



Results of the Rutgers University - New Brunswick 2018

#iSPEAK

Campus Climate Assessment: Sexual Violence Module

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In 2018, all Rutgers–New Brunswick students were invited to participate in a campus climate survey to assess the prevalence of sexual and dating violence among students, as well as students’ perceptions of the university, knowledge of resources related to sexual and dating violence, and disclosure (or non-disclosure) of incidents of sexual and dating violence.¹ In order to reduce response burden, students were randomly assigned to either the sexual violence module or the dating violence module. The following report presents results from the **sexual violence survey module**.²

A broad outreach campaign, including print materials, social media, and direct communications publicized the survey. Over the survey period, 5,911 students participated in the survey (14.0% of eligible students). Of the 5,911 students who participated in the campus climate survey 2,935 were assigned to and completed the sexual violence module.

Women were overrepresented in the sexual violence survey sample (69% of the sexual violence survey module compared to about 50% of the student population). Approximately 42% of the sample identified as white, slightly less than a third as Asian (32% of the sample), 13% identified as Hispanic, and 7% identified as Black/African American.

1. Sexual violence is common even before coming to Rutgers University-New Brunswick.

Nearly one-third of all students (28% of the sample) at Rutgers University–New Brunswick reported experiencing some form of unwanted sexual contact prior to coming to campus. However, rates of previously experienced sexual violence are higher among graduate students compared to undergraduates, which may be due in part to graduate students experiencing sexual violence during their undergraduate education (see Figure 1). Rates of prior sexual violence also differ by gender: women have over four times greater odds of experiencing sexual violence prior to coming to Rutgers compared to men.

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.

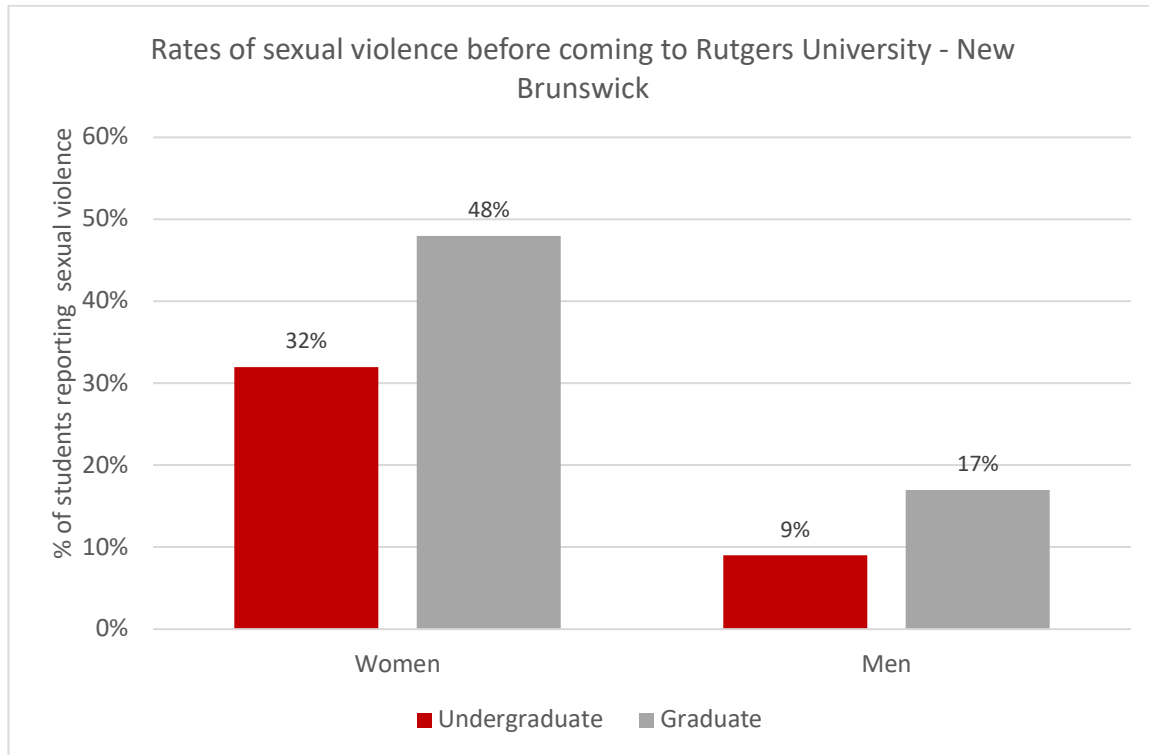


Figure 1. *Percentage of students who experienced at least one incident of sexual violence before coming to Rutgers University–New Brunswick.*

The difference between women and men is significant, $\chi^2(1) = 181.48, p < .001$; The difference between graduate and undergraduate women is significant, $\chi^2(1) = 39.23, p < .001$; The difference between graduate and undergraduate men is significant, $\chi^2(1) = 9.32, p = .002$.

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

Before asking participants about their experiences with victimization they 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

According to this definition, “Sexual assault or non-consensual sexual contact refers to any one or more of the following acts:

- Touching of an unwilling or non-consenting person’s intimate parts (such as genitalia, groin, breast, buttocks, or mouth under or over a person’s clothes)
- Touching an unwilling person or non-consenting person with one’s own intimate parts
- Forcing an unwilling person to touch another’s intimate parts
- Penetrating an unwilling person orally, anally, or vaginally with any object or body part. This includes, but is not limited to, penetration of a bodily opening without consent, through the use of coercion, or through exploitation of another’s inability to give consent
- Penetrating an unwilling person orally, anally, or vaginally with any object or body part by use of force, threat, and/or intimidation.”

Following the definition, students were asked six questions about whether they had experienced various types of unwanted sexual contact since coming to Rutgers University–New Brunswick.⁴ This included:

- Four 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.”
- Two questions about unwanted sexual contact while being unable to provide consent or to stop what was happening because “you were passed out, drugged, incapacitated or asleep.” One question asks about experiences of this type that participants are certain occurred, and the second question asks about experiences of this type that participants are uncertain occurred.

A close examination of the data reveals that the **rate of sexual violence is highest among undergraduate women**; they have nearly five times greater odds of experiencing unwanted sexual contact since to coming to Rutgers than undergraduate men.⁵ Specifically, undergraduate women reported the highest victimization rates, with a range of 1 in 4 and 1 in 5 undergraduate women experiencing at least one type of unwanted sexual contact since coming to Rutgers (see Figure 2).

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

⁴ Questions are adapted from Krebs., C.P., Lindquist, C.H., Warner, T.D., Fisher, B.S., & Martin, S.L. (2007). The Campus Sexual Assault (CSA) Study Final Report. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/221153.pdf> and from the White House Task Force Toolkit, pieces of which are available on www.changingourcampus.org.

⁵ Logistic regression is significant at $p < .001$.

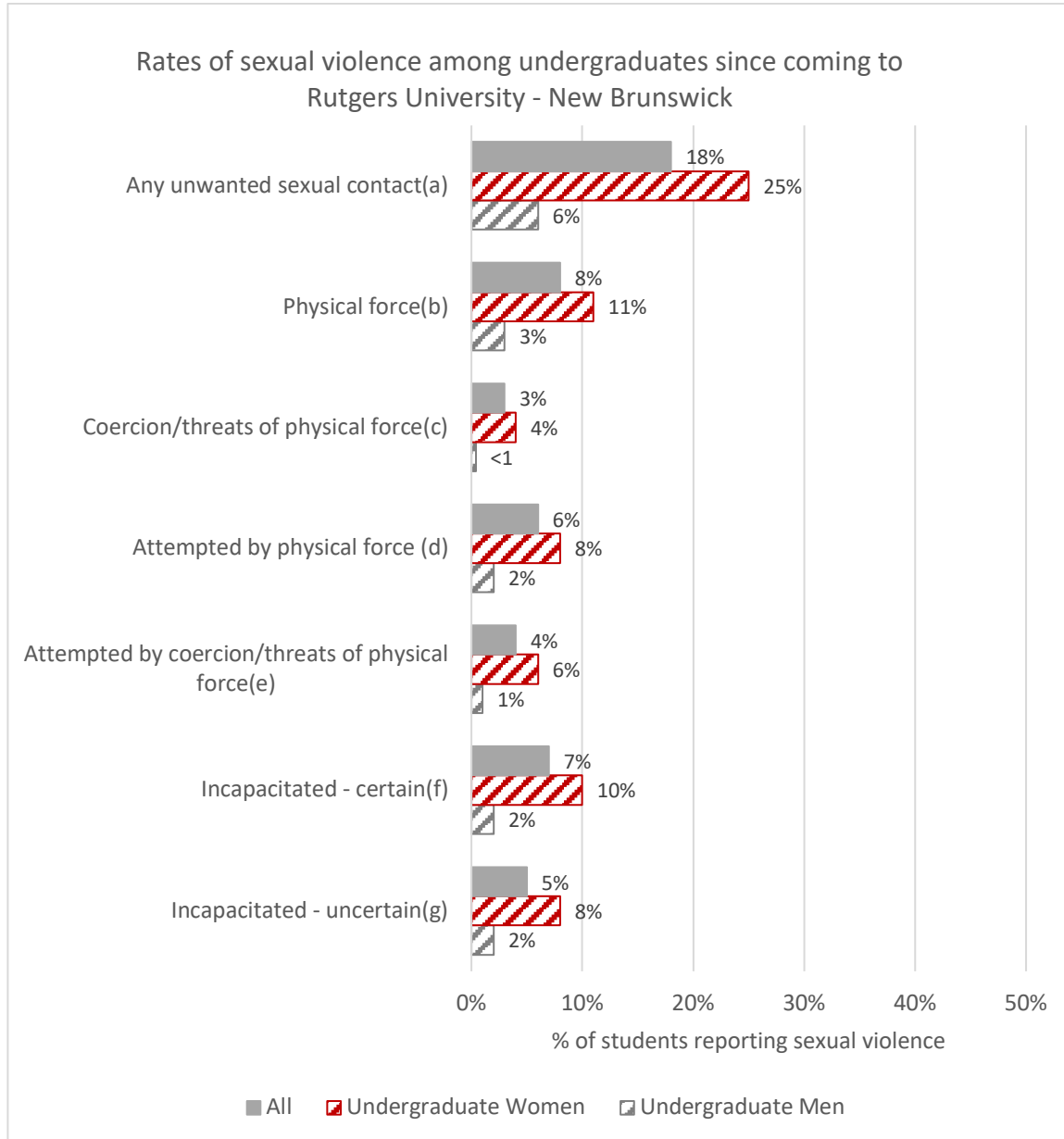


Figure 2. Percentage of undergraduate students who experienced at least one incident of sexual violence since coming to Rutgers University–New Brunswick

^a The difference is significant for any victimization, $\chi^2(1) = 110.15, p < .001$; ^b The difference is significant for physical force $\chi^2(1) = 40.00, p < .001$; ^c The difference is significant for coercion/threats of physical force $\chi^2(1) = 19.79, p < .001$; ^d The difference is significant for attempted physical force $\chi^2(1) = 27.58, p < .001$; ^e The difference is significant for attempted by coercion/threats of physical force $\chi^2(1) = 24.59, p < .001$; ^f The difference is significant for incapacitated (certain) $\chi^2(1) = 45.74, p < .001$; ^g The difference is significant for incapacitated (uncertain) $\chi^2(1) = 29.23, p < .001$

Participants who affirmed any of the six types of unwanted sexual contact were asked a series of follow-up questions regarding the nature of the most serious incident. Participants indicated whether the most serious incident for each of these six types involved nonconsensual touching or penetration. The percentage of students who experienced each type of sexual violence is depicted in Figure 3. Unwanted touching was more common than penetration for each type of sexual violence.

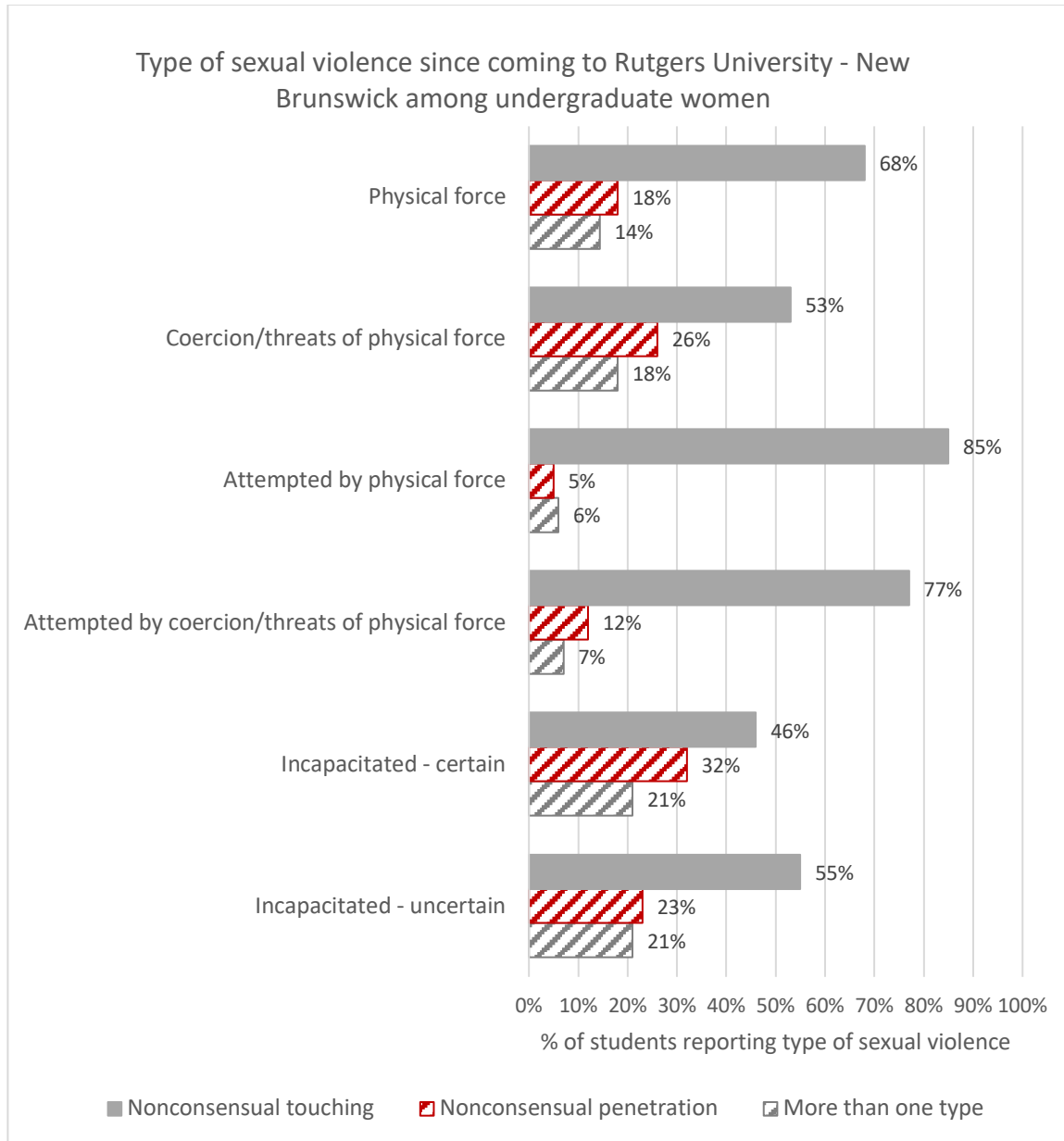


Figure 3. Subtype of sexual violence experienced by undergraduate women during the most serious incident of sexual violence.

3. Perpetrators are most often known to the survivor.

Almost all women students who experienced sexual violence since coming to Rutgers University–New Brunswick reported a male perpetrator of the most serious incident (98%) and over one-third of male students who experienced sexual violence reported a male perpetrator of the most serious incident (39%). Only a slightly larger percent of men (49% of men) reported a woman perpetrator of the most serious incident.

For both men and women, the perpetrator was most often known to the survivor (62% of all survivors). Non-stranger perpetrators were most frequently categorized as a “casual acquaintance or hookup” or a “friend.” Over half (58%) of perpetrators were also Rutgers students.

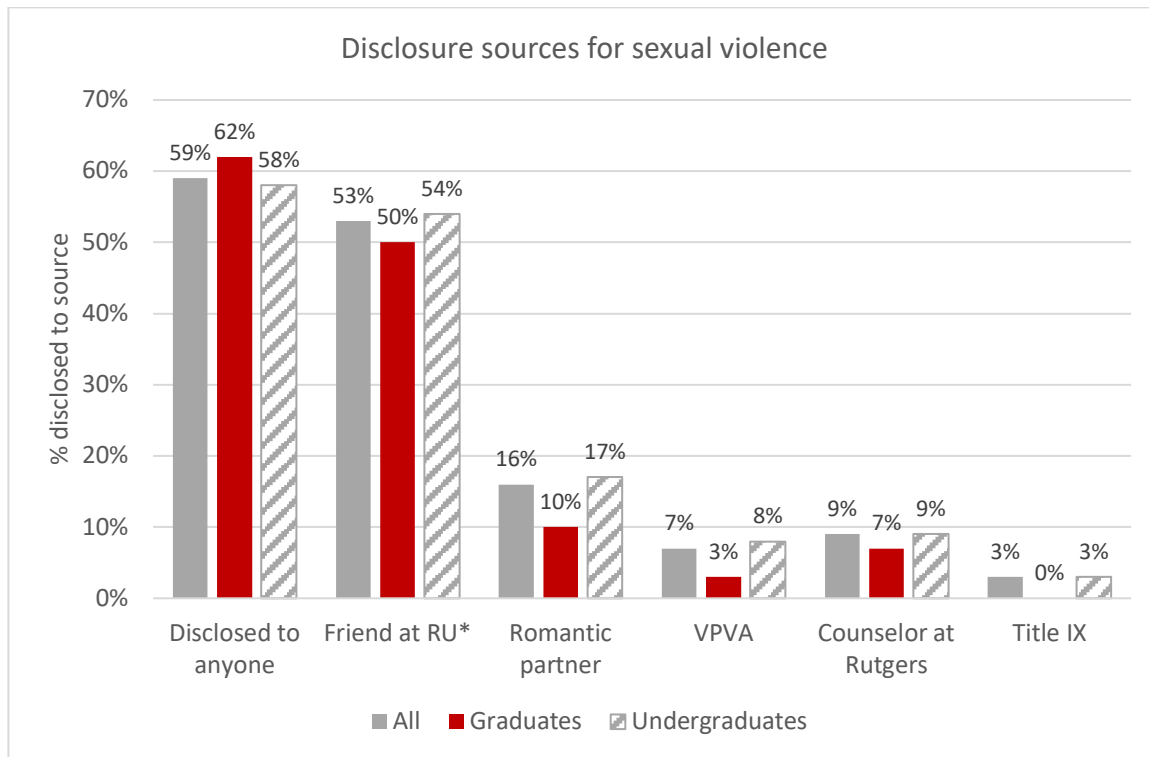
Although most perpetrators were known to the survivor, a large percentage (32%) reported that the perpetrator was a stranger. This finding is inconsistent with previous research that most victims know the perpetrator.⁶ We suspect that students may use the term stranger to refer to someone they met the night of the incident. To support this hypothesis, we examined the location of the incident. Among students who reported the perpetrator was a stranger, 36% said the incident happened in an off campus apartment/house and 31% said the incident happened at a Greek house. Only 5% said the incident happened outside/on the street and 4% said the incident happened at a bar or party. These findings suggest that although a sizeable minority of students are reporting a stranger perpetrator these perpetrators are not true strangers, such as someone on the street that the victim had never before seen.

4. Students tend to disclose to their friends and within 24 hours of the incident.

A majority of survivors (59%) disclosed the sexual violence to someone, and more than half (61%) of these students told someone within 24 hours of the incident. Likelihood of disclosure to someone did not differ based on student status or student gender. All student survivors were most likely to disclose the incident to a friend (see Figure 4).

A series of follow-up questions evaluated the usefulness of on-campus services for those students who accessed them. 81% of all students who reported disclosing to VPVA felt that their response “made things better” while 11% reported that their response “had no effect at all.” Additionally, 61% of all students who reported disclosing to an on-campus counselor or therapist found that their response “made things better” while 27% reported that their response “had no effect at all.”

⁶ Fisher, B. S., Cullen, F. T., & Turner, M. G. (2000). *The sexual victimization of college women: Research report*. Retrieved from Washington, D.C.: <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/182369.pdf>



*The difference for student status is significant, $X^2(1)=7.09, p=.01$.

Figure 4. Percentage of students who disclosed unwanted sexual contact to anyone and to particular disclosure sources.

5. Students' top reasons for not disclosing an incident of sexual violence included: "It is a private matter; I wanted to deal with it on my own," "Had other things I needed to focus on and was concerned about," and "I wanted to forget it happened."

Students who did not tell anyone about what happened to them were asked why they did not disclose. The top reasons for not disclosing among all students included, "It is a private matter; I wanted to deal with it on my own," "Had other things I needed to focus on and was concerned about," "I wanted to forget it happened," "Didn't think what happened was serious enough to talk about," and "Didn't think others would think it was serious" (see Figure 5).

Three options were related to the school's response to sexual violence: "Didn't know reporting procedure on campus," "I thought nothing would be done," and "Feared I or another would be punished for infractions or violations (for example, underage drinking)."

While response patterns were similar among all students, undergraduate students were more likely to cite “Didn’t think it was serious enough to talk about” than graduate students, and less likely to cite “Ashamed/embarrassed” as a reason for not disclosing than graduate students. A significantly larger number of graduate students were more likely to cite “Didn’t know the reporting procedures on campus” than undergraduate students.

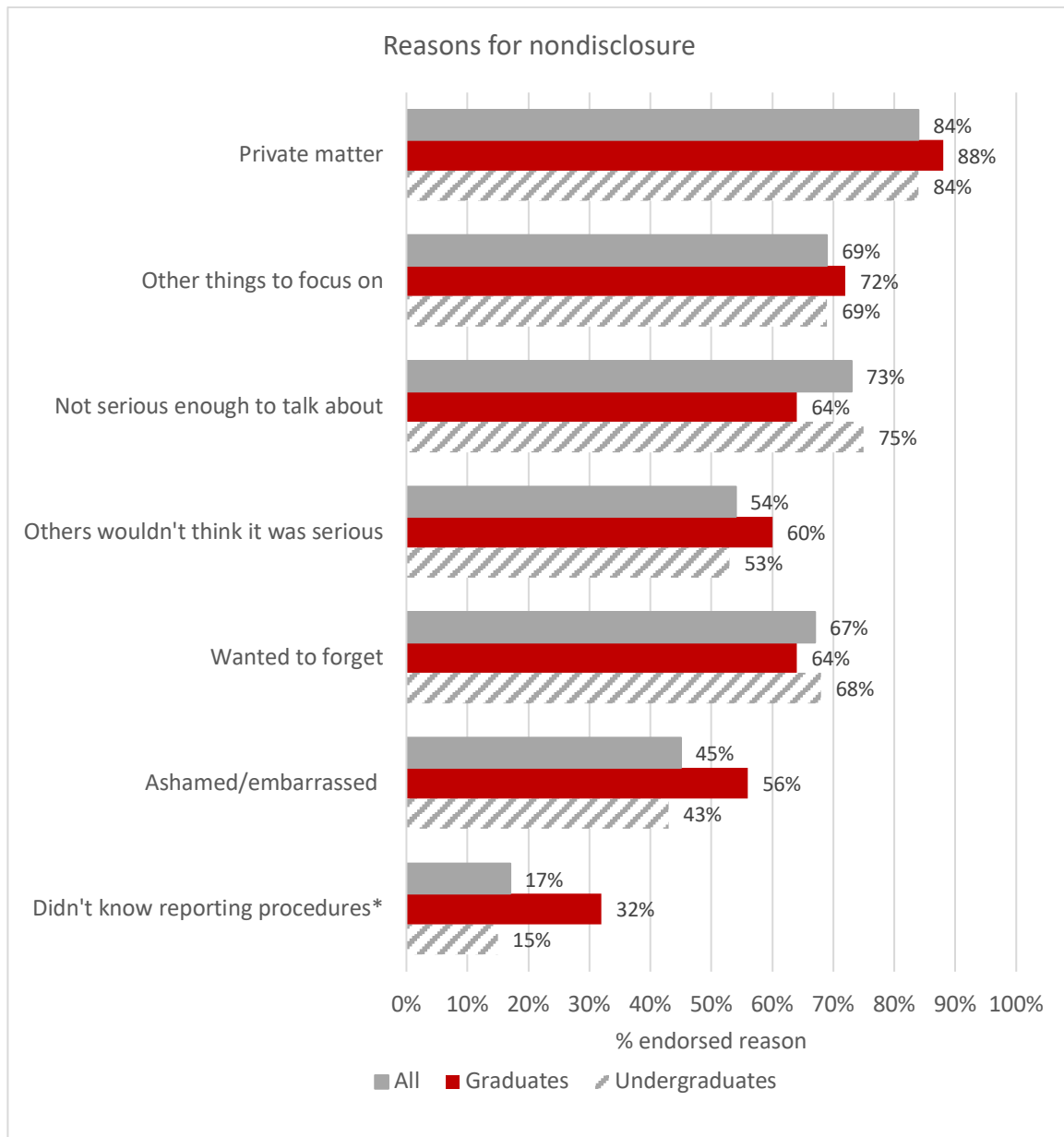


Figure 5. Percentage of students who cited reasons for nondisclosure of sexual violence.

*The difference for student status is significant, $\chi^2(1)=5.42, p=.02$

Conclusion

Results of the 2018 iSPEAK survey revealed that rates of sexual violence are highest for undergraduate women at Rutgers University–New Brunswick. This finding is consistent with literature on rates of sexual violence among undergraduate female students.^{7,8} For a large majority of students who experienced sexual violence since coming to campus, the perpetrator was known to the student.

Further, the results from the iSPEAK survey suggest that both male and female students often do tell someone about their unwanted sexual experience, and most commonly this person is a friend or a peer. Students who did not disclose their experience to someone were most likely to cite that the incident was a “private matter” and that they felt the “incident was not serious enough to talk about” as reasons for their nondisclosure. And while less frequently cited, slightly less than one in three graduate students cited “didn’t know the reporting procedures on campus” as a reason for not disclosing, which may suggest that additional education regarding reporting procedures on campus is needed for graduate students.

⁷ Koss, M. P., Gidycz, C. A., & Wisniewski, N. (1987). The scope of rape: Incidence and prevalence of sexual aggression and victimization in a national sample of higher education students. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 55(2), 162-170;

⁸ Krebs, C. P., Lindquist, C. H., Warner, T. D., Fisher, B. S., & Martin, S. L. (2007). The campus sexual assault (CSA) study (Document No. 221153). Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/221153.pdf>

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