

Stalking risk increases among college students

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According to a study by the Crime Victims' Institute at Sam Houston State University, college students are at higher risk for stalking than the general public, but are less likely to report the crime to police.

"Majoring in stalking: Exploring stalking experiences between [college students](#) and the general public," co-authored by Patrick Q. Brady and Leana A. Bouffard, found that stalking was more prevalent among college students than the general public, with 4.3 percent of [college students](#) experiencing the crime in the last 12 month compared to 2.2 percent of the general public. Yet, only one-quarter of college victims filed reports with police, compared to 32 percent of the general population, according to a study based on data from the 2006 National Crime Victimization Survey, Stalking Victimization Supplement.

Stalking, defined as a repeated course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear, is a crime in all 50 states. This crime most commonly occurs between current or former intimate partners, with the highest rates of offenses between 18 to 24 years old. With advances in technology, stalking offenders can now pursue their victims through new mediums, with one in every four incidents using electronic devices, such as GPS, audio-video recording, [social networking sites](#) or surreptitious software.

"Given the pervasiveness of the issue, campus administrators, school personnel and public safety officials must consider the seriousness of the [crime](#) and tailor their efforts to proactively address stalking among

college campuses and the general public through effective strategies of prevention and intervention," said Bouffard, Director of the Crime Victims' Institute.

Public college campuses also face new mandates to assist victims and promote education on stalking under the Sexual Violence Elimination Act and the Clery Act. This legislation also targets issues such as domestic violence, sexual assault and dating violence.

"The findings from the current analysis suggest that more is needed to build the capacity of universities and public safety officials to systematically address the barriers that inhibit victims from reporting," said Brady, an SHSU graduate student. "Additionally, universities need to ensure that they have the resources necessary to appropriately respond to reports of stalking and other forms of interpersonal violence."

This study is the third in a series by the Crime Victims' Institute on stalking. "Stalking in Texas - 2014" provides an overview of data, policies, procedures and practices on stalking in the state. The second study, "Stalking on College Campuses: Perceptions & Approaches of Campus Law Enforcement Officers," addressed stalking on college campuses and the response and perceptions of campus law enforcement. The reports can be found on the Crime Victims' Institute web site at <http://www.crimevictimsinstitute.org/publications>.

More information: The Stalking Resource Center recently released a guide that can help assist universities develop a model stalking policy for college campuses. "Model Stalking Policies for College Campus" can be found at www.victimsofcrime.org

Provided by Sam Houston State University

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