

INTRODUCTION

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

The following report presents results on **victimization and awareness of resources for students with disabilities**.¹ For the purposes of this report, the term ‘interpersonal violence’ is used to describe various forms of abuse, violence, and harm experienced by our students. The two main types measured in this survey include sexual violence (any form of unwanted, unwelcome, forceful, or coercive sexual contact) and dating violence (a pattern of controlling or coercive behavior by one individual to maintain power and control over another in an intimate relationship; it can be physical, sexual, economic, technological, or emotional).²

METHODS

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

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

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

¹ A full report of the methodology and the responses to all survey questions as well as other reports on specific populations/topics are available on the Center on Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) website.

² Definitions retrieved from Rutgers University Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance [website](#).

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

In order to reduce response burden, all participants were randomized to complete either the dating violence module or the sexual violence module. Of the 5,911 participants in the basic analytic sample, 2,976 (50.3%) completed the dating violence module and 2,935 (49.7%) completed the sexual violence module. The report is based on data from 5,911 survey respondents (15% graduate women, 6% graduate men, 54% undergraduate women, and 25% undergraduate men). Out of the 5,911 students surveyed, 373 indicated they had some kind of disability.

Key Findings:

1. Students with disabilities (in this sample) are a diverse group

Students in the survey data had a range of disabilities ranging from physical to neurological. They also identify across the spectrum of gender and sexuality. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate this diversity. Students were invited to ‘check all that apply’ on the disability questionnaire, and several indicated having multiple disabilities.

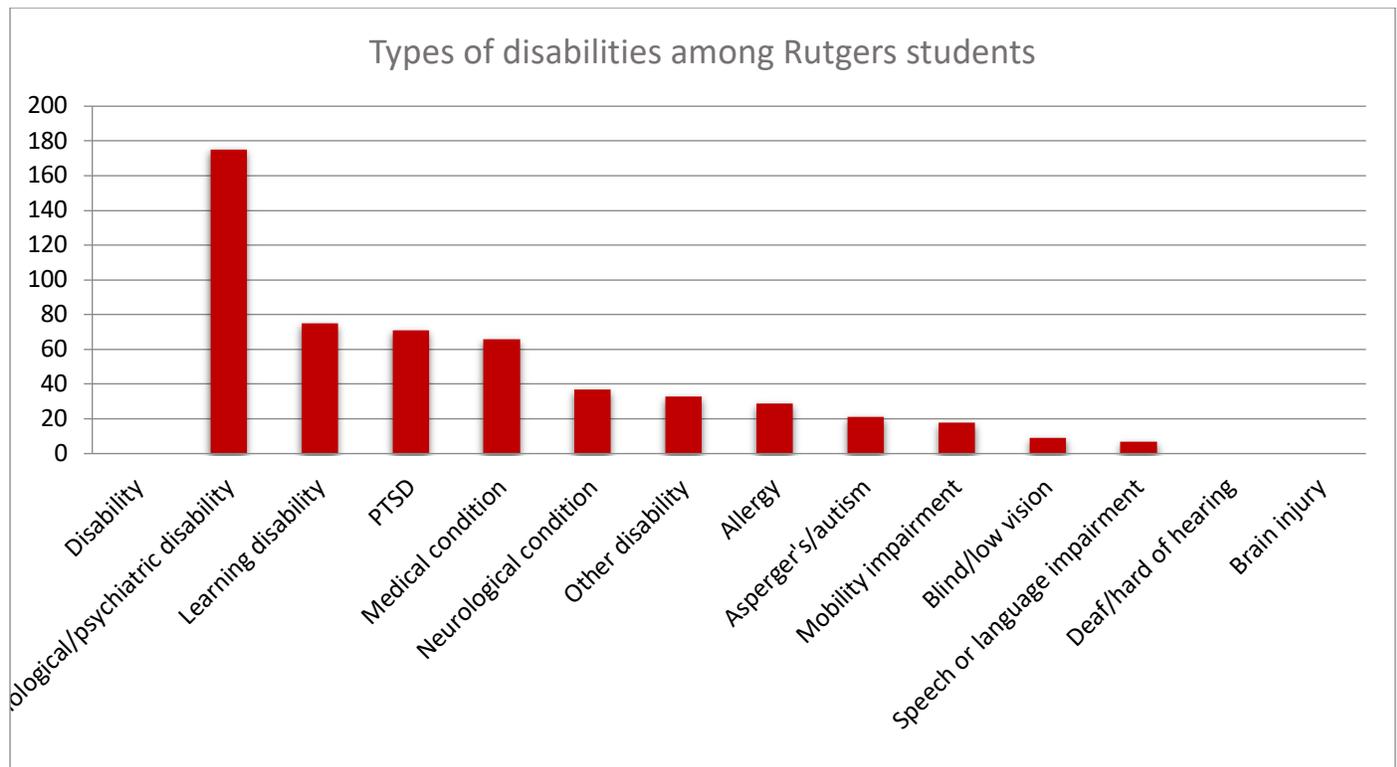


Figure 1. Types of disabilities among Rutgers students who reported they had a disability

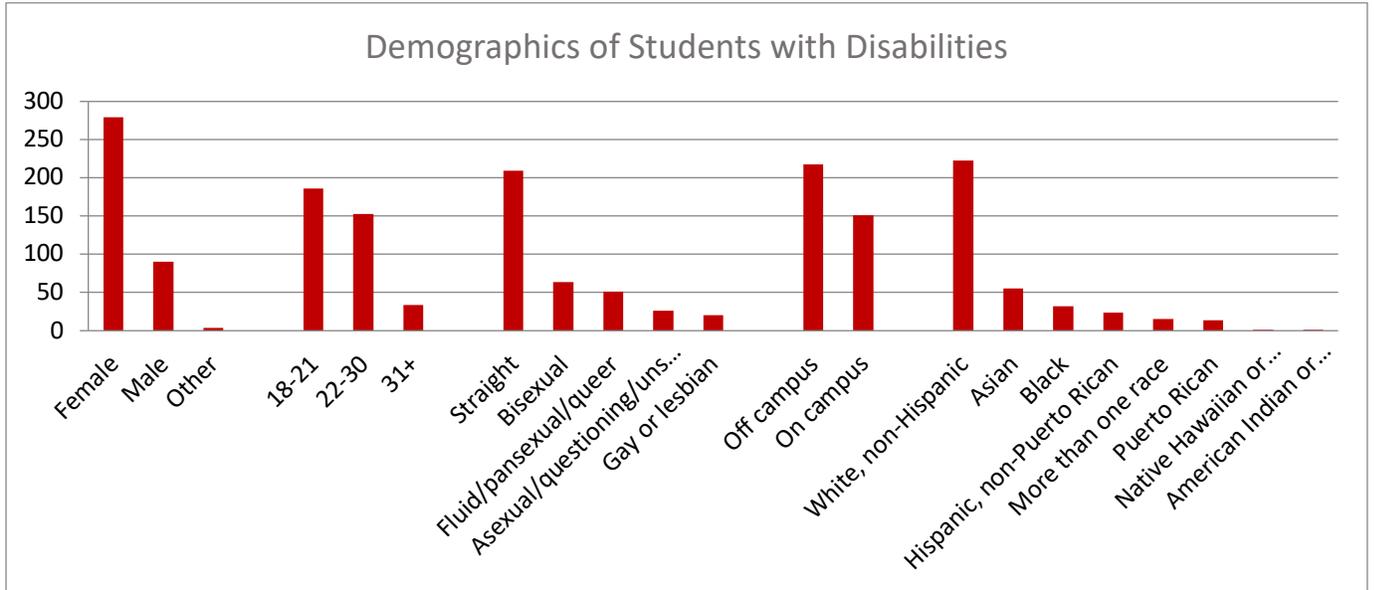


Figure 2. Gender, age, sexual orientation, housing situation, and race of students with disabilities

2. Students with disabilities have a higher prevalence of victimization at Rutgers and before they come to Rutgers, compared to students without disabilities

Rates of sexual violence among students with disabilities

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

Students with disabilities have a significantly higher prevalence of attempted sexual victimization and victimization before and during their time at Rutgers compared to students who did not report having a disability. Rates of sexual violence for students with and without disabilities are presented in Figure 3.

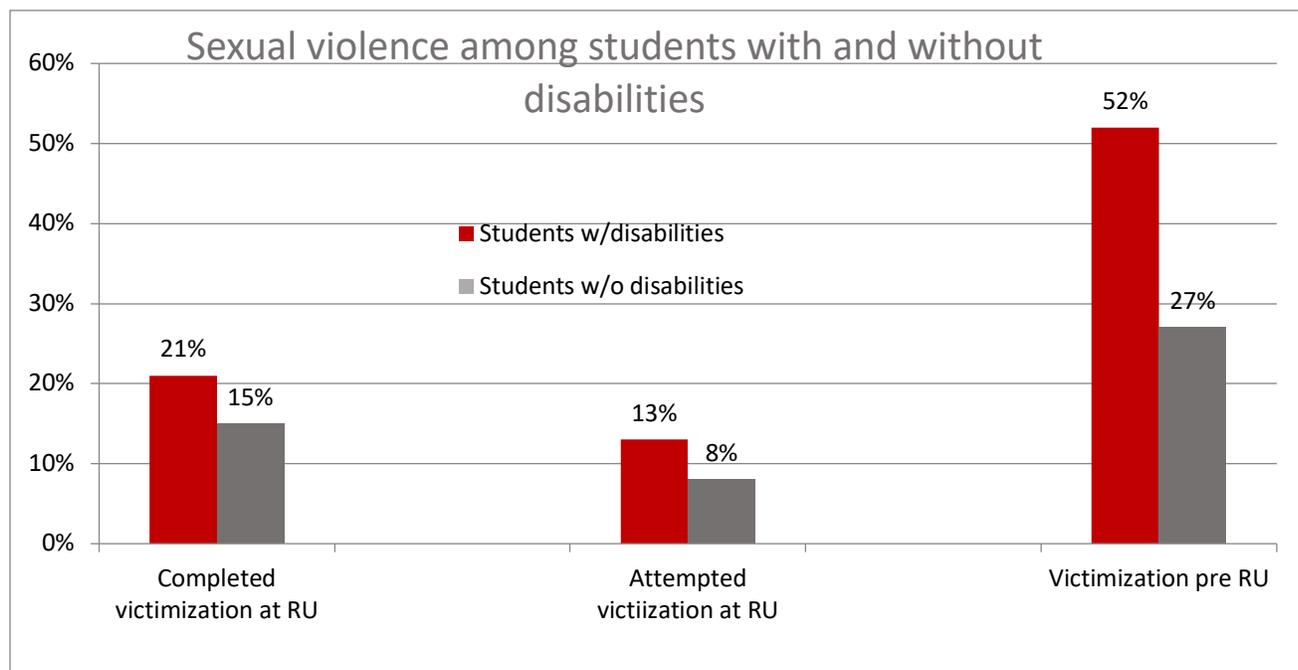


Figure 3. *Rates of sexual violence among students with disabilities*

*The differences between students with and without disabilities are significant across all three categories: Completed victimization $F(1, 2413) = 5.8, p < .05$; attempted victimization $F(1, 2698) = 6.8, p < .01$; and victimization before RU $F(1, 2073) = 52.5, p < .01$

Rates of dating violence among students with disabilities

In addition to experiencing sexual violence, graduate students reported experiences with dating violence. Students were asked about four different types of dating violence experienced since coming to Rutgers University–New Brunswick: physical (e.g., pushing, shoving, or grabbing partner), psychological (e.g., saying things to hurt partner’s feelings on purpose), digital (e.g., pressuring partner to respond quickly to calls, texts, or other messages), and financial (e.g., doing things to keep partner from going to job or classes). We based our assessment on the Title IX/Student Code of Conduct definitions of dating violence and counted people as having experienced DV if their experiences met this threshold.

Students with disabilities have a significantly higher prevalence of attempted sexual victimization and victimization before and during their time at Rutgers compared to students who did not report having a disability. Rates of dating violence for graduate students are presented in Figure 4.

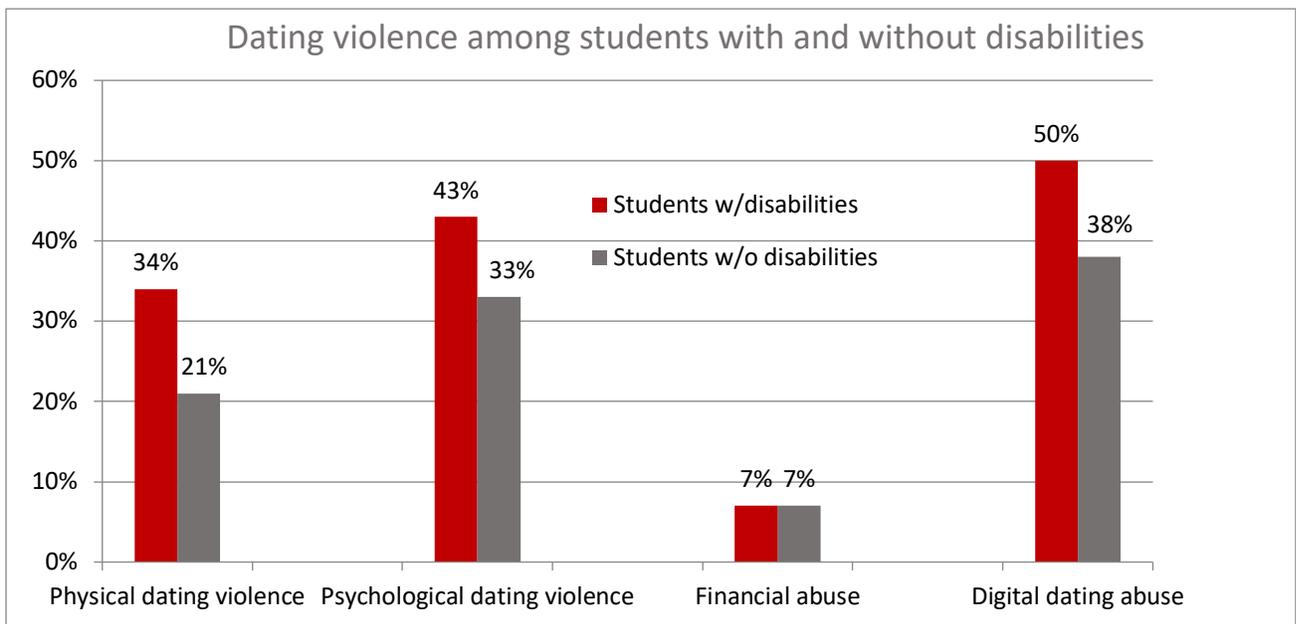


Figure 4. *Rates of dating violence among students with disabilities*

The difference between students with and without disabilities is significant for all types of dating abuse except for financial abuse, where the rates are the same: Physical DV $F(1, 1582) = 12.2, p < .01$; Psychological DV $F(1, 1344) = 5.7, p < .05$; Digital dating abuse $F(1, 1229) = 7.0, p < .01$



3. Students with disabilities are as likely as students without disabilities to disclose sexual violence but were *more likely* to disclose dating violence/abuse.

Most students who experienced sexual violence disclosed to someone, and this was true of students regardless of disability status. Specifically, 66.7% of students with disabilities and 61.1% of students without disabilities disclosed the most serious incident of sexual violence to someone.

However, for students who experienced some form of dating violence those with disabilities were more likely to disclose the most serious incident to someone (50.6% compared to only 38.6%). This difference was statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level ($F(1, 1068) = 4.7$).

4. Students with disabilities, who were victims of sexual violence or dating violence, were more likely to seek out some on-campus resources compared to victims without disabilities.

Students who had experienced sexual violence and who had at least one disability were more likely to seek out support from Resident Assistants ($p < .05$); the Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance ($p < .01$); a Rutgers counselor or therapist ($p < .001$); Rutgers faculty/staff ($p < .001$); and the Title IX office ($p < .05$).

Students with disabilities who had experienced some form of dating violence (in accordance with the Title IX/Student Code of Conduct standards) were more likely than their peers without disabilities to seek support from a Resident Assistant ($p < .01$); the Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance ($p < .05$); a Rutgers counselor or therapist ($p < .05$); and the Title IX Office ($p < .01$).

While small sample sizes precluded analysis of the data beyond simple Chi-Square tests of association, our findings suggest students with disabilities who experience interpersonal violence on campus seek formal support services at somewhat higher rates than their peers.

CONCLUSION

Results of the 2018 iSPEAK survey revealed that students with disabilities are more likely to experience sexual violence and most forms of dating violence compared to students without disabilities. They are also more likely to have already experienced sexual victimization before coming to campus. Despite having higher risk of victimization, students with disabilities disclose sexual victimization at the same rate as their peers and are more likely to disclose dating violence and abuse than their peers. Students with disabilities are likely to reach out to people for help, so peer to peer training should include resources for students with disabilities. Formal on-campus services should also be prepared to work with students with disabilities- underscoring the need for an intersectional approach to victim services that accounts for the multiple ways students experience harm and oppression.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

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

Deba Dutta, PhD, Distinguished Professor, Department of Engineering

Felicia McGinty, EdD, Executive Vice Chancellor for Administration and Planning

Cathryn Potter, PhD, Dean, School of Social Work

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

2017-2018 CAMPUS CLIMATE ADVISORY BOARD

Loren Linscott, MS, Director, Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance

Felicia McGinty, EdD, Executive Vice Chancellor for Administration and Planning

Sarah McMahan, MSW, PhD, Director, Center on Violence Against Women and Children;
Associate Professor, School of Social Work

Jackie Moran, JD, Director, Office of Student Affairs Compliance & Title IX

Judy Postmus, PhD, Associate Director, Center on Violence Against Women and Children; Associate
Dean for Faculty Development and Strategic Initiatives, School of Social Work

Rita C. Seabrook, PhD, Assistant Research Professor, School of Social Work

Kaleigh Sosa, MA, former Training Coordinator, Office of Student Affairs Compliance & Title IX

Dayna Weintraub, PhD, Director of Research and Assessment

Julia Cusano, MSW, Graduate Student, School of Social Work

Julia O'Connor, MPH, MSW, Graduate Student, School of Social Work

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY–NEW BRUNSWICK COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND ORGANIZATIONS

The Arts and Sciences Institutional Review Board – New Brunswick

The Center on Violence Against Women and Children, School of Social Work, New Brunswick

Victoria Porterfield & Jessica Brand, Office of Institutional Research and Academic Planning

RESEARCH SUPPORT

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