

# Study links college football game days to increase in sexual assault reports

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College football game days have long been associated with alcohol-fueled partying on campuses, but a new study shows they're also linked to an increase in reports of sexual assault.

A new paper co-authored by a Montana State University economics professor finds game days at top [college](#) football programs are associated with a 28 percent increase in reports of rape from college-age women.

The study, which focused on 96 U.S. colleges and universities with NCAA Division 1 football programs, examined the relationship between campus party culture and [sexual assault](#). It found rape reports in the vicinity of those colleges surge 41 percent above average on the day of home football games, while reports of rape increase 15 percent when there are away games.

"Our results demonstrate that events that intensify partying increase reports of rape," said economist Isaac Swensen, a research fellow with MSU's Initiative for Regulation and Applied Economic Analysis and one of three authors of the paper. In addition to home games, Swensen said rivalry games and upset wins are associated with higher rates of reported sexual assault.

Published in the January issue of the *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, "College Party Culture and Sexual Assault" considers the extent to which a school's party culture increases sexual violence against women.

"We wanted to quantify the causal effect of partying behaviors on sexual assault and rape, which led us to investigate Division 1 games because they, very clearly, intensify alcohol consumption and partying among college students, said Swensen, an assistant professor of economics in MSU's Department of Agricultural Economics and Economics in the College of Agriculture and the College of Letters and Science. "Looking at high-profile football games provided us an opportunity to look at the underlying effects of such behaviors and events."

The researchers found the effects are larger for schools with more prominent football teams and during more prominent games.

The study's estimates are based on panel data collected from the FBI's National Incident Based Reporting System, a voluntary program for universities.

In addition to the findings, the paper offers recommendations for policymakers to consider and conclude that it will be important for future research to consider the degree to which [game](#) day-specific policies, such as elimination of tailgating and alcohol sales inside football stadiums, reduce incidences of rape.

"The authors hope our results will prompt administrators and university officials to think about ways to reduce the spikes of partying and alcohol consumption that happen around these events, or at least make the partying that does occur safer," Swensen said.

The Initiative for Regulation and Applied Economic Analysis at MSU provides resources and research support to faculty and students from across MSU to research regulation and policy analysis.

Appointments for the Initiative's Research Fellows Program are for two-year periods, with the potential for renewal. The Research Grants

Program provides one-year grants to MSU faculty. Both programs support an array of research programs by a broad and diverse group of MSU faculty.

Swensen, a Montana native, received his bachelor's degree in economics from Brigham Young University Idaho in 2007 and his Ph.D. from the University of Oregon in 2013. One area of his research at MSU focuses on understanding the effects of risky behaviors among college students. His latest research examines the link between campus sexual assault prevention efforts and student enrollment through an analysis of Federal Title IX investigations into claims that universities have failed to protect victims of sexual assault.

**More information:** Jason M. Lindo et al. College Party Culture and Sexual Assault, *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* (2018). [DOI: 10.1257/app.20160031](https://doi.org/10.1257/app.20160031)

Provided by Montana State University

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