



Unwanted Sexual Experiences at UNH:

The Context of Unwanted Sexual Experiences

• 2006 •

Introduction, Methods and Sample

This is the second in a series of reports from data collected at UNH in 2006 with comparisons to data collected in 2000 and 1988. This report focuses on describing the context of instances of unwanted contact and unwanted intercourse (including where they occurred, relationship between victim and perpetrator, and use of alcohol and drugs). This study is the result of an ongoing research collaboration at the University of New Hampshire funded by the UNH Office of the President. The first wave of this study was conducted in 1988 (when detailed victimization data were collected only on women), followed twelve years later in 2000 with a study using the same measures but collecting data on victimizations reported by women and men. The current report describes new data collected from UNH undergraduates in the 2005–2006 academic year and compares these figures with previous studies at UNH. In all waves of the study, we collected information from students at the end of February and asked questions about unwanted sexual contact or intercourse that had occurred since the beginning of the fall semester of that academic year. In 1988 and 2000 all participants completed paper surveys in academic classes. In 2006, approximately half of the sample (N=1242) completed paper surveys in a random sample of UNH undergraduate courses across colleges. The other half (N=1163) completed a web-based survey.¹

The 2006 sample slightly over-represents women; the percentage of female university undergraduates is 58%, compared with the sample percentage of 64%. The sample also over-represents first-year students (24% university compared to 34% sample) and under-represents seniors (28% university compared to 21% sample). The sample is close to the university population with respect to distribution across colleges (e.g., College of Liberal Arts, College of Engineering and Physical Science, etc.).

Unwanted Sexual Contact 2006

For the most part, the context of unwanted sexual contact is similar for women and men (Table 1). For both female and male students, unwanted sexual contact occurs where they live, at social events, and often when the perpetrator and victim have been drinking. The vast majority of incidents occurs between UNH students, and an acquaintance is most often the perpetrator. In many important respects, the experiences reflect the connection of unwanted sexual contact with the college social scene (e.g. occurring in residence halls, Greek houses and in off-campus residences during or after parties, and with alcohol use).²

Unwanted sexual experiences occur in a diverse range of social contexts at UNH. There is no one profile of unwanted sexual experiences.



Definitions of Unwanted Sexual Experiences

For the purposes of the study, the following definitions appeared on the surveys that participants filled out. These definitions and the specific questions used to assess victimization experiences were the same across all years of the study.

Unwanted sexual experiences are those situations in which you were certain at the time that you did not want to engage in the sexual experience and you either communicated this in some way (e.g., you said no; you protested; you said you didn't want to; you physically struggled; you cried; etc.), or you were incapacitated (e.g., drunk, passed out, etc.).

Sexual contact includes attempting or actually kissing, fondling, or touching someone in a sexually intimate way, excluding sexual intercourse.

Sexual intercourse refers to any form of sexual penetration including vaginal intercourse, oral sex, and anal intercourse.

Unwanted Sexual Contact:

Comparing the Context for Women and Men, 2006

Despite the generally similar female and male contexts, there are some noteworthy contrasts. Men are more likely than women to experience contact in a UNH residence, and women are more likely than men to experience contact in a Greek house. Women experience contact more often at a party while men experience this more often at some other social event. Though the association with alcohol use is high for both, it is somewhat higher for women. Finally, as noted above, for women the perpetrator is more likely to be an acquaintance or friend while for men the perpetrator is more likely to be a date or romantic partner. These differences suggest that unwanted sexual contact is more a product of the college social scene for women, and more a relational phenomenon for men. Finally, there are three statistically significant differences in the context of women's and men's experiences with unwanted sexual contacts. Male victims are more likely than female victims to have used drugs (8% vs. 2%); male victims are more likely to experience unwanted contact with a romantic partner (19% vs. 10%), and men are more likely to experience unwanted contact from a same-sex perpetrator than women (9% vs. 2%).

**Table 1: Unwanted Sexual Contact
Women and Men – 2006*****

	Women	Men
Where	n=402	n=91
UNH residence	30%	41%
Greek house	23%	19%
Off-campus residence	29%	21%
Other	18%	20%
When	n=403	n=91
Date	6%	7%
Party	66%	59%
Social event	17%	24%
Other	11%	10%
Alcohol/drugs		
Perpetrator used alcohol	90%	85%
Victim used alcohol	59%	53%
Perpetrator used drugs	8%	8%
Victim used drugs**	2%	8%
Perpetrator's Affiliation with UNH	n=405	n=90
UNH student	71%	80%
UNH faculty/staff	2%	1%
Unrelated to UNH	19%	12%
Don't know	5%	7%
Other	3%	0%
Who *	n=405	n=90
Stranger	28%	27%
Friend or acquaintance	56%	53%
Date or romantic partner	10%	19%
Other	5%	1%
Sex of perpetrator **	n=409	n=86
Female	2%	91%
Male	98%	9%

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** Unwanted Sexual Contact incidence: 28% females; 11% males; $p < .001$

Unwanted Sexual Experiences: Contact and Intercourse – Women, 2006

For women, the incidence of unwanted sexual contact and intercourse can be compared; the number of men who report unwanted sexual intercourse is too small to make a valid comparison across type of unwanted sexual experience. There are important characteristics in common across the two types of unwanted sexual experiences for women (Table 2). Although both happen across a range of places, residence represents a large percentage of the cases. Both types of incidents occur in the majority of cases during or after a party, and alcohol use by the perpetrator is high for both experiences. The perpetrator is another UNH student in the majority of cases for both unwanted sexual contact and intercourse, and in the vast majority of cases the victim knows the perpetrator. These results contrast with the stereotype of the stranger victimizing a student in a lonely and dark location on campus.

However, there are several noteworthy differences in the context for unwanted sexual contact *compared* to unwanted sexual intercourse for women. That is, when we compare the percentages across each context variable in Table 2, there are several significant differences. Unwanted intercourse is more likely than unwanted contact to occur in a UNH residence and at an off-campus residence, while unwanted contact is more likely than unwanted intercourse to occur in a Greek house. The perpetrator's alcohol use is more common for unwanted contact, while the perpetrator's drug use is more likely for unwanted intercourse victimization. The perpetrator is more likely to be a UNH student for unwanted contact (71% vs. 55%) while for unwanted intercourse the perpetrator is more likely to be unrelated to UNH (36% vs. 19%). The perpetrator is more likely to be a stranger for unwanted contact (28% vs. 10%) and more likely to be a romantic partner for unwanted intercourse (29% vs. 10%). These patterns suggest that unwanted sexual contact is more likely to occur as part of the college social scene, while unwanted intercourse is more likely to be relational, that is, to occur in the context of a date or relationship.

**Table 2: Contact Compared to Intercourse
Women – 2006*****

	Unwanted Sexual Contact	Unwanted Sexual Intercourse
Where	n=402	n=103
UNH residence	30%	38%
Greek house**	23%	12%
Off-campus residence**	29%	43%
Other*	18%	8%
When	n=403	n=100
Date	6%	10%
Party	66%	64%
Social event	17%	20%
Other	11%	6%
Alcohol/drugs		
Perpetrator used alcohol**	90%	74%
Victim used alcohol	59%	67%
Perpetrator used drugs*	8%	15%
Victim used drugs	2%	5%
Perpetrator's Affiliation with UNH	n=405	n=100
UNH student**	71%	55%
UNH faculty/staff	2%	2%
Unrelated to UNH**	19%	36%
Don't know	5%	5%
Other	3%	2%
Who	n=405	n=101
Stranger**	28%	10%
Friend or acquaintance	56%	56%
Date or romantic partner**	10%	29%
Other	5%	5%
Sex of perpetrator	n=409	n=98
Female	2%	2%
Male	98%	98%

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

*** Unwanted Contact: 28% (n=412);

Unwanted Intercourse: 7% (n=104)

Unwanted Sexual Contact: *Women – 1988, 2000 and 2006*³

In all three of the studies, unwanted sexual contact occurs at a variety of locations (UNH residences, Greek houses, and off campus residences – see Table 3).

Unwanted sexual contact was most likely to occur at a party in 1988, 2000, and 2006. A majority of perpetrators and victims used alcohol except for victims in 2000. The largest group of perpetrators was UNH students. In 1988 and 2000, over one-third of the perpetrators were in the “other” category, while nearly 1 in 3 perpetrators were friends or acquaintances. In 2006 half of the perpetrators were friends or acquaintances, while one-third were strangers.

Table 3: Unwanted Sexual Contact*
Women – 1988, 2000 and 2006**

	1988	2000	2006
Where	n=176	n=62	n=141
UNH residence	32%	40%	38%
Greek house	28%	16%	28%
Off-campus residence	29%	37%	20%
Other	11%	7%	14%
When	n=177	n=74	n=143
Date	9%	5%	6%
Party	68%	46%	69%
Social event	11%	27%	12%
Other	13%	22%	13%
Alcohol/drugs			
Perpetrator used alcohol	79%	66%	77%
Victim used alcohol	55%	43%	61%
Perpetrator used drugs	5%	6%	9%
Victim used drugs	3%	6%	1%
Perpetrator's Affiliation with UNH	n=177	n=76	n=144
UNH student	70%	51%	74%
UNH faculty/staff	0%	0%	4%
Unrelated to UNH	25%	37%	11%
Don't know	2%	4%	8%
Other	4%	8%	4%
Who	n=173	n=75	n=150
Stranger	18%	18%	35%
Friend/acquaintance	30%	29%	50%
Date/romantic partner	16%	13%	11%
Other	36%	40%	4%

* 35% (178/518) in 1988, 20% (79/406) in 2000, 23% (151/710) in 2006

** Paper surveys only

Summary of Selected Findings from the First Unwanted Sexual Experiences Report on Incidence and Prevalence

From September 2005 to February 2006:

- 25% of women and 10% of men reported at least one unwanted contact.
- 7% of women and 4% of men reported unwanted sexual intercourse.
- 3% of the women reported unwanted sexual intercourse when a perpetrator used force or threat of force.
- 11% of women and 8% of men reported that they had sexual intercourse when they were too intoxicated to consent.

Unwanted Sexual Intercourse: Women – 1988, 2000 and 2006

In all three studies, the most common location of unwanted sexual intercourse was a UNH residence (Table 4).

Unwanted sexual intercourse was most likely to occur at a party in 1988 and 2006 and at a party or another event in 2000. More than three-quarters of perpetrators and victims used alcohol in 1988 and 2006; in contrast, almost half of the perpetrators and victims used alcohol in 2000. A majority of perpetrators of unwanted sexual intercourse were UNH students in 1988 and 2006 whereas in 2000, both UNH students and people unrelated to UNH were common categories for the perpetrator. The most common relationship between the perpetrator and the victim was dating or romantic partner in 1988 and 2000 and friend or acquaintance in 2006.

Table 4: Unwanted Sexual Intercourse*
Women – 1988, 2000 and 2006**

	1988	2000	2006
Where	n=50	n=24	n=36
UNH residence	50%	54%	53%
Greek house	8%	8%	14%
Off-campus residence	36%	39%	25%
Other	6%	0%	8%
When	n=51	n=23	n=35
Date	6%	5%	14%
Party	68%	37%	61%
Social event	24%	26%	7%
Other	3%	32%	18%
Alcohol/drugs			
Perpetrator used alcohol	77%	44%	80%
Victim used alcohol	65%	40%	80%
Perpetrator used drugs	10%	12%	30%
Victim used drugs	2%	8%	16%
Perpetrator's affiliation with UNH	n=51	n=23	n=35
UNH student	55%	44%	69%
UNH faculty/staff	0%	0%	6%
Unrelated to UNH	33%	48%	23%
Don't know	4%	0%	3%
Other	8%	9%	0%
Who	n=51	n=25	n=36
Stranger	12%	4%	14%
Friend/acquaintance	19%	29%	57%
Date/romantic partner	41%	46%	26%
Other	28%	21%	3%

* 10% (51/511) in 1988, 6% (25/388) in 2000, 5% (36/714) in 2006

** Paper surveys only

Unwanted Sexual Contact: Men – 2000 and 2006

A small but consistent minority of men reported an unwanted sexual contact in the two studies in which men were surveyed. In 2000, 8% of 226 men surveyed (18) reported unwanted sexual contact. In 2006, 7% of 461 men surveyed (31) reported the same, indicating no significant change. Note that because of the small numbers, analyses have limited power to detect meaningful differences across the two time periods.

Table 5: Men's Unwanted Sexual Contact
2000 and 2006*

	2000	2006
Where	n=18	n=31
UNH residence	22%	32%
Off campus residence	44%	19%
Greek house	17%	36%
Other	17%	13%
When	n=18	n=31
Date	0	7%
Party	89%	55%
Social event	11%	19%
Other	0	19%
Alcohol/drugs		
Perpetrator used alcohol	100%	64%
Victim used alcohol	100%	39%
Perpetrator used drugs	--	10%
Victim used drugs	100%	10%
Perpetrator's affiliation with UNH	n=18	n=31
UNH student	78%	77%
UNH faculty/staff	0	3%
Unrelated to UNH	22%	10%
Don't know	0	10%
Other	0	0
Who	n=17	n=31
Stranger	12%	26%
Friend or acquaintance	77%	48%
Romantic partner or date	12%	23%
Other	0	3%

* Paper surveys only

In 2000, a more consistent profile emerged in the context for unwanted sexual contact for men compared to 2006. In 2000, unwanted sexual contact tended to occur at an off campus residence, at a party, by a UNH student who was a friend. In 2006, there was much more variability in the context. The unwanted contact was as likely to occur at a

UNH residence or a Greek house, at a party or a social event or other time, by a UNH student, who was a friend or a romantic partner or stranger.

Despite these changing contexts over time, there are important characteristics in common across the two time periods. In general, residence represents a large proportion of the cases. In both years, the majority of cases occurred during or after a party, alcohol use by the perpetrator was high in both years, and in the vast majority of cases the perpetrator was another UNH student.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- ▶ Despite some differences between the unwanted sexual experiences of women and men in 2006, there are important common contexts. Overall, unwanted sexual contact occurs where students live, at social events, often when the perpetrator and victim have been drinking. The vast majority of incidents occurs between UNH students and a perpetrator who is an acquaintance. Continued efforts to address unwanted sexual contact need to build on these known characteristics.
- ▶ The finding that 85% of female victims report that someone they know committed the unwanted sexual intercourse alerts us to the need for further education about who is committing these offenses. Colleges and universities around the country find this same percentage, yet the stereotype remains that the perpetrator is a stranger. We need to continue to educate the campus community that acquaintances are most likely to be the perpetrators against women.

- ▶ Because the context of men's unwanted sexual contact appears to be more variable now (compared with 2000), more education focusing on this is needed. Lack of knowledge that men experience unwanted sexual contact, at a variety of times and places, may be a barrier to effective prevention and education efforts.
- ▶ Given the finding across the three panels of data collection that a UNH residence continues to be the most common location of unwanted sexual intercourse for women, residents and Resident Assistants may need more support and education in order to help prevent women's unwanted sexual intercourse in UNH residences.

Project collaborators

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Endnotes

- 1 Comparisons and analyses of the 2006 data use both paper and web surveys. However, comparisons between the most recent study with the two earlier ones are based on paper surveys only.
- 2 The survey did not distinguish between recognized and unrecognized Greek houses.
- 3 The sex of the perpetrator was not asked in 1988 or 2000.