

# Minority Students at Greater Risk of Sexual Assault

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Not only are racial, sexual and gender minority groups more likely to be victims of sexual assault, students who consider their colleges inclusive and tolerant are less likely to be victims, two new complementary [studies](#) found.

Published recently in the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence and Prevention Science*, the studies reveal how populations with intersecting minority identities may be at greater risk of sexual assault, emphasizing the need for more sexual assault research and prevention and treatment programs that address specific marginalized groups.

One study, led by a team from the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health, was based on surveys from over 70,000 undergraduate students attending 120 higher education institutions between 2011 and 2013.

The team found that women were 150 percent more likely than men to be sexually assaulted, but that transgender people were at much greater risk -- 300 percent more likely than cisgender men to be sexually assaulted.

Gay, bisexual and black men all had higher odds of being sexually assaulted than heterosexual and white men. Black women were more likely than white women to be sexually assaulted, but Asian and Latina women were less likely.

Black transgender people were more likely than white transgender people to be assaulted as well.

The lead author of both studies said this is the first research of its kind to identify ways that intersecting marginalized populations are at greater risk of being sexually assaulted.

In the second study, the team analyzed surveys from 2,000 undergraduate students across all 50 states who identify as part of a sexual or gender minority population. The students who felt that their campus was inclusive and welcoming were found to be 27 percent less likely to be sexually assaulted.

Based on these results, the researchers suggested that such inclusive campus environments might encourage students to speak up and stop a sexual assault if they see one happening or to be more cautious in certain high-risk environments, like events that include drugs and alcohol.

"If sexual assault prevention efforts solely focus on heterosexual violence, they may invalidate sexual- and gender-minority people's assault experiences and be ineffective for them," said Robert Coulter, lead author of the two studies and a doctoral candidate in Pitt Public Health's Department of Behavioral and Community Health Sciences. "To overcome this, existing programs could be augmented to explicitly address homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and racism. And new interventions could be created specifically for sexual, gender, racial and ethnic minorities."