

Risk Factors Associated with Sexual Assault among College Students Attending an HBCU

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ABSTRACT

Sexual assault constitutes as a public health problem that is categorized by sexual activities including forced sexual intercourse, forcible sodomy, molestation, incest, and attempted rape. Recent research suggests that sexual assault is increasing on college campuses. However, there are few studies examining the prevalence and risk factors for sexual assault at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU). To address this, the current study examined the prevalence, risk factors, and outcomes associated with sexual assault at an HBCU. Participants in the study are 264 undergraduate students from an HBCU in the mid-Atlantic region. The majority of participants are female (71%), African American (91%), and seniors (41%). After providing informed consent, participants completed a Climate Assessment survey administered by the Office of Diversity. Results suggest that since starting college about 24% of student's experienced sexual contact without consent. Of those sexually assaulted, 12% reported they were under the influence of drugs, alcohol, or incapacitated at the time of the assault. About 17% of those assaulted experienced a physical injury and/or poor mental health outcomes (e.g., anxiety, depression, flashbacks). The study supports the need to address sexual assault on HBCU campuses to enhance existing literature and create interventions to tackle specific challenges of reporting and developing prevention strategies.

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INTRODUCTION



According to Office of Violence Against Women, sexual assault is categorized by sexual activities that include forced sexual intercourse, forcible sodomy, child molestation, incest, fondling, and attempted rape (Office of Violence Against Women, 2015).

About 1 in 5 women (18.3%) and 1 in 71 men (1.4%) in the United States have been raped at some time in their lives (Black, et al., 2010). In 2013, a total of 1,169 forcible rape were reported in Maryland (MCASA, 2014). 1 in 5 women and 1 in 16 men are sexually assaulted while in college Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault, 2014. About 14.2% of college female students have experienced sexual assault since entering Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). There is limited research on the prevalence of sexual assault among male students at HBCUs (Krebs C. et al., 2007).

There are a few studies examining the prevalence and risk factors for sexual assault at HBCU's. The purpose of this study is to examine the prevalence, risk factors associated with sexual assault at HBCU's and associated outcomes.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Participants

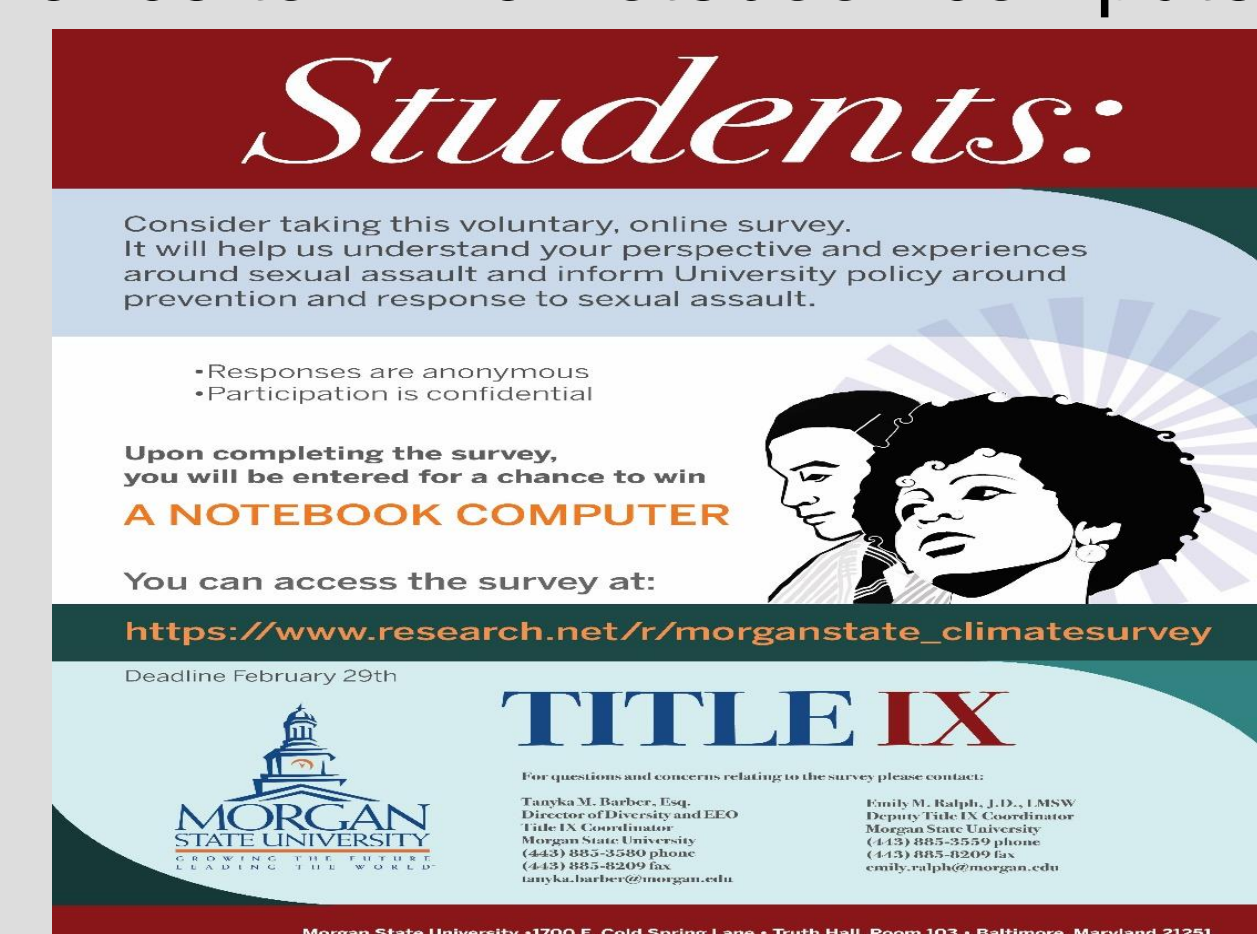
- 264 participants (76 men and 187 women)
- Undergraduate students
 - Predominantly African-American (91%)
 - Majority Seniors (41%)
 - At least 18 years old (M=21)

Measures

- Climate Assessment Survey

Procedures

- Informed consent obtained
- On-line survey given to undergraduates
- Chance to win a notebook computer



RESULTS

Table 1. Sexual Assault Prevalence by Gender

	YES	NO
Females	31 (26%)	89 (74%)
Males	3 (6%)	50 (94%)

$$\chi^2(1) = 9.47, p < .01$$

Table 2. Sexual Assault Prevalence by Classification

	YES	NO
Lower classmen	10 (16%)	51 (84%)
Upper classmen	34 (30%)	79 (70%)

$$\chi^2(1) = 3.93, p < .05$$

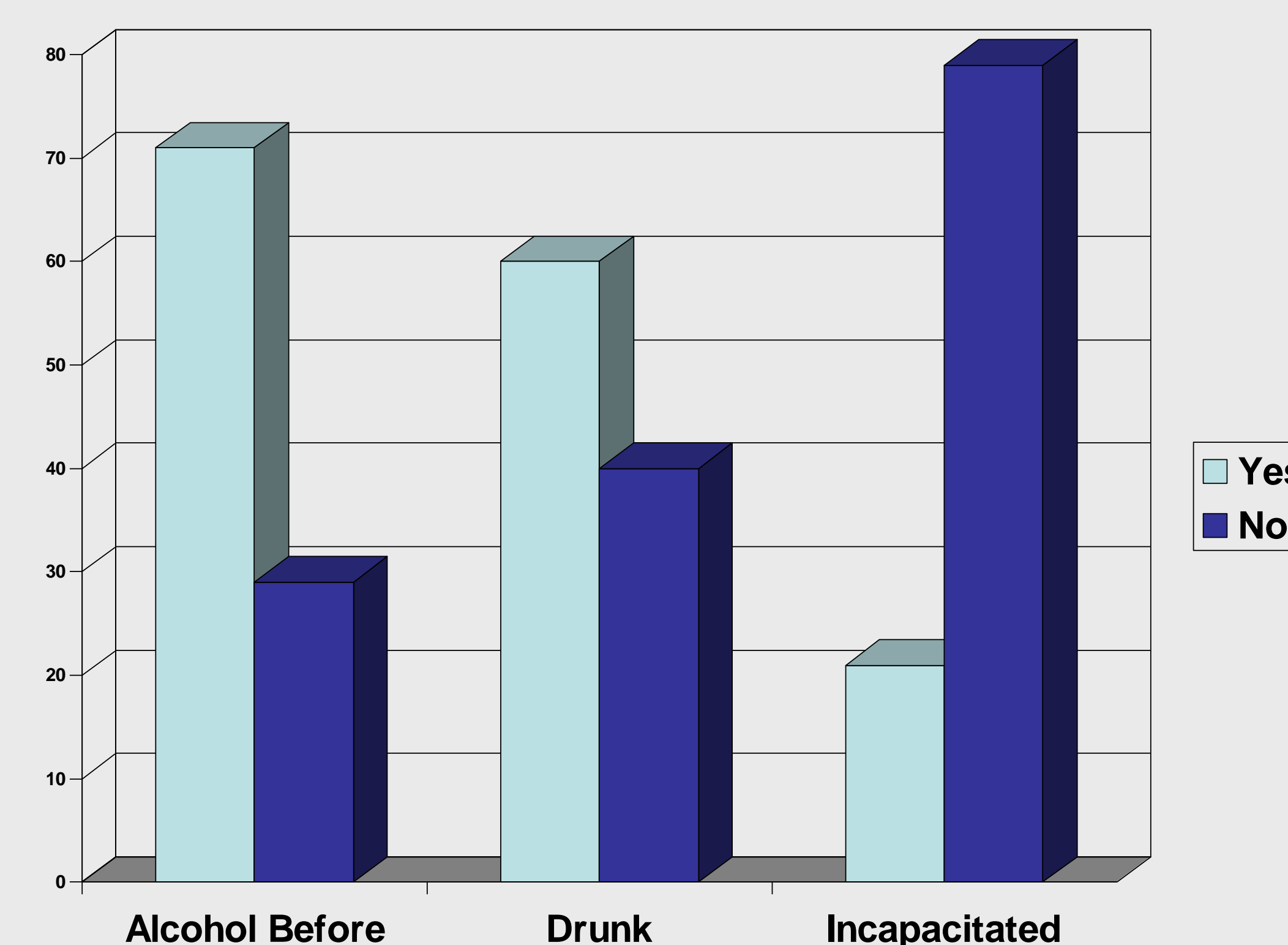


Figure 1. Sexual Assault Risk Factors

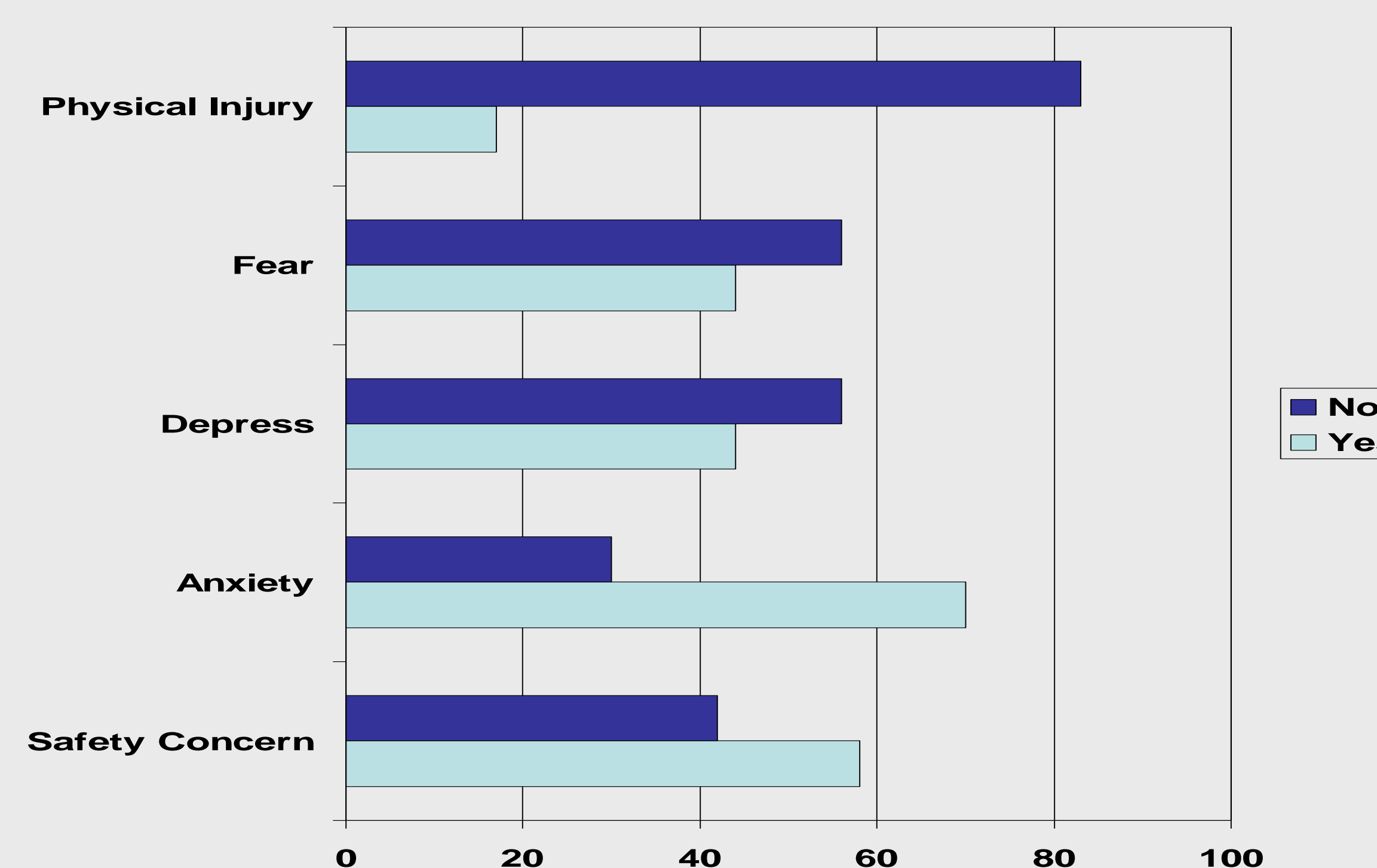


Figure 2. Sexual Assault Outcomes

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine prevalence, risk factors, and outcomes of sexual assault at an HBCU.

Results, revealed that 20% of undergraduate students surveyed at an HBCU have been sexually assaulted. The majority of these students are women and upper classmen. Figure 1, shows that alcohol use or being drunk are risk factors for sexual assault. It is illustrated in Figure 2, that students who have been assaulted have poor mental health outcomes (e.g. anxiety, depression, and fear). The results of this voluntary survey also revealed that students who have been assaulted have safety concerns.

Limitations

- Sample size is relatively small
- Results show majority of students who took the survey were seniors.
- Reliability of answers pertaining to sexual history
- Limited ability to generalize.

CONCLUSIONS

Consistent with previous literature, women are more likely to be sexually assaulted than men.

Alcohol use plays a role in sexual assault.

Interventions should be developed to make students aware of sexual assault at HBCU's.

Future research could examine if sexual assault prevalence rates decrease at an HBCU once a sexual assault intervention has been implemented.

SELECTED REFERENCES

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