



**Results of the Rutgers
University - New Brunswick 2018**

#iSPEAK

Campus Climate Assessment

Comparisons between
2014 and 2018

Rita C. Seabrook, PhD

Julia O'Connor, MSW, MPH

Julia Cusano, MSW

Sarah McMahan, PhD, *Principal Investigator*

OCTOBER 2018

VAWC@SSW.RUTGERS.EDU | 848-932-4390

In 2014 and 2018, all Rutgers University – New Brunswick students were invited to participate in a campus climate survey designed to capture information about the scope and nature of sexual violence among students, use of campus resources among victims of sexual violence, and perceptions of how the university and its students would respond following incidents of sexual violence.¹ The following report compares the results from 2014 survey to those from 2018.²

Although all students were invited to participate in the survey, not all chose to do so. In 2014, there were 10,794 survey participants (25.8% of eligible students). In 2018, the participation rate was lower: 5,911 students participated in the survey (14.0% of eligible students).

The 2018 survey included a module on dating violence that was not part of the 2014 survey. In order to reduce response burden, students were randomly assigned to either the sexual violence module or the dating violence module. Of the 5,911 students who participated in the 2018 survey, 2,935 were assigned to and completed the sexual violence module. This report compares 10,794 responses in 2014 to 2,935 responses in 2018 among the entire sample and among undergraduate women because undergraduate women are consistently shown to have a disproportionately high risk of experiencing sexual violence.

Although the sample sizes were different, the demographic makeup of the 2014 and 2018 sample is largely the same. Women are overrepresented in both samples (64% of the 2014 sample and 68% of the 2018 sample). Just under half of both samples identified as white (45% of 2014, 42% of 2018), nearly a third as Asian (29% of the 2014 sample, 33% of the 2018 sample), 13% identified as Hispanic in both samples, 8% identified as Black/African American in both samples, and less than 1% identified as Native American in both samples.

Key Findings:

1. Perceptions of how the university would handle a report of sexual assault improved.

In both 2014 and 2018, students were asked about their perceptions of how the university would handle a report of sexual violence (e.g., “Rutgers would take the report seriously”). Perceptions were rated on a 1 (= strongly disagree) to 5 (= strongly agree) scale.

Students’ perceptions of the university improved on each of the seven questions. These improvements can be seen for the general student body (see Figure 1) and for undergraduate women (see Figure 2). It is worth noting that perceptions were generally high in 2014 and remained high in 2018; the average score was above the midpoint (3) for each of the seven indicators of perceptions. This finding suggests that students generally had positive perceptions of how the university would handle a report of sexual assault.

¹ The survey tool is based on the *Not Alone* toolkit from The White House Task Force to Protect Students From Sexual Assault (2014). Retrieved from <https://www.justice.gov/ovw/protecting-students-sexual-assault>

² A full report of 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.

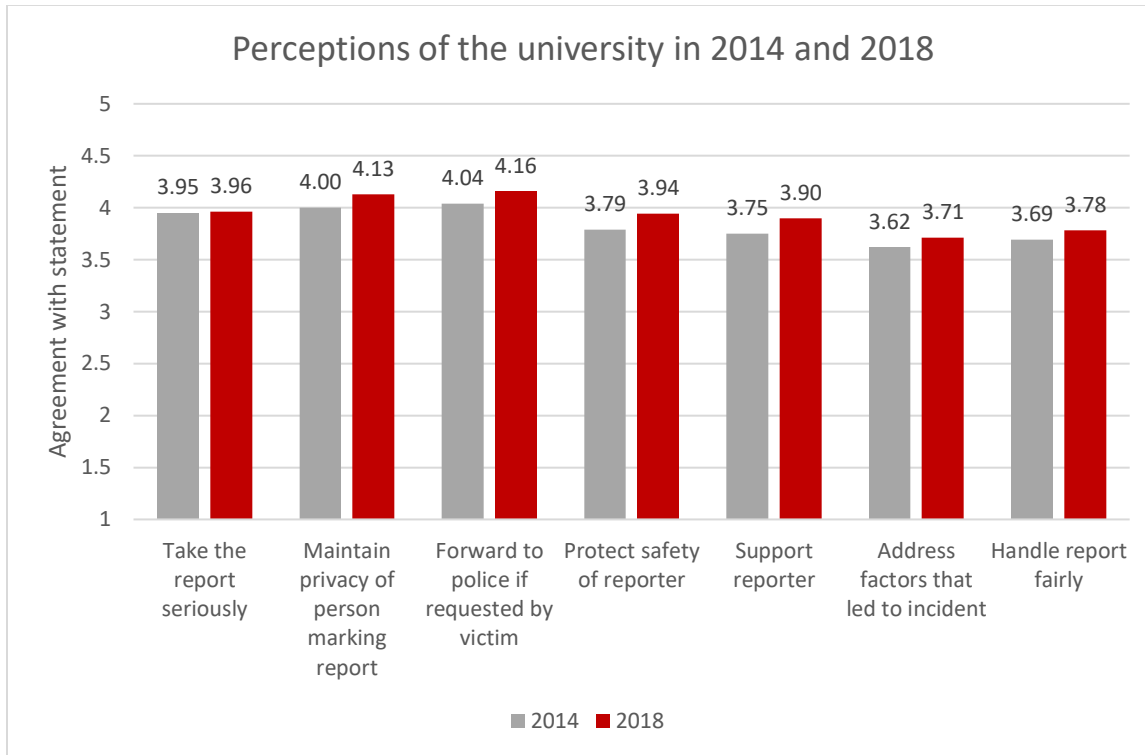


Figure 1. *Perceptions of how the university would handle a report of sexual assault among all students in 2018 v. 2014. Higher scores indicate more positive perceptions.*

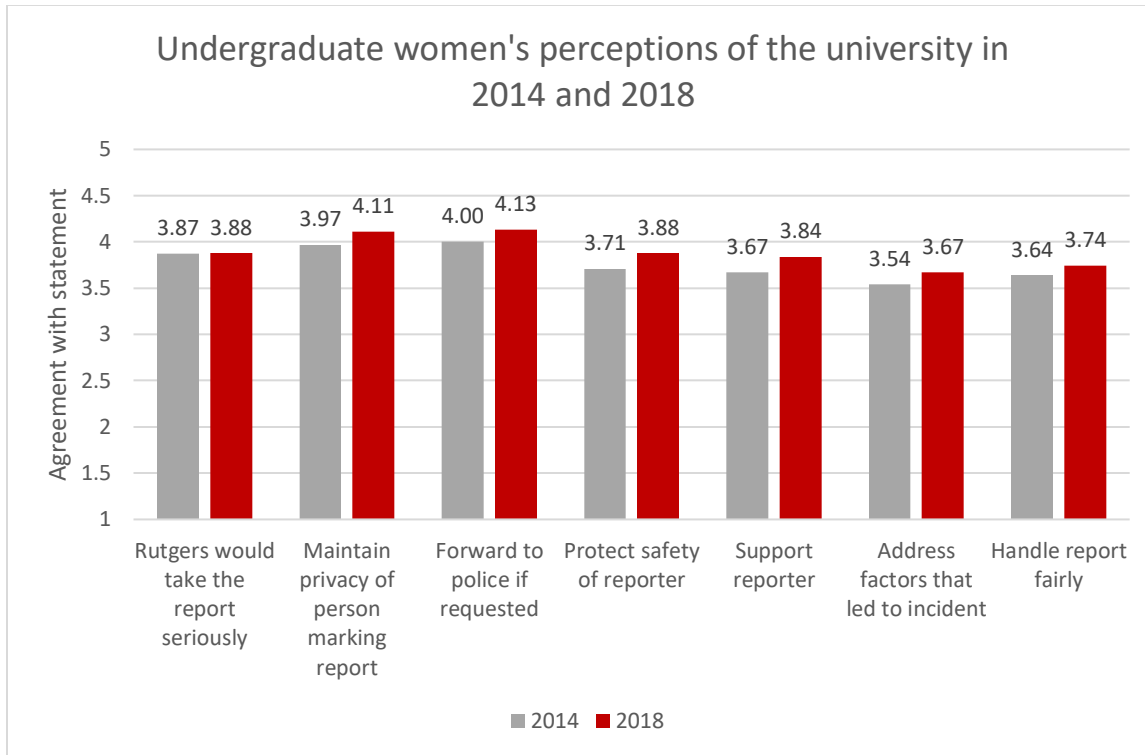


Figure 2. Perceptions of how the university would handle a report of sexual assault among undergraduate women in 2018 v. 2014. Higher scores indicate more positive perceptions.

2. Perceptions of how fellow students would handle a report of sexual assault remained the same.

In both 2014 and 2018, students were asked their perceptions of how fellow students would handle a report of sexual violence (e.g., “Students would label the person making the report a troublemaker”). Students’ perceptions of their peers remained largely unchanged from 2014 to 2018; this pattern was true for the general student population (see Figure 3) and for undergraduate women (see Figure 4).

For these indicators, lower scores indicate a more positive perception. In both 2014 and 2018 students scored below the midpoint (indicating generally positive perceptions) for two out of three items. When asked to rate their agreement with the statement, “The alleged offender(s) would try to get back at the person making the report,” students scored above the midpoint. This finding suggests that students were more likely than not to think that an alleged offender would seek revenge on a student who reports sexual violence.

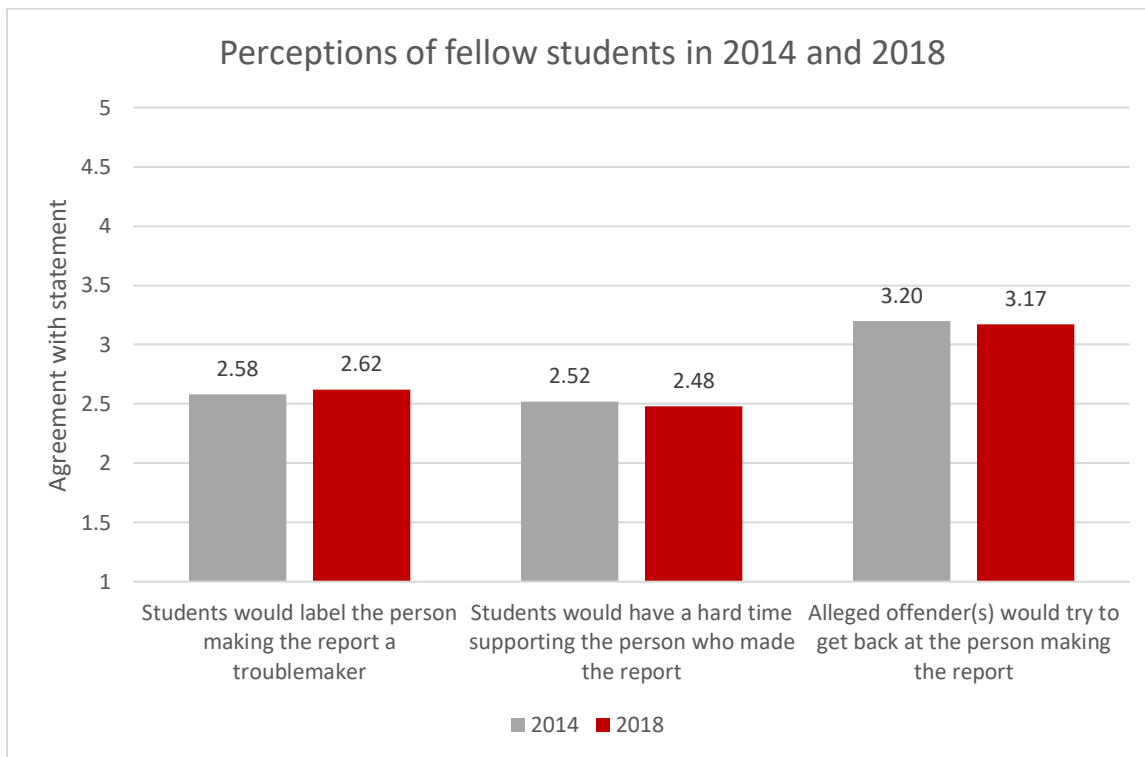


Figure 3. *Perceptions of how fellow students would handle a report of sexual assault in 2018 v. 2014. Lower scores indicate more positive perceptions. Lower scores indicate more positive perceptions.*

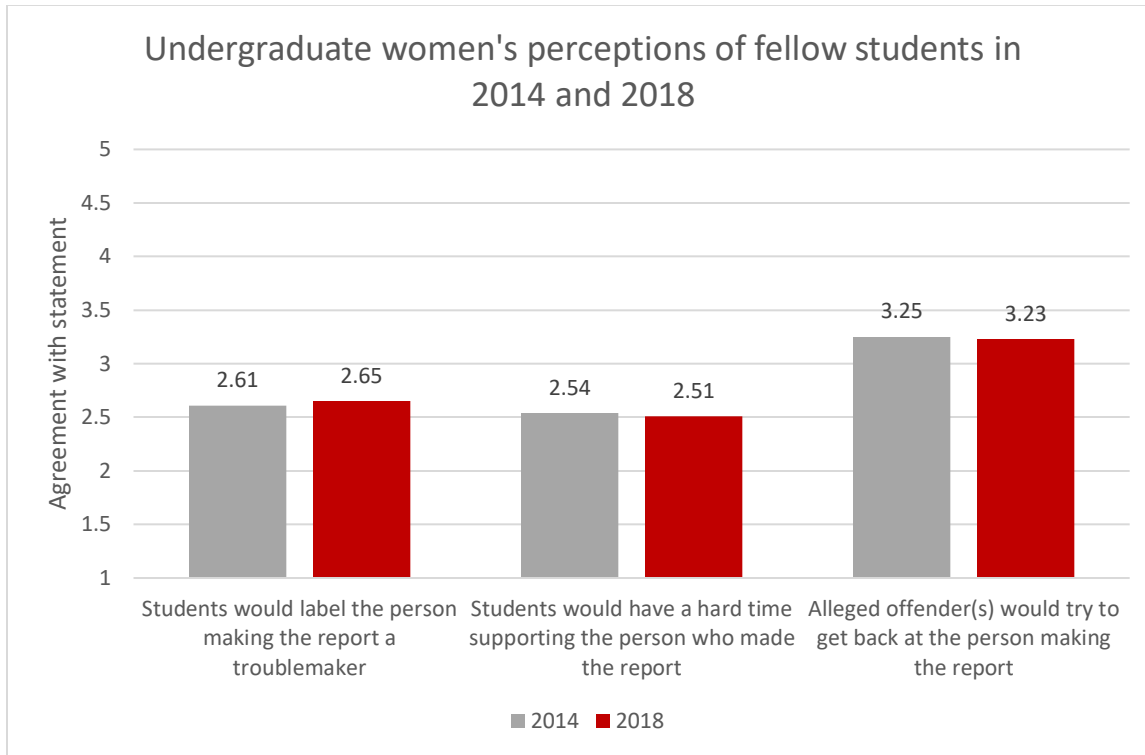


Figure 4. *Perceptions of how fellow students would handle a report of sexual assault among undergraduate women in 2018 v. 2014. Lower scores indicate more positive perceptions.*

3. Knowledge of what to do in the case of sexual assault increased.

In both 2014 and 2018, students were asked to rate their agreement with the statement, “If I or a friend experienced sexual assault, I know where to go to get help on campus” (see Figure 5). The percentage of students who agreed with that statement increased from 42% in 2014 to 54% in 2018; this represents a nearly 30% increase in agreement. The pattern of results was identical for the entire sample and undergraduate women; therefore, only the entire sample is depicted in Figure 5.

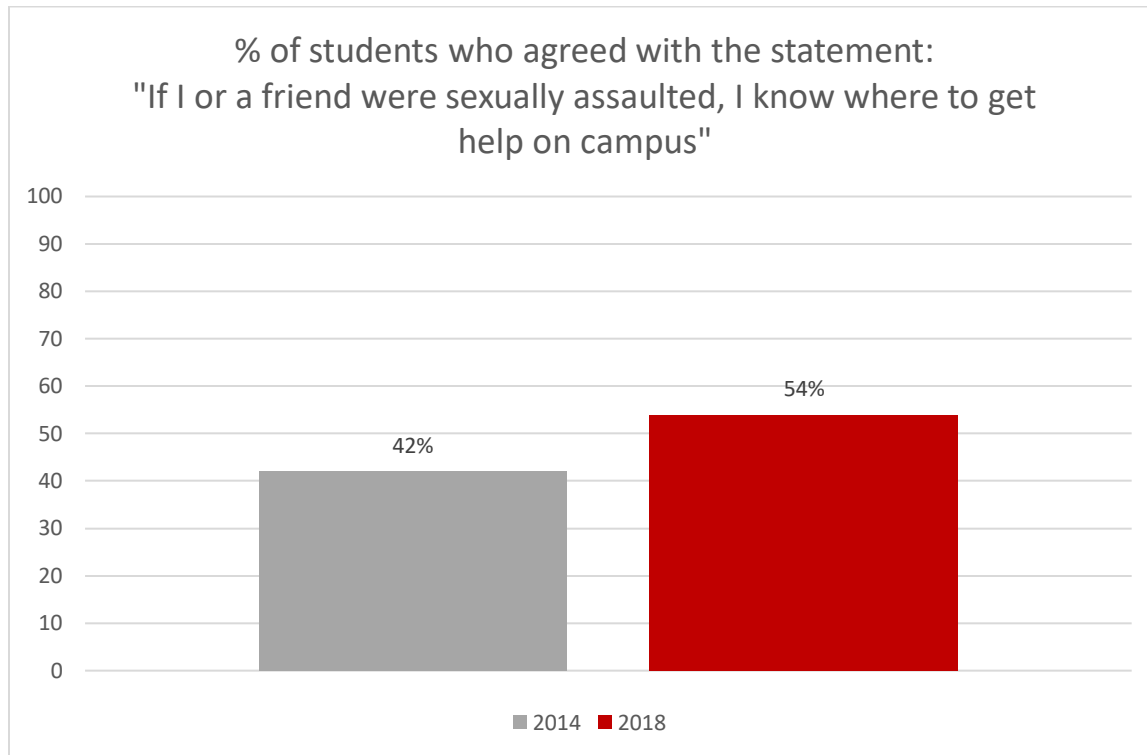


Figure 5. *Percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed that they know where to get help on campus if they or a friend experience sexual violence.*

4. Awareness of resources increased.

Students were asked to indicate their awareness of several resources on campus as they relate to sexual violence. Students rated their awareness on a 1 (not at all aware) to 5 (extremely aware) scale.

Awareness of resources increased from 2014 to 2018 (see Figure 6). The largest improvements in awareness were for: Title IX (a 200% increase in awareness), the Office of Student Conduct (a 68% increase in awareness), and Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance (VPVA; a 67% increase in awareness). Awareness of the Office of Employment Equity also increased by 70% but remained low overall – only 17% of students were very or extremely aware of this office.

Among undergraduate women there were also large improvements in awareness (see Figure 7). Again, the largest improvements in awareness were for: Title IX (283% increase in awareness), Office of Student Conduct (100% increase in awareness), and VPVA (79% increase in awareness). Undergraduate women also showed large increases in awareness of Student Legal Services (an 82% increase in awareness) and the Office of Employment Equity (a 113% increase in awareness), although for both these resources awareness was quite low overall (only 20% of undergraduate women were very or extremely aware of Student Legal Services and only 17% were very or extremely aware of the Office of Employment Equity).

Although awareness of resources increased from 2014 to 2018, many students were still not aware of some key resources related to sexual violence. Specifically, in 2018 20% of students said they were “not at all aware” of VPVA and 22% were “not at all aware” of Title IX.

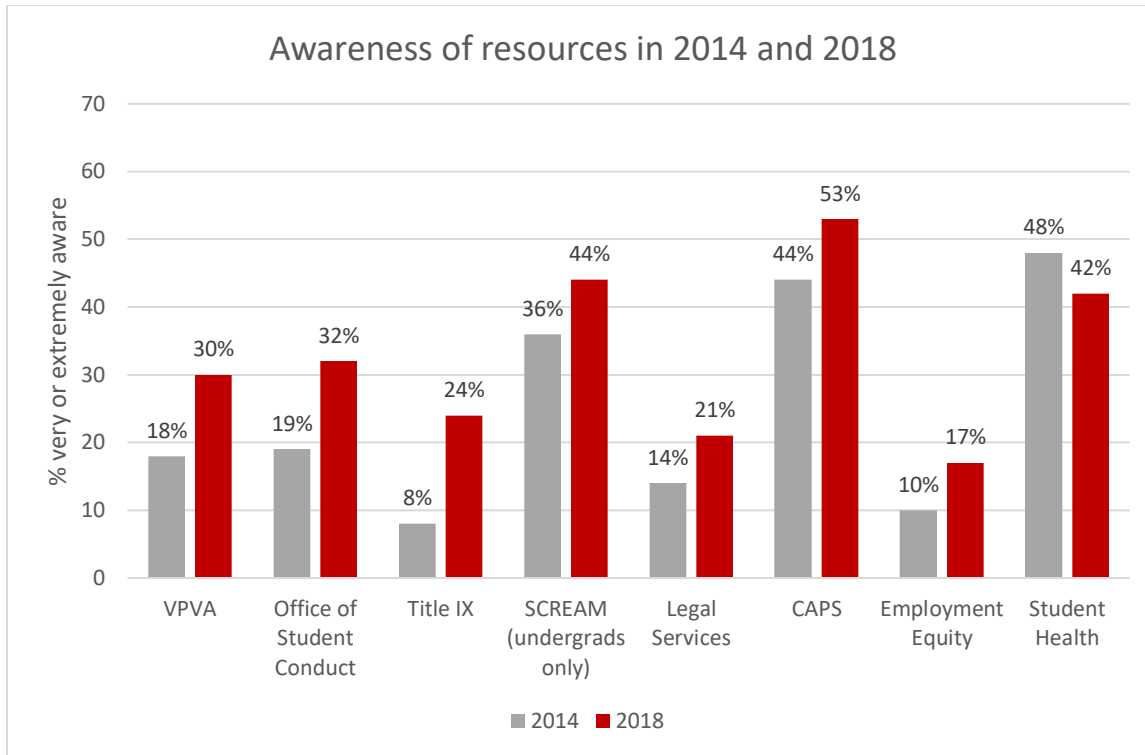


Figure 6. Percentage of students who were "very" or "extremely" aware of each resource.

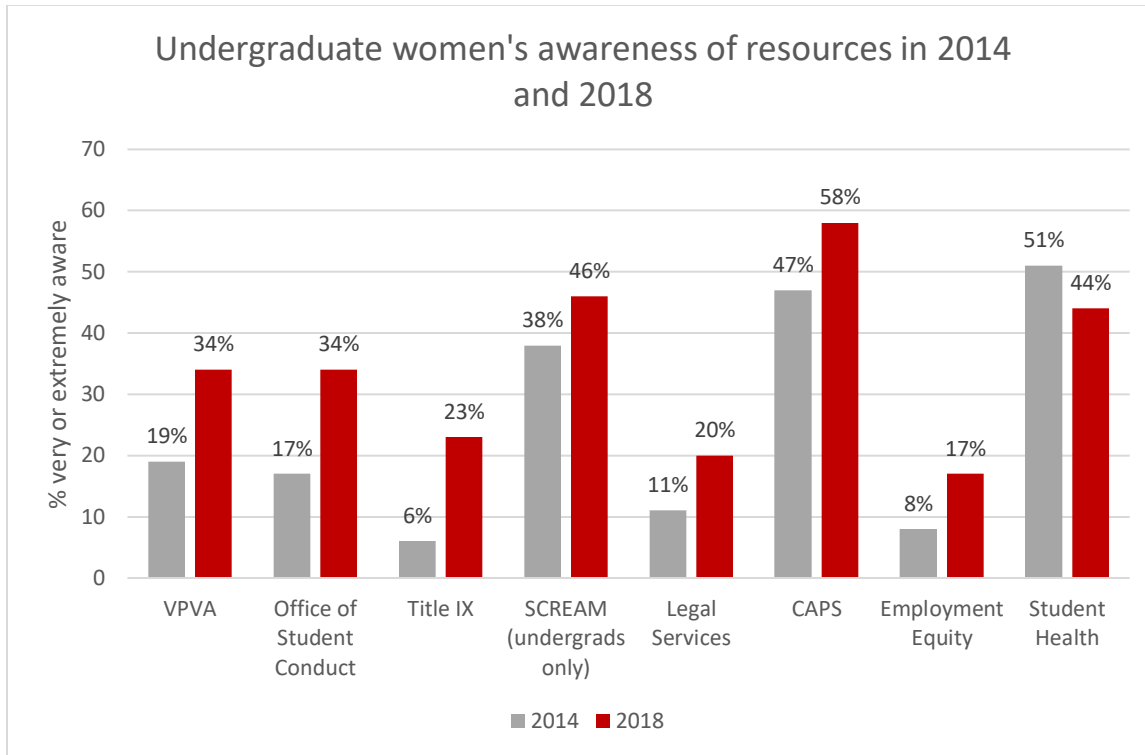


Figure 7. Percentage of undergraduate women who were "very" or "extremely" aware of each resource.

5. More students were exposed to the topic of sexual violence.

In both 2014 and 2018 students were asked whether they had been exposed to the topic of sexual violence through several mediums on campus (e.g., class discussion, crime alerts, posters around campus). More students indicated that they had been exposed to the topic in 2018 compared to 2014 (see Figure 8). The largest increases in exposure came from television or news (146% increase), volunteering at an organization that addressed these topics (133% increase), taking a class to learn more (133% increase), and seeing or hearing campus administrators/staff discuss these topics (100% increase).

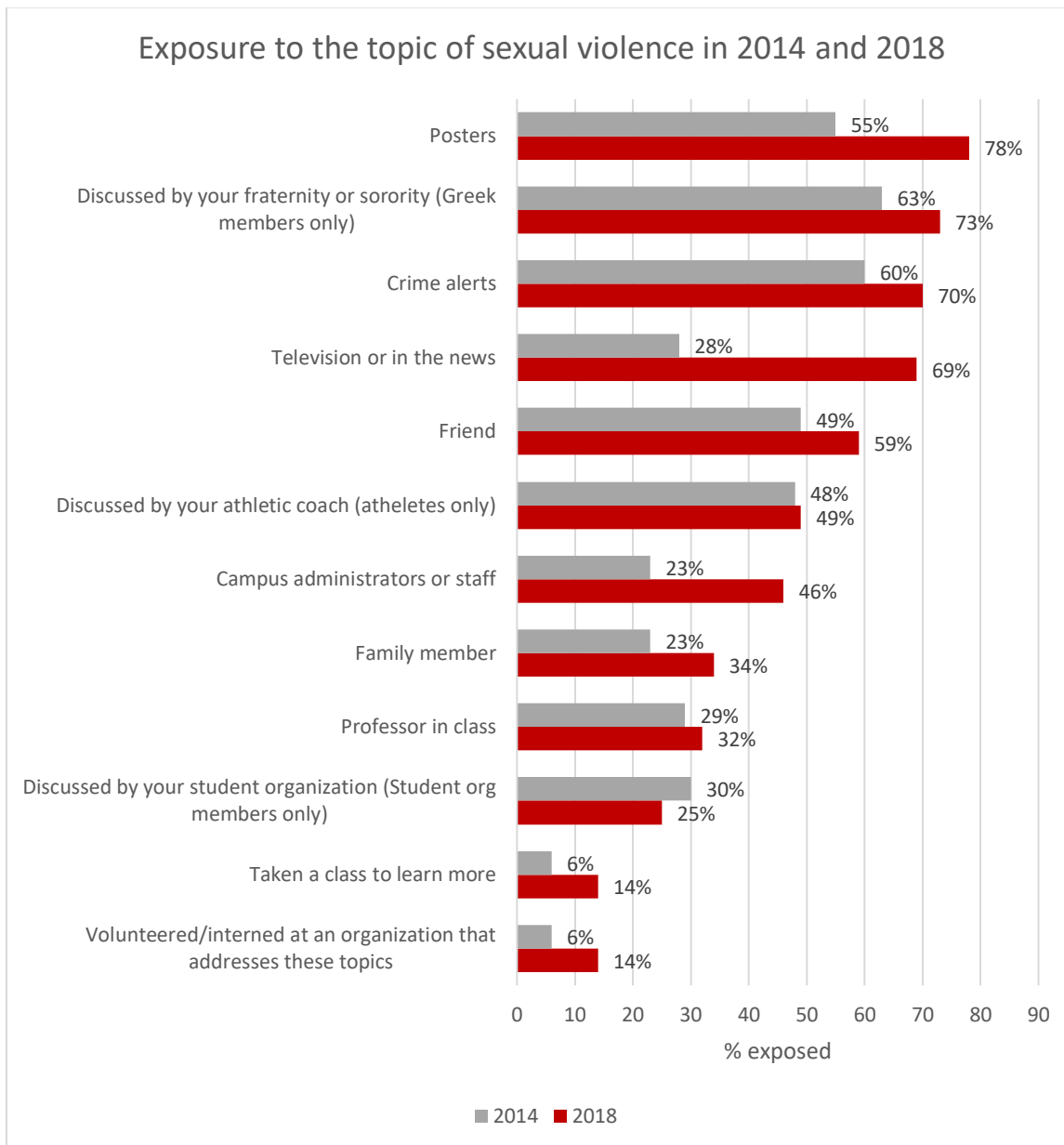


Figure 8. Percent of students exposed to the topic of sexual violence through various means.

6. Victimization rates remained between 1 in 4 and 1 in 5 for undergraduate women.

Participants were provided with the definition of unwanted sexual contact as stated in the Rutgers University Student Policy Prohibiting Sexual Harassment, Sexual Violence, Relationship Violence, Stalking and Related Misconduct.³

Following the definition, students were asked six questions about whether or not they had experienced various types of unwanted sexual contact since coming to Rutgers–New Brunswick. This included 4 questions about unwanted sexual contact that involved force or threats of force, explained as: “This could include someone holding you down with his or her body weight, pinning your arms, hitting or kicking you, or threatening to use a weapon against you” and, 2 questions about experiences with unwanted sexual contact while being unable to provide consent or to stop what was happening because “you were passed out, drugged, incapacitated or asleep.”

A close examination of the data revealed a slight increase in victimization rates from 2014 to 2018, although the rates remained in the 1:4 and 1:5 rate for undergraduate women (see Figure 9 & Figure 10). The slight increase could be a product of participant bias (i.e., survivors are more likely to take the survey because they have an experience to disclose). When the survey was administered in 2014 there was a great deal of national attention around the topic of sexual violence; this may have bolstered participation from survivors and non-victims. The findings that perceptions of the university as it relates to sexual assault have improved from 2014 to 2018 support the idea that the slight increase in victimization is a product of sample bias.

³ Definition adapted from Rutgers University. (2015). [Student Policy Prohibiting Sexual Harassment, Sexual Violence, Relationship Violence, Stalking and Related Misconduct.](#)

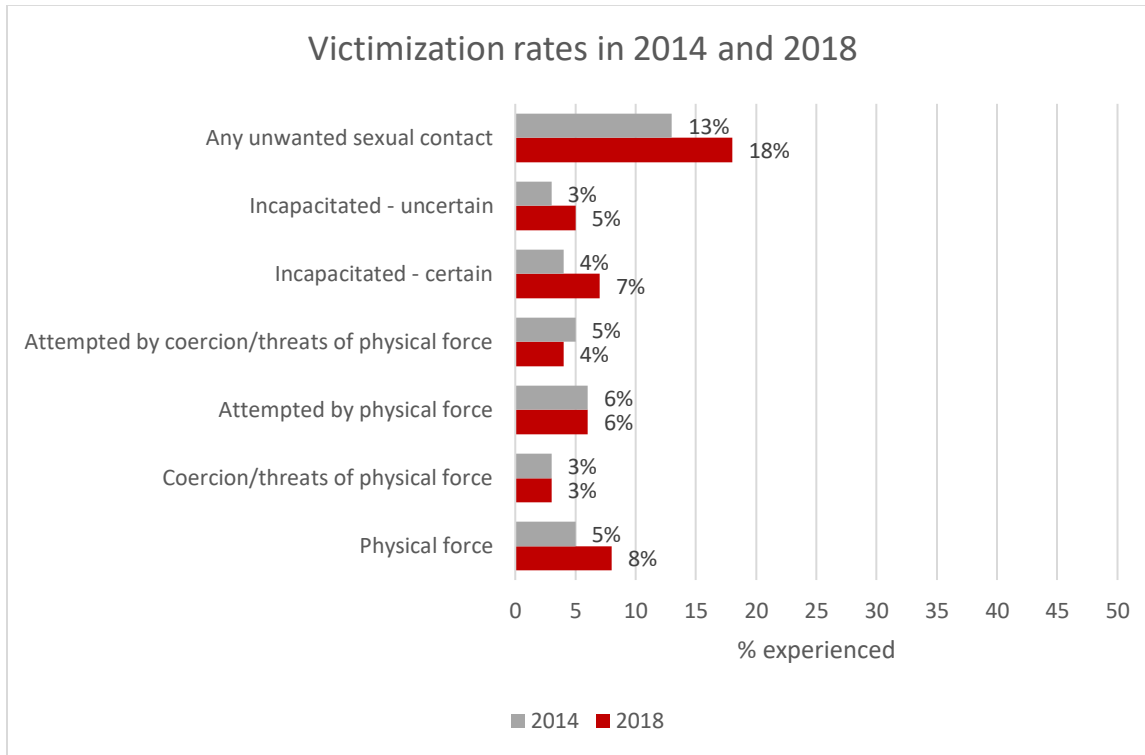


Figure 9. *Victimization rates for all students in 2014 and 2018.*

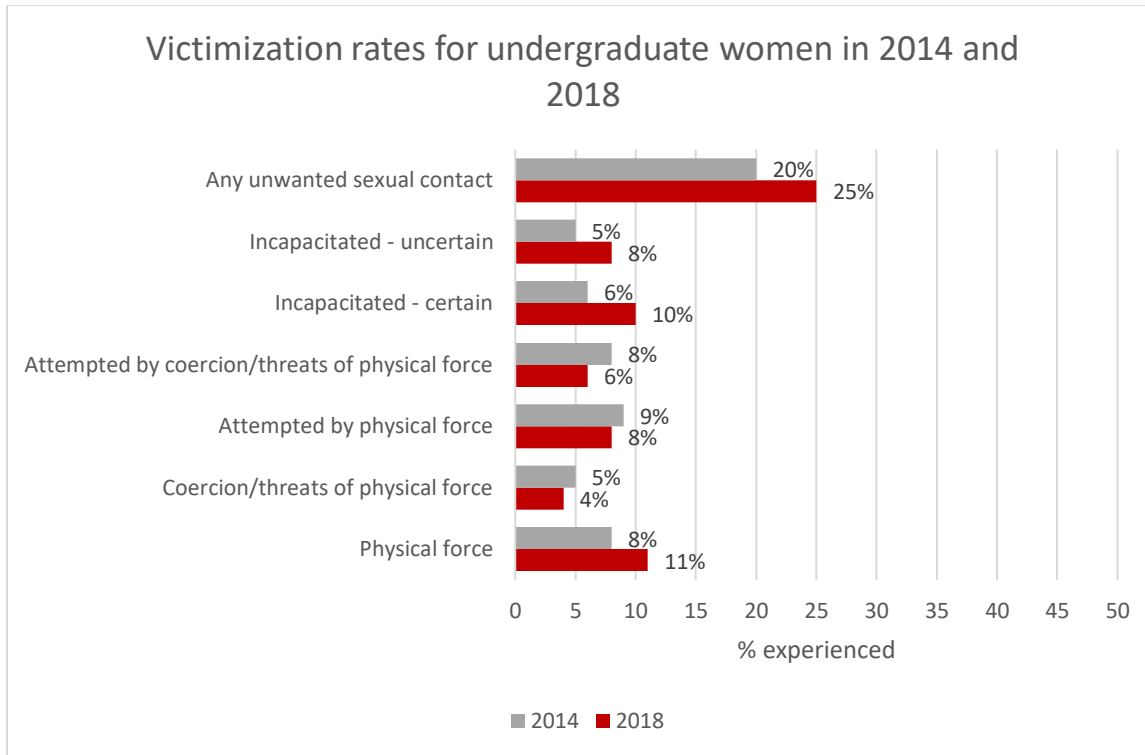


Figure 10. *Victimization rates for undergraduate women in 2014 and 2018.*

Conclusion

Overall, the results of the 2018 iSPEAK survey compared to the 2014 iSPEAK survey suggest that university’s efforts to improve access to and knowledge of resources for victims of sexual violence are effective. Although victimization rates remained stable, students perceived the university more positively, reported greater confidence in seeking help, had greater awareness of resources, and reported more exposure to the topic of sexual violence.

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 McMahon, 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