

# Crimes hit one-third of women at UK

## Sex assaults a top problem, study says

By Deborah Yetter  
dyetter@courier-journal.com  
The Courier-Journal

More than a third of undergraduate and graduate female students surveyed at the University of Kentucky said they had been victims of sexual assault, other physical attacks or stalking, according to findings released yesterday.

In most cases — 82 percent — the women knew the perpetrator, the survey found.

UK officials said they are taking additional steps to ensure student safety because of the results of the survey, which involved 1,010 students.

“We’re concerned about things that have happened in the past and are taking very definitive steps to ensure safety for all our students, faculty and staff,” UK President Lee Todd said yesterday.

Several students yesterday said women on campus are concerned about their safety, and they welcomed UK’s measures.

Junior Jessica Gibbs, a former president of the resident student council, said UK has already taken steps to improve lighting, increase police presence and remove foliage in which assailants could hide.

“There’s really no way to prevent it completely,” said Gibbs, who did not take part in the survey. “But I’m really pleased that the school is taking this interest in it.”

The university’s Center for

See SAFETY, A4, col. 4

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# SAFETY | Crime hits women at UK

Continued from A1

Research on Violence Against Women conducted the survey. Carol Jordan, director of the center, said the survey wasn't prompted by any single incident or a trend — reports of crime on campus dropped slightly between 2002 and 2003, according to statistics from the UK campus police.

Rather, the center wanted to understand what women had experienced and use the research to determine how UK officials could improve efforts to prevent crime, she said.

"In designing programs, we don't want to base it on anecdotes," she said. "We want to hear what has happened to UK women."

## Learning to report crimes

The survey, conducted by telephone in the spring semester, found that:

► About 21 percent of the women had experienced a sexual assault.

► Eighteen percent had been stalked.

► About 10 percent had been physically assaulted.

Jordan said the numbers add up to more than the total 36.5 percent of women who reported that they had been victims because some reported experiencing more than one of the offenses.

Only a fraction of the offenses reported in the survey were reported to police.

About 1.5 percent of the sex offenses, 18 percent of the stalking cases and 23 percent of the physical assaults were reported to police, Jordan said.

UK will use those results to try to better educate women about the need to report crimes, she said.

"We need to do a better job of getting out the message (that) it is not the woman's fault," Jordan said.

The survey found that most women surveyed — 82 percent — knew the perpetrator, and most offenses occurred in the victim's residence, either on or off campus, which Jordan said is significant in educating women on how to protect themselves.

"If they assume the only person who can hurt them is someone who will leap out from the bushes, they're probably not in the best position to protect



*"There's really no way to prevent it completely. But I'm really pleased that the school is taking this interest in it."*

**JESSICA GIBBS**, UK junior and a former president of the resident student council



*"(Crimes such as sexual assault and stalking are) a definite concern."*

**CHRISTINA HOON**, UK senior and a member of the Delta Delta Delta sorority



*"We encourage our female students to report it to the director of the residence hall or call police. It's good to put it out there."*

**JONAH BROWN**, UK junior and president of the resident student council

themselves," she said.

Jordan said that compared with national surveys on campus crime, UK is about the same as most universities. But the goal is to be better than average, she said.

Todd said steps UK will take as a result of the survey include creating a "Women's Place" to coordinate efforts to serve victims and provide education and other services; create a cell-phone lending program for students; offer more self-defense education; expand campus forums on women's safety; and create more programs that educate students about crime.

## Student suggestions

UK senior Christina Hoon said she has not been the victim of any offenses on campus but had a female friend who was attacked. She said the incident was sobering for her.

"It is a definite concern," said Hoon, a member of the Delta Delta Delta sorority. Hoon said the sorority advises members to walk in pairs on campus at night, be aware of their surroundings and report any suspicious behavior to police.

Hoon said students also should be aware of circumstances in which problems might arise, such as situations in which people are intoxicated and fights or assaults could occur.

## UK SURVEY

A survey of female University of Kentucky students found that 36.5 percent reported being victims of rape, sexual or physical assault, or stalking. Some women reported more than one offense.

**20.8%** Reported a rape or sexual assault

**18%** Reported stalking

**10.4%** Reported physical assault

Source: University of Kentucky

By Steve Durbin, The Courier-Journal

UK's education efforts should include tips on "how to stay out of situations where that could happen," she said.

Jordan and Todd agree and said that such information will be a part of efforts to educate students about staying safe and avoiding dangerous situations.

Jonah Brown, 20, a UK junior and president of the resident student council, said his organization will work with UK to continue to educate students about safety. The council urges students to report any threatening or suspicious behavior, he said.

"We encourage our female students to report it to the director of the residence hall or call police," he said. "It's good to put it out there."