

# PREVENTION IS A TEAM SPORT:

## Empowering Male Student Athletes in Your Game Plan for Campus Sexual Assault Prevention



### **Authors:**

SILVIA ZENTENO, Senior Director of Educational Programs and Research, It's On Us  
(Principal Investigator)

EMILY HILTY, Director, Data and Analytics, Civic Nation

KYLE RICHARD, Associate Director of Men's Engagement and Special Projects, It's On Us

### **Contributors:**

TRACEY VITCHERS, Executive Director, It's On Us

ADRIANNA BRANIN, Assistant Director of Trainings, It's On Us

BLAKE KITTERMAN, Associate Director of Campus Organizing, It's On Us

PATRICK MADDOX, Intern, It's On Us



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With immense gratitude,

Tracey Vitchers, Executive Director, It's On Us

Silvia Zenteno, Senior Director of Educational Programs & Research, It's On Us

Kyle Richard, Associate Director of Men's Engagement & Special Projects, It's On Us

Adrianna Branin, Assistant Director of Trainings, It's On Us

Blake Kitterman, Associate Director of Campus Organizing, It's On Us

Patrick Maddox, Intern, It's On Us

# ABSTRACT

In 2022, It's On Us released the research report, *Engaging Men: Campus Sexual Assault Attitudes and Behaviors*, which found that college men perceive most existing sexual assault prevention education trainings to be ineffective.<sup>1</sup> This qualitative, interview-based study demonstrated that the combination of academic and athletic pressures faced by male athletes, the social stigmas surrounding high-profile instances of domestic and sexual violence cases involving athletes, and the use of irrelevant programming by institutions makes it difficult to effectively facilitate prevention conversations with male athletes. At the same time, male athletes are traditionally seen as harbingers of campus culture, often serving as high-profile leaders within the community who possess the ability to influence broader socio-cultural beliefs and behaviors among their peers. Therefore, It's On Us determined it was critical to gather a deeper understanding of how to engage this population of students in prevention education programs.

It's On Us conducted this follow-up research study, *Prevention is a Team Sport: Empowering Male Student Athletes in Your Game Plan for Campus Sexual Assault Prevention (Prevention is a Team Sport)*, to explore how to uniquely engage male college athletes in sexual assault prevention education. It's On Us conducted 38 focus group sessions with 710 male athletes from Division I, Division II, Division III, community/junior college (JUCO), and Club Sports teams nationwide. The teams consisted of NCAA teams, NJCAA teams, and club teams.

The study had several key findings. First, an athlete's initial experience learning about sex had a lasting

impact on their attitudes and behaviors towards sex, consent, relationships, and gender norms. Second, the study confirmed the findings of the *Engaging Men: Campus Sexual Assault Attitudes and Behaviors* report that male athletes find existing awareness and prevention education programs conducted by their institutions to be ineffective. Third, the study investigated the athletes' responses to disclosures and allegations of sexual assault. The researchers found that when an athlete received a direct disclosure from a survivor, the athlete was likely to believe and support them. Simultaneously, the athletes expressed concerns about allegations of sexual assault being levied against themselves or their teammates and the repercussions these allegations could carry.

In the conversations regarding disclosures and allegations, it was found that the majority of athletes did not know their institutions' policies or processes for responding to sexual misconduct. Of those who were aware, some athletes expressed mistrust in their institutions' response efforts following disclosures made by survivors in the athlete's life who underwent the reporting processes. Fourth, the study found that more education is needed to address the full spectrum of healthy, unhealthy, and abusive behaviors in relationships and programming must include more gender-inclusive examples to combat assumptions that men cannot be survivors of sexual and domestic violence. Lastly, the focus groups demonstrated that male athletes have the desire to be active bystanders, but lack the applicable programming to help them build the knowledge and skills to effectively do so.

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<sup>1</sup> Zenteno, S., Stewart Robinson, M. (2022). It's On Us Engaging Men: National Campus Sexual Assault Attitudes and ... (n.d.). Retrieved March 21, 2023, from [https://www.itsonus.org/wp-content/uploads/2022\\_IOU\\_Campus-Attitudes-and-Behaviors-Research-Report-3.pdf](https://www.itsonus.org/wp-content/uploads/2022_IOU_Campus-Attitudes-and-Behaviors-Research-Report-3.pdf)

The study has several key recommendations. In order to build the most effective programming, It's On Us strongly recommends that colleges provide prevention education that begins with basic, evidence-based information on sexual health and well-being. The programs must include statistics and examples of the full spectrum of healthy, unhealthy, and abusive behaviors related to sexual assault and domestic violence, what reporting and support resources are available to male survivors, and how athletes can support teammates who may have experienced sexual assault or domestic violence. It's On Us recommends prevention programs that address misinformation about sexual assault and domestic violence, including deconstructing harmful myths about individuals who make allegations of sexual assault through anecdotes, statistics, and relevant examples. All training programs should center students at each step of the program development and deployment process. Student-centered programming will ensure the programs reflect the unique needs and experiences of each campus community and their individual subcommunities in their tone, time, and setting. Lastly, It's On Us recommends institutions conduct prevention programming through

a conversational learning approach that educates male athletes on what to do rather than telling them what not to do (e.g. discussing how to ask for consent instead of saying "don't rape"). This model can be particularly productive when there are shared identities or experiences among those participating, such as being a male college athlete.

Many athletes left the focus groups reflecting on how they can be a part of the solution to prevent sexual assault on college campuses. In a debrief with a Title IX Coordinator from one of the participating institutions, the researchers were informed that one of the athletes who participated in the focus groups had been empowered to intervene in a sexually violent situation on campus. The incident occurred only weeks after the focus group was conducted, speaking to the impact of meaningful, engaging conversations that center men as the solutions to ending sexual violence, as opposed to the singular problem.

The findings outlined in this study will inform the development of new prevention education modules specifically geared toward male college athletes that will be launched by It's On Us in the fall of 2023.



# BACKGROUND

According to the most recent study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on sexual assault<sup>2</sup>, 1 in 4 American women reported being the victim of a completed or attempted rape at some point in their lifetime.<sup>3</sup> Sexual violence is prevalent throughout the United States; however, female college students between the ages of 18-24 are at risk of sexual assault at a rate three times higher than women in general.<sup>4</sup> More than 1 in 5 women, 1 in 13 men,<sup>5</sup> and 1 in 4 trans<sup>6</sup> or gender nonconforming students are sexually assaulted during their college experience. With prevalence rates this high, it is important to engage influential groups and individuals to create a culture of healthy relationships and violence prevention in college communities and society at large.

Research has indicated the vast majority of sexual assaults on campus – more than 90% – are committed by only 5-6% of male students who are repeat offenders,<sup>7</sup> meaning the majority of college men, including male athletes, are not committing acts of sexual violence. However, these non-violent young

men have historically been left out of conversations surrounding sexual assault prevention<sup>8</sup> and are often regarded as part of the problem.

It's On Us recognizes that male athletes exist in a unique space compared to their peers in relation to the issue of campus sexual violence. A 2019 study conducted on the prevalence and repeat offenses of sexual assault among college men found that being a male athlete in a position of leadership (such as a captain) had a positive correlation with the serial perpetration of alcohol-fueled rapes.<sup>7</sup> Simultaneously, male athletes are part of a group of leaders who are in a unique position to positively shape campus culture. As strong influencers of campus culture, male athletes have the potential to shift the broader campus environment from one that upholds rape culture to one of prevention, accountability, and support for survivors. Therefore, by targeting male athletes with comprehensive and empowering prevention education, we have a unique opportunity to shift broader attitudes and behaviors towards sexual violence within campuses.

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**2** See Appendix 2 for definition of sexual assault.

**3** Basile, K.C., Smith, S.G., Kresnow, M., Khatiwada S., & Leemis, R.W. (2022). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2016/2017 Report on Sexual Violence. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs/nisvsReportonSexualViolence.pdf>

**4** Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2014). Rape and Sexual Victimization Among College-Aged Females, 1995–2013.

**5** Mellins, C. A., Walsh, K., Sarvet, A. L., Wall, M., Gilbert, L., Santelli, J. S., Thompson, M., Wilson, P. A., Khan, S., Benson, S., Bah, K., Kaufman, K. A., Reardon, L., & Hirsch, J. S. (2017). Sexual assault incidents among college undergraduates: Prevalence and factors associated with risk. PLOS ONE, 12(11). <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0186471>

**6** Coulter, R. W., & Rankin, S. R. (2017). College sexual assault and campus climate for sexual- and gender-minority undergraduate students. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 35(5-6), 1351–1366. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260517696870>

**7** Lisak, David, and Miller, Paul M. (2002) Repeat Rape and Multiple Offending Among Undetected Rapists [https://time.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/repeat\\_rape.pdf](https://time.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/repeat_rape.pdf)

**8** Foubert, John D., Clark-Taylor, Angela., and Wall, Andrew F. (2019) Is Campus Rape Primarily a Serial or One-Time Problem? Evidence From a Multicampus Study. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1077801219833820?journalCode=vawa>

# OVERVIEW

It's On Us recognizes that limited data is available on student attitudes and experiences with sexual assault prevention education. Presently, no evidence-based, comprehensive prevention education program exists within the collegiate sports landscape. Rather, many institutions rely on an assortment of generalized prevention programs intended for broader student populations, rather than employing programs tailored to meet the needs of athletic teams. More specifically, It's On Us found through our previous research that male sports teams have significantly different prevention education needs than the general campus population, signaling that schools must use a tailored education methodology to engage and educate male athletes.

In 2022, It's On Us released a research report entitled [Engaging Men: Campus Sexual Assault Attitudes and Behaviors](#), which found that college men in general perceive most existing prevention education trainings as ineffective.<sup>1</sup> This qualitative, interview-based study demonstrated that the combination of academic and athletic pressures faced by male athletes, paired with the social stigmas surrounding male athletes' participation in high-visibility sexual assault cases, make it difficult to facilitate prevention conversations with student athletes. Additional difficulties arose with the athletes' availability, which was often marked by long practices and rigorous training schedules. Lack of availability translated to a lack of participation in prevention education programs, demonstrating accessibility as a key variable in successfully integrating prevention education programs. Coupled with a university's usage of irrelevant and unrelatable prevention programming reliant on a one-size-fits-all narrative, male athletes were left wholly unequipped to address the modern challenges surrounding bystander intervention, survivor support, and their role in the broader prevention movement.

It's On Us conducted the *Prevention is a Team Sport* project to develop more in-depth and representative research on student experiences with prevention education, focusing on the male athlete community. This project looked into various topics, including:

1. Participants' personal experiences with healthy and unhealthy relationships
2. Participants' personal experiences with healthy and unhealthy breakups
3. Participants' ability to identify unhealthy relationship characteristics amongst teammates and friends
4. When and how participants learned about sex and consent
5. Participants handling disclosures from survivors of sexual assault
6. Reactions and attitudes toward people known to be accused of perpetrating sexual assault
7. Knowledge and feelings about the prevalence of sexual assault on participants' campuses
8. Participants' likelihood to intervene in a situation where a teammate could likely cause harm
9. Participants' bystander intervention techniques

This project is the first to explore how we can better educate and engage male college athletes on the topics of sexual assault and domestic violence around the country. The data collected will be used to create six to eight 30-45 minute prevention education modules specifically designed for male college athletes. These modules will be piloted over the course of the 2023 summer semester by the It's On Us team and subsequently deployed within individual team settings by the fall of 2023.

## Methodology

This research used a qualitative data collection method to better understand the experiences of each participant. Conducting focus groups with male college athletes was chosen as the approach in order to enable a deeper understanding of topics by addressing the “how” and “why” to an answer, creating room for participants to share details, context, and other nuanced phenomena that may influence their experiences.

Qualitative research can be time-consuming – both in the project design and analysis – but was utilized due to a desire to understand the fullness of the experience of athletes, which could not have been captured through quantitative methods alone. In this study, quantitative data serves as a supplement to the qualitative data in order to showcase the labor and complexity of the work and to generate meaning from the qualitative data, verifying similar experiences, reactions, and emotions among participants.

An important tactic to employ for successful qualitative data collection is the building of trust between facilitators and participants. It’s On Us established trust by conducting the study through focus groups composed of athletic teams at each participating institution. The focus groups were intentionally curated to be held either with an individual team or more than one team from the same institution to reflect the environment and culture in which athletes spend the most time. This focus group structure allowed the facilitators to observe how the participants’ responses influenced each other and helped create a connection between

the athletes and the facilitators, leading to a deeper level of comfort with sharing stories, disagreements, and questions.

Each session started with an explanation of the project, a disclaimer that the facilitators were there to learn from the athletes and not judge their answers, and by setting the tone through storytelling and vulnerability. All in-person focus groups were led by It’s On Us’s Senior Director of Educational Programs & Research (Principal Investigator and Facilitator) and Associate Director of Men’s Engagement & Special Projects (Facilitator), who is a former collegiate athlete (Division III Football). Each facilitator shared their personal connection to the topic of campus sexual assault prevention in an effort to build trust and set a comfortable tone for each session. Humor and interactive activities were also incorporated throughout each focus group to retain attention and engagement.

Sexual assault is a complicated and emotional topic. To ensure participants were familiarized with the voluntary nature of their participation in the study and to center their emotional well-being as a cornerstone in the data collection process, trigger warnings (a statement at the beginning of a conversation that alerts the audience to potentially distressing material) were provided at the beginning of the session and throughout as more difficult topics arose. Participants were allowed to leave the focus group at any time without explanation. Each participant filled out a consent form that assured their anonymity throughout the data collection process and the facilitators requested that they use non-identifying information when disclosing any stories involving real people.



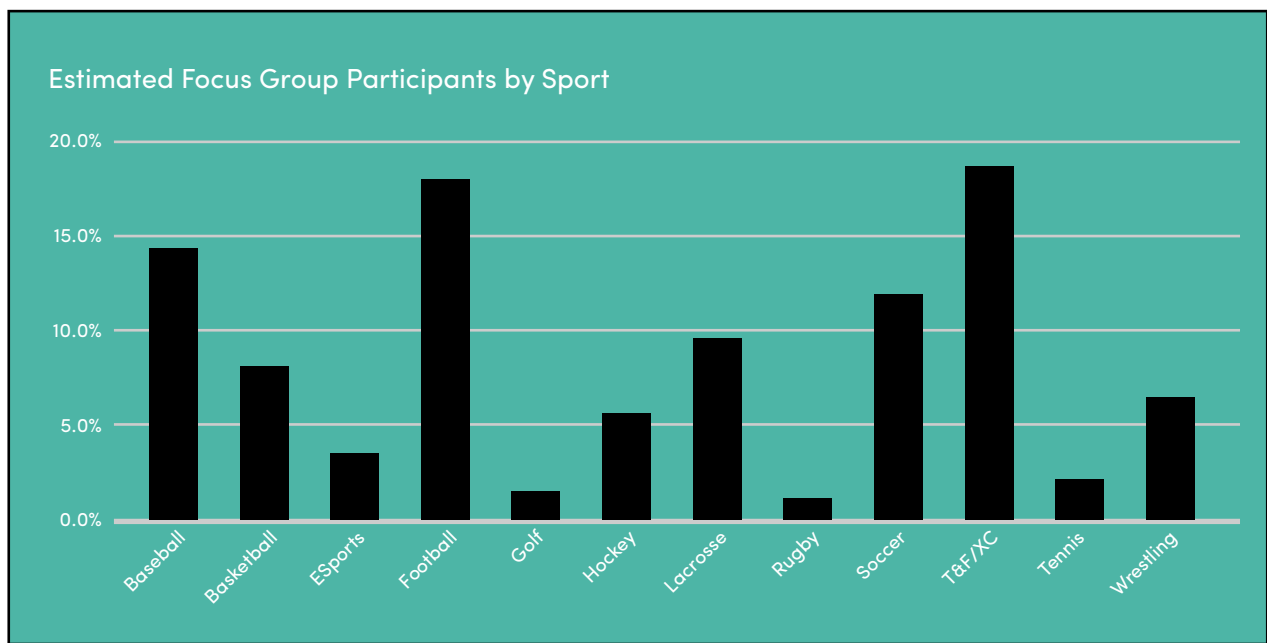


## Sample

The 31 focus groups engaged 710 male athletes from 38 different sports teams at 9 different institutions between November 2022 and January 2023. The researchers liaised primarily with athletic administrators at the participating institutions to secure permission to host and coordinate athlete participation in the focus groups. Other administrators were engaged on a case-by-case basis. At no point were athletic administrators or coaches present during the focus group conversations.

There was an extensive effort to ensure that participation in the focus groups was as broad and representative of the larger male athlete population as possible. Of the 38 teams, 28 were NCAA teams, 5 were NJCAA teams, and 5 were club teams. While most of the focus groups (79%) were composed of members of the same team in an effort to increase the comfort level of participants, 21% had members of more than one team from the same institution participating simultaneously. The chart below shows the distribution of the participation in the focus groups by sport.

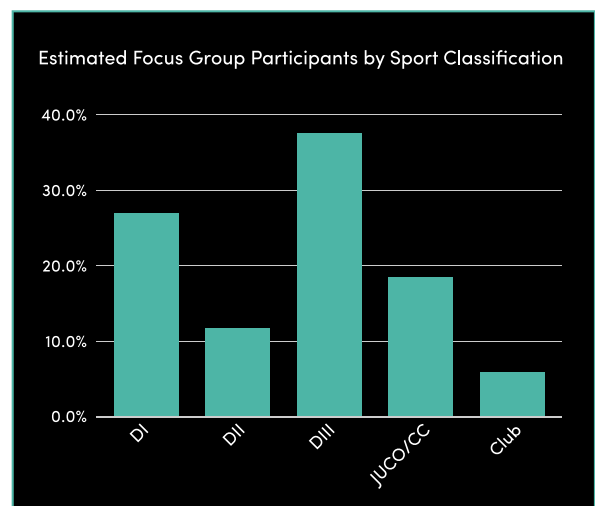
**Chart 1**



As the research focused on male athletes broadly, representation of all divisions and a variety of conferences was critical. The adjacent chart shows the representation of Division I, Division II, Division III, community/junior colleges, and Club sports in the focus groups by percentage of estimated participants. Focus groups were conducted at schools in the following conferences:

- DI: ACC, Big East, Big Sky, MAC
- DII: Lone Star
- DIII: Liberty League, NCAC, WIAC
- JUCO: NJCAA

**Chart 2**



## Analysis

### Transcribing the Data

The volume of recordings (approximately 31 hour-long focus groups with two independent recordings on each researchers' phone) required the use of a transcription tool to fully capture the participants' contributions. [Descript](#) was selected as the primary transcription tool because: (1) the artificial intelligence used to detect and record speech provided a layer of anonymity not guaranteed with a third-party manual transcribing service; (2) the strong data security of the application (to protect our participants and the data); and (3) the efficiency provided by the application's accuracy, speed, and editing capabilities.

It's On Us staff used Descript's software to conduct a first pass at transcription, and then followed up with a second pass of manual edits, cross-referencing the focus group recordings with the initial transcription output by Descript. The researchers conducted a final review as the last step in the transcription process to ensure the strongest, most accurate transcripts were available for subsequent coding and analysis.



### Coding the Data

In order to process and analyze the vast amount of qualitative data from the focus groups, [Delve](#) supported the coding and subsequent analysis of the transcripts. Delve was selected for its intuitive user interface, ease of collaboration across multiple staff members, and flexibility and support of multiple approaches to qualitative analysis.

In determining the qualitative analysis approach, the researchers focused on the following conditions: (1) while all focus groups shared the same protocol, the content yielded would reflect the unique and varied opinions of the participants; and (2) multiple staff members would be responsible for coding the transcripts due to the volume of data, which required ensuring consistency across the application of codes. For these reasons, a hybrid approach of both deductive and inductive coding was utilized. To control for the variation in staff member coding and ensure consistent output, the researchers started with an initial coding structure (larger themes) and specific codes based on both the focus group protocol and the experience of the facilitators (deductive coding). This approach was validated and refined through an initial coding exercise with a single transcript. To account for the variation of content in each focus group, the researchers also allowed for inductive coding where staff members would identify the need for an additional code or theme, share their reasoning with the group, and allow others to use that same code or theme if they observed something similar in their transcripts.



## Analyzing the Data

After the coding process was complete for all transcripts, the researchers analyzed the resulting data in the following ways:

First, the researchers determined the topics most commonly identified in Delve. The focus group protocol covered a variety of topics, but the athletes naturally focused on some more than others. To validate this, the researchers examined how many transcripts included discussions of each topic in addition to the overall frequency of each topic or code. Through this initial exploration, the researchers determined that the central topics for analysis were:

1. Conversations about sex education
2. Conversations about disclosures and accusations of sexual assault
3. Conversations about relationships

The researchers also chose to explore bystander intervention as a key topic in the findings outlined in this report. An activity on bystander intervention was part of the focus group protocol, but not all of the groups had the opportunity to participate in it because of time constraints outside of the groups' control. While bystander intervention did not have an equitable opportunity to surface as a topic through the methodology outlined above, the researchers decided to include it as a key topic in the findings after considering the prevalence of bystander intervention in prevention education programs and the level of engagement with the topic by participants exposed to the activity.

Second, the researchers categorized the codes within each of the key topics for more straightforward analysis, such as sorting relationship codes into healthy or unhealthy behaviors. Within those categorizations, the researchers identified the topics brought up most often during the focus groups. For example, when discussing sex education, participants often mentioned the role of family, leading the researchers to examine that topic more fully. To conduct this part of the analysis, the researchers synthesized the excerpts and code frequency to make overall conclusions and identify key passages. The researchers also conducted this same process with key demographic breakdowns, including:

- Sport type (NCAA, NJCAA, Club)
- Sport
- Division (DI, DII, DIII, JUCO/CC)
- If the athletes represented in the focus group practiced and competed in a mixed gender or an exclusively male environment
- The institution's religious influence
- If the team had international students

The researchers did not identify strong findings along all of these lines, but these external variables were considered when analyzing the responses shared in the focus groups. Quantitative data from the activities (i.e., counts of ideas shared on post-its by the participants) and responses to facilitator questions (i.e., counts of hands raised from various prompts) were also used to provide insights about the athletes' experiences and opinions.



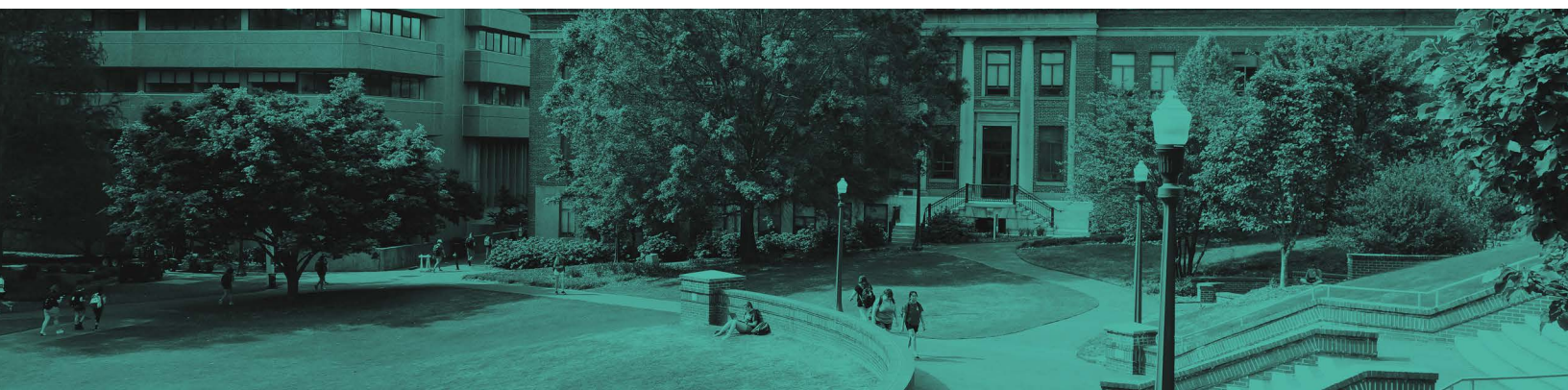
# FINDINGS

As stated above, the following topics garnered the most engagement from the athletes: sex education, responding to disclosures and accusations of sexual assault, and relationships (what makes a relationship unhealthy/healthy, as well as the topics of communication, manipulation, trust, and control in relationships). The frequency of coded mentions of each topic in the focus group transcripts and the percentage of focus groups with mentions of each topic are listed in Table 1.

**Table 1**

Topic	Excerpts Coded	% of Transcripts
Relationships: Unhealthy/Toxic	350	100.0%
Relationships: Communication	188	90.3%
Relationships: Healthy	184	87.1%
Learned About Sex: Health Class/Sex Ed	125	93.5%
Relationships: Manipulation	110	80.6%
Relationships: Trust	110	93.5%
Accusations: Know Accused	103	67.7%
Relationships: Controlling	102	90.3%

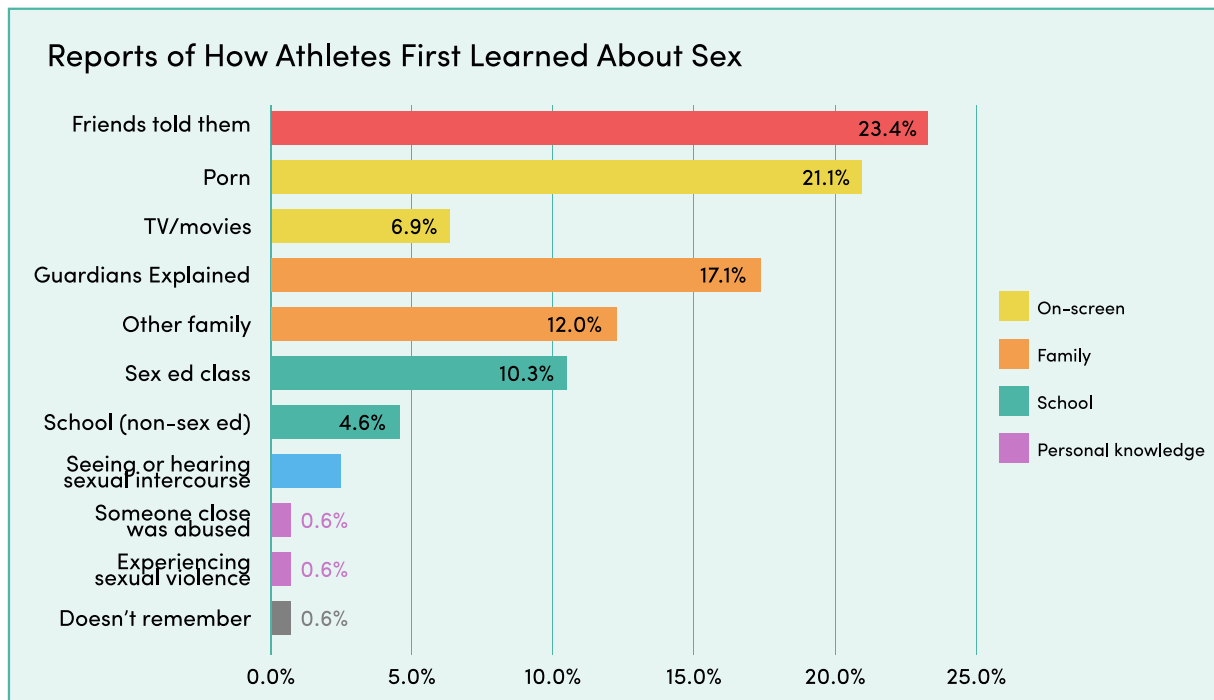
Table 1 indicates the topics mentioned most during the focus groups, with “Excerpts Coded” as the total number of times each code was applied in the transcripts. “% of Transcripts” indicates the proportion of all sessions each topic/code was mentioned in. For example, Unhealthy/Toxic relationships were mentioned 350 times across all 31 of the focus group sessions.



## Sex Education

After an introduction to the purpose of the research and an initial ice breaker, the first portion of the focus group protocol addressed the athletes' initial exposure to the topic of sex, including at what age they learned about sex and from whom and/or what. Appendix 4 contains the questions asked as part of the focus group protocol. All instances of this activity were compiled into the summary below (Chart 3) of how the athletes first learned about sex.

**Chart 3**



This activity provided an entry point for the researchers to engage athletes in generalized discussion before diving into more complicated topics addressed later in the focus groups.

**As shown in Chart 3, it is significant to note that of all 710 athletes, less than 1% of the athletes did not remember how they learned about sex.**

This overwhelming response highlights the importance of the first impression an athlete has about sex and how it fundamentally shapes their behaviors and attitudes toward sex later in life.

Athletes were most likely to have first learned about sex from family or friends in ways that were both helpful and unhelpful in developing accurate

understandings of sex and consent.<sup>9</sup> Social, cultural, religious, and other beliefs impact what an individual or community thinks about the topic of sex. These beliefs can influence what an individual shares with others, which may or may not be factual or complete information, and can lead to inaccurate or unhealthy understandings of sex. Although formal sex education classes were cited as a source of learning about sex for the first time by about 10% of athletes, these experiences were usually described as lacking or unhelpful:

*"It was more like, 'this is where babies come from' kind of thing. Right. And then, like, high school was like STD and like birth control and stuff like that."*

—Male Athlete

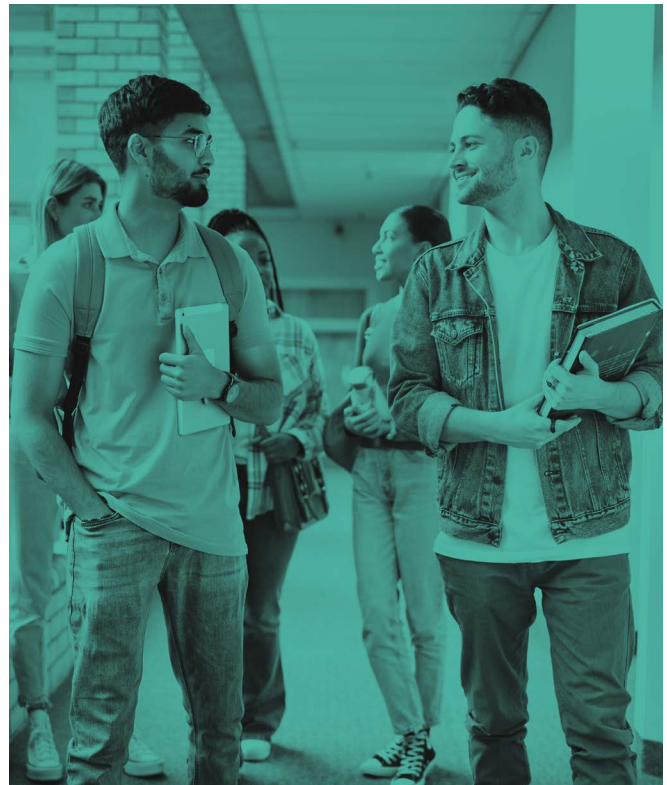
<sup>9</sup> See Appendix 2 for our definition of consent.

Exposure to pornography also factored heavily in the athletes' first experiences learning about sex and was mentioned in 30 of 31 focus groups by 21.1% of all athletes. This exposure included online porn, being shown explicit images or videos by peers, and watching depictions of sex in movies and shows. This combination of influences on an athlete's understanding of what constitutes healthy sexual behavior underscores the need for institutions of higher education to include comprehensive sex education as part of their prevention programming.

## Learning from Family

A plurality (29.1%) of athletes noted that they first learned about sex through a relative. Of these respondents, 59% learned from parents/guardians as compared to 41% from non-parental family members, such as cousins or siblings. In a few instances, a family member showed the athlete pornography, in which case responses were labeled as learning about sex via porn.

Overall, 17.1% of participants indicated that they learned from their parent(s)/guardian(s) in some way about sex (see Chart 3). Of those participants, many said their parents/guardians had a serious conversation about sex with them while a few shared that their parents/guardians casually spoke about sex. Some athletes noted that their parents/guardians forced them to have the conversation, regardless of the athlete's comfortability. While a few athletes noted that these conversations made them uncomfortable, the majority did not express any feelings about their experience.



## Learning from Friends and Teammates

Along with family, friends were a common source for athletes to initially learn about sex. A significant number (23.4%) of athletes specified that the information came from friends, with about a quarter of those participants noting that it was an older friend. Others stated that while friends initially introduced them to the topic of sex, the athletes then took initiative to pursue other sources of information, such as asking their family, looking up information online, or watching porn.

Athletes at two of the institutions specified that they learned about sex from friends/teammates in the locker room, underscoring the importance of the team space as a place where initial education can occur. It is also significant that several athletes noted that these "learning about sex" conversations took place in group text chats, rather than through face-to-face conversations. Both locker rooms and group text chats may be important avenues for sex education for young athletes, but it is important to consider that these mediums have very different norms and likely provide different information and/or possibly incorrect information from what a young person would receive in a classroom setting or from a family member.

## Learning in School (K-12)

About half (52%) of participants received some type of formalized sex education at some point in elementary, middle, or high school. Of this 52%, almost none of the athletes received or remembered receiving a formal education on consent. Consent is the permission that is or is not given for something to happen through verbal and non-verbal cues; it is about communication and respect for people's boundaries and bodies.<sup>10</sup> Of note, 31.1% of participants who learned about sex in a formal health class reported receiving abstinence-only education, which typically does not cover the topic of consent. In addition to sharing the lack of education received on this topic, some respondents expressed misunderstandings of consent and the nuances of consent.

*“Yeah. Because in an instance saying like you with a girl and she like at first like you trying to talk to touch her and stuff, and she’s saying no, but letting you do it - is that still a case of sexual assault? Like saying ‘no, no chill’, but she’s still letting you touch her and stuff like that.”*

—Male Athlete

Research has shown a correlation between high rates of sexual violence in a community and a lack of education about consent, healthy relationships, and sexual assault among its members.<sup>11</sup> The lack of consent education prior to coming to college cited by the athletes combined with the high rate of sexual assault on college campuses indicates a need for comprehensive consent education throughout a student's college experience.

A lack of consent education can become even more dangerous in situations where alcohol overconsumption/binge drinking takes place, as

the athletes noted happens occasionally. Approximately half of sexual assaults that occur on campuses include alcohol consumption by either or both the survivor and perpetrator.<sup>12</sup> Given that research has indicated that male athletes are at a heightened risk of perpetrating repeated acts of sexual assault when alcohol is involved, it is necessary that prevention education for athletes include information on the role of alcohol in sexual assault perpetration.<sup>8</sup>

## The Effects of Pornography

While only 21.1% of the athletes shared that they first learned about sex from pornography, additional participants disclosed that they sought to fill gaps in their knowledge of sex through porn. Pornography can affect the understanding of what realistic sex looks like, and when it is used as a form of self-education early in a person's life, it can lead to the normalization of unhealthy beliefs and behaviors.<sup>13</sup> There are countless examples of pornographic content that students can “learn” from that do not contain valid representations of consent.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, many pornographic materials portray acts of sexual assault without a violence disclaimer, which has the potential to normalize acts of violence as part of a conventional sexual experience. Therefore, it is critical to take into consideration the impact that the combination of learning about sex through pornography and a lack of consent education has on male athletes' attitudes toward what they may believe are healthy sexual behaviors.

*“Honestly, personally, I don’t even know exactly like what constitutes sexual assault. Yeah. I feel like when people think of sexual assault, they just think rape.”*

— Male Athlete

<sup>10</sup> What consent looks like. RAINN. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2023, from <https://www.rainn.org/articles/what-is-consent>

<sup>11</sup> Spencer, J. M. (2020, October 14). Sexual violence in Utah: The relationship between sexual education and sexual violence: Categories sexual and Reproductive Health: Doi: 10.26054/OK7VFD5DKV by Jillyn M. Spencer. UWH Review. Retrieved March 28, 2023, from <https://doi.org/10.26054/OK7VFD5DKV>

<sup>12</sup> Abbey, A., McAuslan, P., and Ross, LT. Sexual Assault Perpetration by College Men: The Role of Alcohol, Misperception of Sexual Intent, and Sexual Beliefs and Experiences. *J Soc Clin Psychol.* 1998;17(2):167-195.

<sup>13</sup> Rothman, E. F., Beckmeyer, J. J., Herbenick, D., Fu, T. C., Dodge, B., & Fortenberry, J. D. (2021). The Prevalence of Using Pornography for Information About How to Have Sex: Findings from a Nationally Representative Survey of U.S. Adolescents and Young Adults. *Archives of sexual behavior*, 50(2), 629–646. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-020-01877-7>

<sup>14</sup> Martellozzo, E., Monaghan, A., Alder, J. R., Davidson, J., Leyva, R., & Horvath, M. A. H. (n.d.). Fictions of the normal. *Young People and Pornography.* [https://figshare.com/articles/dataset/\\_I\\_wasn\\_t\\_sure\\_it\\_was\\_normal\\_to\\_watch\\_it\\_/3382393?file=8652163](https://figshare.com/articles/dataset/_I_wasn_t_sure_it_was_normal_to_watch_it_/3382393?file=8652163)

## Existing Prevention Training in College

Respondents found existing sexual assault prevention trainings to be unhelpful in preventing sexual assaults on their campuses. Specifically, athletes mentioned the prevention education programs provided by their institutions were boring, not reflective of their campus culture, unengaging, and were typically conducted via an online program. The online programs were cited as being ineffective because the athletes could easily click through them without paying attention to the content. Moreover, online learning does not allow space for further questions or discussion, or for athletes to practice important skills, such as asking for consent or being an active bystander.

*“But we, that was my junior year. We had already been through all of the prevention training and I still didn’t know what any of the definitions were, and I didn’t know how to talk about it.”*

— Male Athlete

Almost all of the athletes cited wanting proactive and empowering prevention education that called them in to be a part of the solution, not programming that made them feel like they were “the problem” or were receiving reactive education in response to an incident that had already occurred. They discussed wanting or needing more education on how to safely

intervene in situations involving dating or intimate partner violence. In the portion of the focus groups on bystander intervention, 33% of participants who said they would not intervene in a hypothetical situation attributed their inaction to safety concerns (see Chart 5). The athletes also indicated needing more information in prevention education programs about how traits that may be helpful or seen as positive during practice and competition (e.g. cultivating aggression and persistence) should not translate to their interpersonal/romantic/sexual lives. The vast majority of the prevention education they received focused on teaching them what not to do, which left many of the men feeling ill-equipped on what to do. Most expressed a desire to engage in healthy behaviors in their romantic/sexual lives, but felt they lacked the knowledge and skills needed to do so.

Overall, the focus group findings on prevention education were reflective of the earlier research conducted by It’s On Us published in August of 2022<sup>8</sup>, which found that male students believed that an effective prevention education program should include information that is socially and culturally relevant to them, be facilitated by someone they believed understood their experience as men on campus, and provide information on the value of being an active bystander and being a part of the solution to sexual assault in their community.





## Disclosures & Accusations

The focus group protocol approached disclosures and accusations of sexual assault in two ways: (1) asking participants if they had ever received disclosures of sexual assault from someone in their life, and, (2) if they have known someone accused of committing one of these crimes.<sup>15</sup> The vast majority of participants (75.4%) had experienced a disclosure from a survivor, knew someone who was accused, or both, making disclosures and accusations significant topics of conversation within the focus groups. Of particular note, a common theme that emerged in the focus groups' discussions about accusations was athletes communicated feelings of surprise or frustration when information about an accusation came from a third party or through social media. However, when participants experienced a disclosure from a survivor directly, they were overwhelmingly supportive and empathetic toward the survivor. The difference in whether or not an athlete was likely to believe an accusation was largely dependent on the proximity of the source of the information to the allegation itself.

### Disclosures

When the focus group participants were asked if they had ever received a disclosure of sexual assault or domestic violence, 41% raised their hands. The athletes often expressed a substantial amount of anger, sadness, or rage toward the perpetrator after a survivor disclosed to them. Several participants shared that they were subsequently fixated on physically hurting the abuser after hearing about the assault or abuse from the survivor. A small number of those athletes did report acting on these negative feelings by physically harming or threatening to harm the perpetrator.

However, some of the participants who experienced survivor disclosure found more productive ways to support the individual who disclosed to them.

Examples of survivor support from students included: checking in with the survivor, asking what they can do to make the survivor feel safe, and helping the survivor find resources on campus or in the community if they felt safe doing so (regarding safety, see section below on institutional mistrust).

*"For me, it was my freshman year in college. My best friend. Um, I just remember, I was just furious like. They told me this incident happened. I just remember being so sad. And so angry I wanted to hurt that man. Thankfully I didn't end up doing anything like that. I ended up supporting my friend emotionally. How I could, um, help find resources like within campus, outside of campus. But honestly – for my friend – it was really hard for them."*

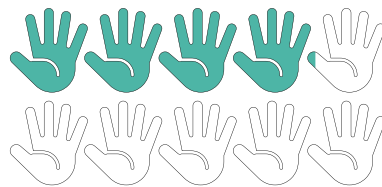
— Male Athlete

The sexual assault and domestic violence disclosures the athletes received not only had an effect on the direct survivor of the violence, but left many of the athletes themselves and their communities feeling angry, upset, or hurt.

*"Extreme anger, like just that, not even at anybody. Just the fact that this happened and like kinda went through the thoughts of what I do. I found out, you know, but then like, it kind of, it turns into like concern for the person. I just asked, 'are you ok? Like, is there anything that I can do for you right now?' And most of the time it's just a shoulder to cry on type thing."*

— Male Athlete

**When the focus group participants were asked if they had ever received a disclosure of sexual assault or domestic violence, 41% raised their hands.**



It is significant that in every story shared where athletes received disclosures from a survivor of sexual assault or domestic violence that the athlete believed the survivor without question. No participant who shared receiving a disclosure reported questioning the survivor's story. Participants overwhelmingly felt that the best way to respond to a disclosure is by listening, and that any other response would not be helpful because they could not turn back time and prevent the assault from happening in the first place.

<sup>15</sup> See Appendix 4 for the full focus group protocol.

## Accusations

In addition to how the athletes responded to survivors, multiple athletes detailed the impact an accusation of sexual assault or domestic violence had on people they knew. The majority of these accusations were directed toward participants' male friends from high school or college. When the accused was also an athlete, they spoke about how the sexual assault accusation negatively affected the career of the player involved. Multiple athletes expressed that they felt players accused of sexual violence should be able to keep practicing and competing if the accusation had not yet been proven. Only one athlete voiced that they felt all survivors should be believed unless a false accusation is proven.

Statistically, false accusations are rare. Fewer than 4.5% of sexual assault and domestic violence accusations are false.<sup>16</sup> However, participants expressed the feeling that it is unfair for an accusation to ruin someone's career or life. The reasoning participants gave for this belief included: the alleged sexual assault took place multiple years beforehand but was not reported until later, making it difficult to prove; when the athletes personally knew the alleged perpetrator(s) as a "good person" or "good people"; and, possible ulterior motivations of the person making the accusation to make money or gain popularity at the expense of a high-profile athlete.

These expressions were significant, as they pointed to the unique social status held by college athletes. As student athletes, the men maintain an elevated role both within their campus community and their institutions' broader athletic fanbase. This left participants feeling anxious and vulnerable to false accusations of sexual violence despite its statistical improbability. Participants felt that because of their community status, they themselves were more susceptible to false accusations and also felt unprepared to handle an accusation levied against their teammate(s). These feelings were underscored by past experiences with prevention programming that addressed the athletes as potential perpetrators rather than being deployed as agents of change. Still, a majority of the athletes expressed conflicting feelings about how to respond to a person they know

being accused of assault. This conflict was often expressed in the form of confusion as to how to handle the relationship with the person that was accused.

*"I would say stressful, especially like close friends because... part of your mind wants to be supportive, cause you feel bad in a way, but then part of your mind's kind of saying like, 'why would that person do that?' I was like, kind of angry with them and you kind of want, I guess, to hold them accountable and like it's arrogant, you know, you have that side of you that's kinda like, 'well that's my really good friend and I've been friends with since we were little kids.'"*

—Male Athlete

Participants were more likely to believe an accusation and support the survivor's story if: they had previously witnessed abusive language or behavior from the individual accused of assault; if they had a close relationship with the individual experiencing abuse; or, if the survivor disclosed to them directly. In several cases, the participants felt it was appropriate to end the friendship or to exclude the accused individual from social activities (i.e., removed from a party or kicked off the volleyball team). If the participant did not know the victim, it was common for them to believe that the accused individual was innocent or that the accusation was the result of a misunderstanding. In situations where the participant knew both parties involved, the accusation created a sense of uncertainty. It often resulted in the participant distancing themselves from both the accused and the victim, particularly in situations involving domestic violence or allegations of rape. These results necessitate ongoing prevention education that engages athletes on proper responses to disclosures and how to handle allegations against fellow teammates and friends.



<sup>16</sup> Spohn, C., White, C., & Tellis, K. (2014, January 27). *Unfounding sexual assault: Examining the ...* - wiley online library. Wiley Online Library. Retrieved March 28, 2023, from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/lasr.12060>

## Institutional Mistrust

Several participants who experienced a disclosure shared that they became distrustful of formal reporting options such as reporting to law enforcement or their college/university after witnessing the institutional betrayal<sup>17</sup> survivors experienced when reporting their abuse.

*“She didn’t want to go to the authorities cuz she knew things would’ve gotten worse. And the kid who supposedly raped her was kind of like a, like a rich kid at her school. And people liked him, but he was just kind of a douchebag. He didn’t have any redeeming qualities. He was just rich. Um, and people blamed the girl a lot. They were like, ‘you’re lying.’”*

— Male Athlete

Participants shared that they were often hesitant to recommend that a survivor report to the police or their institution. They expressed concern that the money or status of the accused student would affect how the report of sexual assault would be handled. The athletes were more likely to offer comfort during disclosures than offer to help the survivor formally report the abuse. Only two participants mentioned trying to locate resources to help the survivor report the abuse they had disclosed.

For example, the participant below hesitated to trust the motivations of their institution when responding to campus sexual assault, showing that **both survivors and non-survivors have some level of mistrust in institutional misconduct processes.**

*“I think the law, the first responders. I guess it’s a culture clash that happens cause a lot of people don’t even feel comfortable and a lot of people don’t feel comfortable calling the cops. Something happened, you know? And we don’t feel comfortable reaching out to people who can help you. In (their) higher positions, we don’t know if they’re gonna have interest, especially if you’re at a university, the university’s interest. You know, they don’t want that.”*

— Male Athlete

After the athletes were asked if they had ever received a disclosure of sexual assault or domestic violence, the facilitators asked a follow-up question: “How well do you think you responded? What are some things you wish you knew or did?” Of the 198 athletes who raised their hands to indicate they had received a disclosure, none stated that they responded by seeking support from or referring the survivor to their institution’s Title IX or Victim Services Coordinator. Many did not know who their Title IX Coordinator was. It was also unclear whether the athletes knew what their campus or local community resources were. This lack of awareness of the resources available was a barrier for athletes who desired more direction and tangible actions they could take in response to a disclosure.

After asking how well they responded, facilitators typically asked participants what they did to respond to the disclosures they received, which also elicited some responses indicating mistrust for current institutional reporting procedures for survivors.<sup>18</sup> A few participants mentioned how their friends or other peers on campus would offer additional support to survivors (i.e. checking in, spending additional time with them) when survivors chose not to report formally through their institution or to the police.

Ultimately, the majority of athletes who received a disclosure did not refer the survivor to formal reporting processes either due to mistrust of the institutions responsible for conducting investigations or because they lacked knowledge of formal response resources. This indicates that colleges and universities must make a more conscious effort to address student mistrust of existing investigation protocols and invest in broader education efforts on available sexual assault response and support services on and near campus.



<sup>17</sup> See Appendix 2 for definition of institutional betrayal.

<sup>18</sup> This question is not explicitly included in the Focus Group Protocol shared in Appendix 4, but was a frequent follow-up question asked by facilitators as part of the discretionary nature of their role in this qualitative data collection. Such flexibility was permitted by the terms of the study’s IRB approval (Appendix 8) and allowed the facilitators to elicit more clarity on topics engaging the participants.

## Unhealthy Relationships

While the topic of relationships was a small portion of the focus group protocol, the athletes spent a significant amount of time discussing the details of unhealthy relationships and breakups from the perspectives of both their own personal experiences and relationships they have observed. However, it is notable that when the athletes shared characteristics of a toxic or abusive relationship they experienced or witnessed, they often did so without labeling it as such. In a majority of the focus groups, participants asked the facilitators to clarify what they meant by the prompt, “has anyone ever been in an unhealthy or toxic relationship?” The lack of definitional clarity and unwillingness to explicitly name the nature of these relationships by the athletes was striking.

After gaining clarity about the delineation between healthy and unhealthy relationships,<sup>19</sup> 44% of participants shared that they had been in a healthy relationship and 35% disclosed that they had been in an unhealthy relationship. In order to encourage honesty and build trust amongst the athletes in this portion of the focus groups, as well as to increase their conceptual understanding, the facilitators employed personal storytelling tactics. The tone of the conversations on relationships varied widely, from humorous in some instances to serious in others. Since this topic can generate many emotions, it required the facilitators to demonstrate empathy with the athletes in order to successfully facilitate these conversations.

When discussing unhealthy or abusive relationships, the athletes were able to identify many characteristics of these relationships, such as manipulation, jealousy, immaturity, isolation, poor communication, and physical violence. All relationships exist on a spectrum of healthy to abusive behavior, with unhealthy and toxic behaviors falling in the middle; relationships can easily progress from unhealthy to abusive if there is no intervention.<sup>20</sup> The experiences shared by the athletes ranged across this spectrum. The manipulation described by the athletes often started small, but a few athletes noted an escalation of behaviors that included threats of self-harm or even suicide.

*“and you try to leave and they’re just like, you know, they, you know, they’re like suicidal or stuff like that. And it’s just like, you know, you have this fear of, you know, as much as I care about this person, I need to start thinking about myself and my own, like, you know, mental health because this person’s like dragging me down.”*

— Male Athlete

One athlete named this type of manipulation as “emotional hostage taking.” At times, manipulation was described as being paired with controlling behaviors, such as being pressured to share one’s location with a partner or grant the partner access to passwords or to their phones.

*“But maybe more than just like a, ‘oh yeah, and she checks my location every day, or doesn’t let me leave the house with specific things’ that I see as a red flag and a bad thing, but maybe they don’t.”*

— Male Athlete

Across the experiences shared was a common struggle of balancing one’s own needs and well-being with those of a loved one, even if the relationship was unhealthy. Finally, the athletes acknowledged that it can be hard to identify the warning signs that a relationship is unhealthy, with several stating that the recognition of unhealthy behaviors comes after the relationship has ended.

*“I mean, it was one of those, uh, things where, you know, when you are in one of those relationships where you’re being manipulated, it’s very difficult to see and rationalize that like this is toxic, right?”*

*“Because you have this idea of, you know, like, I love this person, right? You know, I’ll do anything for this person, including take all this abuse and, you know, you have like your parents, your friends, and everyone telling you to like leave to get away, run as fast as you can.”*

— Male Athlete

The focus groups also revealed some gender dynamics in the athletes’ understanding of these types of relationships. The athletes felt that double standards fell along gendered lines. For example, there was a perception or belief among many of the athletes that women were allowed to have

<sup>19</sup> See Appendix 2 for our definitions of healthy and unhealthy relationships.

<sup>20</sup> *The Relationship spectrum*. Love is Respect. (2023, February 23). Retrieved April 5, 2023, from <https://www.loveisrespect.org/everyone-deserves-a-healthy-relationship/relationship-spectrum/>

male friends, but men were not allowed to have female friends, and that imbalance can contribute to a relationship being or becoming unhealthy. The previously mentioned inability of the athletes to label relationships explicitly as unhealthy or toxic also had a gendered dynamic to it. For example, one athlete described being in a relationship with a partner who hit him, but he did not call it assault or dating violence because it was his female partner being violent and not him.

The experience of this student represented a larger theme that arose throughout the focus groups: that although they were rarely able to articulate the gendered difference in their understanding clearly, **many of the athletes expressed a belief that an incident being labeled as sexual assault and/or dating violence was contingent on a male being the aggressor/perpetrator and a female being the victim/survivor.**

*"I got a question. Can males get, get like raped?... Listen, listen...so say, uh, like, same you trying, you with a lady or whatever. Then boom, y'all like, you, you want some sex? She say no. And you like, all right, cool. But then when we say no, they like, aww come here, come on."*

— Male Athlete<sup>21</sup>

*"Well, me personally, communication was a big thing for me which led me to get into like a physical – I actually got punched in the face. So I guess communication for me was like a big deal...and it was my fault. I'm so sorry. I deserved it, but like, I didn't expect it to come when it happened. I was like, damn. That's crazy...Cause it, it really takes like your manhood out. You like, you just got socked in the face – especially by girls...And my mom always told me, don't hit a girl. So... I just gotta like, like hold her, like calm down, you know? Calm her down. Cause she was a pretty violent person."*

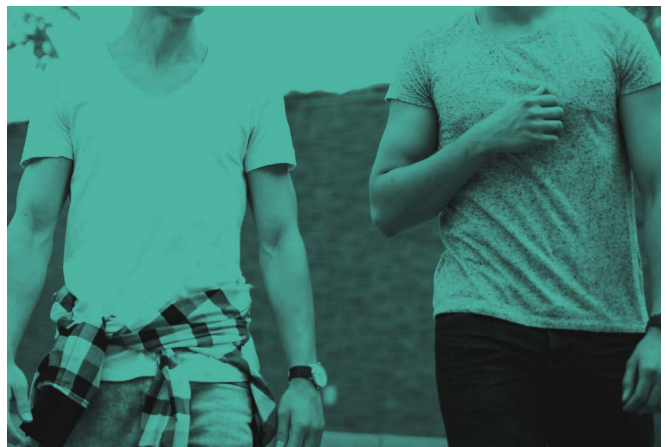
— Male Athlete

Therefore, it is important that definitions of what constitutes abuse and sexual assault be presented in gender-neutral ways, and that examples of who can perpetrate such behaviors be inclusive of all gender identities (e.g. female-on-male examples of relationship abuse). Ensuring inclusive definitions and examples are provided as part of prevention education programs will be critical in supporting young people in identifying harmful behaviors before they escalate.

When discussing both healthy and unhealthy relationships, the athletes consistently highlighted the importance of strong communication in a relationship. They pointed out that communication helps to set clear expectations and establish boundaries. Similar to how they perceived a gendered gap in the acceptability of friendships with the opposite sex, some athletes also emphasized that while female partners communicated their boundaries, it didn't always feel that they, as males, could do the same. The athletes also pointed out that the kind of communication matters. Communication that built trust and was part of an underlying friendship between romantic partners was different from communication that was more controlling or manipulative at its core.

*"I would just say... good communication in general... if you need help, there's someone there to talk to you or if you just need someone to talk to in general, like they're always there for you and it's easier... life's easier with them, not more complicated and stressful."*

— Male Athlete

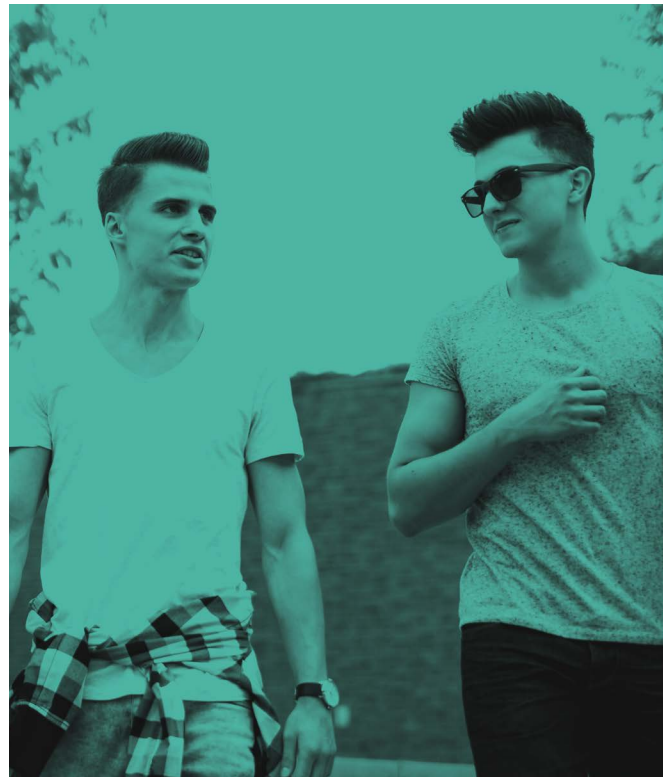


<sup>21</sup> Ellipses in this section are utilized to eliminate when other athletes chimed in, in order to streamline to one speaker for ease of understanding the sentiment expressed.

## Bystander Intervention

The final activity in the focus group protocol asked the athletes about the likelihood that they would be an active bystander. Due to the one-hour time constraint of each session, not every focus group completed the bystander intervention activity. Therefore, the information contained in this section is not representative of all 31 focus groups.

The activity included asking the athletes to describe what they would do or not do if the following hypothetical situation: they were witnessing their best friend on the team engaging with a young woman who is unknown to them, who is clearly incapacitated and is unable to consent. If you would do or say something, what would that be? How likely are you to intervene? If you would not intervene, do not write anything or write why you would not intervene. An example of this activity from a focus group can be seen below. Appendix 4 contains the details of the questions asked as part of the focus group protocol. In the majority of the focus groups that discussed bystander intervention, one of the facilitators told a personal anecdote about intervening in a sexual assault as a college athlete. This helped set the tone for the conversation in an effort to build trust with participants. In the course of subsequent discussion, a few athletes recounted their own past experiences of intervening when they witnessed something inappropriate. The examples provided ranged from allowing a woman to stand near them because someone was making them uncomfortable to directly confronting a teammate or peer who crossed the line.



*“... the girl was forcing him to drink and drink more, drink more. Then I took my friend and I put him in the bed recently, and like, she came over and tried to close the door and tried to sexually assault him and I was like, oh shit. So we got my other friend, he walked into the door, got everyone out, he got up off the bed and went away and like that just gives me awareness that women can do the same exact thing too. And like, that shit is scary...”*

— Male Athlete

### Likelihood to Intervene

Least Likely

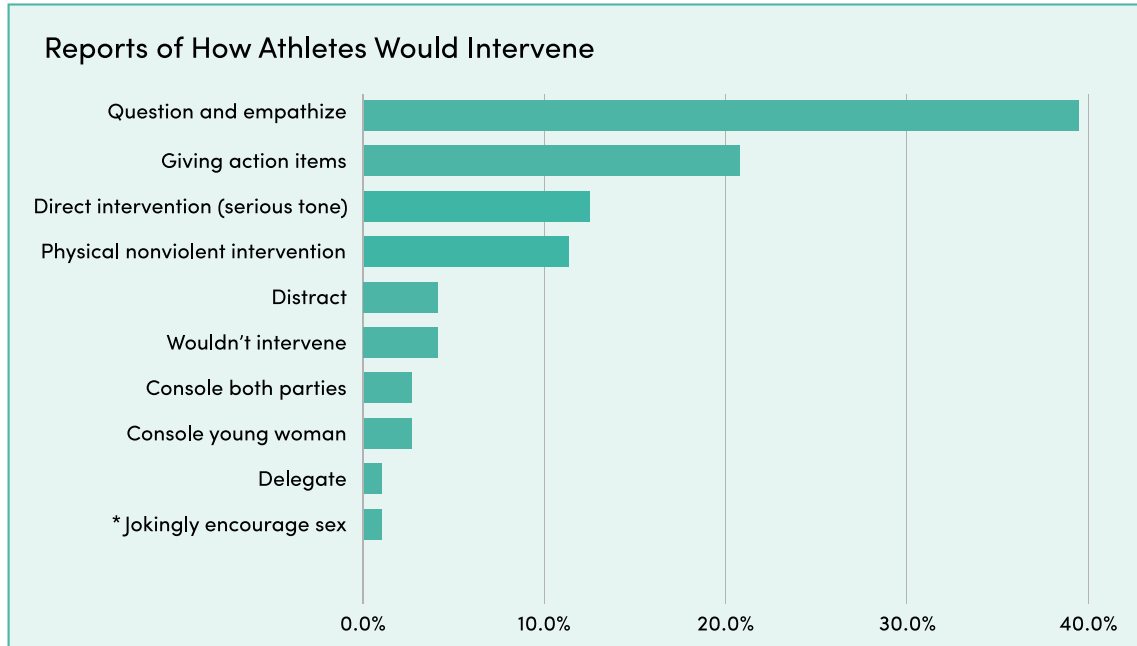
Most Likely



Note: This is an example of one of the post-it activities where athletes placed themselves on a scale of how likely they are to intervene in a potentially harmful situation. Each square represents a post-it.

Some focus groups explored exactly what hypothetical actions the athletes would take to intervene, which can be found below (Chart 4). The most common intervention was to question their teammate (like asking, “what are you doing?”) and empathize (trying to understand their actions), followed by giving action items and directly intervening either verbally or physically in a non-violent manner.

**Chart 4**



\*Note: while shared as a response by an athlete, “jokingly encourage sex” is not a valid bystander intervention technique, which is discussed more below.

When athletes expressed that they would question and empathize, they indicated it was a way to defuse the situation in a non-confrontational and conversational manner. While some alluded to this type of intervention being a way to distract the individual, the majority of participants wanted to have their teammates think about their potential actions and how those actions did or did not align with their values as a person.

*“Check with him and make sure he is good and ask what his plans are with her.”*

— Male Athlete

*“I would intervene...tell him that he’s better than this. I would not let him engage with the girl.”*

— Male Athlete

Providing action items to a teammate was a common answer, meaning athletes would give their teammate a plan to ensure the teammate was not placing himself at risk of perpetrating sexual assault. Responses from athletes varied from intervening

in a conversation a teammate was having with an individual to arranging for transportation so that the teammate would be separated from any potentially escalating situations. Multiple athletes gave action items that included ways for their hypothetical teammate to maintain contact with the hypothetical incapacitated young woman, so that their teammate can continue communication at a later time when the young woman is able to consent. Any time an athlete gave direction or a plan for the teammate to follow, it was labeled as “Giving action items” (Chart 4).

*“I would tell him to just get her number and talk to her tomorrow when they are both sober.”*

— Male Athlete

*“Stop them and tell him if they are feeling each other, to do it another night.”*

— Male Athlete

*“... wait until the morning.”*

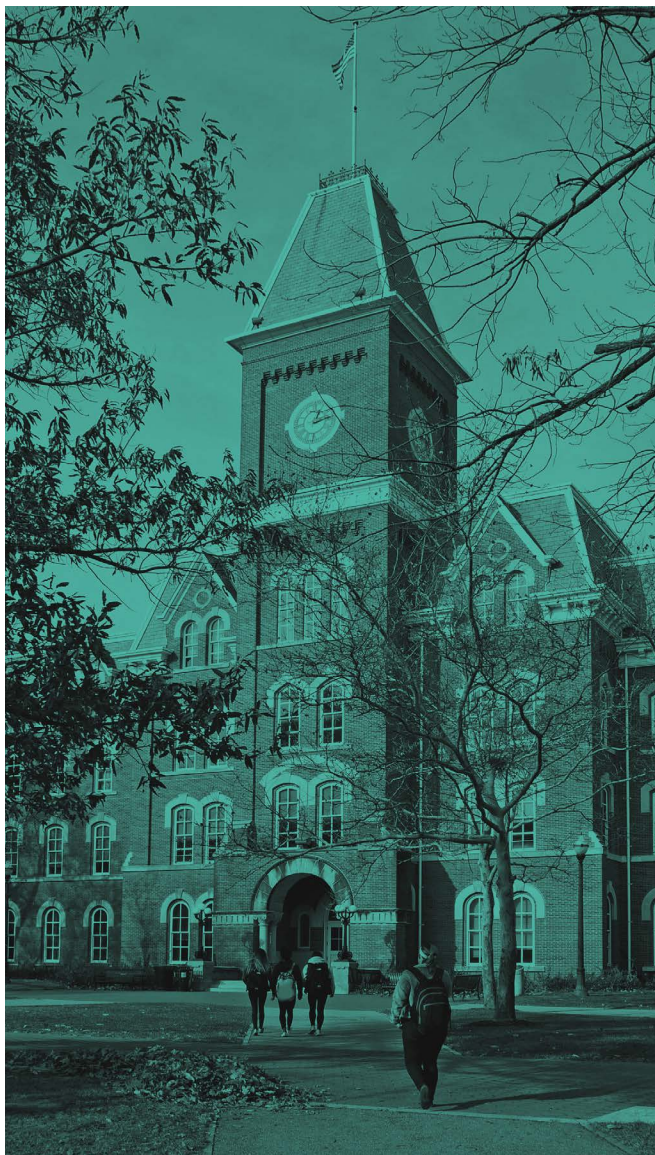
— Male Athlete

Pursuing direct intervention with a serious tone or non-violent physical intervention were consistent choices for the athletes, who mostly indicated that they would “grab their teammate and tell them to not be stupid.” None of the physical interventions suggested were violent in nature (the majority of participants supported grabbing their teammates’ arms to get their attention). A few of the participants noted that they would use physical force as a last resort.

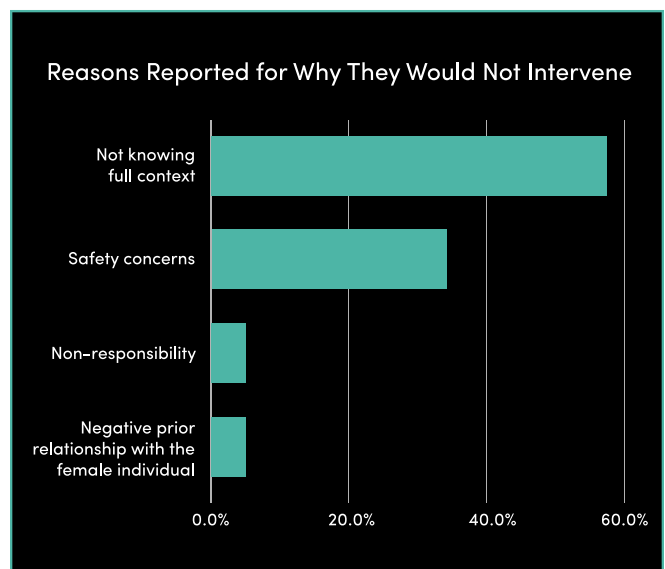
Respondents were also given the option of explicitly stating that they would not intervene, which a few (4%) chose to do. Additionally, one athlete offered the tactic of jokingly encouraging sex. This is not a valid tactic for a bystander to use to prevent an assault, but is shared here as an example of some of the toxic culture and pervasive beliefs this research uncovered.



In addition to allowing athletes to choose the option of not intervening in the initial question, a small subset of the focus groups also explored the reasons why they would not intervene explicitly (shown below in Chart 5). One reason provided by the athletes was not knowing the full context of the situation at hand. The athletes shared that it is difficult to determine the truth of the matter in these situations and that they do not want to decide what happened without full information. Notably, a third of the participants who answered why they would not intervene stated fearing for their safety as a hurdle to intervention (see Chart 5). When recounting past experiences of intervening, some also shared fears of risking their relationship with a teammate (see quote).



**Chart 5**



*“Um, so I heard from a girl that one of my teammates was kind of taking advantage of her while she was drunk one night. Then I saw her another night and he was doing the same thing. And so then I jumped in and that hurt our relationship cause like I wasn’t friends with him after that cause he like took it out on me.”*

— Male Athlete



# RECOMMENDATIONS

This research was conducted to explore how to best engage male college athletes in sexual assault prevention efforts and how institutions of higher education can more effectively educate their male athletes on dating violence and sexual assault prevention. **It's On Us has identified seven key recommendations for how colleges and universities can create and implement prevention education to create attitude and behavior change in their male athletes.**

## 1. GET BACK TO THE BASICS:

**Include basic, evidence-based information on sexual health and well-being in sexual assault prevention education.**

As outlined in the findings, only 52% of the athletes who participated in the focus groups received sex education in a formal educational setting at some point before college, and none of the athletes received or remembered receiving consent education as part of the curriculum. It's On Us strongly supports universal, age-appropriate, comprehensive sex education that includes information on consent and healthy relationships in K-12 schools. Unfortunately, as the findings reflect, this type of education is not available to many students. Rather, requirements for K-12 sexual health and well-being education are regulated at the state level, with some states having no requirements for schools to teach sex education.<sup>22</sup>

Institutions of higher education, on the other hand, are held to federal requirements for comprehensive

sexual assault prevention education through the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (Campus SaVE).<sup>23</sup> Due to the lack of access to comprehensive sex education in K-12 schools, programs provided by a college or university may be the first time many male athletes – and students generally – receive any formal education related to sex, healthy relationships, and sexual assault prevention. **It's On Us strongly recommends that college-provided prevention education begin with basic, evidence-based information on sexual health and well-being** that can serve as the framework through which subsequent awareness and educational programs are taught.

## 2. FLAG ON THE PLAY:

**Combat misinformation by including anecdotes, data, and examples in sexual assault prevention education to address common stereotypes and false beliefs.**

Throughout the focus groups, athletes shared many unfactual beliefs about sex, relationships, sexual assault, and domestic violence that were a result of exposure to misinformation. Consequently, it is critical for prevention education programs to include data and statistics, as well as anecdotes and examples, in order to combat misinformation and give athletes a fuller, evidence-based education. Considering the frequency with which focus group participants voiced concerns about women engaging in unhealthy or abusive behaviors toward their male partners while simultaneously expressing reticence and/or

<sup>22</sup> Planned Parenthood. "Sex Education Laws and State Attacks." Accessed April 1, 2023. <https://www.plannedparenthoodaction.org/issues/sex-education/sex-education-laws-and-state-attacks#:~:text=Decisions%20about%20sex%20education%20are,should%20be%20taught%20in%20schools.>

<sup>23</sup> Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act, Campus SaVE (H.R. 2016), 112th Congress, 2013. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/112th-congress/senate-bill/834/text>

confusion around naming those behaviors as such, it is important for educational programs to **include information and examples about female-on-male incidents of sexual assault and domestic violence, what reporting and support resources are available to male survivors, and how athletes can support their teammates who may have experienced sexual assault or domestic violence.**

Similarly, programs should cover topics such as false allegations in a manner that provides opportunities for athletes to have meaningful conversations that will serve to **deconstruct harmful myths and stereotypes about those who make allegations of sexual assault without judgment.** Many participants in this study believed them to be much more common, despite the fact that statistically false accusations are rare.<sup>16</sup>

### 3. KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE PRIZE:

**When designing a prevention program, institutions must center the needs and realities of students on their campus.**

Institutions must meaningfully include students and their experiences in the design and deployment of prevention education programs and supplemental resources. The majority of the athletes described the prevention programs they had received to date as ineffective, boring, not reflective of their campus culture, and/or unengaging. **Centering students at every step of the program development process will help to ensure the programs and resources created reflect the needs and realities of their campus communities and subcommunities, and are relatable and engaging for students.**

Student engagement throughout the program design will also help to facilitate wider community buy-in when the programs and resources are deployed. The result will be the creation of impactful programs that drive meaningful attitude and behavior change among students that they will hopefully carry with them throughout their college experiences and the rest of their lives.

### 4. FULL COURT PRESS:

**Instead of limiting prevention to focus on the extremes of healthy or abusive behavior, campuses can better serve students by focusing on the gray areas in between.**

Many prevention education programs fall short of addressing the full spectrum of healthy, unhealthy, and abusive behaviors that can be present in sexual and romantic relationships. As demonstrated through the focus groups, it is often not as simple as someone existing in either a healthy OR an abusive relationship. Many of the athletes reported experiencing, witnessing, and/or perpetrating behaviors that were unhealthy, like small coercive actions such as texting a partner nonstop to come over or constantly questioning them about where they are, who they are with, and what they are doing.

The athletes also acknowledged that it can be difficult to identify these behaviors as problematic in the moment and stop them from progressing into more unhealthy or abusive behaviors. Additionally, some of the athletes shared the experience of either pressuring a partner or being pressured by a partner into unwanted sex. The athletes did not define this behavior as sexual assault, despite the fact that “consent” given under coercion or pressure is not actual consent. Therefore, **prevention education programs must address the full spectrum of healthy, unhealthy, and abusive behaviors by defining and providing examples of the behaviors that fall within the various categories of healthy, unhealthy, abusive, or somewhere in between.**

### 5. GIVE STUDENTS A GAME PLAN:

**Information on preventing and responding to sexual assault, and support services, should be easy to find and provided regularly.**

The facilitators asked the athletes if they knew who their Title IX Coordinator was and where to find them and, in all but one case, none of the students possessed this knowledge. **Information on where to find resources for both the prevention of and response to sexual assault on campus should be easy to find. This information should be provided regularly to students and through as many avenues as possible.** For example, institutions may choose to include resources on class syllabi or the back of student identification cards. It is important to remind students that resources to address sexual assault and domestic violence exist and are accessible to everyone.

Participants also disclosed that the unhealthy relationships they have been in have caused them to experience trauma, violence, and/or abuse themselves. It is crucial to educate this population on

where they can find support services and resources on campus when they need them. Unfortunately, men often feel excluded from these services and resources for a variety of reasons, including, but not limited to: the promotion of available resources being gendered in nature (e.g. posters about sexual assault survivor resources only including visuals of women); peer-to-peer survivor support groups being facilitated by feminist clubs on campus; and crisis intervention services being housed in campus women's centers. Having these resources explicitly gendered in nature perpetuates myths about who can experience sexual assault and domestic violence and who is deserving of support. Therefore, we recommend using gender-neutral descriptors in names of buildings, organizations, and services for survivor support on campus.

## 6. PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE:

**Use a conversational learning approach to educate students on what TO DO, rather than what not to do.**

The focus group findings indicate that **male athletes want prevention education programs that focus on helping them understand what they can and should do to build healthy relationships and prevent sexual assault in ways that are relevant and relatable to them.** For example, it is unhelpful to tell young men “don’t rape” when most cannot imagine themselves ever doing so. Rather, a more effective approach would be to engage a group of athletes in conversation about how they define consent, how they would get consent, and if they believe there are situations under which consent cannot be given. This is called a conversational learning approach and can be an effective means of helping to change attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors through dialogue and storytelling. This model can be particularly productive when there are shared identities or experiences among those participating, such as being a male college athlete. The conversational learning approach is also a particularly effective means to educate athletes on how to be an active bystander, which is a key prevention education method for combatting campus sexual assault. As demonstrated in the research, by engaging the athletes in conversations about what they would do or say to a teammate who may be at risk for committing sexual assault, the researchers were able to support the athletes in imagining themselves in real-life scenarios in which they may need to intervene and talk through how they would serve as an active bystander.

## 7. EMPOWER ATHLETES TO BRING THEIR A GAME: Ensure conversations can be impactful by focusing on the right setting, timing, tone, and cadence.

The focus group conversations were successful in large part due to their setting, timing, and tone, which can be translated into the creation of new prevention education programs. The focus groups were conducted in small group settings and typically within a single team environment, meaning the athletes who participated already had a shared identity and trusting relationships with one another. Additionally, the primary facilitator for the focus groups was a former college athlete, which allowed him to quickly establish a rapport with the participants. This level of comfort granted the athletes a sense of psychological safety to be honest about their beliefs, experiences, and behaviors, and to ask difficult and vulnerable questions in the focus group conversations.

The timing of when the researchers held the focus groups was also a factor in their success. Athletes have strict schedules with limited free time. Therefore, the focus groups were time-bound to one hour and arranged around the academic and athletic schedules of the participants. It is critical for institutions to consider the importance of scheduling when implementing prevention education programs with athletes, as the timing greatly affects athletes' level of engagement. For example, it is not helpful to host programs immediately after practice, when athletes may be hungry or need to shower. Rather, the programs should be held on either rest days or days when practices are shorter (e.g. strength days or film days). Additionally, the program duration should be no more than 45 minutes in length. Asking an athlete to spend two or more hours discussing a topic as heavy as sexual assault can be psychologically straining. However, it is strongly discouraged to limit the prevention program to a singular 45-minute session. It is impossible to cover the full breadth of topics required for the programming to be truly comprehensive in a single session. Therefore, It's On Us recommends that different prevention topics be spread out throughout the course of a semester through multiple educational sessions that build on one another in terms of content.

Moreover, the tone of the focus groups was empathetic and empowering. Rather than treating the athletes as “the problem,” the facilitators treated the athletes as leaders and influential community members who were central to combatting campus

rape culture. This approach mirrored an almost universal finding of the athletes expressing a need to receive proactive and empowering prevention education that called them in to be a part of the solution within the safety of their team environment. Given the success of this approach with the focus groups, It's On Us recommends that this strategy be deployed in the development of future prevention education programming for this key population.

**The keys to successful prevention training include: creating a safe space; hosting at a time when the athletes can be present physically and mentally; having multiple touchpoints no longer than one hour; and educating in a way that is proactive, empathetic, and empowering.**



# CONCLUSION

The male athletes who participated in this study expressed a genuine desire to be called in as part of the solution and educated on sexual assault and domestic violence prevention, but unfortunately believe that current efforts are failing them. The findings outlined in this study will inform the development of new prevention education modules specifically geared toward male college athletes that will be launched by It's On Us in the fall of 2023. The resources generated from this research will include:

- Six to eight 30–45 minute-long prevention education programs, covering topics such as consent, active bystander intervention, healthy relationships, healing from sexual assault, navigating breakups, and setting boundaries.
- A workshop facilitator's guide and opportunities for facilitators to be trained in-person or virtually by the It's On Us Associate Director of Men's Engagement and Special Projects.
- Supportive materials to help athletes continue the conversation beyond the programs.
- Information on additional highly-vetted resources for male college athletes, coaches, and athletic administrators as it relates to sexual assault and domestic violence prevention.

By developing these programs, It's On Us hopes to enhance prevention education programs for male athletes and equip institutions to meet the unique needs of this student population.



# NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

While this study represents a significant contribution to what is known about sexual assault and domestic violence prevention on college campuses, there is still a need for further research on ways to change campus culture and engage students in the prevention of sexual assault and domestic violence. It's On Us recommends the following topics for further research and evaluation:

## **Research with Other At-Risk Male Student Populations**

Male athletes are one of two student populations most at-risk for serial perpetration of sexual violence, with the other being men in fraternities.<sup>8</sup> Most gang rapes reported on college campuses are tied to fraternities.<sup>8</sup> Research has also indicated women in sororities are 74% more likely to be raped than other women on campus.<sup>24</sup> Due to the high rates of sexual assault that occur in Greek life settings, it is common for fraternity and sorority members to be required to participate in sexual assault awareness and prevention programs by either their national organization or their academic institution. Despite these additional education efforts, the rates of sexual assault perpetrated within Greek life settings have not declined.

Similar to athletes, men in fraternities have a strong influence on campus culture and have the potential

to shift the broader campus environment from one that upholds rape culture to one of prevention, accountability, and support for survivors. Therefore, It's On Us recommends further research be conducted to (a) evaluate the efficacy of prevention programs most commonly used with Greek life students, and (b) evaluate the attitudes and beliefs of fraternity men toward sexual assault and domestic violence, existing prevention programs, and what they believe their role to be in combatting campus sexual assault. This research can be used to develop tailored prevention programming for men in Greek life and determine whether or not similarities exist among male athletes and fraternity men in attitudes and behaviors towards topics related to campus sexual assault.

## **Research with Non-Survivor Student Populations on Awareness of Institutional Policies, Procedures, and Resources**

As indicated in this study, the majority of the athletes It's On Us spoke with had minimal awareness of their institution's policies, procedures, and resources for survivors, and many did not know who their Title IX Coordinator was. This lack of awareness was a barrier for athletes who desired more direction and resources when experiencing a disclosure. 40% of survivors will first disclose their experience with sexual assault to a peer – such as a friend,

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<sup>24</sup> Mohler-Kuo, M., Dowdall, G. W., Koss, M. P., & Wechsler, H. (2004). Correlates of rape while intoxicated in a national sample of college women. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 65(1), 37–45.

teammate, or roommate<sup>25</sup> – and the response of that individual can shape what actions the survivor does or does not take next. For some survivors, choosing not to report to the police or their institution may be their best or safest option. However, all students should be knowledgeable of the various reporting options to ensure survivors are empowered to make the best decision for themselves with full knowledge of the available choices for recourse. Therefore, it is critical for additional research to be conducted with non-survivor student populations on their awareness of institutional policies, procedures, and resources for survivors as their knowledge may affect reporting rates and/or survivors' pursuit of support services.

### Research on the Social Impact of Institutional Betrayal

Of the athletes who had an awareness of response efforts, some shared that they were often hesitant to recommend that a survivor report to the police or expressed concern that money or status would affect how their university handled an accusation of sexual assault. Extensive research exists on the topic of the institutional betrayal experienced by student survivors by the actions or inactions of their universities. Institutional betrayal is defined as wrongdoings perpetrated by an institution upon individuals dependent on that institution, including failure to prevent or respond supportively to wrongdoings by individuals (e.g. sexual assault) committed within the context of the institution.<sup>26</sup> However, further research is needed on how an institution's failure to appropriately respond to reports of campus sexual assault and the school's mistreatment of survivors may affect broader perceptions among non-survivor student populations of their misconduct policies, investigative procedures, and support services. This research also has the potential to shed light on whether or not negative public attitudes could make it less likely that students will encourage their survivor peers to report, which, in turn, would impact overall sexual assault reporting rates within a campus community.

### Evaluation of It's On Us's Prevention Programs

Finally, once It's On Us's prevention education learning modules, trainings, and resources are developed based on the research documented in this report, It's On Us recommends further research be conducted to track the progress of male athletes who participate in the programs over time to determine their effectiveness and allow for the re-evaluation of existing gaps in the educational material. It's On Us intends to build a rigorous evaluation plan for the programs to be developed as a result of this research.



<sup>25</sup> Holland, Kathryn J., et al. "A victim/survivor needs agency": Sexual assault survivors' perceptions of university mandatory reporting policies." *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2020, <https://spssi.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/asap.12226>.

<sup>26</sup> Freyd, J.J. (n.d.). Institutional betrayal and institutional courage. Institutional Betrayal Research Home Page. Retrieved March 29, 2023, from <https://dynamic.uoregon.edu/jjf/institutionalbetrayal/>

# APPENDIX

- 1. About It's On Us and Civic Nation**
- 2. Definitions**
- 3. Research Timeline**
- 4. Focus Group Questions**
- 5. Data Analysis Code List**
- 6. List of Participating Schools by Sport and Division**
- 7. Sample Consent Form**
- 8. Independent Review Board (IRB) Certification**



# APPENDIX 1: ABOUT IT'S ON US & CIVIC NATION

**It's On Us** is building the movement to combat campus sexual assault by engaging all students, including young men, through grassroots organizing, prevention education programs, and large-scale culture change campaigns. Founded as an initiative of the Obama-Biden White House, It's On Us is the largest student organizing program of its kind. IOU chapters have led more than 10,000+ educational programs on more than 500 college campuses in all 50 States. It's On Us is committed to shifting the culture around campus sexual assault through partnerships with media and brands that engage with millions of college students every day.

**Civic Nation** is a nonprofit ecosystem for high-impact organizing and education initiatives working to build a more inclusive and equitable America. We shift culture, systems, and policy by bringing together individuals, grassroots organizers, industry leaders, and influencers to tackle some of our nation's most pressing social challenges. Our initiatives take on the biggest issues of our time — strengthening democracy; fostering civic engagement; and fighting for gender equity, racial justice, economic mobility, and more. Civic Nation is home to seven national initiatives: It's On Us, ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge, End Rape On Campus, Change Collective, United State of Women, We the Action, and When We All Vote.

# APPENDIX 2: DEFINITIONS

## **Abuse**

To treat (a person or an animal) with cruelty or violence, especially regularly or repeatedly (Cambridge)

## **Consent**

The permission that is or is not given to engage in sexual activity. Consent can help people understand and respect people's boundaries. (RAINN)

## **Domestic Violence**

Pattern of behaviors used by one partner to maintain power and control over another partner in an intimate relationship (National Domestic Violence Hotline)

## **Healthy Relationship**

Healthy relationships involve honesty, trust, respect, and open communication between partners and they take effort and compromise from both people. There is no imbalance of power. Partners respect each other's independence, can make their own decisions without fear of retribution or retaliation, and share decisions. (NY.gov)

## **Institutional Betrayal**

Refers to wrongdoings perpetrated by an institution upon individuals dependent on that institution, including failure to prevent or respond supportively to wrongdoings by individuals (e.g. sexual assault) committed within the context of the institution. (Freyd)

## **Physical Violence**

A instance or situation in which when a person hurts or tries to hurt a partner by hitting, kicking, or using another type of physical force (CDC)

## **Relationship Spectrum**

All relationships exist on a spectrum from healthy to abusive, with unhealthy relationships somewhere in the middle. (LevelsRespect)

## **Sexual Assault**

Sexual contact or behavior that occurs without explicit consent of the victim. This includes rape and unwanted sexual touching. (RAINN)


## **Trauma**

An event that combines fear, horror, or terror with actual or perceived lack of control. Trauma is often a life-changing event with negative, sometimes lifelong consequences. (EVAWI)

## **Unhealthy Relationship**

A relationship in which one partner tries to exert control and power over the other physically, sexually, and/or emotionally (Youth.gov)

# APPENDIX 3: IT'S ON US PROJECT TIMELINE



<b>NOV 2022 - JAN 2023</b>	Conducted Focus Groups
<b>FEB 9, 2023</b>	Transcription Begins
<b>FEB 21, 2023</b>	Coding Begins
<b>MAR 8, 2023</b>	Development of Report Begins
<b>MARCH 15, 2023</b>	Present Initial Findings to NFL
<b>APRIL 25, 2023</b>	Official Report Launch

# APPENDIX 4: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

## Agenda:

### Welcome

#### Who are we and why are we here?

**SZ (PI) - Silvia Zenteno** is the Senior Director of Educational Programs and Research at It's On Us, the nation's largest nonprofit program dedicated to activating students on campuses on sexual assault prevention and awareness. Silvia is a proud Latina, a survivor activist, and an expert in national campus sexual assault programming and data collection. She has worked with multiple federal, state, private, and nonprofit groups to improve their response to violent crimes. Her work is rooted in improving access to sexual assault response and prevention services for students and ensure they are relevant and effective.

- Keywords: survivor, guilt, depression, anger issues, physical insecurity. I am NOT here to judge.

**KR - Kyle Richard** is the Associate Director of Men's Engagement & Special Projects for It's On Us. He has dedicated his early life to preventing sexual, domestic, and gun violence through positive manhood and Bystander Intervention efforts. The former collegiate football player (Class of '20) has been recognized by President Biden, the Capital One Orange Bowl, ESPN and multiple violence prevention organizations, for helping prevent a sexual assault and r his continued advocacy. Since his junior year, he has engaged over ten thousand athletes across North America through storytelling & speaking engagements.

- Keywords: Non-judgmental, tough-minded, imperfect.

### Overview of topic

Project background: Founded in 2014 as an initiative of the Obama-Biden White House, It's On Us is building a movement to combat campus sexual assault by engaging all students, with a specific emphasis on calling young men into the work, and activating the largest student organizing program of its kind in prevention education programs.

A 2019 study found that leaders of male sports teams, such as captains or top performers, were the most likely to commit sexual assault and perpetrate multiple times. We partnered with the NFL to speak to you, as leaders on your campus about ways to end this violence.

Our goal today is to have some very honest and maybe even challenging conversations with you to create six 30-45 minute long prevention education modules that will be 100% free to athletic programs nationwide and will be deployed within the safe space of an individual team, and facilitated by male athletes to implement the programs.

### **The six programs will include the following topics:**

- i.** *Let's Level Set: What \*Is\* Sexual Assault?*
- ii.** *What does it mean to be an ally to women and survivors on and off the field/court/etc.?*
- iii.** *Bad Bro Behavior: Identifying the Signs and Symptoms of Perpetration*
- iv.** *Come On Bro, Stop It: How to be an active bystander and have uncomfortable conversations*
- v.** *A teammate has been accused of sexual assault – now what?*
- vi.** *Supporting Survivors: how to support a survivor after they disclose to you.*

### **Ground rules**

- a.** Read the consent form out loud.  
Write KR and SZ names and emails on board before each session and include Heartland's contact info.
- b.** We will be using two recording devices on either side of the room for each focus group for our own records. Please make sure to project. Once we transcribe the recordings, we will delete them and there will be no personal identifying information in our notes.
- c.** Please do not disclose personal identifying information about anyone else. If you feel like someone is being talked about that is present, do not pressure the respondent and do not give personal identifying information.
- d.** We will be passing around resources if you need them, but please feel free to come up to us after the session for guidance on finding additional support or resources if you need them.
- e.** Please take a break at any time if you need it.
- f.** Do not interrupt others.
- g.** Respect everyone's responses even if you do not agree with them.
- h.** This is a new type of qualitative research: Research in America has historically been sexist, very racist, and put different people and communities in harm's way and left people traumatized. Our goal is to be very innovative in this project and data collection.

### **Ice Breaker**

What clubs are you a part of, positions and numbers?  
Why did you choose that number? (Write on board)

## Questions:

\*Each session is scheduled for 1 hour

### Changing culture: (20 mins)

1. How old were you when you first learned about sex? How did you learn? (ex: through porn, parents, siblings, etc.) Post-its on-side wall spectrum from ages 0 - Today.
2. What kind of activities are you involved with on campus?
3. Has a teammate or anyone in your life ever disclosed to you that they have experienced a sexual assault or sexual violence of any kind? How well do you think you responded? What are some things you wish you knew or did? Write this on a post-it note from the table and place it anywhere on the wall.
4. On the flip side - what if a teammate, friend, or someone you follow/are a fan of is accused of committing one of these crimes? How does this make you feel?  
Come up and mark a tally next to the feelings you resonate with. Feel free to add another category if you think of anything else.

### Increasing leadership: (20 mins)

1. Does sexual assault happen on your campus (those campus alerts, articles, etc)? When you hear that there has been an incident of sexual violence on your campus, how do you react? How do you feel?
2. Are there situations where you can tell that a relationship is causing more harm than good for a teammate or friend? (Raise)  
If so, we would love to hear about some situations that come to mind (reminder not to use names).
3. Who in here has ever been in a healthy relationship and how did you know? Vice versa?
4. Breakout groups: (3 minutes each)
  - a. Come up with some qualities in your healthy breakups. Share out loud.
  - b. Come up with some qualities from unhealthy breakups. Share out loud.

### Ensuring sustainability: (10-15 mins)

1. Research shows guys have a gut feeling a teammate is behaving badly, but often don't know if the behavior they are witnessing is harassment or assault. How do you (if you do) actively show up for the women in your own life to create a more comfortable culture?
2. Would you step in if you saw something happening? Please take a few minutes to think about this and write each answer on a post-it note and paste it on a spectrum (Left = Less likely to intervene, Right = More likely to intervene) across the wall. What circumstance would you be more likely to intervene?

## CLOSER

3. How did you get here? Is there anything that would have helped you make the choice to show up? What would some worthwhile incentives look like? How much time could you dedicate to learning about relationships & sex per week if there was a 2-month program? (Small post it activity)

# APPENDIX 5: DATA ANALYSIS CODE LIST

## TOPICS

*Purpose: To track when a specific topic comes up in the transcript and map against different levels of engagement and response*

### Accusations

- Accusations: High Profile
- Accusations: Hypothetical
- Accusations: Accused on Socials
- Accusations: Know Accused
- Accusations: Survivor Disclosed

### Being an Active Bystander

*Purpose: To identify when athletes discuss being an active bystander (tactics, examples, etc.)*

- Hurdles to Being an Active Bystander

*Purpose: To capture when athletes explain why they might not be an active bystander*

### Consent

### Drinking

### Drugs

### Learning About Sex (LAS)

- LAS: Abstinence Only
- LAS: Books
- LAS: Family
- LAS: Friends
- LAS: Health Class/Sex Ed
- LAS: Movies/TV
- LAS: Porn
- LAS: Video Games

### Mental Health

- MH: Trauma Dumping
- MH: Trauma Experience

### Preventative Education (PE)

- PE: Religion
- PE: Private vs Public school
- PE: Rural vs city

### Professional Leagues/Athletes

### Recognizing Sexual Assault/Violence

### Relationships: Unhealthy/Toxic

- Relationships: Reactive
- Relationships: Cheating
- Relationships: Controlling
- Relationships: Immaturity
- Relationships: Isolation
- Relationships: Unhealthy Breakup
- Relationships: Manipulation
- Relationships: Jealousy
- Relationships: Physical Violence

### Relationships

- Relationships: Accountability
- Relationships: Coach
- Relationships: Communication
- Relationships: Family
- Relationships: Financial
- Relationships: Friends
- Relationships: Healthy
- Relationships: Healthy Breakup
- Relationships: Trust

### **School Pride**

*Purpose: To capture when athletes mention sexual assault impacting their pride in their school (or jersey/team)*

### **School Response**

### **Sexual Violence**

- Defining Sexual Assault/Violence
- Other Related Crimes to SA
- Sexual Violence in Early Childhood
- Sexual Violence in High School
- Sexual Violence in College

### **Stalking**

### **Stigma**

- Stigma: Attitudes Towards Women
- Stigma: Homophobia
- Stigma: Masculinity
- Stigma: SA Creating Campus
- Stigma: Transphobia

### **Supporting Survivors/Friends**

## **TRAINING**

*Purpose: To guide the development of trainings, please apply these codes when a topic is identified as needing additional training or a recommendation for training is made*

- Training: Recommended Activity
- Training: Specific Topic

*Purpose: To note when a topic is identified as the participants needing more training (ex. a desire to learn more about consent when alcohol is involved)*

- Training: Unhelpful

## **SERIOUS TONE (ST)**

*Purpose: To code the response for when a serious tone is used by the facilitators and what kind of response that generates across topics*

- ST: Silence
- ST: Some Engagement
- ST: More Engagement

## **HUMOROUS TONE (HT)**

*Purpose: To code the response for when a humorous tone is used by the facilitators and what kind of response that generates across topics*

- HT: Silence
- HT: Some Engagement
- HT: More Engagement

## **FACTS AND STATS (FS)**

*Purpose: To code the response for when facts and statistics are used by the facilitators and what kind of response that generates across topics*

- FS: Silence
- FS: Some Engagement
- FS: More Engagement

## **PERSONAL STORYTELLING (PS)**

*Purpose: To code the response for when personal storytelling is used by the facilitators and what kind of response that generates across topics*

- PS: Silence
- PS: Some Engagement
- PS: More Engagement

## **COUNT FLAG**

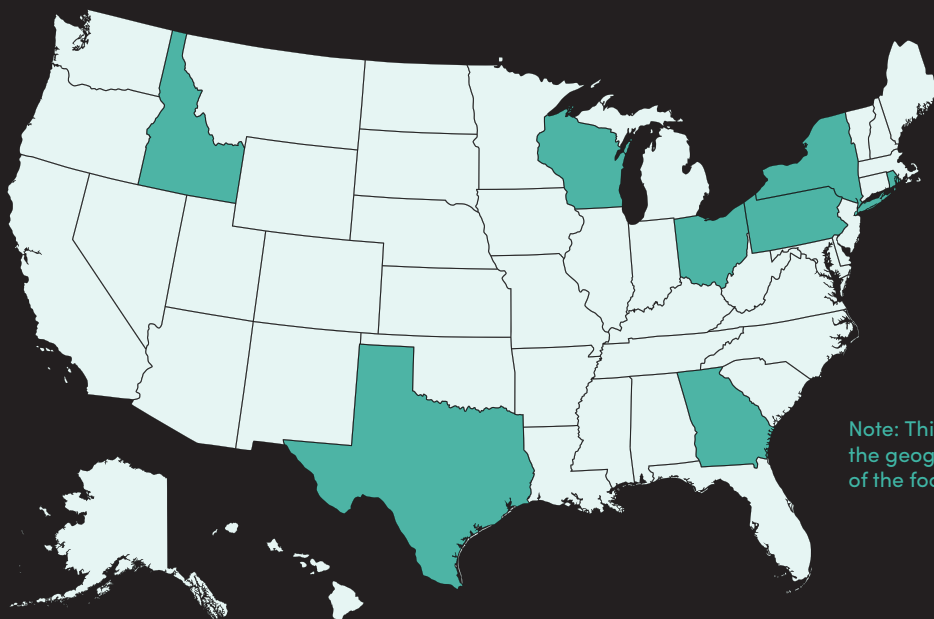
*Purpose: To capture the counts of athletes who raise their hands at specific prompts (ex. have you had a healthy breakup?)*

*Please also tag the topic (ex. Relationships: Healthy Breakup)*



# APPENDIX 6: LIST OF PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

School	Division	Conference	State
Clemson University	DI	ACC	SC
Idaho State University	DI	Big Sky	ID
Lackawanna College	JUCO	NJCAA	PA
Miami University	DI	MAC	OH
Ohio Wesleyan University	DIII	NCAC	OH
Providence College	DI	Big East	RI
St. Edward's University	DII	Lone Star	TX
SUNY Buffalo State University	DIII	Liberty League	NY
University of Wisconsin- LaCrosse	DIII	WIAC	WI



Note: This map indicates the geographic distribution of the focus groups.

# APPENDIX 7: INFORMED CONSENT FORM – STUDENT OPINIONS

**Principal Investigator:** Silvia Zenteno  
Senior Director of Education and Research  
It's On Us, Civic Nation  
Phone: [contact information redacted]  
Email: [contact information redacted]

**Purpose:**

This study investigates the students' opinions on the engagement of male-identifying students on sexual assault in college and university athletic communities. As part of this study, you will be asked to participate in a focus group and answer structured and open-ended questions. This study will take approximately 45 minutes.

**Participants Rights:**

I understand that my responses will be kept in the strictest of confidence and will be available only to the researcher. No one will be able to identify me when the results are reported and my name will not appear anywhere in the written report. Please do not share other people's identities or responses from the focus group with others to maintain the anonymity of the participants outside of the focus group. I also understand that I may skip any questions or tasks that I am not comfortable answering or completing. I understand that the consent form will be kept separate from the data records to ensure confidentiality until completion of this project. I may choose not to participate or withdraw at any time during the study without penalty. I agree to have my verbal responses tape-recorded and transcribed for further analysis with the understanding that my responses will not be linked to me personally in any way. After the transcription is completed (by June 1, 2023), the tape recordings will be destroyed.

I understand that upon completion, I will be given full explanation of the study. If I am uncomfortable with any part of this study, I may contact Tracey Vitchers, Civic Nation at [contact information redacted].

I understand that I am participating in a study of my own free will.

**Consent to Participate**

I acknowledge that I am at least eighteen years old, and that I understand my rights as a research participant as outlined above. I acknowledge that my participation is fully voluntary.

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# APPENDIX 8: INDEPENDENT REVIEW BOARD CERTIFICATION (IRB)

Click below for details on the official certification of this project indicating all processes met the DHHS policy guidelines of 45 CFR §46.111.

[Approval for Project](#)

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