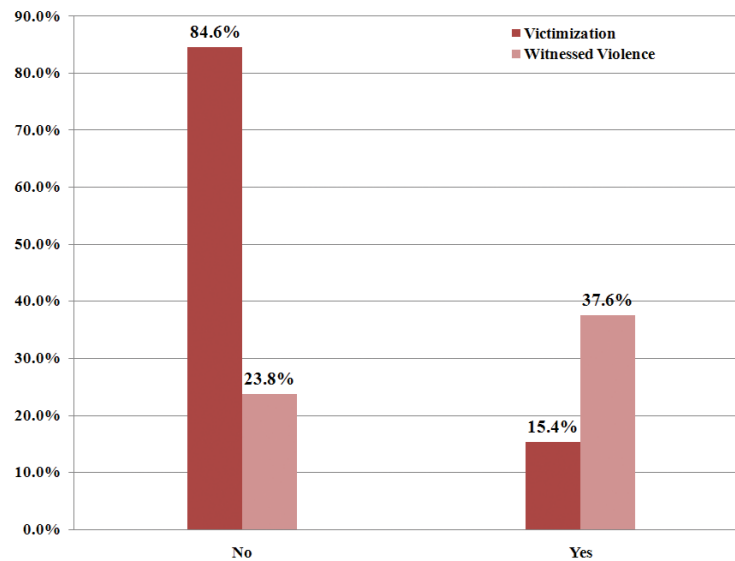


Figure 25. Victimization and Having Witnessed Physical Violence Between Parents While Growing Up

As has been found in previous research, personal crime victims had higher levels for fear of crime. This finding was expected since being victimized tends to lead to more fear. Also shown is the strong relationship between time spent partying and violent victimization, which was anticipated. Partying in college is associated with several risk factors such as alcohol and drug use, being out late at night, and being around more potential offenders (Mustaine & Tewksbury, 2007). However, the finding that victims of personal crime had a higher mean score for taking safety precautions compared to non-victims was not expected, considering previous studies showing the opposite (Miethe, Stafford, & Sloan, 1990).

A number of measures were not significantly associated with personal victimization, including living arrangements, whether dorm residents lived in a co-ed or single-gender building, and fraternity/sorority membership. It was expected that violent victimization would be less likely for those living off campus, particularly in apartments. This is based on lifestyle theories and was predicted by Mustaine and Tewksbury (2007), citing prior studies linking residence type to greater risk for stalking and sexual victimization, as well as expecting the link to apply to other violent acts.

A difference was also expected between those living in same-sex dorms and those living in co-ed dorms. Limited evidence from past research suggests that males may be more likely to be victimized in all-male dorms, while females have a greater chance in co-ed dorms (Mustaine & Tewksbury, 2007). However, the risk for victimization among males has been linked to property crimes, while females in co-ed dorms have been linked to sexual victimization. Regardless, supplemental analysis did not reveal substantial differences when looking at males and females separately. Finally, the existing literature links membership in a fraternity or sorority to higher risk of victimization (Mustaine & Tewksbury, 2007). Involvement in such groups is associated with spending more time away from home in group settings, substance use, and being out at night. Females in sororities tend to be victims of sexual assault more often than other females, which has been attributed to spending more time in fraternity houses. However, no such differences were found, even when looking at males and females separately.

Criminal Behavior

Frequencies and percentages for respondents' involvement in personal criminal behavior are shown in Figures 26 and 27. Overall, only 4.4% (n=169) of respondents reported committing a personal crime over the past two years. Among those who committed a personal crime, the individual act with the highest percentage of respondents reporting involvement was stalking (34.9%) followed by aggravated assault (26.6%).

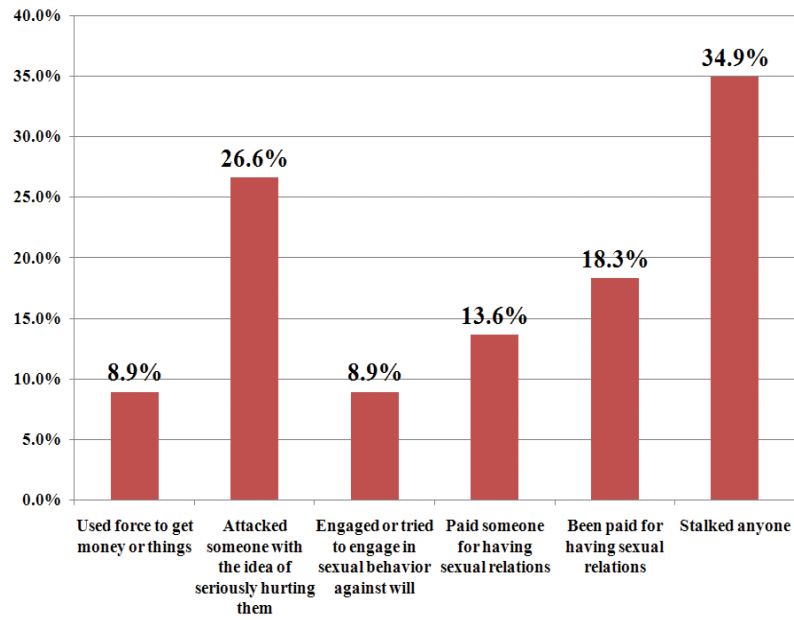


Figure 26. Involvement in Personal Criminal Behavior in the Past Two Years

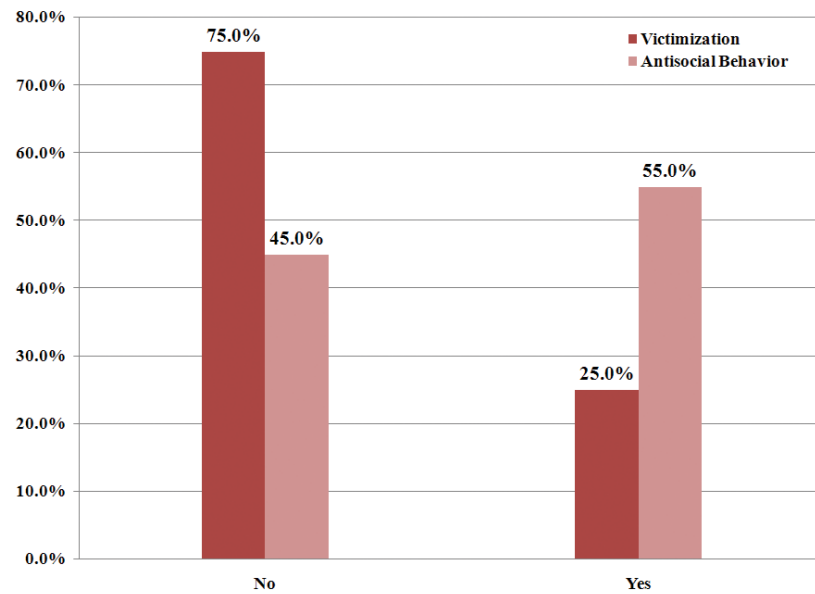


Figure 27. Victimization and Having Been Involved in Personal Criminal Behavior in the Past Two Years

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore aspects of personal victimization among college students in Texas. Findings were reported and discussed regarding the extent of personal victimization, factors increasing or decreasing the likelihood of personal victimization, and situational issues pertaining to the consequences of being victimized.

The implications of these findings are far reaching. Understanding that college students are at a greater risk for personal victimization compared to the general population is valuable for current students and anyone with loved ones in college. It underscores the need to educate students about the risks of victimization and the precautions they should consider to protect themselves during their years in college. This educational effort should be ongoing and directed not only to new students but to those who are returning students. Students should be informed about resources that are available to assist them both on campus and in their community.

Victim advocates often focus on underprivileged populations, and rightly so. However, knowing that female college students experience forms of sexual victimization at a significantly higher rate than women in the general population may prompt more outreach efforts on college campuses. Although adolescents are becoming independent, parents can play an important role in their children's healthy and safe passage from adolescence to adulthood. Parents need to be aware of the potential risks their sons and daughters face in college, so that they can discuss their concerns about personal safety with them. To be available to listen and provide assistance as needed may make it easier for students to reach out to family members in times of need. Students may be reluctant to speak to their parents about victimization experiences out of fear of being blamed or not believed and not wanting to worry or disappoint them. Parents need to be good listeners and nonjudgmental in their interactions with their adult children.

Community agencies need to be aware of student victimization so that appropriate resources are brought to bear in assisting victims. These include:

- Hospitals and clinics
- Community mental health centers
- Victim service organizations (rape crisis centers, shelters, etc.)
- Police and sheriff's departments
- Prosecutors' offices
- Legal services agencies
- Faith-based organizations

The university community needs to be educated about the victimization of students. This includes dormitory directors, student advisers, and the campus police. Outreach to students may include new student orientation, dormitory meetings, fraternity and sorority meetings, programs sponsored by the student union, and feature articles in the campus newspaper.

Conclusion

It is hoped that this report provides useful information to those involved in preventing violent and personal victimization, particularly within the university setting. Of course, this report presents findings representing a small fraction of issues relating to college students and victimization. For instance, other forms of victimization, namely property victimization, need to be explored. Also, most of the findings presented here can and should be given a deeper, more thorough treatment in order to have a richer understanding of the dynamic interplay between multiple factors associated with victimization.

In order to provide reports that are not exceedingly long, every aspect of importance in this paper could not be addressed. However, the data from this study also contains measures of property victimization and more detailed information on many of the variables explored here. Thus, the present report on personal victimization is the first of a series of reports pertaining to college student victimization. The next report will focus on property victimization, and subsequent reports will delve deeper into factors associated with victimization among college students. The ultimate goal is to have a series of reports that, as a whole, provide a rich and detailed look at college student victimization.

Endnotes

- 1 Although some scholars use the terms “violent victimization” and “personal victimization” to describe the same acts (e.g., Warr & Stafford, 1983), we make the distinction that personal crimes are not necessarily violent, but that violent crimes are always considered personal.
- 2 Although stalking does not necessarily require close interpersonal contact, it is considered a personal crime.
- 3 The wording for stalking items was partially based on the National Violence Against Women Survey (see Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998; 2000).
- 4 Lifestyle measures were adapted from multiple sources, particularly Fisher and Sloan (2003) and Fisher et al. (1998).
- 5 Statistical information that provided little value to the reader was omitted to save space. This included descriptive information for variables that did not contain simple categories, which preclude the use of graphics to depict frequencies. Descriptive statistics for omitted variables was limited to average scores, which give little insight to the reader.

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Appendix A

2008 College Student Victimization Survey

Welcome to this study about the experiences of college students in Texas. You and thousands of other college students around the State of Texas are being asked to participate in a study about your lifestyle, about difficult and frustrating things that may have happened to you, and about things you have done.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The purpose of this study is to identify the factors that lead students to engage in risky behaviors, and the consequences those behaviors have for themselves and for other students.

WHO IS CONDUCTING THE STUDY?

This study is being conducted by Dr. Glen Kercher, who is a faculty member at Sam Houston State University.

CHECK TO SEE IF YOU ARE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE

Yes / No I am at least 18 years of age. This is an adults-only study. If you are not 18 years old, you need to leave this site.

Yes / No I am enrolled in a Texas University this semester. If you are not attending a Texas university this semester, you are not eligible to take this survey.

Yes / No I understand that I will be asked some questions that are personal.

Yes / No I have not taken this survey before. It is important that you only complete the study once.

I click to affirm that I am eligible to enter the study

Exit the study

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO AS A STUDY PARTICIPANT?

If you agree to participate in the study, we will ask you to give us your consent. You will then be asked to answer 95 to 160 questions (depending on what your experiences have been). Completing this survey will take 15-30 minutes.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION?

Benefits: Sharing your experiences may cause you to think specifically about things you have done or that have happened to you and the ways these things have affected your life. Your participation will also contribute to a better understanding of the experiences of young adults.

Risks: You will be asked questions about illegal acts you may have done or about things that others have done to victimize you. Some of the questions may be embarrassing to you or make you feel uncomfortable. We need to ask these questions in order to complete this study, but your participation is voluntary. So, you can choose not to answer any question, to stop at any time, or to exit the survey and begin again later.

WILL I BE IDENTIFIED?

No. We do not ask you to provide any information that identifies you. The information you provide will be encrypted so that no one other than members of the research team will be able to see your responses. The researchers will not be able to associate your responses to the email address we used to invite you to participate.

WHO CAN I CONTACT IF I HAVE ANY DIFFICULTIES IN TAKING THIS SURVEY?

If you have any problems during the survey, please contact Teri, the project staff associate, at terin@shsu.edu or by phone at 936.294.3100.

If completing the survey makes you feel emotionally uncomfortable, we will provide you with a list of contacts who can assist you.

This study has been approved by the Protection of Human Subjects Committee at Sam Houston State University. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Protection of Human Subjects office at 936-294-3621.

I CONSENT and wish to enter the study

I DO NOT CONSENT and wish to leave the study

Background Information

1. How old are you? _____
2. Which group best describes you?
 - White/Caucasian
 - Hispanic
 - African American
 - American Indian or Alaskan native
 - Asian/Pacific Islander
 - Mixed
 - Other (Specify) _____
3. What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female
4. What is the zip code of your residence during the school year? _____
5. What is the zip code of your permanent residence? _____
6. What is your current relationship status? Are you:
 - Married
 - Living with someone of the opposite gender as a couple
 - Living with someone of the same gender as a couple
 - Dating someone of the opposite gender
 - Dating someone of the same gender
 - Divorced or separated
 - Single, never married
 - Widowed
7. Growing up, who primarily raised you?
 - Both biological parents
 - Biological mother and stepfather
 - Biological father and stepmother
 - Biological mother only
 - Biological father only
 - Grandparents
 - Other relative
 - Other
8. When you were growing up, did your father, mother, stepfather, or stepmother ever physically hurt each other during an argument or disagreement?
 - No
 - Yes
 - Don't know
9. How many full brothers and sisters do you have?
 - None (**skip to question 10**)
 - Specify the number _____
 - a) Among your siblings, are you
 - The oldest
 - The middle child
 - The youngest

10. Are you

- Employed part-time
- Employed full-time
- Not employed

11. How often do you attend religious services?

- Once a week or more
- At least once a month, but less than once a week
- At least once a year, but less than once a month
- Never or rarely

12. Academic Standing

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate student

Lifestyle Information

1. Where do you live while at school?

- On-campus dorm
- On-campus apartment
- Off-campus apartment, not with family
- Off-campus house, not with family
- Off-campus with family
- Other

2. Is your dorm coed?

- No
- Yes

3. Do you have roommates?

- No
- Yes (please specify the number) _____

4. About how many days per week are you on campus during the day (before 6 p.m.)? Circle one

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

5. About how many days per week are you on campus at night (after 6 p.m.)? Circle one

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

6. About how many nights per week do you spend partying on or near campus? Circle one

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

7. About how many nights per week do you spend partying away from campus? Circle one

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

8. Are you an **active** member of a fraternity or sorority?

- No
- Yes

9. How many **close** friends do you currently have?

- Three or more
- One or two
- None

10. About how many times in the past month did you carry \$50 or more in cash or wore jewelry worth more than \$100 in a public place? _____

11. About how often do you go out shopping?

Daily

Between 2-6 days per week

Once a week or less often

Never

12. How often have you taken the following safety precautions: Circle the number that applies

Safety Precaution		Scale of Importance			
		Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Never
a.	Carried a firearm	1	2	3	4
b.	Carried mace	1	2	3	4
c.	Carried keys defensively	1	2	3	4
d.	Asked someone to walk you to your destination	1	2	3	4
e.	Asked someone to watch your property	1	2	3	4
f.	Attended campus-sponsored crime awareness or crime prevention programs/seminars	1	2	3	4
g.	Used any campus-sponsored crime prevention services	1	2	3	4
h.	Avoided specific areas of campus because you were afraid of being robbed, assaulted, or threatened	1	2	3	4
i.	Avoided specific areas of campus at night	1	2	3	4
j.	How often do you lock your door when you leave your room, but not the building	1	2	3	4
k.	Do you lock your vehicle when you park on or near campus	1	2	3	4
l.	Do you lock your bike or take the front wheel off when you park on or near campus	1	2	3	4

13. At one time or another, most of us have thought about the likelihood of becoming the victim of a crime. Below is a list of different types of crime. We are interested in how ***afraid*** you are about becoming the victim of any of these things in your everyday life. If you are not afraid ***at all***, then circle the number 0 beside the crime. If you are ***very afraid***, then circle the number 5 beside the crime. If your fear falls somewhere ***in between***, then circle the number between 0 and 5 which best describes your fear about that crime.

Type of Crime		Scale of Importance					
		Not Afraid at All					Very Afraid
a.	Being assaulted	0	1	2	3	4	5
b.	Having your car stolen	0	1	2	3	4	5
c.	Having something taken from you by force (being robbed)	0	1	2	3	4	5
d.	Having someone break into your home	0	1	2	3	4	5
e.	Having your property damaged by vandals	0	1	2	3	4	5
f.	Being sexually assaulted	0	1	2	3	4	5

Things That May Have Happened to You

1. Have you *ever* had something taken from you directly by force or by someone threatening to hurt you?

No (skip to question 2)

Yes

- a) How many times has this happened in the *past two years*? _____

- b) Did you need medical care as a result of any of these incidents?

No

Yes

Don't know

- c) For the most recent incident, who did these things to you?

Stranger

Family member (Specify) _____

Friend

Coworker

Casual acquaintance

Someone you dated

Don't know

Other (Specify) _____

- d) Did you report this incident to the police?

No

Yes

- e) Were you under the influence of alcohol or drugs during this incident?

No

Yes

2. Has anyone *ever attempted* to take something from you directly by force or by threatening to hurt you?

No (skip to question 3)

Yes

- a) How many times has this happened in the *past two years*? _____

- b) Did you need medical care as a result of any of these incidents?

No

Yes

Don't know

- c) For the most recent incident, who did these things to you?

Stranger

Family member (Specify) _____

Friend

Coworker

Casual acquaintance

Someone you dated

Don't know

Other (Specify) _____

- d) Did you report this incident to the police?

No

Yes

- e) Were you under the influence of alcohol or drugs during this attempt?

No

Yes

3. Has anyone *ever* attacked you, injured you, or beaten you up *without the use of a weapon*?

No (skip to question 4)

Yes

- a) How many times has this happened in the *past two years*?_____
- b) Did you need medical care as a result of any of these incidents?
 - No
 - Yes
 - Don't know
- c) For the most recent incident, who did these things to you?
 - Stranger
 - Family member (Specify)_____
 - Friend
 - Coworker
 - Casual acquaintance
 - Someone you dated
 - Don't know
 - Other (Specify)_____
- d) Did you report this incident to the police?
 - No
 - Yes
- e) Were you under the influence of alcohol or drugs during this incident?
 - No
 - Yes

4. Has anyone *ever* attacked you *with a weapon* such as a gun, knife, bottle, or chair?

No (skip to question 5)

Yes

- a) How many times has this happened in the *past two years*?_____
- b) Did you need medical care as a result of any of these incidents?
 - No
 - Yes
 - Don't know
- c) For the most recent incident, who did these things to you?
 - Stranger
 - Family member (Specify)_____
 - Friend
 - Coworker
 - Casual acquaintance
 - Someone you dated
 - Don't know
 - Other (Specify)_____
- d) Did you report this incident to the police?
 - No
 - Yes
- e) Were you under the influence of alcohol or drugs during this incident?
 - No
 - Yes

5. Has anyone ***ever*** forced or coerced you to do sexual things (e.g., oral, vaginal, anal, etc.) even though you did not want to do those things?

No (**skip to question 6**)

Yes

- a) How many times has this happened in the **past two years**? _____

- b) Did you need medical care as a result of any of these incidents?

No

Yes

Don't know

- c) For the most recent incident, who did these things to you?

Stranger

Family member (Specify) _____

Friend

Coworker

Casual acquaintance

Someone you dated

Don't know

Other (Specify) _____

- d) Did you report this incident to the police?

No

Yes

- e) Were you under the influence of alcohol or drugs when this happened to you?

No

Yes

6. Has anyone ever ***attempted*** to force or coerce you to do sexual things (e.g., oral, vaginal, anal, etc.) that you did not want to do?

No (**skip to question 7**)

Yes

- a) How many times has this happened in the **past two years**? _____

- b) Did you need medical care as a result of any of these incidents?

No

Yes

Don't know

- c) For the most recent incident, who did these things to you?

Stranger

Family member (Specify) _____

Friend

Coworker

Casual acquaintance

Someone you dated

Don't know

Other (Specify) _____

- d) Did you report this incident to the police?

No

Yes

- e) Were you under the influence of alcohol or drugs during this attempt?

No

Yes

- 7 Has anyone ***ever deliberately*** and ***repeatedly*** done things that made you fear for your safety, the safety of your family, or damage to your property or possessions? This may include angry and threatening phone calls, emails, letters; being followed and spied on; having your possessions damaged or stolen; spreading malicious information about you, etc.

No (skip to question 1 in next section)

Yes

- a) Did any of these things happen within the ***past two years***? _____
- b) Did you need medical care as a result of any of these incidents?
- No
- Yes
- Don't know
- c) Who was the person who did these things to you?
- Stranger
- Family member (Specify) _____
- Friend
- Coworker
- Casual acquaintance
- Someone you dated
- Don't know
- Other (Specify) _____
- d) Did you report this incident to the police?
- No
- Yes

Things You May Have Done

1. Have you ***ever*** stolen or ***tried to steal*** a motor vehicle such as a car or motorcycle?
- No (skip to question 2)
- Yes
- a) How many times in the ***past two years*** did you do this? _____
- b) How old were you when you first did this? _____
- c) When you did this the last time, were you alone or did others take part in the event?
- Alone
- With others
- (Specify how many others) _____
2. Have you ***ever*** stolen or ***tried to steal*** something worth between \$5 and \$50?
- No (skip to question 3)
- Yes
- a) How many times in the ***past two years*** did you do this? _____
- b) How old were you when you first did this? _____
- c) When you did this the last time, were you alone or did others take part in the event?
- Alone
- With others
- (Specify how many others) _____
3. Have you ***ever*** stolen or ***tried to steal*** something worth more than \$50?
- No (skip to question 4)
- Yes
- a) How many times in the ***past two years*** did you do this? _____
- b) How old were you when you first did this? _____

- c) When you did this the last time, were you alone or did others take part in the event?
 Alone
 With others
 (Specify how many others)_____
4. Have you ***ever*** broken into someone else's building or vehicle, or ***tried to break in***, to steal or damage things, or just to look around?
 No (**skip to question 5**)
 Yes
- a) How many times in the ***past two years*** did you do this?_____
- b) How old were you when you first did this?_____
- c) When you did this the last time, were you alone or did others take part in the event?
 Alone
 With others
 (Specify how many others)_____
5. Have you ***ever*** knowingly bought, sold, or held stolen goods (***or tried to do any of these things***)?
 No (**skip to question 6**)
 Yes
- a) How many times in the ***past two years*** did you do this?_____
- b) How old were you when you first did this?_____
6. Have you ***ever*** used force (strong-arm methods) to get money or things from anyone?
 No (**skip to question 7**)
 Yes
- a) How many times in the ***past two years*** did you do this?_____
- b) How old were you when you first did this?_____
- c) When you did this the last time, were you alone or did others take part in the event?
 Alone
 With others
 (Specify how many others)_____
- d) Were you under the influence of alcohol or drugs during this event?
 No
 Yes
7. Have you ***ever*** attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting or killing them?
 No (**skip to question 8**)
 Yes
- a) How many times in the ***past two years*** did you do this?_____
- b) How old were you when you first did this?_____
- c) When you did this the last time, were you alone or did others take part in the event?
 Alone
 With others
 (Specify how many others)_____
- d) Were you under the influence of alcohol or drugs during this incident?
 No
 Yes
8. Have you ***ever*** sold or ***helped sell*** marijuana or hashish?
 No (**skip to question 9**)
 Yes

- a) How many times in the *past two years* did you do this? _____
- b) How old were you when you first did this? _____
9. Have you *ever* engaged in or *tried to engage* in any kind of sexual behavior with someone against his/her will or when they were unable to consent?
- No (skip to question 10)
- Yes
- a) How many times in the *past two years* did you do this? _____
- b) How old were you when you first did this? _____
- c) When you did this the last time, were you alone or did others take part in the event?
- Alone
- With others
- (Specify how many others) _____
- d) Were you under the influence of alcohol or drugs during this incident?
- No
- Yes
10. Have you *ever* sold or *helped sell* hard drugs such as heroin, cocaine, or LSD?
- No (skip to question 11)
- Yes
- a) How many times in the *past two years* did you do this? _____
- b) How old were you when you first did this? _____
11. Have you *ever* paid someone for having sexual relations with you?
- No (skip to question 12)
- Yes
- a) How many times in the *past two years* did you do this? _____
- b) How old were you when you first did this? _____
12. Have you *ever* been paid for having sexual relations with someone?
- No (skip to question 13)
- Yes
- a) How many times in the *past two years* did you do this? _____
- b) How old were you when you first did this? _____
13. Have you *ever* been loud, rowdy, or unruly in a public place?
- No (skip to question 14)
- Yes
- a) How many times in the *past two years* did you do this? _____
- b) How old were you when you first did this? _____
- c) When you did this the last time, were you alone or did others take part in the event?
- Alone
- With others
- (Specify how many others) _____
14. Have you *ever* frightened or *intended to frighten* someone on more than one occasion by following them, spying on them, communicating with them in any way against his/her will, or in other ways engaging in threatening acts?
- No (skip to question 15)
- Yes

- a) Did you do any of these things within the *past two years*? _____
 - b) How old were you when this last happened? _____
 - c) When you did this the last time, were you alone or did others take part in the event?
 Alone
 With others
 (Specify how many others) _____
15. Have you *ever* been suspended from school?
- No (**skip to question 16**)
 Yes
- a) How many times in the *past two years* did this happen? _____
 - b) How old were you when this last happened? _____
16. Have you *ever* been arrested for something other than a minor traffic offense?
- No (**skip to question 17**)
 Yes
- a) How many times in the *past two years* did this happen? _____
 - b) How old were you when this last happened? _____
 - c) When this happened the last time, were you alone or with others?
 Alone
 With others
 (Specify how many others) _____
 - d) Were you under the influence of alcohol or drugs during this incident?
 No
 Yes
17. What is the zip code of your residence during the school year? _____

END OF SURVEY

Thank you for participating in this survey. Sometimes when students think about the bad things that have happened to them, it makes them feel uncomfortable, sad, or scared. Please remember that it is not your fault if someone hurts you. You did not make the bad things happen.

If participating in this survey has been difficult for you because of the things you were asked to recall, we encourage you to talk about it to a good friend, your parents, and/or someone at the college counseling center. If necessary, a counselor can work with you or refer you to a mental health provider in your community.

Below you will find some phone numbers where you might find information that will help you with the things that happened to you.

- 1) The Texas Information and Referral Network: **2-1-1**
- 2) National Sexual Assault Hotline: **1-800-656-HOPE**
- 3) National Center for Victims of Crime: **1-800-FYI-CALL (1-800-394-2255)** (Monday through Friday, 7:30am to 7:30 pm).
- 4) Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Victim Services Division Referral Center: **1-800-848-4284** (Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.).
- 5) The Crime Victims' Institute, Sam Houston State University: (936) 294-3100
- 6) Texas Suicide Hotline: **1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)** (24 hours/7days a week).



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phone: (936) 294-3100; fax: (936) 294-4296
email: terin@shsu.edu
www.crimevictimsinstitute.org

To view all research publications relating to victims of crime please visit the
Crime Victims' Intsitute website at:

www.crimevictimsinstitute.org