STALKING AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS: FACT SHEET

What is stalking? While legal definitions of stalking vary from one jurisdiction to another, Title IX and the Clery Act have a good working definition of stalking: Engaging in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to (1) Fear for the person’s safety or the safety of others; or (2) Suffer substantial emotional distress.

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18-24-year-olds experience the highest rates of stalking among adults. This makes it vital for colleges to appropriately address stalking on campus and ensure services are accessible to all victims.

STALKING OFFENDERS
- The majority of college student victims are stalked by someone they know.
  - Most stalkers are also students.
  - The most common stalkers are former intimate partners (33%), closely followed by someone the victim knows or recognizes but is not a friend (31%), then friends (25%), classmates (18%), and current intimate partners (14%).
- The most common stalking behaviors reported by college stalking victims include:
  - Unwanted voice or text messages (45%).
  - Unwanted emails or social media (44%).
  - Being approached or seeing the stalker show up at places when the victim did not want them to be there (37%).
- Stalkers misuse common technology and use specialized technology to facilitate stalking:
  - 24% of college stalking victims have had a stalker create a fake profile pretending to be the victim.
  - 21% have experienced spoofing (calls, texts, or e-mails in which the stalker makes the contact seem that is coming from someone else).
  - 16% have been doxed (had private or identifying information published publicly online).
  - 16% have been the victim of nonconsensual sharing of intimate images.
- People with Autism Spectrum Disorders are more likely to engage in inappropriate courting behavior and pursue romantic targets longer, so reports of stalking committed by these students require specialized interventions that include input from disability experts.

COLLEGE STUDENT STALKING VICTIMIZATION
- Between 6% and 39% of college students report being stalked since entering college. College students at higher risk for experiencing stalking include:
  - Women
  - Students of color
  - Sexual minority and gender non-conforming college students (LGBTQ+)
  - Students with disabilities
  - Students living off campus
  - Younger students
- Among undergraduates stalked by an intimate partner:
  - 32% were sexually assaulted the prior academic year
  - 40% experienced co-occurring coercive control
  - 27% experienced co-occurring threats for a partner to hurt themselves, the victim, or someone the victim loves
  - 11% experienced co-occurring physical assault by an intimate partner
- 43% of college stalking victims who meet the legal criteria of ‘stalking’ do not identify their experience as ‘stalking’.

DISCLOSURE AND HELP-SEEKING
Among college stalking victims:
- 92% tell friends and/or family.
- 29% contact a program or resource for help, more than victims of sexual harassment (12%) or IPV (19%).
  - Transgender, nonbinary, genderqueer, or gender questioning (33%) are more likely than cisgender students (28% cis women/29% cis men) to do so.
- Of those who contact a campus program for help, 40% say it was extremely or very useful and 35% say it was a little or not at all useful.

School-Related Impacts for Stalking Victims Include:
- difficulty concentrating in class, on assignments, and during exams
- missing meetings and extra-curricular activities
- dropping classes
- lower grades
- considering dropping out of school
- changing living situation, like moving out of dorms

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Sources


