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# **2011 Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Groups**



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# **2011 SERVICE ACADEMY GENDER RELATIONS FOCUS GROUPS**

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The lead analysts on this assessment were Paul Cook, SRA International, Inc., and Rachel Lipari, DMDC. Written transcripts of each of the sessions were provided by Niziankiewicz & Miller Reporting Services, LLC; Corbin & Hook Reporting, Inc.; Gail Sherry Court Reporting Associates, Inc.; and Jennifer Windham Court Reporting, Inc. Policy officials contributing to the development of focus group content include: Sharon Cooper, Executive Director, Defense Human Resources Activity; Kaye Whitley, Darlene Sullivan, and Anita Boyd (Department of Defense Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office); Jimmy Love, (Office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity); LTC Kay Emerson and MAJ Missy Rosol (U.S. Military Academy); CAPT Diana Cangelosi and LCDR Franklin Lendor (U.S. Naval Academy); Amanda Lords (U.S. Air Force Academy); Mr. Antonio Farias and LT Nic Jarboe (U.S. Coast Guard Academy).

# 2011 SERVICE ACADEMY GENDER RELATIONS FOCUS GROUPS

## Executive Summary

The *2011 Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Group (2011 SAGR)* study is a focus group assessment conducted per U.S. Code 10 as amended by Section 532 of the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007. *2011 SAGR* is part of an assessment cycle at the Military Service Academies (MSAs) that consists of alternating surveys and focus groups. Focus groups were conducted at all three MSAs as well as the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. Separate sessions were conducted for male and female students in each of the four class years and a single mixed-gender session of upper classmen was conducted at each academy.

Data from the focus groups were analyzed qualitatively to identify major themes and ideas conveyed across the sessions. For each theme, supporting comments from the focus group participants are included. Analysts used a combination of topical coding and repeated reviews to gather specific comments that supported the emerging themes. Where students differed in their opinions on a topic, both perspectives are presented in separate findings. Although focus group findings cannot be generalized to all students at each of the Academies, findings serve as illustrations of situations and themes for consideration by Academy officials as they review their programs.

Findings are presented in separate chapters for each Academy. Within chapters, the major themes are presented with specific findings and supporting comments from the students. Each comment identifies the gender of the student. Although the topics reported are similar for each Academy, no attempt was made to compare or generalize findings across Academies.



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# 2011 SERVICE ACADEMY GENDER RELATIONS FOCUS GROUPS

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The Service Academies strive to provide a safe educational and leadership development environment for their students. Working with their Service Headquarters and the Department of Defense (DoD) Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO), the Academies have implemented programs to reduce sexual harassment and unwanted sexual contact/sexual assault, and to provide reporting and victim care procedures. Recurring evaluation of these programs is helpful for developing process improvements aimed at reducing instances of sexual harassment and assault and enhancing victim care.

One source of information for evaluating these programs and for assessing the gender relations environment at the Academies involves quantifiable feedback from students through a representative survey. Another source of information involves qualitative feedback from students through focus groups with a moderator who is trained to facilitate discussion on these topics. This report presents findings from the recent *2011 Service Academy Gender Relations Focus Group (2011 SAGR)* study. This introductory chapter provides background on why this study was conducted, a description of the focus group methodology, analysis methods and limits, and a brief overview of subsequent chapters.

U.S. Code 10 as amended by Section 532 of the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007 codified an assessment cycle at the Academies that consists of alternating surveys and focus groups. The first assessment in this series was conducted in 2004 by the DoD Inspector General (IG). Responsibility for subsequent assessments was transferred to the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) beginning in 2005. This requirement applies to the U.S. Military Academy (USMA), U.S. Naval Academy (USNA), and U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA). The U.S. Coast Guard Academy (USCGA), the only Federal Military Academy within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), is not required to participate in the assessments codified by U.S. Code 10. However, USCGA officials requested they be included, beginning in 2008, in order to evaluate and improve their programs addressing sexual harassment and assault.

### ***Focus Group Methodology***

Unlike other research methods that employ statistical sampling and extrapolation of findings to the larger population, focus groups follow a qualitative research approach to collect subjective details from participants on a limited number of topics. The design for these focus groups was replicated for each session at each Academy. Although the results cannot be generalized to the population of the Service Academies, they provide insights into issues and ideas for further consideration. Procedures for selecting participants, developing the questions, and analyzing the data are described below.

## ***Selection of Participants***

Participation in the 2011 focus groups was voluntary. Participants were selected at random at each Service Academy and offered the opportunity to participate. To select participants, each Service Academy first supplied DMDC a roster of all cadets or midshipmen.<sup>1</sup> DMDC randomized the list of students within clusters defined by gender and class year. The rosters were then returned to each respective Academy and it was the responsibility of each Academy to use their randomized list to identify the first ten students who were available (e.g., did not have a class scheduled during the focus group) to attend the focus group appropriate for their gender and class year. Students were contacted by their Academy and asked if they would voluntarily participate in the focus group. Additional students were selected from the randomized lists as necessary to achieve eight to ten students committed to attending. In some cases, students who agreed to participate did not show up at the scheduled session. For that reason, session sizes varied. For the mixed-gender focus groups, similar procedures were used, selecting an equal number of junior and senior men and women to achieve sessions of approximately 10 students.

## ***Development of Questions***

To begin the collaborative effort of developing focus group questions, DMDC analysts drafted potential questions by reviewing comments and findings from the *2010 Service Academy Gender Relations Survey (2010 SAGR)*. Analysts looked for follow-up topics that might clarify or expand upon findings from the previous year's survey. A list of preliminary questions was generated and provided to SAPRO, as well as to the Office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity (ODEMO) and to each Service Academy. A revised set of questions incorporating comments from SAPRO, ODEMO, and the Academies was compiled and then returned to each for final revisions. Six question areas with detailed subquestions (probing questions) were presented to focus group participants. The topics addressed were:

1. Sexual Assault—awareness of the behaviors that comprise unwanted sexual contact, discussion of the incidence rates for men and women from the *2010 SAGR* survey, the role of force and alcohol in sexual assault, and discussion of results of the survey where cadets were asked if sexual assault occurs more or less often at their Academy than in civilian colleges or universities
2. Reporting—understanding from students' perspectives why someone who experienced unwanted sexual contact would report it or not, to whom would one most likely make a restricted or unrestricted report, recommendations on how to encourage more victims of unwanted sexual contact to come forward and make a report, and discussion of the treatment of alleged offenders during an investigation and trial period
3. Factors Affecting Sexual Assault—advice students would give to an incoming student or what advice they would have liked to have received when they were new

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<sup>1</sup> The roster excluded foreign national students, as well as exchange students.

4. Sexual Harassment/Sexist Behavior—discussion of the sexual harassment and sexist behaviors incidence rates from the *2010 SAGR* survey, why these behaviors occur, and how their training in sexual harassment awareness and prevention affects the behaviors
5. Leadership Response—opinions on whether leadership at all levels take prevention of sexual assault and sexual harassment seriously, examples to illustrate why they believed the way they did, situations that had the most impact (positive or negative) on their opinions, and discussion of how well cadets felt prepared by the Academy to deal with issues of sexual assault and sexual harassment when they are commissioned and have leadership responsibilities of their own
6. Training—discussion of training received and comments on the most and least effective training
7. Bystander Intervention in Sexual Assaults—focus group participants were read a scenario of a party situation and asked to share their opinions of the actions students would most likely take to step in and prevent a potential sexual assault
8. Recommendations—what more the Academy could do to decrease sexual assault and sexual harassment<sup>2</sup>

### ***Conducting the Focus Groups***

Nine focus groups were scheduled in 90-minute sessions at each Academy. Separate focus groups were conducted by gender and class year with one additional mixed-gender session. Focus groups were held in conference rooms or classrooms on each Service Academy campus.

DMDC provided focus group facilitators who led the sessions at all four Academies. A male facilitator led the male focus groups and a female facilitator led the female focus groups. Both a male and female facilitator led the mixed-gender sessions. The facilitators conducted the subsequent qualitative analysis of the data. DMDC provided a female recorder who used a stenographic machine to transcribe all comments from students and the facilitator. Transcripts were provided to each Academy after they were cleaned of all identifying comments and names. No audio or video recording was made of any focus group session.

All focus group sessions were governed by a number of ground rules, most notably that they were all non-attribution sessions. Students were advised of the purpose for the recorder, and they were informed that their names were not recorded and their comments would not be attributed back to them. Students were encouraged to provide information generally but not to specify personal experiences, names, or other identifying details. Students were also advised not to share information learned within the focus groups after the session was concluded.

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<sup>2</sup> The focus groups concluded with an open invitation to express any other thoughts regarding gender-related issues at the Academy and any additional recommendations for ways the Academy could reduce sexual assault and sexual harassment. These recommendations are not reported separately; rather they are integrated with other discussion points on similar topics.

## ***Analysis Methodology***

Data from the focus groups were analyzed qualitatively for major themes and ideas conveyed across the sessions. The order of presentation does not imply that any one theme is more important than any other. For each theme, supporting comments from the focus group participants are included. The supporting comments do not include every comment made on a particular theme; rather they illustrate the theme in the words of the cadets and midshipmen. No attempt was made to quantify the number of comments made on a specific theme.

The results in this study are based on qualitative analysis—findings cannot be generalized to all students at each of the Academies. Findings should be viewed as illustrations of situations and themes for consideration by Academy officials as they review their programs. Findings may also be viewed as a general perspective on students' views of sexual harassment and assault at their Academies, but they do not portray a statistical report on incidence rates or performance of response and prevention programs.

### ***Categorization of Topics***

Focus group analysts reviewed transcripts to identify major themes. Although findings tended to cluster around the main questions asked in the sessions, categorization based on the questions was not an *a priori* requirement. Analysts were sensitive to themes that emerged from the discussions. Analysts used a combination of topical coding and repeated reviews to gather specific comments that supported the emerging themes. Where students differed in their opinions on a topic, both perspectives are presented in separate findings.

### ***Organization of Findings***

Findings are presented in separate chapters for each Academy. Within chapters, the major themes are presented with specific findings and supporting comments from the students. Each comment identifies the gender of the student. Caution must be exercised in reviewing these findings because comments should not be viewed as representative of all other students. Finally, although many of the themes are similar across the four Academies, each Academy should be viewed separately. No attempt was made to compare or generalize across Academies.

## Chapter 2: U.S. Military Academy

Nine focus group sessions were conducted at USMA from April 11-13, 2011. Each session was scheduled for a 90-minute period. There was one male and one female session held for each class year and one mixed-gender session. Each session had between two and eight students.

### **Sexual Assault**

Understanding how cadets view various aspects of sexual assault and the incidence rates of sexual assault from the 2010 SAGR survey were primary topics addressed in the 2011 SAGR focus groups. Cadets were provided the definition of unwanted sexual contact (i.e., sexual assault) used in the 2010 SAGR survey.<sup>3</sup> The facilitator shared the sexual assault incidence rates for men and women at USMA from the survey and asked if participants had seen or were briefed on the survey results. Participants then discussed the factors that might have contributed to the increase in the sexual assault rate for women from the 2008 SAGR survey.<sup>4</sup> Focus group participants then discussed the role of force and alcohol in sexual assault as well as situations where consent can or cannot be given. This section ended with a discussion of results of the survey where cadets were asked if sexual assault occurs more or less often at their Academy than in civilian colleges or universities.<sup>5</sup>

### **Familiarity With Incidence Rates From 2010 SAGR**

- **Some focus group participants thought they had received a briefing on the results of the 2010 survey.**
  - *“We’ve heard a lot about this in the past, four or five months, they brought it up as an issue last semester with people getting drunk and just doing inappropriate things. They made a pretty big deal about it when they thought they saw a red flag when they had two rape charges within weeks of each other. So I think they do a good job of addressing it.”* (Female)
  - *“All those statistics, every once in a while during our briefing, the beginning of the year, they’re glossed over.”* (Male)

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<sup>3</sup> Unwanted sexual contact refers to a range of activities that the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) prohibits, including uninvited and unwelcome completed or attempted sexual intercourse, sodomy (oral or anal sex), penetration by an object, and the unwanted touching of genitalia and other sexually related areas of the body. For this report, sexual assault includes all of the behaviors included in unwanted sexual contact.

<sup>4</sup> On 2010 SAGR, at USMA 9.1% of women and 1.2% of men indicated they experienced unwanted sexual contact (sexual assault) in the timeframe of June 2009 through spring 2010. This is not statistically different for women or men from 2008 (8.6% for women and 0.6% for men in 2008).

<sup>5</sup> The results of 2010 SAGR showed a decrease in the percentage of respondents who said it occurs less often at USMA than civilian colleges/universities (among women it was 71% in 2010 versus 83% in 2008; and for men it was 85% in 2010 versus 93% in 2008).

- **Other focus group participants had not heard any results of the 2010 survey.**
  - *“I’m not in a command position. I feel like a commander might be able to tell you because he deals with everything, but I only have a little circle, and I know in my circle it hasn’t.”* (Male)
  - *“I don’t think we really heard any of that.”* (Male)
  - *“Usually the Commandant or the Dean — a lot of times the Commandant would throw out during his briefings statistics but it’s never presented in terms of the DMDC results from the survey, it’s just presented as a general statistic.”* (Male)

### **Reactions to Incidence Rates**

- **Focus group participants indicated the incidence rates from the 2010 survey were about what they expected for their academy.**
  - *“I’m not surprised by the numbers. They don’t seem like they’re outrageous numbers. People like to think ‘Oh, it’s an academy, there should be nothing wrong with it.’ I’m pretty sure that if you went somewhere else in the country it wouldn’t be too different or if it was different we would probably be on the lower end of the spectrum.”* (Female)
  - *“I think it’s reasonable considering we’re a small population [of women], but it’s also a high number considering there’s about 12% of us here. So that’s actually a very high number. It’s shocking in a sense that it still happens. You typically want to see that number go down.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants offered several reasons why the sexual assault incidence rate found on the surveys among women has not changed between 2010 and 2008.**
  - *“I don’t feel like there’s a significant change, but I feel like it’s always been addressed in a very nontolerance way.”* (Female)
  - *“I think since I’ve come to the Academy, they were already on the ball with this. I know that maybe in the ‘90s and before then there were a lot of issues. I feel like they took care of this before we got here, which is nice. And from when I’ve been out in the Army versus here, because this is such a small community, they have a much better grasp of controlling it and controlling cadet’s lives.”* (Female)
  - *“Awareness and expansion of the definition, people getting better at coming out if something’s happened to them. The actual incidents might have actually gone down; it’s just the amount of awareness, the people willing to report, the people willing to intervene and actually report on people has actually gone up. I think that system has improved.”* (Male)

- **Focus group participants indicated that the incidence rate for sophomore women<sup>6</sup> might be higher due to the lifting of restrictions on relationships.**
  - *“I think it's a direct result of the fact that you're not allowed to have any relationship with a freshman. So it's like a college campus, freshman are fresh meat. Here it's the exact same thing [for sophomores].”* (Female)
  - *“Part of the culture here, part of our regulation is if you were an upper class cadet, sophomore, junior, or senior, if you have any kind of sexual contact, even if it's completely consensual, with a freshman, then they just rain hell on you. You are in so much trouble that it's unbelievable; and there are a lot of people who might like a certain freshman, and they're waiting for that person to come of age.”* (Male)
  - *“I think that because freshman year they're not allowed to have as much contact with the upperclassmen and then when you get to be a sophomore you're available all of a sudden and a lot of girls aren't used to that kind of attention. So they make themselves available and it invites more I think. And then we get a little bit wiser as we get older and we watch out for things like that.”* (Female)
  - *“Because you have a whole year to look at the catalogue and see what's out there, and then all of a sudden the order is in.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants also discussed reasons why the incidence rate for junior women<sup>7</sup> is higher than the other class years, unlike the other academies where only sophomores exhibited a higher rate.**
  - *“They can start drinking.”* (Female)
  - *“The fact that juniors and seniors interact so much, there's more interaction and because they're like ‘Let's go grab a drink.’ Sophomores you have the fresh meat phenomena and juniors maybe just because there's so much more contact and it's much more direct that people become a little bit comfortable and then perhaps their behavior slides.”* (Male)
  - *“It depends on how you're scrambled [reassigned to new companies]. Usually you're scrambled after your sophomore year. So maybe you're scrambled into a new company, so there are new people there and girls don't know a lot of the guys in their new company. Sometimes so you don't really know how to gauge them, so that certainly gives guys other opportunities.”* (Female)

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<sup>6</sup> 11.2% of sophomore women at USMA indicated experiencing unwanted sexual contact on the 2010 SAGR survey.

<sup>7</sup> 11.4% of junior women at USMA indicated experiencing unwanted sexual contact on the 2010 SAGR survey.

## **Circumstances of Sexual Assault**

- **Focus group participants indicated that sexual assault often occurs with people you know in ambiguous situations.**
  - *“Mutual friends. That's how sexual assault sometimes happens, it's with the most familiar people you know. Sometimes alcohol put into the situation blurs decisions, it happens, and even though you didn't want it to happen, it's just different circumstances. But I think definitely that puts a higher risk because you confide in that person but that doesn't necessarily mean you're in the best state of mind to agree.”* (Female)
  - *“Say you had sexual intercourse with some guy and it's like normally if you weren't under the influence you would be ‘Oh, my God, no.’ So you justify that to yourself, like he had to have forced me. I know I wouldn't have done that.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that consent to engaging in sex can be given in circumstances where one cadet is senior to another.**
  - *“I don't think it's as big a deal as it is in the Army, like if you were to have sex with your squad leader in the Army, that's a pretty big deal. But here, we change our positions every semester, so someone maybe you liked before and did things with, magically just became your platoon leader, and vice versa. So people's positions are always changing, so I don't think — that situation can arise pretty easily.”* (Female)
  - *“I don't feel like the power disparity here is anything like the actual Army because you can have a company commander here tell you to do something and just blow them off. In the Army, that will get you in a lot of trouble. I still feel like the consent almost would follow the same line of consent as a civilian university.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that cadets can feel comfortable saying ‘no’ to an inappropriate sexual approach.**
  - *“[Multiple] Yes.”* (Male)
  - *“The rank structure here, it's not even like real, it's self-imposed really just to make everything run smoothly. Technically we're all the same rank.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that sometimes circumstances can be confusing with regard to consent to engage in sexual behavior, especially with freshmen.**
  - *“I think we've seen that a lot with the plebes [freshmen], actually. Last semester we saw a lot of plebe girls and upper class guys. I can't prove it, but it seemed like it could have been an intimidation factor.”* (Male)

- *“One of the problems when you're a plebe, you get asked to do a lot of strange things that wouldn't normally happen, like sing Little Mermaid. So what happens is some of those things you're told — maybe a plebe girl is told, ‘Dance to this song,’ which might also be told to a plebe guy but the plebe girl might interpret it differently or it might be set in a different context with a different intention, so it's not out of the realm of what could happen, but it might have mal-intent behind it.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants agreed that physical force is not necessary for sexual assault to have occurred.**
  - *“Obviously there's physical contact, but I wouldn't say all the time there has to be force, because sometimes people just roll over and let it happen because they don't want to resist and see it as worthless if they try.”* (Female)
  - *“Absolutely not. Like threatening your career or some sort of extortionist idea, you definitely don't need physical threat.”* (Female)
  - *“I know some people get coerced into it, a quid pro quo situation, that physical force isn't there, but I consider if she didn't want to do that and got forced in that situation.”* (Male)
  - *“I would say physical force wouldn't be that high because I know last semester there was a girl screaming in the hallway and all of a sudden there were fifteen guys in the hallway, what's going on? So especially with a close proximity to everybody else, you can't really use your physical force [else someone will observe and react].”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that at USMA a person who has been drinking can consent to sexual relations under certain circumstances.**
  - *“I think it's possible to engage in sexual behavior while you're partially intoxicated and be happy with the results later, but in general, it usually isn't that way because you're not thinking correctly.”* (Female)
  - *“It's probably dependent too on your relationship with the person. If you have a long-term relationship with him, I think that's probably accepted.”* (Female)
  - *“That depends on the tolerance level. If you have a guy who goes to the Firstie Club every weekend and downs several rounds. One or two drinks, yeah, they could probably still give full consent. But at the beginning of the year when a cow [junior] just turned 21 over the summer, can't come here and drink, after one or two drinks on the first weekend, not likely.”* (Male)
  - *“It seems like it would be less likely to be assault if both people were drunk because they're both thinking on the same level, whereas if a guy is completely sober and the girl is drunk, my immediate conclusion would be that there's something wrong there.”* (Female)

- **Survey results in 2010 showed that 51% of women who experienced unwanted sexual contact indicated that alcohol was involved in some fashion. Focus group participants commented that 51% seemed low.**
  - *“It almost seems low. I would expect like 75% or something.”* (Female)
  - *“I was expecting, actually, more people to say that it was alcohol-related.”* (Male)
  - *“Most of the incidents I have ever heard of have involved alcohol in some way.”* (Female)
- **Even though use of alcohol contributes to sexual assault, focus group participants indicated that drinking is part of the culture and most people handle themselves responsibly.**
  - *“We know what our limit is and occasionally, yes, we drink to excess, but we're with friends, we have someone who will get us back to our rooms and make sure we get to bed or whatever.”* (Female)
  - *“There's always a little bit of responsibility involved. But drinking in excess does definitely exist, but I feel like it's a once a week or when I'm done with all these exams, then I'm going to just let it all out. Which probably isn't healthy, but — ”* (Female)
  - *“And I think the good thing about the Firstie Club is you're surrounded by everyone you know. There's no way you would ever do something in the Firstie Club. Ever. If you did something that night, it was back in the room. It's not like a bar where you might try to touch someone or take someone in a back room. It's not even possible. So you have all these people there watching you.”* (Female)
  - *“I think they do a good job of keeping things under control, so when two people are in their right mind, they're aware of the such high repercussions there are, it's just such a huge incentive not to; but when two people are drunk and they're no longer thinking about that stuff, that's when it would happen.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants noted that the Academy has instituted new policies with regard to drinking that are intended to lessen the novelty.**
  - *“It's a bigger part of the culture now too. It's changed the dynamics. It's social drinking, the idea being we'll bring a beer truck out so you can have a beer or two and socialize with your friends, but I don't know if it's in excess. I think it's been a good thing, but you always have the possibility that one bad apple is going to spoil the whole bunch.”* (Male)
  - *“I think providing alcohol and giving people an established place to drink is another method of control for the Academy. They just want to keep you in a*

*central area. The intent is to give people a responsible environment to practice drinking alcohol, but it's the individual that takes it too far. When you forced it a little more underground, like you have people drinking in the barracks and you're already in more of a risky scenario, you're going to be more apt to do stupid things, there's going to be higher chances of sexual assault.” (Male)*

- *“Two years ago they made ‘Hundredth Night.’ They had this social reception with alcohol wearing civilian clothes. I think more events like that where you can learn how to drink responsibly, behave socially, professionally, more situations like that would definitely help.” (Female)*

### **Comparison to Civilian Colleges and Universities**

- **When asked why the percentage of cadets who indicated sexual assault occurs less often at the Academy was down slightly from the previous survey, focus group participants noted that there has been increased emphasis and training.<sup>8</sup>**
  - *“Sexual assault training may have increased. When people are more aware of what's going on or trained more, talked about more, then you might think it's occurring more, and maybe more it's occurring outside of the walls.” (Female)*
  - *“The over exposure of the sexual assault help lines and things like that, and realizing that that falls under unwanted sexual contact, more people are becoming aware of it.” (Male)*
  - *“Maybe because awareness — we've been getting more briefs about it and so it's more present in our days than it was back then. So the subject is always being brought up so we think it's happening here more than it is.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants also indicated that publicity of sexual assault at the academies might have increased awareness.**
  - *“I heard a lot of stories about sexual assault and stuff at Air Force and maybe people just hear that and they associate that with here, could just be knowing about it.” (Male)*

### **Reporting**

The objective of this section was to understand from cadets’ perspectives why someone who experienced sexual assault would report it or not. The questions first asked why the number of actual reports was higher in 2010 than in 2009,<sup>9</sup> then questions addressed to whom cadets

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<sup>8</sup> The question posed in the focus groups was “On the survey, we ask if sexual assault occurs more or less often at your Academy compared to civilian colleges/universities. We have seen a shift in perceptions over the years. The results here at USMA show a decrease in the percentage who said it occurs less often at USMA than civilian colleges/universities. For women, in 2010 71% said sexual assault occurs less often here at USMA, which is down from 83% in 2008. For men it was 85% in 2010 versus 93% in 2008. Can you help us understand this finding? Why would this be so?”

<sup>9</sup> There were nine reports of sexual assault in 2009 and ten reports in 2010.

would most likely make a restricted or unrestricted report. Cadets were also asked for their recommendations on how to encourage more victims of sexual assault to come forward and make a report. The questioning in this section ended with a discussion of the treatment of alleged offenders during an investigation and trial period.

### ***Increase in Actual Reports of Sexual Assault***

- **Focus group participants indicated that although there was one more report in 2010 than 2009, most incidents are not reported due to the bureaucracy involved and overreaction.**
  - *“I think people get worried about it being really messy and complicated, like everything here. There's a lot of paperwork and a lot of steps and a lot of waiting, and you don't see repercussions until a long time after everything happened, and I think that that's a little bit discouraging.”* (Female)
  - *“I would say almost all of the minor instances are never, ever reported. Just because the system or whoever you want to call it or the big brass people overreact. They're told, okay, you have to nip this in the butt. We don't want it here. So a small thing happens, their, basically, instruction is to completely crush that, make an example. And here they make examples of people a lot. So you don't want to be that person.”* (Female)
  - *“I know as a girl and seeing people report it, usually the system judges females and tries to present their image as they're a slut, they're this, and tear down any good image that they have. And if you do ever get assaulted, you just don't feel like going through this, this is going to make me look bad. You're like, ‘I'd just rather deal with it myself and know it happens and prevent it.’”* (Female)
  - *“A girl was raped here when she was plebe [freshman] and her just telling us the process she had to go through to report everything. Unless you have that cookie cutter like ‘Okay, I was screaming, someone hurt me,’ so there's a witness now and then we immediately went to the hospital to get genetic evidence, unless everything happens in the Lifetime movie way, it's just not going to get proven. So I feel like it's a really broken system that doesn't work unless you have a stereotypical assault case.”* (Female)
  - *“It's just incredibly bureaucratic — if anything is actually formalized, it takes so long to get the process done and a lot of boards and I can see people not wanting to deal with that. We're way loaded up with stuff and no one wants to deal with that.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants also indicated that incidents are not reported due to the attention it generates.**
  - *“I think people might be worried about ramifications if they report something and they think maybe it's not that big of a deal — I just think people may worry*

*about how others will think that, oh, she's just making a big deal out of nothing.” (Female)*

- *“I think being a small population people will hear about it if you do and it will spin around that you were sexually assaulted, which is bad. Nobody wants to be known as that person. And two, you'll have to tell everybody or you'll be known as a whistleblower. And three, I feel like most sexual assaults you know the person in some way; it's not just some random person. But you don't want to report them because it's somebody you had class with and you don't want to make them awkward.” (Male)*
- *“So I think if something on a personal level, unwanted sexual contact happened, they probably, whether it was restricted or not, they probably wouldn't report it just because of the embarrassment factor of telling somebody else what happened.” (Male)*
- *“The process is really almost public. A lot of people get into your personal lives I've heard and why would you want that kind of attention. You just want to fly under the radar.” (Female)*

### **Recipients of Restricted and Unrestricted Reports**

- **Focus group participants indicated that someone would most likely seek a chaplain to receive a restricted report of sexual assault.**
  - *“Probably the chaplain because people know who they are and their offices are really available.” (Female)*
  - *“And it's more anonymous. You could be talking to them about anything, like a parent or a grandparent dying or religious counseling, whereas if someone sees you walking into the sexual assault office, that's a little odd.” (Female)*
  - *“Chaplains are the best, most well known. And their offices are right in the mess hall. They're the most accessible.” (Male)*
  - *“I would say chaplain. Just because they're accessible 24 hours a day. You can't just walk in Malone [the clinic] and say, ‘I want to see somebody.’ They'll usually ask you why or make an appointment. You can't just say, ‘I need to see somebody.’” (Male)*
- **A few focus group participants indicated other people or activities that could receive a restricted report of sexual assault.**
  - *“I'm surprised, with the chaplain. I'm sure he's a very good source for a lot of people, but with Major Berger [Special Assistant to the Commandant for Human Relations] I would be very surprised if she didn't receive a lot of information about it only because she was always up there putting it out there, letting people know she was available.” (Male)*

- *“And there's a counseling department too, Center For Professional Development.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated several possible recipients of an unrestricted report of sexual assault.**
  - *“Having a male TAC, I would never really feel comfortable talking with him because I don't have a close relationship with him anyway. If I felt I needed to tell chain of command, I would go to a female TAC in the regiment. My first reaction would probably be to go to a doctor before I started mentioning it, just to get more information about what had happened. But the way it is here, you don't usually want to go to military police without letting someone know first because they will freak out and be, like, well, why didn't this go through me. There would be a lot of repercussions if you went straight to military police.” (Female)*
  - *“TAC, yes. Depends whether it's in company or somebody from another company because if it's in company, you might want to go to someone other than your TAC because there's a conflict of interest.” (Male)*
  - *“If you're underclass, you're more likely to go to your squad leader or platoon sergeant. If you're upperclassmen, cow [junior] or firstie [senior], you'd probably go to your TAC.” (Male)*
  - *“I would automatically go to my TAC. Because she's been there all year, so it's trust and I know she would be willing to help me out as soon as I would tell her. That's the first person I would run to.” (Female)*
  - *“The only other one I would think about would be medical, because we have doctors who — I play sports and we have doctors who work with your team so I would feel comfortable going to one of them.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated most people would not contact the military police to make an unrestricted report of sexual assault.**
  - *“I don't think that that would be the first thing in a cadet's mind because we don't interact with them at all. So that would be completely going to an outsider not in a good way, more like in a known way.” (Female)*

### **Reasons for Reporting**

- **Focus group participants indicated that someone might make a report of sexual assault to remove an offender from the Army.**
  - *“Not wanting to see those people be soldiers.” (Female)*
  - *“To get the people that did that to them out. I wouldn't want to see them standing by my side. I'm serving next to you but yet you sexually assaulted*

*somebody. Honestly, everyone makes their mistakes but that's just not tolerated and I wouldn't want someone to go unreported and have that option to serve with me and know that they may have sexually assaulted one of the females next to me.” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that someone might make a report of sexual assault to stop the offender from hurting them or others.**
  - *“Afraid it's going to happen again. Maybe they know that it has happened again to somebody else. I think people are generally more willing to come forward or something like that if they feel like other people are involved or that they would help someone else as well because sometimes it's hard to just stick up for yourself, easier to stick up for other people.” (Female)*
  - *“If they think the other person is a danger to other people, they would want to prevent that from happening to anyone else.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that someone might make a report of sexual assault to seek justice or because it's the right thing to do.**
  - *“Justice.” (Male)*
  - *“Or if they're just trying to highlight something they see as a widespread problem.” (Male)*
  - *“Confidence in the system goes up as you go through the system and I think that's why people are starting to report more because they have a responsibility to the larger organization to say this person is not an officer that I want to serve with.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that someone might make a report of sexual assault to seek help dealing with an emotional incident.**
  - *“That they were raped and just completely devastated. That's why I would think they might do it.” (Male)*
  - *“To talk about it and to get help and talk through it so you're not carrying all the burden of sexual assault.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants noted that there is a pervasive assumption that many women report sexual assault to get out of trouble.**
  - *“I think a lot of people think women report to avoid getting in trouble themselves, but be it true or not, that's what a lot of people assume.” (Female)*
  - *“This is going to sound terrible, but a lot of times the perception is that if because there's punishments associated with being caught having sex in the*

barracks, the tendency is that men often think that women will cry rape or cry sexual assault in order to mitigate the punishments they receive.” (Male)

### **Implications of Reporting**

- **Focus group participants discussed the potential negative effects of someone making a report of sexual assault.**
  - *“It's related to the level of injustice they perceive that they've suffered. Because a lot of people might try to take the responsibility or take some of the blame and be like, ‘Well, it's not my fault but I did lead the person on, or the person was drunk and I let them come in my room, I talked to them.’ They try to take a part of the responsibility so they don't necessarily want to engage in all the bureaucratic paperwork and official process because they're afraid of the impact it's going to have on that person and they'll feel guilty. And then there might be some kind of retribution after the fact or some guilt like, ‘I just ruined this person's career and I played a part in it because I led the guy on.’” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that people are not going to be encouraged to report sexual assault unless they see positive results.**
  - *“Just keep informing them. I think if the system actually worked. If you don't change the results, no matter what you do, it's not going to have an impact. You could make them aware, this is restricted, this is nonrestricted, you can inform them about the process, you can inform them about who they can come to, but unless that happens I don't see anything lasting that's going to change.” (Female)*
  - *“All that stuff is painful. If it was a simple process that had a legitimate result and didn't just ruin both people involved.” (Male)*
  - *“If you make it more of a consequence, if you do sexually assault, for sure separation, you would feel more comfortable to report an assault.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants suggested improvements to the sexual assault awareness posters.**
  - *“They have those posters in the bathroom stalls for girls. They're some girl crying and stuff. If I were a victim of sexual assault and I saw that in the bathroom, I don't want some helpless victimized figure in front of me, I feel shitty enough. And I know that those aren't in the men's restrooms. I think it needs to be something that's gender neutral so girls feel that it's just procedure, that they have options, they know what their options are, not to make them feel victimized. So guys, they don't feel gender biased, so they feel they can get help too.” (Female)*

- **Other focus group participants indicated that there is not much more the Academy can do to encourage reporting other than provide the necessary information on how to do so if one chooses.**
  - *“I don't think there's much you can do other than just putting the word out there, ‘Hey, if you need help, these are the numbers.’ If you need any kind of assistance, go to this Website, we have the CIS [Cadet Information System], you can find it under these tabs. If they need it, they'll find it.” (Male)*

### **Treatment of Alleged Offenders**

- **Focus group participants indicated alleged offenders are sometimes treated as though guilty.**
  - *“He was like a pariah in the whole company. It's such a taboo thing and it's like everyone runs away. No one wants to get close to it. Especially once it comes out, it's untouchable. No one wants anything to do with it.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that at other times alleged offenders are supported especially if the allegations are perceived as false.**
  - *“I've seen it happen twice, maybe three. Each time the guys closed ranks and they just shut the girl out. They just said, ‘We know you're full of crap. We know what you do.’ I think it really depends on the situation. If the guy is known to be sleazy, maybe they'd be like, ‘We don't trust you,’ but when they're good friends, they just close the doors on her.” (Male)*
  - *“His friends were like whatever, dude, we were out having a good time.” (Male)*
  - *“If the girl is known to or rumored to be sleeping around with a bunch of people and then she claims that, general consensus is they are going to go with the guy because the guy seems like a good guy or vice versa. The personality definitely affects how they'll be treated.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants offered a variety of suggestions for dealing with alleged offenders.**
  - *“I honestly think the best thing they can do for a lot of targeting the accused here is make it go faster, get it over with so that it's not something people are talking about for two months; they're only talking about it for two weeks and then they see the results, and I think it gives people more confidence in the system too.” (Female)*
  - *“And I think honestly the TACs could be more professional about it, because we like to think TACs, they're these majors, but the thing is when you get a group of majors together, they're just like cadets. I hear TACs talking about stuff all the time, ‘Oh, did you hear what happened in company so and so.’ So anything bad*

*that happens in the company, almost all the other TACs know about it while they're shooting the breeze at lunch.” (Female)*

- *“It's a really bad idea [moving an alleged offender or the victim to a new company]. It's better to keep them in the same company. If someone comes into my company, it's like, ‘Hey, I just switched because of something really bad.’ It's not because you got straight As. It's because you really messed up, and everyone knows that. Why did this guy just magically pop in here, if he wasn't a medical leave? It's because it's something weird. So it really draws attention to you. They should keep people in the same company until the situation is resolved and just put measures in place to control a situation.” (Female)*
- *“What bothers me is the ones who've gotten away with it and they're just like ‘I'm never going to get caught.’ Those are the worst ones. They're like ‘I've done it but until you catch me I can do whatever I want’ because the burden of proof is on you to prove they did it and they know that. So it's like they just slandered my name, whatever, and they can move onward. The victim really can't move on.” (Female)*
- *“We never really hear what happens to the offenders. Maybe for some of these really bad ones on this list of bad stuff, put them in front of everybody, make them tell what they did.” (Male)*

### **Advice About Avoiding Sexual Assault**

In this short section of questions, cadets were asked what advice they would give to an incoming cadet, or what advice they would have liked to have received when they were new, regarding places or activities to avoid.

#### **Advice to Incoming Cadets**

- **Focus group participants offered advice on how to conduct themselves and choosing reliable friends.**
  - *“As a girl, the advice I would give them is be competent. Carry your weight, like, physically. Do well in school. Don't make yourself someone who they would perceive as weaker because I think they probably get targeted more.” (Female)*
  - *“Choose your friends wisely and then keep them close to you. They make sure things are right and they make sure you're safe.” (Female)*
  - *“Before I came here, a grad told me perception is everything, and he said a lot of the men at the Academy viewed girls as either the women who come here to hold their own and to be good leaders and to succeed, and there's girls who come here to be in bed, and they don't view them in any other [way] — there's two categories.” (Female)*

- *“A lot of plebes seem to want to interact with upperclassmen. If they're on a team, for instance, they'll shun their own classmates to go hang out with the team which is a mixed bag of all the classes. So I would tell them just to focus on their class. It's safer and I just feel like it's a better environment. Less underage drinking, that kind of thing.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants also offered advice on ways to protect one’s reputation and minimize the risk of unwanted advances.**
  - *“West Point is not conducive for girls casually dating. People are going to spread rumors that aren't true. So you either say, I'm not really interested in dating right now, or I'm in a fairly serious relationship. To just have a casual date and go out to dinner, here if you did that all the time, people are going to question.”* (Female)
  - *“This is really something that I wish that they would preach more, is hang out in groups. Girls and guys, hang out in groups. Don't bring attention to yourself. I know going from plebe to upperclassman, don't bring attention to yourself. Find your group of people, stick with them. You don't need to have painted nails. You don't need to have perfect hair and makeup every day. If you are doing it, good, do it for yourself, but if you feel like you need to bring attention to yourself that's where you are going to find yourself in a situation that you don't even want to be in.”* (Female)
  - *“I think the advice that I would give is as we've gotten older at the academy I think our male classmates, all of us, because it's just a small community, have figured out, for lack of a better term, who's easy and who's not. And because everybody has a reputation by this point. So if you don't have that kind of reputation, you don't get bothered.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants offered advice on use of alcohol.**
  - *“Be smart about alcohol. Don't drink too much.”* (Male)
  - *“I would tell them to be with a friend all the time, have somebody else there. It makes it harder for the sex offender to take advantage of you if someone is there to watch over you. Especially if you are drinking, always have someone drink with you just so they can watch over you.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants offered advice on ways to avoid situations in the barracks that might put them at risk.**
  - *“Avoid situations that could look bad. For instance a guy and a girl in a room watching a movie, working on a project, nothing bad or inappropriate could be happening whatsoever and the door could have gotten shut by the wind and you didn't get up. Somebody comes in the room and sees the door shut and sees two*

*people in the room, instantly rumors start and spread around the company.”*  
(Male)

- *“Know the situation you put yourself in. A lot of assaults involve alcohol, where you're alone in your room and a drunk guy comes in. From then you should know, ‘Okay, I should call a friend over, see if there's someone there to help me.’ Because all of the stories I've heard here is always there's just two people alone in the room and something bad is going to happen.”* (Female)

- **Focus group participants offered advice on ways to avoid other risky situations.**

- *“I know this may come off as harsh, but I think you need to evaluate yourself because I have heard of other female cadets who really get around. And it's like what do you expect then? Don't put yourself in those kinds of situations that it could happen.”* (Female)
- *“And it's not necessarily a male assaulting the female, sometimes it's a misconception, mixed signals that they end up getting blamed because someone feels regret for something they did. So I think especially for guys as well, because it definitely happens, males get assaulted and so do females and male/male, female/female, it's pretty much everything now. It's just being aware that that little misread can definitely go a long way. And just being careful I think, the biggest thing is being aware of the situation because there's no perfect equation to solving all of the world's problem, just make yourself situationally aware of what's going on and just be careful, it's the best thing you can do.”*  
(Female)
- *“The only place I can think of is off campus. Don't go to Highland Falls and walk back — if you are a single female, don't walk back with five other guys. I don't want to put the system victim focus on it, but you are putting yourself in a precarious situation even if it is five good friends. And it does get complicated when you are talking after however long you've been drinking, it can get risky. But nowhere on post. I would imagine anywhere on post you would be safe.”*  
(Male)

- **Male focus group participants offered advice on ways to interact with female cadets.**

- *“How I operate is based off a personal decision I made. I treat the female cadets here as if they're work associates. So it's just business and then after that, there's no relationship stuff involved.”* (Male)
- *“I'm friends with a few women [cadets] on a personal level. I've gone to their house for holidays and stuff, and I feel like as long as you observe some basic guidelines, you should be okay.”* (Male)

## **Sexual Harassment and Sexist Behavior**

In this section cadets were provided the sexual harassment and sexist behaviors incidence rates from 2010 SAGR<sup>10</sup> and asked to discuss why these behaviors occur and how their training affects the behaviors.

### **Sexual Harassment Incidence Rates**

- **Most focus group participants acknowledged that crude and offensive behavior, such as jokes and locker room talk, is pervasive.**
  - *“I think the crude comment, like locker room talk, I would not be surprised if 100% of the women interviewed said they heard it, but I don't think they would feel it's harassment.”* (Female)
  - *“Another thing too with the barracks being guys and girls, the locker room talk gets moved to the barracks and you'll have a group of guys or girls just shooting the breeze with each other and it travels down the hallway and so people will hear it. Even though it was supposed to be a semi-private conversation, it's just the nature of the location. Other folks are going to hear it.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that in most instances crude and offensive behavior is not regarded as sexual harassment.**
  - *“I personally wouldn't classify it as harassment. I classify it as being rude and disrespectful. They say things inappropriate and hurtful and rude. It shows disrespect for women. But it's not necessarily harassment, in my opinion. It doesn't lead to something physical, usually. It's just insulting or it creates a bad climate.”* (Female)
  - *“It goes back to intent, especially with the jokes. The guys are just intending to have a good time, they're not directing it at us. They've experienced it but they don't necessarily feel harassed. It's not like someone coming up to you and saying hey, baby, what are you doing tonight?”* (Female)
  - *“In this uniform you have a different set of standards and it just kind of goes with the job description. You can't be too girlie, you can't be too much of a guy, you have to find this awkward balance to where you can't take everything offensively even if it does rub you the wrong way.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that they understand crude and offensive behavior is going to occur in a predominantly male culture.**

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<sup>10</sup> 84% of women and 45% of men indicated they had experienced some form of sexual harassment in the past year (crude/offensive behavior was highest) but of those percentages, only 51% of women and 9% of men would describe their experience as harassment. 94% of women and 35% of men experienced some form of sexist behavior in the past year.

- *“I think that most girls who come here know that they're entering an environment that's 80% male, and that's one of the things they're going to have to deal with is hearing guy talk all the time, and so it's not — I've never really taken the mentality that it's sexual harassment. It's the whole Army.”* (Female)
- *“You know the quote about rough men, they say it's a gentleman's profession but in reality it's a pretty rough job. I don't want to make it sound martyred or whatever because it's not, and it's really not an excuse, but at the same time, if you want these guys to be tough, then you've got to let them be guys.”* (Male)
- *“I think that girls can agree that we've heard a lot just because we're around so many males, sometimes language isn't appropriate. There's a lot of things a lot of females may not want to hear. And I think West Point is trying to make the males and everyone aware that there's still females at West Point so to watch your language around females.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that sexual harassment often centers on perceived inadequacies, such as inability to meet physical standards/ expectations.**
  - *“If they [men] don't hold their weight, like physically. I think usually it's mostly physically, militarily, if they are perceived as weak or if they're injured a lot. Like how can you be here, sort of thing. And I feel like we experience that with other women too. It's like you're not holding your own. You don't deserve to be here. How did you fall through the cracks?”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants also noted that the designation of a behavior as sexual harassment can also be context dependent.**
  - *“Reported numbers also depend on the person in the situation because there are a lot of instances I've heard of where people get turned in for saying something that they said a million times before; it's just that the person who is reporting them was having a bad day or they were pissed at them or whatever.”*
  - *It's their trump card.”* (Male)
  - *“I would like to know more about the context of the situation whenever they make those kind of reports because it really depends on the person and their perception, because that goes down to whether it's a wanted or unwanted and then also where that person draws the line.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants gave various reasons why a small percentage of men indicated they had experienced behaviors they considered to be sexual harassment.**
  - *“They may have found it offensive because it was done to somebody else. Or called being gay or faggot or something like that. I haven't seen a lot of women [harassing men]. Especially here, I would say it's man-on-man.”* (Male)

- *“Playing alpha male.” (Male)*
- *“Also some of that with ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ changing, that might change too. Calling someone gay and stuff like that — it may become a vernacular for you, but someone who actually is gay may find it offensive and that may be where it’s from.” (Male)*

### **Sexist Behavior Incidence Rates**

- **Focus group participants were not surprised that sexist behavior incidence rates are higher at the Service Academies than active duty or Reserve component activities.**
  - *“It really makes perfect sense, though, to be honest, because when you get out in the actual military, you’re concerned about the mission and accomplishing the mission. Anytime I’ve been out in the Army, girls in a unit aren’t a big deal because they have a purpose and they have a job, and once you get into the military, you recognize that the quartermaster is really important. You can’t have a mission with just the rangers. You recognize the whole team. You go on deployments with these people, you respect them. Here it’s really combat arms focused, it’s all about physical training, grades, whatever. They don’t really see us as teammates. It’s all about us trying to measure up to them.” (Female)*
  - *“That doesn’t surprise me at all. We’re college kids, we’re teenagers.” (Female)*
  - *“You have 4,400 people in a much tighter location here so you are going to have those incidents. There’s a lot more accountability in the big Army for when you misspeak. There’s also a much more clear rank structure in the Army, it’s going to lend itself to keeping people in line and not speaking out about some sort of sexist behavior. Here it’s a giant locker room. The Army you are living a daily life that’s not here, that’s outside. With the accountability and the social aspect of it I’m not surprised that those numbers go down.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that maturity is a factor in sexist behavior.**
  - *“Maturity. You’re straight out of high school and then you get in an environment where you’re surrounded by guys, and maybe you feel a little bit more empowered by putting people down.” (Male)*
  - *“Also the age group, that might be a big deal. Some people are much more mature than others.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that sexist language is pervasive.**
  - *“I’ve heard that word ‘trow’ [derogatory term for female cadets] used in a bunch of different contexts. I actually know several females who use that word on a regular basis just to describe the less motivated female cadets that often*

*give them a bad name. So it's been used as blatant offense against all women, some people use it as regular vernacular, and others use it just to describe those certain women.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that there is still a belief among some that women do not belong in the military.**

- *“It's the society. It's the Army. There are people here who still believe females shouldn't be at this Academy and they're going to act accordingly. I've had teachers in class say that. So it's not a culture that changes. There are TACs here who believe and who have openly stated that.” (Male)*
- *“I think that [sexist behavior] stems a lot too from the macho, this is supposed to be the best place, originally it was an all guys' school. We're here, we're the best and we're making ourselves better and just the connotation is the females, at least from what I hear from my friend, a lot of people tell them they're slowing the academy down or something like that. And that's probably where a lot of that comes from.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that the emphasis on combat arms overshadows the value of women in other roles.**

- *“Everything — our military science classes are all combat arms, and we maybe don't match that level of physical competency or whatever, but nothing is really said about how important logistics is to a mission. Hardly at all.” (Female)*
- *“And West Point really doesn't do a good job of showing the guys that. Like if we have a speaker come talk to us, they're always infantry armor. Rarely is it even someone who is an engineer. I actually saw a female general at a briefing the other day and I was shocked. I was, like, ‘Wow, she's really squared away.’ I've never even seen that. I was amazed. As a girl, I felt good to have seen that. And I knew the guys were thinking too, like, ‘Wow, I didn't know a woman could be a general and be so assertive and confident.’ That's something you don't see here.” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants noted that sometimes mission requirements set up a situation where someone interprets behavior as sexist.**

- *“We were in the field and we have a heavy machine gun and there's rifles and there's varying weights of weapons. And one of the girls in our squad was consistently getting angry because we wouldn't let her carry the heaviest machine gun and she wanted to. She was really high speed but she physically couldn't handle a machine gun. But by us not letting her carry that — they didn't let me carry it. They let some big guys manhandle this thing. By us not letting her carry that, she considered it sexism, when it was just a basic fact that we had to have this machine gun deployed at a certain place at a certain time.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that sexist comments often continue unless there is push back.**
  - *“There are a lot of sexist comments to females here. But then again, it falls under the whole guise of people are, for the most part, legitimately joking when they say that. And females don't really bite back at that, like, ‘Hey, I really don't appreciate that’ or, ‘Hey, that offends me’ or, ‘Hey, stop staying those things.’ And if a behavior isn't receiving a negative response, it's not going to stop it from being perpetuated.” (Male)*
- **Male focus group participants indicated that changing sexist behavior at USMA requires a change in physical fitness standards.**
  - *“I think that if they're going to successfully mitigate the instances of sexist behavior among the military, then they need to significantly change something about the standards. The biggest issue that I've seen is that PT tests aren't the same; women aren't measured by the same standard, guys have it harder, all that crap. So, I feel like they need to change something about that if they want to actually get rid of it. I don't even know if that's realistic, if that's even possible, but it's a bigger system problem.” (Male)*
  - *“And if you feel you're not being treated fairly [with regard to physical fitness standards], it's going to want to make you say something about another group of people who are being treated differently.” (Male)*
  - *“We had a briefing and gender equality was the main subject. One of the subjects was the new physical training test, and it was talking about it's not so much based off of whether you're male or female; it's based off the job you're going to perform. So there's going to be different standards based off of whether you're combat arms or service support or wherever, so it sounds like it will be a little more equitable.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that diversity goals can contribute to perceptions of sexism.**
  - *“This comes from a group I was sent to. They were talking about gender relations and one of the things brought up was how they pick people for certain positions. And the Commandant's reasoning was I want to have people from all different minority groups represented so that someone can say that's my role model. And a lot of people take offense to that because why can't it be just strictly merit based? And then as far as females feeling like they've been exposed to sexist behavior, just being around it or actually being the victim of sexist behavior?” (Female)*
  - *“West Point institutionalized the contradiction — I don't know exactly how to put this, but there are definitely girls here who are extremely qualified and they're equally frustrated with the system when they do the percentiles because*

*they say, 'We need this many in a chain of command position.' The ones that are actually good get marginalized because everyone immediately has a hesitation 'Is this person actually qualified or did they get in there because of that?' You never trust it because everybody knows the percentages are there."* (Male)

- *"[The perception that positions are based on diversity objectives] really does a lot to hurt females here because there are females who deserve those leadership roles, who work really hard and do a good job of that. But since there's that perception in the Corps, that sometimes their reputation gets tarnished because of that."* (Male)

### **Leadership Response**

Cadets were asked to share their opinions whether leadership at all levels take prevention of sexual assault and sexual harassment seriously. They were asked for examples to illustrate why they believed the way they did and to describe situations that had the most impact (positive or negative) on their opinions. The section also included a question on how well cadets felt prepared by the Academy to deal with issues of sexual assault and sexual harassment when they are commissioned and have leadership responsibilities of their own.

### **Perceptions of Leadership Response to Sexual Assault**

- **Focus group participants indicated that overall leadership takes sexual assault response and prevention seriously.**
  - *"Most of its fully institutional, like the mandated training we have."* (Female)
  - *"They [senior leadership] got a special assistant on that, so I think they take it pretty seriously."* (Male)
  - *"Apparently from the time that it was reported [a sexual assault] to the time that it was taken care of and his court date was set, it was real, real short. And so I think once something is found out they take care of it quick. It's just the getting to that point is the slow speed."* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that immediate response to inappropriate behaviors sets a high standard.**
  - *"I think for sexual assault the best thing that they do is send up for Respect board. And I think when someone gets in trouble for that, they know better next time. I think that's the best way because that's the only thing they can actually do. And for sexual assault, the Commandant said that anyone who performs sexual assault here from the academy is kicked out automatically. I'm pretty sure they do take heavy punishment, they do give out heavy punishment for that. But the people just don't report it. It's not seen very often."* (Female)

- **Focus group participants indicated that company leadership takes sexual assault response and prevention seriously.**
  - *“I think it all starts with the TAC officer, the upper leadership for a company. I think the TAC officer sets the tone for who the senior cadet leadership will be when they select those each semester and that selects the tone. It's trickle down. The good companies have a really good TAC officer. He inspires them and takes care of them.”* (Male)
  - *“When an officer, an NCO is talking about it, it's no goofing around, it's clear cut.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that sexual assault prevention at the company level is emphasized when there is an incident.**
  - *“I don't think we really see it on a company by company level until there's an issue that they address personally.”* (Female)
  - *“In terms of TACs and stuff, I think they take it pretty seriously. They have to report to somebody too, and if there's a whole bunch of instances of sexual assault in a unit, they know that's a poor indication of unit morale or cohesion.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that cadet leadership is less serious about sexual assault prevention, but improving.**
  - *“TAC level and above, at least my TACs, when they addressed or whenever there's a training, my TAC is like, ‘This is very serious.’ But as far as cadet leadership, I think it might be a check the block sort of thing. I think brass leadership buys into it because they have to and then cadet leadership is just like, ‘Well, sign this when you watch the video.’”* (Female)
  - *“Cadets change positions so radically and so often that there's really no way to establish that, yes, they care about this or, no, they don't because they're constantly recycling.”* (Male)
  - *“People are taking it more seriously. I know one company had training [where they discussed] what is considered and not considered sexual assault and harassment. They played out scenarios; is this right, is this consensual. It's silly at times but it does happen — at least they're addressing it. As silly as it can be, somewhere along the line it's going to help somebody. I know they are taking it seriously as much as possible.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that coaches and other people in leadership positions sometimes address sexual assault prevention.**
  - *“They [coaches] tell us be careful, make smart decisions.”* (Male)

- *“Most of the upperclassmen, mostly just hear all Army active duty and they have a lot of insight and they're just walking knowledge about a lot of different things, so I would definitely say ‘yes.’” (Male)*
- *“A lot of mind checkers [thought provoking comments] are put out there, personal opinions in class. The ‘don't ask don't tell,’ they'll [mostly military faculty] put their personal opinions out there. And sometimes we'll open class with discussions about that, they are asking questions or you will be talking about it with one of your buddies and they'll jump in and put their opinion in. So I feel like they're up to date and up to speed with a lot of things that we're experiencing.” (Male)*

### **Perceptions of Leadership Response to Sexual Harassment**

- **Focus group participants indicated that leadership is also serious about sexual harassment prevention.**
  - *“I think it's pretty much the same across the board.” (Female)*
  - *“I definitely think so. The Commandant's definitely trying to. There's a lot of offensive language towards women here still at the academy and he's trying to get rid of it, like the word ‘trow’ and things associated with it. In briefings he just talks about respect and treating everybody equally.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants recommended better clarification of offenses and punishments.**
  - *“One thing I think that would be beneficial, at least at West Point, is to really classify what the different levels are, and more than just two, and clearly identify what the repercussions are. So, if there's a category that's just, like, inappropriate gestures or jokes, and the punishment for that would be five demerits. If someone was just going to get five demerits and they made a really ugly joke, then I might not feel bad about saying something. But I'm not going to say something if they're going to get a Respect board or who knows what. The only reaction is either nothing or an overreaction. Those are the two levels. So that's what we have to operate at.” (Female)*
  - *“Making first time offenders, making the consequences more case dependent. Making them understand that it's not a joke, that they're not just going to lose their rank for a little bit. It has to be something more because you have to give them a message and you have to give other guys a message that it's not cool, it's not acceptable. I personally feel like any sexual assault or repeated sexual harassment, they should immediately be separated or even suspicion of sexual harassment or sexual assault that's repeated.” (Female)*

## **Recommendations for Leadership Actions**

- **Focus group participants indicated that some of the problems with inappropriate behavior could be reduced by eliminating certain cadets.**
  - *“This is going to sound really harsh, but the Academy sometimes really hesitates to get rid of people. There are certain people that are — I don't know how to put it — they're just dirt bags and they don't need to be here. It's hard to get in, but once you get in, the Academy is hesitant to kick people out.”* (Male)
  - *“You can't peer someone out. But in rangers school, you can peer someone out. You can say, ‘This person should not be here. They should be kicked out.’ It wouldn't ultimately be up to the cadet. It would just be a conduct review and then TACs would get involved and then maybe chain of command would look into their character and then make the final analysis.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated more separation in the living quarters could be a positive step toward reducing opportunities for improper behaviors.**
  - *“I don't know if this would help but maybe separate the girls and guys rooms more. I don't know if it's realistic or anything but it just seems like if there's more of a division in the living quarters that would just make it more comfortable.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the requirement that two females must be in a room overnight has negative consequences.**
  - *“In the SOP [Standard Operating Procedure] right now, if your roommate goes on trip section or something, you have to go sleep in another girl's room or another girl has to come sleep with you. Some companies are really strict about it and some just don't care. I think if a girl can lock her door then that's good enough. I understand the meaning behind it but that just makes me feel like a potential victim more than anything, targeted.”* (Female)

## **Preparation as Future Leaders**

- **Focus group participants indicated that they do not receive much direct training in how to deal with sexual assault involving personnel under their command.**
  - *“I don't think they really teach you on the human level very much. Here you're not in charge of it as much, you just report it. I think one of the issues as well is people at West Point really have a disconnect of the type of people that are in the Army and the fact that they're completely different than we are. A lot of women who are in the Army, enlisted women have self-esteem and sexual issues that they [West Point cadets] don't know about. A lot of female enlisted soldiers are very vulnerable. So I don't think they really grasp that.”* (Female)

- *“I think that we have been taught the proper channels and stuff to go through and that way I don't know if you could ever be prepared for the specific situation because you can always get emotionally invested in it. I don't want anyone to be harmed under my watch, and I don't feel at this point that I have that power to stop it. So I feel like maybe once I graduate, I don't know if that magical gold bar will give me a little extra courage. But I think that we do know what we need to do, maybe just don't feel like we have the legitimacy or the backing until we get out there.”* (Female)
- *“I think we're prepared for maybe the legal side of it but I'm not sure about the psychological effects that it will have on the unit if that happens. That's the kind of thing that I don't really know we can be prepared for. I think we can hear about how it will psychologically affect the victim and the aggressor and everyone else who knows them but I don't know if we can — until we get to that situation we can just hear examples, but I think that's one thing we're probably not prepared for, is dealing with the personal part of it.”* (Female)
- *“I feel like all they do is drill the same basic information and tell us that later on you'll figure it out and it will all make sense. Right now I feel like most of it is a waste of our time honestly but they have to do it.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the training they receive as cadets will be useful in dealing with and educating soldiers under their leadership in the future.**
  - *“I think being here, even though actions aren't taken and I don't see it very often, just the fact that they've tried to put some kind of knowledge into us by giving us briefings, I think that would help. It would make me a better leader in the sense of trying to tell my soldiers and make them understand about sexual assault and sexual harassment, just taking different measures for them to know what they've tried to teach me here. And having different programs and talk to them. I think in that sense they've done a good job.”* (Female)
  - *“I was in a leadership position as a cadet and I didn't deal with this specifically but different discipline issues I definitely learned how to interact professionally with the offender, the guy to blame. So actual experience has helped me. I'd probably deal with it the same way, just professionally.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that hearing about real experiences would be helpful.**
  - *“I think it would be really beneficial to have an example, because the training we get is like, ‘Okay, this is what you're not supposed to do.’ And it's always about this setting, the West Point setting, which honestly cadets don't consider the real world. So to have an officer come in and say, ‘No, this actually does happen, this happened in my platoon, this is what we had to do about it,’ the guys really resonate with anything that has to do with being out in the Army.”*

*That's what they all aspire to, because they're always competing with each other to be a great officer, and when you tie that in, they really listen.” (Female)*

- *“We had a new PME [Professional Military Education], was three companies — a couple of different companies from different regiments, we all went down to the Firstie's Club and ordered pizza and there were thirty or forty actual officers that came in and sat down with us. One officer for three cadets and went through a scenario of this guy in Iraq and a situation he dealt with. And we sat there and we saw a video clip and we got to ask questions. I thought that was probably the best PME ever. I think they are trying to change the PME to something like that, which I think is pretty good and interesting and I learned a lot from it.” (Male)*
- *“I feel like some sort of mentor program for especially guys, it doesn't stick with them because it's just another brief telling them not to do something. Like I got it. I got it. But like monkey see, monkey do. If they have someone they respect and admire and they see them putting that brief into action in their everyday life, I think that would be a lot more effective.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants suggested that role playing could be an effective technique to prepare cadets for dealing with sexual assault.**
  - *“Maybe like a mock situation going from start to finish. Like how like they train the MPs in a situation, they arrive at a situation — going through the whole mock scenario from start to finish.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that even bad examples can be enlightening.**
  - *“I heard about a bad situation. A cadet first sergeant would stand everyone out on the wall and speak to them on ethics and being an upstanding citizen. The next semester he had three or four rape charges and he got kicked out. Just the biggest bunch of hypocrisy I've ever heard about in my life. I just resolved myself to never ever be like that.” (Male)*

### ***Training***

Results from the 2010 SAGR indicated that nearly all cadets had received some form of training in the prevention and response to sexual assault. Similar results were found for training in sexual harassment. However, when asked if the training was effective in reducing sexual assault or sexual harassment, the percentage of cadets who indicated “very effective” is down from previous surveys. Cadets were asked to describe their training briefly, then comment on the most and least effective training they received in the past year.

## **Training Received**

- **Senior focus group participants indicated that the training has not changed much in their four years, but the training that engages discussion is useful.**
  - *“I would say that the training that we get at the first week of every semester is the same as it always was and it's basically just a reminder. It's really no more effective than it was before and people mainly sleep through it. I noticed in the past couple of years we've had some PME classes, which are ethical classes, that talk about the more subtle side of it where it actually causes people to have to think. That's where people become engaged.”* (Female)
  - *“The words sexual assault and sexual harassment, immediately people, like, ‘Whatever.’ But if you can draw the topic towards sexual assault topics but talk about respect, teamwork, whatever else, that's better because when you hear sexual assault, no one wants to hear about it.”* (Female)

## **Most Effective Training**

- **Focus group participants gave the following examples of memorable sexual assault prevention training.**
  - *“Last year a girl got in trouble for consensual sexual relations in the barracks, and one of the things that they made the two of them do was go around and talk to all of their classmates about it, and I thought that that was good. She only had to talk about the situation and the lessons she learned. But the guy had to give a briefing on sexual assault and rape and why it's important to keep the door open and how it protects females and all sorts of stuff. And I think that as a whole, our classmates appreciated that because for the two of them, it helped clear the air, and hearing it from classmates this could happen to you and this could ruin your career.”* (Female)
  - *“It took a relevant case that happened in the Corps a year prior. It was a gray area situation where both of them had been drinking and she said ‘no’ and then she started flirting with him a little more and I think it was really good. And I'm just like, ‘no is no in drinking.’ It was interactive and entertaining so you got a lot more.”* (Male)
  - *“I think the best training that they can do is simply group discussion. A lot of times guys don't know any better, they think it's okay. If you have girls in the room — it should be mixed. A girl is going to be ‘No, don't do that.’ And they're going to know, they're going to understand, they're going to hear that girl in the back of their head when that situation arises for them. So that's really just the easiest training, just group discussions are usually most effective.”* (Female)

## Training Recommendations

- **Focus group participants offered suggestions to make their training more effective by focusing on realistic situations and smaller training sessions.**
  - *“Bring in people who dealt with it. In our yuk year [sophomore] we had a speaker who had a stranger rape and that actually had an impact on our class. People stood up and clapped after she was done speaking. Because this stuff actually really occurs, just bringing that issue to light or having people who have gone through that situation brief it instead of some cadet who doesn't care. That person that makes that situation real, we need to focus on this because it does happen in the Army and you need to know the process and be prepared for it, which cadets don't think about, it's too far away. It's going to be a reality.” (Female)*
  - *“I feel if you could find someone who went through the system of reporting and didn't get screwed by the system that would help a lot too. Someone who had something legitimately happen to them and when they reported it, repercussions followed the person that actually assaulted them. Because I haven't really heard of anything like that happening. That makes me sometimes cynical, ‘Oh, sexual assault awareness. It doesn't really seem to do anything.’” (Female)*
  - *“Maybe a teaching point would be instead of having the massive briefings that we have on sexual assault, bring it down to small groups, that's where people are going to start talking, that's where they're going to start asking questions, not trying to be a cool guy. As much as briefings, like class briefings or something like that takes care of the entire group, I don't think that the effect we would like to see within the Corps will really happen from something like that. In the small groups might be best.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that many cadets are socially immature and steps could be taken to improve self-awareness.**
  - *“A lot of the guys are socially awkward, so that guy that keeps asking you out on a date and doesn't get it and it's making you uncomfortable and you told him. I feel like some sort of social program where guys and girls could mingle so they can see this is right, this is wrong, stop creeping, you look like a creeper. That would probably be really good for them and for girls too to know how to respond to approaches that are unwelcome or even welcome. How to do that in a professional manner that doesn't put you in the fire. And then you add alcohol to that. Never had girlfriend, boyfriend, not allowed to drink until you are a junior.” (Female)*
  - *“Most of the people here are people who just focused in high school, got amazing grades, plugged into sports and then go straight here and they have no real sense of social and life and all the just normalcies that you get at a normal college. So it's really awkward.” (Female)*

## **Awareness Campaigns**

- **Focus group participants indicated there was a sexual assault awareness campaign in April.**
  - *“There was ‘Walk a Mile’ for it. I think it was last week. So you signed up and got a T-shirt and walked. There were a lot of cadets who showed up.”* (Female)
  - *“They sent an e-mail saying it [the ‘Walk a Mile’] will be at this location from this time to this time, go down and walk a mile in support of this. I was busy during that time. But I guarantee you, just like me, a majority hit delete, they read the subject line and that was it. Versus instead they could have done it where you give some incentives — cadets love incentives.”* (Male)
- **Some focus group participants had not heard of the DoD “Hurts One, Affects All” campaign.**
  - *“I don't think so.”* (Female)
- **Other focus group participants had the DoD “Hurts One, Affects All” campaign confused with another campaign or had heard of it but could not describe it.**
  - *“I've seen posters for it or something. That sounds familiar. I thought it was suicide related.”* (Male)
  - *“I've heard about it, but I'm not familiar with it.”* (Male)

## **Bystander Intervention**

2010 SAGR presented a scenario involving a party and potential sexual assault. Focus group participants were read the scenario and asked to share their opinions of the actions cadets would most likely take to step in and prevent a sexual assault.<sup>11</sup> They were asked if the scenario was realistic for their Academy, why someone would intervene or not, and how cadets typically perceive their responsibility in such situations.

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<sup>11</sup> The text of the party situation reads as: “Suppose you see a female cadet, who you do not know very well, getting drunk at a party. Someone tells you that a guy from your company is going to take her to a back room to have sex. What are you most likely to do in this kind of situation?”

- Nothing
- Leave the party to avoid any kind of trouble
- Find someone who knows the woman and can help her
- Talk to the woman/try to get her out of the situation
- Stop the guy from leaving with the woman
- Other action”

## **“The Party Situation”**

- **Focus group participants had mixed reactions to whether such a situation could occur at USMA.**
  - *“It could be, but it wouldn't happen at West Point. There's really no such thing as a party at West Point.”* (Female)
  - *“It could be at the Firstie Club, him taking her back to the barracks.”* (Female)
  - *“I could see that more at a house party, if you were at a house party on the class weekend.”* (Female)
  - *“Here I would say no. We don't have that conduct. We're in a different setting. We don't have clubs to go hang out in. In a regular general college it probably happens a lot. This would be if somebody took pass and went back home.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants agreed that most cadets would intervene if they perceived the situation posed a threat to either party.**
  - *“If someone is in trouble you just go in and you intervene, I think that's expected, especially since we're all supposed to be leaders of character.”* (Female)
  - *“I would look for more information. Is this something that was preplanned? Is this something she's okay with? Or is this guy trying to take advantage of her? I think if you can establish one of those.”* (Male)
  - *“If it was me I probably wouldn't talk to the female. I don't know her that well, I don't know if she does this all the time, if she's a slut or not. I'd probably talk to the guy in my company.”* (Female)
  - *“I think I would do all of them except ‘nothing.’ I would try anything to stop her from going with him. That's just me though. I don't care if I cause a scene, if I can prevent it I will.”* (Female)

## **Reasons for Avoiding Intervention**

- **Focus group participants indicated that of the 25% of male respondents who said they would do nothing or leave, the primary reason might be that men do not want to interfere with another man's attempt to engage in a relationship.**
  - *“If you see another guy, it's a territorial thing. You don't step on another guy's turf. Maybe he knows her. Maybe they agreed to this before. You don't really know. For a girl it's more like protecting the girl. With a guy it's more like ‘Do I want to step on this guy's toes, do I want to make a situation out of this if maybe there's not one?’”* (Female)

- *“You might not know the whole situation too. They could actually be dating or something, who knows. And that's why I would go to the friend and say, ‘Hey, see so and so.’ And they would know a lot better than me. I know it's like passing the buck, but still you're putting the eyes of the situation on someone who knows it a whole lot better, and girls will stand up for each other a whole lot better too according to the survey. It's a way to meet in the middle without having to stand out.”* (Male)
- *“I think a lot of people are non-confrontational and wouldn't want to make things worse. I think that's for the most part why we would find someone who knows the person or someone that we know who knows something about the situation instead of just going up to talk to the girl and say ‘Hey, are you okay with this?’ Because you don't want to interfere. People are afraid of doing something.”* (Female)
- *“Not my fight, not my problem probably. If that's what they want to do. I'm not going to stop them.”* (Male)

### **Perceptions of Responsibility**

- **Focus group participants indicated that taking the initiative to intervene is a difficult decision.**
  - *“Obviously the start and end of something are two short time periods, whereas as the process is occurring is the longest part of it. Having to intervene in a situation is always the most difficult to do. It requires confidence. It's pretty easy to say, ‘Well, you shouldn't do this.’ Or if someone comes to you and says, ‘Could you help me report this? Okay.’ But to actually have to take initiative is probably the most difficult scenario.”* (Female)
  - *“I think something that can be done is just making that third person involved know that they're not going to get in trouble for it. Because a lot of people are afraid to stop someone or to say something because they're like ‘Oh, well, I'm going to get in trouble too.’ And I think just letting that person know that it's going to be okay and that it's actually something good that they're doing, just emphasizing that I think would help a lot.”* (Female)

### **Watching Out for Each Other**

- **Focus group participants indicated that they typically watch out for each other.**
  - *“Definitely taught that. I think it also comes natural too, but it's always like during Beast and basic training, you would always go with your buddy everywhere you went and you always watch out for your buddy.”* (Male)
  - *“When you are going out, make sure you're with people that you trust to watch your back. Probably nothing is going to happen, but if something did, you'd want someone there who you know would say something.”* (Female)

- *“That's the big thing always in Friday morning safety briefings, if you do anything, don't do it alone, always have a buddy with you.” (Male)*



## Chapter 3: U.S. Naval Academy

Nine focus group sessions were conducted at USNA from April 4-8, 2011. Each session was scheduled for a 90-minute period. There was one male and one female session held for each class year and one mixed-gender session. Each session had between seven and fifteen students.

### ***Sexual Assault***

Understanding how midshipmen view various aspects of sexual assault and the incidence rates of sexual assault from the 2010 SAGR survey were primary topics addressed in the 2011 SAGR focus groups. Midshipmen were provided the definition of unwanted sexual contact (i.e., sexual assault) used in the 2010 SAGR survey.<sup>12</sup> The facilitator shared the sexual assault incidence rates for men and women at USNA from the survey and asked if participants had seen or were briefed on the survey results. Participants then discussed the factors that might have contributed to the increase in the sexual assault rate for women from the 2008 SAGR survey.<sup>13</sup> Focus group participants then discussed the role of force and alcohol in sexual assault as well as situations where consent can or cannot be given. This section ended with a discussion of results of the survey where midshipmen were asked if sexual assault occurs more or less often at their Academy than in civilian colleges or universities.<sup>14</sup>

### ***Familiarity With Incidence Rates From 2010 SAGR***

- **Focus group participants indicated they had heard the results of the 2010 survey.**
  - *“I know that there was some concern when they first came out because the results had skyrocketed, but we attribute that to the fact people are starting to feel more comfortable talking to people and telling them about things that happen.”* (Female)
  - *“It was on the home page on the Internet.”* (Male)
  - *“I don't remember where it was. It was probably one of the SHAPE [Sexual Harassment and Assault Prevention Education] sessions we have to go to, but they told us those statistics.”* (Male)
  - *“I think it was e-mailed out.”* (Male)

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<sup>12</sup> Unwanted sexual contact refers to a range of activities that the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) prohibits, including uninvited and unwelcome completed or attempted sexual intercourse, sodomy (oral or anal sex), penetration by an object, and the unwanted touching of genitalia and other sexually related areas of the body. For this report, sexual assault includes all of the behaviors included in unwanted sexual contact.

<sup>13</sup> On 2010 SAGR, at USNA 16.5% of women and 3.4% of men indicated they experienced unwanted sexual contact (sexual assault) in the timeframe of June 2009 through spring 2010. This is a statistically significant increase for women from 2008 (8.3% for women in 2008). The rate for men of was not different from the rate of 2.4% in 2008.

<sup>14</sup> The results of 2010 SAGR showed a decrease in the percentage of respondents who said it occurs less often at USNA than civilian colleges/universities (among women it was 67% in 2010 versus 77% in 2008; and for men it was 84% in 2010 versus 92% in 2008).

## **Reactions to Incidence Rates**

- **Focus group participants indicated the incidence rates from the 2010 survey were higher than what they expected for their academy.**
  - *“I would be fairly surprised by that. I don't feel like it's running rampant through the halls here that the numbers double like that. It's just something I haven't seen personally.”* (Male)
  - *“Surprises me.”* (Female)
  - *“I find it hard to believe that 3% of the guys on campus feel that they've been touched when they didn't want it or sexually assaulted. Like somebody in the locker room slapped some guy's butt. That could be in the 3% and they didn't want to say anything because he'd obviously be unpopular, but you could write it on the survey.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the increased sexual assault incidence rate found on the survey for women might be due to the level of emphasis being placed on prevention and response.**
  - *“Just the fact we're addressing it a whole lot more now the past couple years than in our plebe [freshman] year. It's more open talk about it, discussed or more awareness of what assault would be considered.”* (Male)
  - *“I think that [increased awareness] has a lot to do with it. I think people are a little bit more aware and a little bit more likely or apt to throw the flag on that one.”* (Male)
  - *“Maybe there's just the culture has changed a little bit because we're getting more sexual assault prevention training that people are more willing to say even in a survey that they were assaulted.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the increased sexual assault incidence rate found on the survey for women might be due to the greater availability of reporting channels.**
  - *“Could it be they have more outlets to talk to other people about it and actually report? It may be they feel more comfortable about reporting.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the increased sexual assault incidence rate found on the survey for women might be due to greater understanding of the behaviors that constitute sexual assault.**
  - *“I think it came from a lot of education, a lot of putting it out there, things like what exactly is unwanted sexual contact. People who were sexually assaulted, you think ‘Oh, that was just rape. I didn't get raped, so I wasn't sexually*

*assaulted.’ So I think it was the broadening of the term made a lot more people more comfortable to say what was going on.” (Male)*

- *“Maybe because more people realize exactly what constitutes sexual assault and what doesn't, so maybe they know about sexual assault more.” (Female)*
- *“With the trainings that we're taking now that they update it frequently and they give these scenarios. Some people who may not have thought it was sexual assault or unwanted sexual contact, now they know a little bit more.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that the increased rate of sexual assault on the survey might be an artifact of the increased awareness and emphasis.**

- *“When you make people more aware of something, then they start to recognize things that have happened and things that might be conceived as such. So I would expect a spike just because more people are knowing, more people are informed, which means more people are reporting. Then after the spike, I feel like it'll gradually decrease because then people, once they're educated, then they actually apply their education, then you have a lot less cases.” (Male)*
- *“We've had in recent years programs that have been made to make us more aware of gender relations. There's the SHAPE program, Sexual Harassment and Assault Prevention Education. We have a lot of discussions about how to prevent sexual harassment and sexual assault in the workplace.” (Male)*
- *“Looking over from the time we were plebes [freshmen] to now, there's more awareness, so I really don't think it would be something that that's actually increased, just general environment.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that the incidence rate for sophomore women<sup>15</sup> might be higher due to greater vulnerability.**

- *“They're the forgotten class in a way. So I think the lack of upper class involvement in oversight and mentoring leads to them being in situations that they shouldn't be in in the first place and making themselves more vulnerable.” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that the incidence rate for sophomore women might be higher due to the novelty of alcohol.**

- *“And most youngsters [sophomores] are still underage. So for alcohol, when that comes in, it's there in the presence of it a lot of times on weekends, but they're still not legal to drink and they haven't developed healthy drinking habits if they do drink, so...” (Female)*

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<sup>15</sup> 25.1% of sophomore women at USNA indicated experiencing unwanted sexual contact on the 2010 SAGR survey.

- **Focus group participants indicated that the incidence rate for sophomore women might be higher due to the lifting of restrictions on relationships.**
  - *“It makes sense because it's super taboo to engage in any relationship with a plebe [freshmen] in that sense, but youngsters [sophomores], like ‘Oh, now, they're datable.’ First time they're really going out, they're really allowed to take weekend.”* (Female)
  - *“Because plebes [freshmen] are off limits and you're a joke when you're a plebe, so it's almost like the freshman fresh meat idea gets moved back a year in the Academy.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the incidence rate for sophomore women might be higher for the same reason the overall rate is higher at USNA – greater awareness.**
  - *“I think it really is awareness. It's just if you were to ask us four years ago ‘Were any of you sexually assaulted?’ I don't think you'd get very many responses, and then when you actually outline it and people understand what the definition is as we've had the past couple of years, it's a lot easier to say we were touched unwantedly than we were raped or assaulted.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the incidence rate for sophomore women might be higher due to inability to handle the attention given them.**
  - *“A lot of youngster [sophomore] girls like feel lost and they want the attention and they'll take attention from anyone, even if it's detrimental to them in the long run.”* (Male)
  - *“I think there's a need sometimes to re-establish yourself as a woman here at the Academy. Plebe [freshman] year, there's nothing you can do about it. You're going to be a mess, but that first youngster [sophomore] summer and then youngster year, you do have a chance to put yourself back together again. That renewal of freedom, might stumble a little.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the incidence rate for sophomore women might be higher due to inexperience handling new found freedom.**
  - *“Plebe [freshman] year, you don't really have time to grow up. You're treated like a kid so much because people are telling you where to be and what time and you better be there. Youngster year [sophomore], all of a sudden, they give you just enough rope to hang yourself. You can take a weekend, and that's where a lot of alcohol offenses happen, whereas plebe year, you don't hardly have any weekends, so it's just there's not a good balance. It's really extreme to all of a sudden complete freedom, pretty much, except for having a car.”* (Male)

- *“Sophomore year almost as a rule is characterized by excess. People get in a lot of trouble with alcohol. They'll waste time watching movies and playing games instead of doing homework, and I think this is just another thing that they're trying out.” (Male)*
- *“I think that that's directly related to bad choices that both sophomore males and females are making with their new found sophomore freedoms. I bet you a lot of that was over the summer training as well.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants also indicated that by the beginning of the junior year midshipmen have an incentive to control their behavior.**
  - *“When you sign a piece of paper [beginning of junior year] that says if you get kicked out, you owe the Federal government like \$174,000, you start examining some of your risky behavior.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants did not recommend major policy changes with regard to the restrictions placed on freshmen or liberty for sophomores.**
  - *“As bad as sexual assault is and some of these numbers are definitely remarkable, I don't think we can justify changing the entire rules of the Naval Academy based on a sexual assault survey.” (Male)*
  - *“We have a number of programs already that address that. We have 21st birthday training for alcohol to help people to adjust to that, and then I've already mentioned the SHAPE program.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that different perspectives on sexual behavior might contribute to the incidence rate for men staying even and not declining.**
  - *“It's just the attitude of guys. If they're getting sexually assaulted, they don't really want to tell anybody they're being sexually assaulted. They'll more change it in their mind, she's just hitting on me, that's a good thing, instead of this is not what I wanted to do.” (Female)*
  - *“I think that people in general when they think of sexual assault, they think of men attacking women. But it also could be men attacking men and women attacking women, but men attacking men I think is something that people don't really think about. So when it happens, they never even think about it, and it doesn't get stopped, maybe reported.” (Female)*

## **Circumstances of Sexual Assault**

- **Focus group participants indicated that consent to engage in sex can be given in circumstances where one midshipman is senior to another.**
  - *“Absolutely. If you're communicating with the individual, I don't see why not. It is class-based here to an extent, but it's also based on the individual. You're capable of having interpersonal relationships on an individual basis that disregards class in some cases. But the class differences could be leveraged possibly, be a disadvantage to good communication and consent, so...”*  
(Female)
  - *“You're still able to say ‘No.’ After all this training, that's the biggest thing. You have to get consent, and you can always say no before you try anything. There's definitely that boundary, and when that boundary's crossed by a superior, you clearly have that ability to say ‘No,’ and if it goes too far, it's definitely wrong.”* (Male)
  - *“Within the confines of the rules we already have, if I was above someone in the chain of command and use that authority to leverage sexual favors or whatever, we already have rules to define that as illegal. But if I'm a firstie [senior] in 7th Company and there's a second class [junior] or third class [sophomore] in 27th Company, I don't think that really applies. I think we're able to draw lines.”*  
(Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that midshipmen can feel comfortable saying ‘no’ to an inappropriate sexual approach.**
  - *“[Multiple] Yes.”* (Male)
  - *“I think it can [consent can be given]. That doesn't make it right, but anyone can say ‘Yes’ and anyone can say ‘No.’”* (Female)
  - *“I would feel every plebe [freshman] in my company would definitely be able to say ‘No, don't do that, that you just crossed the line,’ because we definitely from plebe summer on make it very clear that we have lines, too.”* (Male)
- **In some circumstances, consent to a relationship on one occasion makes it more difficult to say ‘no’ the next time.**
  - *“If you consent once, then what's to stop that person from holding that over your head again? You may be forced to continue whatever it is that is going on because you have no choice.”* (Female)

- **Focus group participants indicated that sometimes circumstances can be confusing with regard to consent to engage in sexual behavior, especially with freshmen.**
  - *“For plebes [freshmen], they know that there's a line, but sometimes it's hard when the upper class crosses it to actually realize that they're crossing it. You always expect that they're going to do the right thing, and when they're not, it's hard for a plebe to first realize that and then secondly do something about it. So I think that there's definitely is an intimidation factor in saying ‘no.’”*  
(Female)
  - *“It's easy for us [upperclassmen] now, looking at it, it seems to me they should know that they can say ‘no’ any time. But as a plebe [freshman], they haven't matured enough and they're still new to everything here. I can see where it would be a difficult situation for some of them.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants agreed that physical force is not necessary for sexual assault to have occurred.**
  - *“No.”* (Multiple Female)
  - *“I don't think it has to be physical. Intimidation. I think that's the best word for it. There could be coercion that happens, and it doesn't have to be physical for someone to feel like they're being pressured into a situation.”* (Male)
  - *“I don't think force necessarily has to be a factor. It could be something like the roofie or alcohol or drugs I'm sure play a big factor. The person that is being sexually assaulted, their physical, mental state definitely has a factor in it more than the person doing the sexual assaulting, how much physical force they put into it.”* (Male)
- **Some focus group participants indicated that force is involved in sexual assault.**
  - *“Almost always except for sexually touching, then yes, there would need to be some kind of force involved. Touching, you really don't need any force at all, but if, indeed, you're going to attempt to have sexual intercourse or any of these on here, you're going to need to put some effort into it.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that it is questionable whether a person who has been drinking can consent to sexual relations.**
  - *“Going out to a party, if you have one beer, I think you still certainly have the ability to make a choice. But I think the problem is there's nowhere to draw the line. Everybody's different, and that's why we go with the idea that you definitely need to say zero to be able to clearly say that consent was given. It's just such a sketchy line.”* (Male)

- **Some focus group participants indicated that a person who has been drinking cannot consent to sexual relations.**
  - *“Just flat out no. Even if they're saying they're sober, it's pretty easy to see if someone is acting in a way that they usually would under alcohol. It's the way alcohol works. You're going to do things that you don't normally do.”* (Male)
  - *“If you're not in the right state of mind, then you can't, even if you say ‘Yes,’ it's still not really consent because you're not in the right state of mind.”* (Female)
- **Some focus group participants indicated if both parties have been drinking they can consent to sexual relations under certain circumstances.**
  - *“It's hard to generalize because everyone's tolerance is so different. You've both been at a party, both been drinking, but who knows? Someone could have been sitting in the corner drinking so much and you could have had one drink. Maybe they act exactly the same, but one's level is a lot higher.”* (Female)
  - *“I do strongly believe that if two people enjoy a glass of wine over dinner or something, they can consent to having sex with each other.”* (Male)
  - *“I feel consent can only not be given if one person is using their sobriety over a person who's drunk, if there's intentional malice to take advantage of someone in an impaired state. But if two people go to a party with no intention of taking advantage of each other and then they both get drunk and then they end up spending the night together, that's consensual because it's no malice. It's not a good situation, but it's not like one person's unwantedly sexually contacting the other. It's both pretty mutual.”* (Male)
- **Some focus group participants indicated that consent depends on original intentions regardless of alcohol use.**
  - *“I think everybody has certain moral lines they're not going to cross. Depending on the level of intoxication of the other person, I think they're still capable of giving consent. Just because you're drunk doesn't mean you're going to rob somebody or murder somebody if that's a moral boundary for you.”* (Male)
  - *“You might regret it, but I think it would still be consensual.”* (Female)
- **Survey results in 2010 showed that 65% of women who experienced sexual assault indicated that alcohol was involved in some fashion. Focus group participants commented that 65% seemed low.**
  - *“I would have thought the number would have been higher, honestly, for alcohol. Like 90% of the stuff I see is somebody was drunk when they did it. So especially here most midshipmen are pretty decent people, mostly. I feel like you have to be pretty drunk a lot of times.”* (Female)

- *“I think it's low, too. I'm honestly surprised because everything in my company to date is all alcohol related, and that's where a lot of the offenses and things happen, alcohol.”* (Female)
- **Some focus group participants indicated that some people might be reluctant to admit alcohol was involved in their sexual assault.**
  - *“[Someone might think] ‘Well, I know alcohol was involved, but I was in control of my senses, I didn't have enough to say that the alcohol was involved in the situation, so I'm just going to discount that and pretend the alcohol wasn't there.’”* (Male)
  - *“I would think it's underreported because a lot of the sophomores are also underage, and I know you tell them it's confidential, but people are still really wary to put that on there because that's a really big deal. You can get in a lot of trouble drinking underage.”* (Male)
  - *“Because that takes some of the responsibility away from the aggressor. This puts a little bit of fault on you.”* (Male)
- **Other focus group participants indicated that increased confidence among this generation of midshipmen means greater willingness to admit alcohol was involved in their sexual assault.**
  - *“I think it has to do with the confidence of the people who are now coming into that, the focus of sexual assault. You have a woman being raised to be told that you can do whatever you want to do, you can be this, you can do this, you have confidence, you can take care of yourself. And I think when things like that happen, they're more confident in the ability to step forward and say this happened to me instead of just sitting back meekly like in previous years.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants noted a dual standard regarding alcohol and bad decisions.**
  - *“I'd like to point out the double standard that we seem to have for — about how certain kinds of behavior when drunk are excusable and then certain kinds aren't. If you go out and get drunk and then kill somebody, that's not going to hold up in court. You can't say well, I was drunk, I didn't know what I was doing. It's not excusable. Whereas if you go out and make some bad decisions, then later on you point the finger at somebody else and say it's all their fault. I don't think that's right. I think you should be held personally responsible for what you do when you're drunk. And if you can't control yourself, then you shouldn't drink to the point where you're not going to be able to do those things. We put a lot of unfair pressure on the person who gets the finger pointed at in that situation. I'm not saying what they're doing is right, but they tend to get all the blame, and that's not right.”* (Male)

- **Some focus group participants indicated that alcohol policies could be enforced even more.**
  - *“Actually enforce zero-zero-one-three. The Navy says no drinking if you're underage, no drinking, is it if you're driving, one drink an hour, three drinks a night. No one listens to that. Absolutely no one listens to that. If you go out and drink, you're just going out to get wasted or whatever.”* (Female)
  - *“When people do get caught, though, and they get in trouble, alcohol offenses, there's so many remediation options. I don't feel like people are getting in trouble enough for people here to really be afraid of the consequences.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants noted that many midshipmen believe that more liberty would help lessen the novelty of drinking.**
  - *“A lot of other schools have bars on campus. And when people do exchanges, they're like ‘Yeah, there's less alcohol.’ People really don't care as much because they can just go any time they want and go to a bar and get a drink, so it really doesn't matter as much. But here, because we can only have it Fridays and Saturdays, it's a huge deal. Everybody has to go out to the bars this weekend. That's why you have so many big groups of guys and girls going together, and that's where a lot of bad things can happen.”* (Female)
  - *“At an on-campus bar you're in a more controlled environment. You have bartenders that are looking for signs, like cutting people off, more responsible type thing. Then I think we would learn how to be responsible with alcohol. But just setting us free, hey, you're 21 and there are 1800 bars in town, go have fun.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants discussed the possible gender-related consequences of returning to the dormitory after excessive.**
  - *“Another reason why we think alcohol is a really big issue is because a lot of people just come back to the hall after they've been drinking. So they'll come back around one or two in the morning on Fridays and Saturdays, and a lot of people come back really, really drunk. So you've got people wandering the halls where there's — we don't lock our doors. So you've got like plebe [freshman] females in the hall, they're not drunk, so you've got drunk firsties [seniors] walking around, and it's also a bad situation.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants suggested that the most effective way to instill responsible drinking behavior is through encouragement by the upper class.**
  - *“I think the best way to fix it is more like a company by company basis. Responsible drinking should be something encouraged from upper class midshipman down to underclass mids. Not just educated, but the company*

*commander speaking to his staff, the staff talking to their friends who are second class [juniors], second class friends with the third class [sophomores], so on. When it comes to problems like that, it's more of a family thing, personal problems. It's not something that can be trained out of you.” (Male)*

- *“They've been doing a similar thing with the honor concept that we have here this year. The firstie [senior] who's in charge of it, his whole emphasis has been on making ownership for the brigade and having us be in charge of running it all because he realized that the superintendent telling us to be honorable wouldn't do anything. But if we take accountability for it, we will, and I think it's pretty similar to alcohol.” (Male)*

### **Comparison to Civilian Colleges and Universities**

- **When asked why the percentage of midshipmen who indicated sexual assault occurs less often at the Academy was down slightly from the previous survey, focus group participants noted that there is greater awareness and reaction.<sup>16</sup>**
  - *“I think that has a lot to do with the education we're being given from the SHAPE program and SAVI [Sexual Assault Victim Intervention] program. I also think that it's a lot of the camaraderie we have. We see something happening, we're able to step up and say this isn't right or talk our friends out of doing something like that. We are more aware of what is going on.” (Female)*
  - *“It's maybe second week of plebe [freshman] summer when we had our first SHAPE brief, we always have the SHAPE briefs and all that stuff. I don't know if there are or are not more sexual assault cases. I know that they probably are reported more now than they used to, so maybe that's why people see it as they're rising.” (Male)*
  - *“I think that less stuff happens here in my opinion. Some people might get the perception that more happens here because when something does happen here, it's more publicized than I'd say regular civilian college. If something happens four or five times, you might not hear about it until something happens really bad. Whereas here, even if something that's still bad but on a smaller level, it's going to be blown up ten times as much as if it was twice as worse.” (Male)*

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<sup>16</sup> The question posed in the focus groups was “On the survey, we ask if sexual assault occurs more or less often at your Academy compared to civilian colleges/universities. We have seen a shift in perceptions over the years. The results here at USNA show a decrease in the percentage who said it occurs less often at USNA than civilian colleges/universities. For women, in 2010 67% said sexual assault occurs less often here at USNA, which is down from 77% in 2008. For men it was 84% in 2010 versus 92% in 2008. Can you help us understand this finding? Why would this be so?”

- **Focus group participants indicated another reason for the decline in survey results is the perception that more incidents must be occurring.**
  - *“With the amount of training that we're getting, there's a perception of ‘Oh, this is happening,’ because there's more focus on it, we assume that it's happening, even if we have never experienced it or don't know anyone.” (Male)*
  - *“I think that might be just the emphasis on all our training that we're getting, SHAPE and SAVI. We're being exposed to it more. We're seeing this more often in training, so maybe we're not as well off as we might have thought.” (Female)*
  - *“Every single time there's some type of incident, we usually have a brief about it. They explain what happens, so I think the awareness of the case that's happened around the hall has increased. Before, it might have happened just as much, but it just wasn't made as public. The publicity of the incident has gone up maybe with it.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated another reason for the decline in survey results is that midshipmen are more aware that sexual assault occurs at the Academy.**
  - *“Compared to civilian colleges, I either hear about it or you see instances occur here, whereas civilian colleges, when I go visit, I don't. Things travel more here.” (Female)*
  - *“I don't think that it [sexual assault] occurs any less here than at any other school. I think that there's probably the lower numbers because there's a lower percentage of females who go to the Naval Academy than any other school. The females here are typically pretty confident and have a tough time saying that they have been sexually assaulted. You're supposed to be responsible for yourself, take care of yourself. I think that fewer women will report here than at other places, so I think that it's just as big a problem here. I just think that not as many people see it because the women who experience it are less likely to come forward with it.” (Female)*
- **Some focus group participants indicated sexual assault might occur less frequently at the academies, but not sexual harassment.**
  - *“I would think that sexual assault might happen even less, but sexual harassment certainly happens more than at a civilian college. ” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that media coverage might influence the perception about the frequency of sexual assault at the academies.**
  - *“We've been made more aware through the training that we're going to so often and that just might be opening eyes. Even the media's been focused differently*

*now, like broader picture, and you're not hearing as much about issues that happen on other colleges.” (Female)*

– *“It could have to do with certain media influences going on at the time.” (Male)*

- **Even though the percentage of midshipmen who indicated sexual assault occurs less often at the Academy was down slightly from the previous survey, focus group participants indicated that they feel safe on campus.**

– *“I don't think every guy midshipman here is an angel, but we do have some respect as a fellow midshipman. I hear horror stories from my friends at civilian schools that they can't go out at night, they have to call in security to drive them to the library. I don't feel like that at all. That it would happen walking at night, so maybe it's the sense of looking out for each other, even though there's going to be those cases wherever you go that something slips.” (Female)*

– *“I went to a civilian college before this. We were supposed to call a security driver to take us to the library after dark, and here, I don't feel like anyone, if they saw me being in a sketchy situation, even a midshipman I didn't know wouldn't step in and be like leave her alone or go back to the hall [dormitory]. I just never feel uncomfortable that way here.” (Female)*

### **Reporting**

The objective of this section was to understand from midshipmen’s perspectives why someone who experienced sexual assault would report it or not. The questions first asked why the number of actual reports was higher in 2010 than in 2009,<sup>17</sup> then questions addressed to whom midshipmen would most likely make a restricted or unrestricted report. Midshipmen were also asked for their recommendations on how to encourage more victims of sexual assault to come forward and make a report. The questioning in this section ended with a discussion of the treatment of alleged offenders during an investigation and trial period.

### **Increase in Actual Reports of Sexual Assault**

- **Focus group participants thought the increased number of reports in 2010 from 2009 might be due to increased trust.**
  - *“The further development of the SHAPE and SAVI programs, hopefully, that allows people to always have someone in one of the companies. I know each company has at least someone assigned to them. So hopefully, they feel there's someone they know that they trust to talk to.” (Female)*
  - *“In terms of the program, when we go to briefs for my company, we all sit together. You definitely hear the complaints, like I shouldn't be here because*

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<sup>17</sup> There were eight reports of sexual assault in 2009 and eleven reports in 2010.

*I'm not going to be doing this kind of thing. But you never hear like I wouldn't tell that person anything or I wouldn't trust this person. I think there's a lot of trust in the system because I see that there's people that really care. That would probably be to me the reason for the increase.” (Male)*

- *“It has to do with the increase in advocacy and education for sexual assault. When people are learning more about what it is and also learning more about the SAVI program, they possibly feel safer going forward to someone and saying this is what happened to me. So that's probably why the reports have gone up.” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants thought the increased number of reports in 2010 from 2009 might be due to better knowledge of how to report.**

- *“We have an increased familiarity with the people you can contact to report and just the whole awareness aspect of the training that we get. And it may be repetitive to some people and maybe a lot of people don't like hearing the same thing over and over again, but just emphasizing the fact that you have these people to report to I think probably could account for more people wanting to report issues instead of just letting them go.” (Female)*
- *“I think the SAVI guides helped as well. There's a SAVI case that I heard about where the girl did not want to report it. But she spoke to a friend who's a SAVI guide and this individual really helped her come forward and deal with it and actually report it where she was just going to let it go. If that SAVI guide hadn't been there, she would have not said a word.” (Female)*
- *“Because we go to more meetings for SHAPE and sexual assault, people feel there are more outlets to report these things to. They're not just confused who to go to. They have multiple people to go to, so there's less hesitation to report these issues.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants thought the increased number of reports in 2010 from 2009 might be due to the emphasis through the SHAPE and SAVI programs.**

- *“I think the attitudes change because of the programs, the education programs that we have to attend. Before, maybe the victims felt why did this happen to me, maybe it's something I did, maybe it's my fault, so they wouldn't report it. But the programs we attend made it clear that it's not the person's fault. They're the victim, and they have a right to say things about it.” (Male)*
- *“We're encouraged more to file reports. Definitely our SHAPE and SAVI briefs and sessions now, they hit hard on that, filing, reporting, telling people your stories and stuff. And I think also encourage you based on your support, give you different ways that people are able to support you, whichever one you choose to file.” (Male)*

- **Even though there was a slight increase in the number of reports made in 2010, focus group participants indicated most incidents remain unreported.**
  - *“The culture here is definitely one that if something bad happens or something doesn't go the way you wanted it to, you don't have time to go back and fix it. Just make sure you do the next thing right. I'll just keep moving. I can't speak for all females for that perspective, but I feel that's a lot of how we think, trying to get through things.”* (Male)
  - *“The mentality, especially a lot of the females here, those stronger girls are very like, ‘Tell me what I can't do and I'll go do it.’ When something like this happens a lot of those girls look at it and don't necessarily want to admit that it did happen or have to talk about it. That happens everywhere, not just at the Naval Academy. That's why we don't see very many instances reported.”* (Female)
  - *“They [midshipmen who experienced unwanted sexual contact] would just not report it, and then the survey comes up and they're like well, this is anonymous, I'll go ahead and put it down here.”* (Male)

### **Recipients of Restricted and Unrestricted Reports**

- **Focus group participants knew who could take a restricted report of sexual assault.**
  - *“I actually have the card — SAVI guides, victim advocates, SARC [Sexual Assault Response Coordinator] and chaplains are the only people who can accept restricted reports. And it says non-identifying information only will go up the chain of command. Anyone who is not a restricted reporting source is required to report identifying information about sexual assault to the SAVI chain of command.”* (Male)
  - *“I would have gone to Captain Cangelosi [previous SARC] when she was here. I actually had her as a professor, and I know us girls who had her, she was talking about the program and such and she was ‘You know you can come straight to me.’ And after talking to her, she was one of the most approachable people, and if you go straight to her, all people, all the midshipmen like the SAVI guides and stuff, they wouldn't know, so it would be very private.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that someone would most likely seek a chaplain to receive a restricted report of sexual assault.**
  - *“It would definitely be the chaplains. I walk by the chaplain's office every day. I know exactly where he is. He's got a smile on his face. I know I could walk in there with doors open, and that would make it so I would go to the chaplain instead of if I'm walking by someone else's office.”* (Male)

- *“I’d say chaplain. They’re the ones that are sworn to secrecy. If you tell them something, you can tell them what you want to do, but they’re going to keep it.”*  
(Female)
- *“Chaplains are good, especially if they live in your company area. We have a chaplain in our company and we talk to him all the time. There’s definitely that comfort level that somebody could say something happened this week, Monday just walk right into his office on the way to class.”* (Male)
- **Some focus group participants would not go to a chaplain to discuss sexual assault.**
  - *“I wouldn’t contact my chaplain just because religious beliefs. So if I had sex, I wouldn’t want to go to the chaplain if I had sex before marriage just because I’d be letting him down in a way, so that’s why I wouldn’t go to a chaplain.”*  
(Female)
- **Some focus group participants would seek the SAVI advocate to make a restricted report of sexual assault.**
  - *“The SAVI advocate’s a civilian. I think that really helps because people don’t feel intimidated going and talking to her because she’s not an officer, she’s not in uniform. So I think that really helps the midshipmen be able to talk to her or approach her with an issue instead of like a midshipman like a peer or an officer.”* (Female)
- **Some focus group participants indicated people might make a restricted report of sexual assault to medical personnel.**
  - *“I think quite a few people also would just go straight to medical because they know that whatever happens there is confidential. You can go down there and they can be in the doctor’s office and tell them what happened. And then for all anybody else knows, you’re just going down there for a routine appointment or anything like that, so nobody really has any idea or say like ‘Oh, what were you doing in that person’s room or why were you coming out of there or talking about it?’”* (Female)
- **Other focus group participants would be reluctant discussing something as personal as sexual assault with medical personnel because of privacy concerns.**
  - *“If you went to medical, you’re announcing what you have to the people around you. Everyone can hear if you’re in there, so it would be really awkward to go in, ‘Can I speak to someone private.’ You can’t even do that privately.”*  
(Female)
  - *“I wouldn’t really feel comfortable going to medical here. Privacy isn’t really upheld that much because we stand there and ‘What are you here for?’ They*

*say it really loudly and you're like 'Ear infection.' I just wouldn't feel comfortable going to them because I feel like it would take a long time to see them unless you wanted to go to the emergency room now, but then it could cause more attention, so it's a lose-lose situation.*" (Female)

- **Some focus group participants indicated students would make a restricted report of sexual assault to a SAVI guide.**
  - *"Probably a SAVI guide. Be daunting to go to another chaplain. Probably more comfortable talking to a peer rather than an officer or something like that."* (Female)
  - *"Every company has a SAVI guide. The SAVI guide is actually in the company, so everyone knows that that's the SAVI guide. And they have a board and they have all these other things that let people know if you have a problem, come see this person, and so they also do trainings with each class. So I feel they would be more apt to report to a SAVI guide because that's the person who they know they can contact, whereas as far as the SARC and the victim's advocate, you have to go look those up. You have to figure out who they are, where they are, whereas the SAVI guide is right there in company where you can reach them."* (Male)
- **Some focus group participants indicated students would be reluctant to make a restricted report of sexual assault to a SAVI guide because they are fellow students and not professionals.**
  - *"You live and you work in the same place for four years straight with the same 35, 40 people, it's impossible to keep things quiet. They may just leave a paper on their desk. It doesn't even have to be a conversation. A roommate notices a couple words and oh, shoot, and now the rumor spreads and 4,000 people know about it in a day."* (Male)
  - *"If it's something that maybe you're embarrassed of or you don't want people in your company to know about, whether or not you completely trust your SAVI guide, you may want to go to someone like the SARC because you know I'm never really going to see that person any more, or they're not going to judge me and things like that."* (Female)
  - *"The SAVI guides are the same ages. They're in the same class. I'm not going to want the opinion of someone who's the same age as I am. I wouldn't feel like I'd be getting anything out of that."* (Male)

- **Focus group participants indicated that most people want to talk to a friend if they have experienced sexual assault, but that can cause problems with the friend being obligated to report it.**
  - *“I really think that whole restricted/unrestricted reporting is messed up because people want to talk to their best friend and we're told that as the best friend, you also have an obligation to report it because now, it's unrestricted. And I think that's messed up that you can only talk to four people about this traumatic personal incident you're going through and you can't even talk to your best friend or your closest confidante because it would be unrestricted and you'd be afraid of an investigation.”* (Female)
  - *“Technically, we're supposed to report it up to people who can help them out.”* (Female)
  - *“I actually know another midshipman who was raped, and when she told me about it, she asked me not to tell anyone. I had a really hard time with that, and then she told me that she wanted to do a restricted report, but she had to do it the right way. Just her trying to get help in doing it the restricted way took so much effort, and I just hated it. I didn't know what to do. I couldn't just go tell someone and then let it all come out. She needed help, and I didn't know how to give it to her.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated several possible recipients of an unrestricted report of sexual assault.**
  - *“At the Naval Academy, your chain of command, so personally, I would start with my midshipman squad leader if I had a good relationship with him.”* (Female)
  - *“I would go to my coach or my officer representative for my team. She's amazing, so someone on the team would probably be where I'd turn first.”* (Female)
  - *“If it's an unrestricted report, the person reporting obviously, or not obviously, but may have the intention of pressing charges, so they'd probably go to a SAVI guide or maybe even a SARC or an officer so that that process can be started.”* (Female)
  - *“It's still really personal. You're still not going to talk to someone that you don't trust. If it was me, I'd still be inclined to talk to a chaplain because they have experience with counseling people. They know what to do. They're in a position of power, so they can do something about it if that becomes necessary.”* (Male)
  - *“One of my female upper class who I feel I could talk to.”* (Female)

- **Focus group participants indicated some people might be reluctant to make an unrestricted report of sexual assault to their military chain.**
  - *“There might be a couple exceptions, but I know that if I have a problem, probably the last two people I’m going to talk to are my company officer and my senior enlisted.”* (Male)
  - *“You want something to happen instantaneously, you just go to them. Things have to be talked about because obviously, there’s a problem in the company, and then the midshipmen talk.”* (Female)

### **Reasons for Reporting**

- **Focus group participants indicated that someone might make a report of sexual assault to stop the offender from hurting them or others again.**
  - *“I’ve got a friend in another company. She’s got this problem with this guy that maybe had some sexual contact with her that was unwanted. He has kept persistently bugging her. It’s a problem that needs to be addressed with some forceful measure to keep him away.”* (Male)
  - *“Another reason they might have for reporting it is for prevention, either they thought that they were in danger or someone else was in danger of another sexual assault.”* (Male)
  - *“Not wanting someone else to go through something similar, so if you speak up, you might prevent that person from hurting someone else in the future.”* (Female)
  - *“Closure. One individual I knew was afraid that he would do it again, and she didn’t like the idea of someone getting hurt because she didn’t say anything.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that someone might make a report of sexual assault to seek justice or punish the offender.**
  - *“First thing I would think of is a little bit of vindictiveness — this person hurt me and they deserve to be punished somehow.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that someone might make a report of sexual assault because it’s the right thing to do.**
  - *“I think moral obligation would be a better term than duty. People feel that they have to report it not because it’s their duty but just because it’s the right thing to do.”* (Male)

- **Focus group participants indicated that someone might make a report of sexual assault to discourage other potential offenders.**
  - *“Also to discourage other people, not that specific offender, but other guys from doing that. Because if that number was 150 reports last year, then I think guys would be a lot more hesitant to do sexual assault knowing there's a pretty good chance they're going to report me. Where with those numbers, 11 out of 200 or whatever it is, they can know they can sexually assault this girl and pretty good chance of not going to be reported, nothing's going to happen.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that someone might make a report of sexual assault to seek help dealing with an emotional incident.**
  - *“Reporting unrestricted or restricted helps you to get help just in case you might have messed up something physically, you can get counseling so you can fix yourself mentally — well, not necessarily fix yourself, but get some help, and also to alleviate the stigma that, I'm alone in this where you aren't alone. So reporting would help to ease the healing process or start the healing process.”* (Male)
  - *“To make sure that you're not suffering the consequences of something that happened for years and years because it would be incredibly traumatic. So it's important just to talk to somebody, even if it's just saying it out loud and having somebody say it's okay, so to take care of yourself.”* (Female)

### **Implications of Reporting**

- **Focus group participants discussed the potential negative effects of someone making a report of sexual assault.**
  - *“If there's no real conclusion — say if the person's not actually found guilty of anything that a lot of people here misunderstand that and take that to mean that nothing actually happened when, in fact, it's just that they haven't reached that conclusion. So I think that a lot of people misunderstand that whole side of it, so that if something, if it goes to court or whatever, it goes all the way up the chain of command and then nothing, nobody sees anything happen with it, then there's like ‘Oh, well, obviously, it didn't happen.’ So then you're called a liar or whatever.”* (Female)
  - *“It's very emasculating to admit you've been sexually assaulted.”* (Male)
  - *“I can see how somebody wouldn't report here. If your company somehow thinks that you date too much or something and then something happens, then they immediately think you lie. I know somebody that that happened to, and her entire company turned their back on her. That'd be really scary because those are the people you're supposed to be closest with and live with.”* (Female)

- *“People just gossip, whether it's true or not. I think one of the biggest things is worrying about people will find out. If you confide in one person, somehow it slips out, it'll get around everywhere and the story will change and mutate into something that is so different from what it is. Unfortunately, some of the people that I know who have reported it and a lot of people found out, it turned out really badly for them. They had terrible nicknames or people just have a lot of unnecessary social repercussions for doing the right thing or trying to have justice served.”* (Female)
- *“We're all ranked by our peers. We choose who has certain positions. If someone gets a bad reputation in the company for something that wasn't their fault, that got blown out of proportion, they're not going to come out and say that's not what happened. It's just going to be a scar on them for the rest of their time. They'll be ranked low, which has effect on service selection and they won't get the positions they want, which really could alter their time here.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants offered some suggestions to encourage reporting.**
  - *“Maybe if system didn't take so long. When you deal with something like this, it ends up taking months. You have to deal with a lot of paperwork, a lot of painful interviews for both sides for a long time. It's a drawn out miserable process. I feel like people don't report because it's such a pain. They know it's actually harder on people emotionally to report.”* (Male)
  - *“They've told us there are certain people that if you go to, since it's the military, they really can't keep it quiet. If there were more people that you actually have interaction with that can do something that it wasn't going to be told and it was confidential, then people probably would report more. But the fact that the people they're closest to don't have the confidentiality.”* (Female)
  - *“Maybe educate the victim in such a way that they recognize that by reporting it, they can prevent the same thing from happening to other people. Make it not seem like it's obligatory, but in a way that's really the responsible thing to do to prevent this happening to other people in the military. I would probably report it simply because on a ship, you don't want that to happen. You're doing it as a duty to your comrades. Then I think that might increase the numbers.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants suggested that having discussions with upper class midshipmen on topics of sexual assault might open lines of communication for future reporting.**
  - *“It would be nice to see some more company involvement. I know who my SAVI guide is, but it would be nice to have in the beginning when plebes [freshmen] show up if they have a sit down meeting. It would be nice to have that connection and know who that is rather than it's just a board that has a name on it that you might recognize.”* (Female)

- *“In my company they brought in all the girls because we have a boy who has a reputation for being creepy, especially with the plebe [freshman] girls. So all the upper classmen girls came and talked to us and made the line of communication open and just made us aware of the situation.”* (Female)
- *“My company had three separate meetings. We [freshmen] had one with the youngster [sophomore] girls, then we had one with the second class [juniors], then we had one with the firsties [seniors] on three separate days. They just talked to us about being girls at the Academy and stuff like that, and I thought that really helped out a lot.”* (Female)
- **Other focus group participants indicated that there is not much more the Academy can do to encourage reporting.**
  - *“I think the Academy is doing a really good job of encouraging people to come forward.”* (Male)

### **Treatment of Alleged Offenders**

- **Focus group participants indicated alleged offenders are sometimes treated as though guilty.**
  - *“We are a very protective little culture about each other. People's minds are made up that, whether or not the accused got acquitted, if they did something wrong, then people are going to treat them as though they did something wrong.”* (Female)
  - *“Even if it's not a report, even if there's no restricted or unrestricted stuff, if something, say a random rumor came out that someone might blame you. You'd have to literally go on the offensive all the time. It would almost be like having press conferences, ‘I didn't do this.’ You'd have to expose this whole side of your life to prove what happened.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants noted that there is an assumption that many women report sexual assault to get out of trouble.**
  - *“Most people don't automatically assume that the male is guilty. Here they automatically assume the woman's lying.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that how an alleged offender is treated depends on who is more popular or more believable.**
  - *“Horror stories that I've heard about for the victim, anyway, is that everyone immediately jumps to the side of really whoever's more popular in the company. It comes down to who people think they can trust more. So I've heard situations where everyone jumps to the assaulter's side and is like ‘Hey, I got your back, we know you would never do something like this, like so-and-so is probably just*

*making it up, they're out to get you.' So I think it just depends on the situation and that person's particular situation within their company.” (Female)*

- *“People are going to split into camps. People that she's absolutely telling the truth and she's absolutely lying, he never did that. That's just human nature. If you know her, you're going to side with her, if you know him, you're going to side with him. So I think that should be the goal [innocent until proven guilty], but I don't think we should be disappointed when it doesn't happen.” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants offered a variety of suggestions for dealing with alleged offenders.**

- *“They should be treated like innocent until proven guilty, just because that's the law of the United States of America, and it's not fair to them. At the same time, I do think if there's any interactions between the victim and the offender, there should be a way, maybe switch platoons or something like that so they're not in direct contact.” (Female)*

### ***Advice About Avoiding Sexual Assault***

In this short section of questions, midshipmen were asked what advice they would give to an incoming midshipman, or what advice they would have liked to have received when they were new, regarding places or activities to avoid.

### ***Advice to Incoming Midshipmen***

- **Focus group participants offered advice on how to conduct themselves and choosing trustworthy friends.**

- *“My best advice would be to have a buddy. I think especially one who drinks less than you or remains completely sober, so the designated thinker. Someone to watch out for you.” (Male)*
- *“I'd say if you're going to stand out, stand out in a positive way, so don't be that girl...” (Female)*
- *“Just associate yourself with people that you know are going to, if you can't make the right decision, help you make the right decision. You have to choose people that you know you can trust. The Naval Academy doesn't screen out all the scum, so you need to choose who you want to associate yourself with because eventually, indirectly, they're going to shape your character with the decisions they make.” (Male)*
- *“Find someone that you're close with that will be in your company, another girl or another guy if you're a guy that you can talk to openly about things, like a mentor, almost. So they can lead you away from stuff like that because they've seen it.” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants also offered advice on ways to protect one’s reputation and minimize the risk of unwanted advances.**
  - *“We bring all the girls together [incoming freshmen] and sit them down in the ward room and we have a few upper classmen and then all the under class. What I always say is don't date when you're a freshman because you don't want the reputation of having things going on with a bunch of guys. You're going to be here for four years, so just watch yourself from the very beginning. So just as a rule of thumb, don't do it your first year. And some of them listen, some don't. But then after that, make sure the way you hold yourself is you're not asking for attention, that you're here to work and you're not asking. That's the big thing that some catch on and some don't.”* (Female)
  - *“I would definitely remind them, too, that on the weekends when you do have a little bit of freedom, be yourself. Don't ask a guy for attention. Don't go out of your way to try to get attention that you may not get in the hall because of the way you have to live during the week.”* (Female)
  - *“Trying to tell girls listen, ‘There's a double standard, but you don't even know how much of a double standard there is.’ I think they underestimate it, underestimate how much girls are treated differently than guys here.”* (Female)
  - *“Nothing is a secret here, absolutely nothing. Something can happen to one person and then by the end of the day, everyone knows.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants offered advice on pacing yourself and not trying to prove something.**
  - *“You get a lot of kids coming here who were pretty good kids in high school, didn't really mess up a lot, and you come here and a lot of kids still want that college experience. But they can only get it on Saturday night those first two years. So you end up going to places like hotel parties or more sketchy situations and drinking a little more alcohol than you maybe would have on a normal night had you been given the normal college experience. So that's something to warn people, that you don't need to go proving yourself that you are the party animal. No one really cares.”* (Female)
  - *“It has to do with the attention thing. People come from all different backgrounds and you come here and there's like all these guys and all this attention. And it's just staying focused and not sticking out. Just wait it out, get through your plebe [freshman] year and then see where it goes from there.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants offered advice on ways to avoid risky situations.**
  - *“My advice is pretty much stay out of downtown Annapolis. Don't go drinking in downtown Annapolis. It's just a bad idea. You put yourself in a situation*

*where you're with people that you usually interact with in a professional manner, and it changes the dynamics of that relationship. People get in conduct trouble downtown, and it's just not a good situation to put yourself in."*

(Female)

- *"I feel the big problem for plebes [freshmen] and youngsters [sophomores] especially is hotel rooms, probably like not in downtown Annapolis, but probably out by the mall. That was plebe year the biggest place to go because you're away from your upper class, you can wear civilian clothes, and you're normally with people in your company who you are very close with. Then when alcohol gets involved, you're overstepping those boundaries."* (Female)
- *"Biggest thing is just generally make good decisions. Make generally smart choices, avoid dangerous situations and you're a lot less likely to get hurt or assaulted or anything. It's common sense to me, but I feel like that's lost on many midshipmen."* (Male)
- *"Think before you act. Try to envision yourself describing what you're doing to an authority figure, Captain Clark [previous Commandant]."* (Male)
- **When asked if there were places or events to avoid, focus group participants were positive about safety on campus.**
  - *"There's always people that we know. We know so many like on a given night when you walk down the hall, you see about five, ten people you know, right off the bat. At football games, there are so many people that you know that I could not ever imagine anybody like that I know doing anything to me."* (Female)
  - *"I've never thought about this place being unsafe, I just walk everywhere by myself."* (Female)

### **Advice They Would Have Liked to Received**

- **Focus group participants indicated advice on developing a reputation would be helpful.**
  - *"Mind your business outside of the hall. A lot of people say what they do and people find out about it because they do it in the hall and they get caught. And then that ruins reputations. If something legitimate happened to that woman or male, since they already have a reputation, it would be hard for them to put their case out because of the reputation already."* (Male)
  - *"Just stay professional."* (Male)

- **Focus group participants indicated advice on watching out for each other is important.**
  - *“Watch out for your shipmates. Watch out for your friends if they're doing something stupid or you hear about them or you're talking to them and you know what they're saying isn't right.” (Male)*

### **Sexual Harassment and Sexist Behavior**

In this section midshipmen were provided the sexual harassment and sexist behaviors incidence rates from 2010 SAGR<sup>18</sup> and asked to discuss why these behaviors occur and how their training affects the behaviors.

#### **Sexual Harassment Incidence Rates**

- **Most focus group participants acknowledged that crude and offensive behavior, such as jokes and locker room talk, is pervasive.**
  - *“A lot of squads have joke Friday, and you tell jokes and a lot of jokes are like anti-women jokes. We just brush them off because sometimes they're actually funny, and other times we just let it go. It's not a big deal. They're not actually saying that they hate women or that women are inferior. It's just a joke.” (Female)*
  - *“It's overwhelming to think of that as sexual harassment because then if you consider jokes sexual harassment, I get sexually harassed by 12 people a day. So I don't feel sexually harassed. I think it's inappropriate. It's a high number, and maybe that's what's wrong, but I can understand why that many girls didn't say that it's sexual harassment.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that in most instances crude and offensive behavior is not regarded as sexual harassment.**
  - *“When it's not directed to anybody you have more of a tolerance for it, but when it's actually directed at somebody, then you see it's sexual harassment.” (Female)*
  - *“Locker room talk and crude jokes, maybe I'm the outlier here, but I don't think that's even remotely close to sexual harassment.” (Male)*
  - *“Most of the time, I just put up with it, just not bring attention to myself. [Described a joke incident at table] and afterwards he apologized. It was one of those situations where I wish it didn't get to that extent, but at the same time,*

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<sup>18</sup> 91% of women and 54% of men indicated they had experienced some form of sexual harassment in the past year (crude/offensive behavior was highest) but of those percentages, only 63% of women and 17% of men would describe their experience as harassment. 96% of women and 49% of men experienced some form of sexist behavior in the past year.

*I hope he learned something so when he goes out to the fleet, he doesn't treat women like that.” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that their training helps them understand the behaviors associated with sexual harassment.**
  - *“We definitely talk about sexual harassment. We discuss the line between sexual harassment and assault and try to define the line. Almost always, it's between the guy and the girl context.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that they understand crude and offensive behavior is going to occur in a predominantly male culture.**
  - *“But I think joining the military, you can say that it's wrong to say that sort of joke, but guys will be guys, and it's predominantly male. And I think that it comes from the atmosphere and the culture of the military. It's going to happen, so whether or not you take offense to it, you can either be a good sport about it, or if it gets extremely bad, then you can say ‘This is the line, please don't cross it. I tolerate this much because I signed up for this, we're in the military.’ But there's a certain line that I don't think they should cross.” (Female)*
  - *“This is a great big boys club. You could walk down any company area on a given day and probably see 10 or 20 things that you might consider sexual assault or harassment. Just the way the guys are, the guys aren't completely serious. So stuff that might happen to girls because of that environment or stuff that guys don't take seriously, but girls do. It's just the nature of the boys and it's not necessarily that there's anything malicious in it. It's just the way the guys act with each other.” (Male)*
  - *“Guys here are always trying to prove their masculinity. They're always outdoing each other. When it comes to making jokes about women and hooking up, they're all about that. Nothing is going to change them telling these jokes because they always want to be funnier than the last week.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants gave various reasons why a small percentage of men indicated they had experienced behaviors they considered to be sexual harassment.**
  - *“Some guys are just really obnoxious, to be completely honest. They just think they're all that and can do whatever they want, punch you wherever, smack you wherever, even if you don't want that. They just make a joke out of it, and nothing really comes of it because it's just guys being guys. I think you can be offended by it and then cope with it on your own and get over it and try to avoid that situation.” (Male)*
  - *“When they [guys] hang out together, they're guys about it, and it would actually surprise me more that people report this as legitimate sexual*

*harassment because most of the time, it's just how they joke around with each other.” (Female)*

- *“I think they're [guys] aware of it, but whether or not they admit it is a completely different story. Saying you've been sexually harassed by a female is just going to get you looked at funny, like ‘Don't you like that, what's wrong with you?’” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants also noted that the designation of a behavior as sexual harassment depends on the individual.**

- *“It's a very nebulous line. I've definitely heard some very raunchy comments here that some people are okay with and others are appalled by them. The line is not much of a line. It's more like a grey area.” (Male)*
- *“It's all that little word that's unwanted. If it's unwanted, all of a sudden, it is sexual harassment.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants also noted that the designation of a behavior as sexual harassment depends on the intent.**

- *“It also depends on the kind of joke it is. If it's just your regular old woman joke, people might not think it's a big deal. But if you go up to a girl and say ‘Oh, you're a stupid dub,’ that's a little more forward.” (Male)*

- **Some focus group participants were concerned over the sexual harassment incidence rates at USNA.**

- *“It certainly seems excessive for an organization that claims to be professional.” (Male)*
- *“It's kind of a cliché. These are future leaders of the country, and in fact it's kind of discouraging. I think the school needs to put a little bit more emphasis on harassment than assault because that is what occurs more.” (Female)*

### **Sexist Behavior Incidence Rates**

- **Focus group participants were not surprised that sexist behavior incidence rates are higher at the Service Academies than active duty or Reserve component activities.**

- *“I'm surprised it's not everyone. I'm sorry, but there's no way you haven't heard the term dub at least once in your time at the Naval Academy. There's no way you can convince me otherwise.” (Female)*
- *“I'm surprised it's not 100%.” (Female)*

- *“I think it's a matter of on active duty when you're actually out there doing a job and getting things done and the fact that the military has different people in different jobs based on sex. When you have a unit that has a mission to get done, it puts it in a lot more context of ‘Hey, if you're doing your job, I don't care, let's just get this done.’ Here at the Academy, it's definitely an environment where the guys feel there's some unfair rules for where the girls have an advantage and the girls feel that the guys shouldn't feel that way and it increases the tension between the two.” (Male)*
- *“I also think the reason we're maybe higher here than in the fleet or whatever is we live here. We never leave. They can go home. They can do their thing and maybe ‘Yeah, I was a little offended,’ but I'm going to regenerate, be back tomorrow, no big deal.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that maturity is a factor in sexist behavior.**
  - *“It's also the age of midshipmen. 18 to 22 is the majority. When people come in at 18 years old, they're still pretty immature. They have a lot of growing up to do, and especially the first two years before you really mature into an adult. It's just the age in which that happens.” (Female)*
  - *“We live in a frat house. It's a big frat house. And we're all caged in and everyone is pretty much immature. It's hard to separate where you work and where you live. There's really no separation. Like the officers come and go and they have their offices in the hall, but we also sleep there. So during the day, we're all professional in our uniforms and everything, but at night, we wear sweats and bunny slippers, and it's a huge change. I just think it's the immaturity and the blowing off steam and it's not indicative. I think in the proper situation, people can act appropriately.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that there are still some issues about women in the military.**
  - *“Quite frankly, there are some unresolved gender equality issues in the military, and it's going to be talked about, especially in professional development courses. The system is not perfect, and it's still working.” (Male)*
  - *“I think that the issue with a lot of gender issues with the military is that the military is and has always been such a masculine job. Like before World War II, women couldn't, it was unheard of. So going into a profession in which your strength, your masculinity and it's been exalted as a male profession since like Homer, it just makes it worse that now. You're coming in and they think that you're belittling their job, their position, their even superiority over us.” (Female)*
  - *“Because people think they know what the military is. People don't have a clue what the military is. Women do just as much as men do out there. Men don't*

*see women the same here, which is a problem. They don't give them the chance.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that the competitive culture at the academy contributes to sexist comments.**
  - *“A lot of people who come here are athletes and in an athletic setting, you get a lot of macho-ism. We use gender specific demeaning comments without really thinking of it. People who are less able to compete physically or maybe don't fit in as well can be demeaned and have their masculinity attacked by calling them something that sounds more feminine. That was the link that I was trying to draw with athletes, although in our culture in general, I feel that's a problem, not just with athletes.” (Male)*
  - *“It's one of a cultural issue here. A lot of people focus on physique and performance. If you're not up to certain standards of physique and performance, you get made fun of. If you're a female, you get attacked with derogatory names for females. If you're a male, you get attacked with derogatory names for males.” (Male)*
  - *“Everything's really competitive here. Everything's ranked here. Everything is we have to be better than the next person, and so it just starts to almost consume everybody's lives that they always have to be better than the person next to them. And that's what turns girls into something that you just don't want to be around because they're constantly trying to be better than you or they're constantly trying to be better than everyone. And sometimes it's just not possible to be better at everything, so it just changes people.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that different physical fitness standards generate sexist behavior at USNA.**
  - *“I also think like with the sexist jokes, usually, when we ran PRT<sup>19</sup> time is when you'll get all these jokes about girls. ‘Oh, you guys get to run so much slower than us, it's so unfair.’ That's usually when I notice it the most, any physical test, they'll point it out.” (Female)*
  - *“Any time there's two standards, there's going to be talk. A typical example is like PRT or something like that, just two standards.” (Male)*
  - *“Since it's mind, body, spirit here, for a women's mind, that's the easy part. But the body part, everything's so physical, either sports, PRT, intramurals, doing the E course, O course, even some of our service selections. For instance, EOD [Explosive Ordnance Disposal] is the only special warfare that's opened up for women, but our standards are a little bit lower, and it is because we probably*

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<sup>19</sup> Physical Readiness Test. A three-part physical fitness test consisting of curl-ups (65 for both men and women), push-ups (40 for men, 18 for women), and a 1.5 mile run (10 minutes, 30 seconds for men; 12 minutes, 40 seconds for women).

*can't meet the guys' standard. But for a female to get the female standard, that's amazing, but they see it as 'Oh, she can't do whatever it is, 20 pull-ups, she only has to do 7.'*" (Female)

- *"We're all held to the same standards like for education, our grades, honor. We're all held to the same minimums, but the reason those numbers are so high [sexist behavior] is to be honest, the Academy keeps people that probably they shouldn't keep. People are going to be like 'Well, why do you throw him out if she hasn't passed the PRT for a year or two years?'"* (Male)
- *"No matter what you do, even if you prove yourself physically, they're going to be like 'Well, your standards are lower.' With the sit-ups, I always do better than most of the guys in sit-ups, and they're like 'That's because you don't have as many muscles, so it's easier for you.' No matter what you do, you can't win."* (Female)

- **Focus group participants indicated that small differences are magnified in a military environment.**

- *"It's also part of the culture of the military. Like the subtle differences in your uniform, how you're supposed to iron your uniform or pockets or just the little things. It sounds stupid, but it's the little things that just make those subtle differences a little bit more apparent. Then you take the personalities of midshipmen who are very competitive, very driven, very analytical, very critical, and it magnifies everything. It fosters this environment where something in whatever other situation, maybe it wouldn't have been an issue but here, because of the culture mixed with the people mixed with specific circumstances, it just [magnifies]." (Female)*
- *"Treating us and dressing us up and making us look as manly as possible affects our self-value a lot. It affects the way that men will treat us because men will respect a woman, they'll respect a woman, but they won't necessarily respect a woman dressed up like a man acting like a man. They'll respect a woman being a strong woman dressed like a woman acting like a woman."* (Female)

- **Focus group participants pointed out many differences between life as a midshipman versus life in the fleet that contribute to sexist behavior.**

- *"Here, we're separated, men's sports, women's sports, men's this, women's that. In the fleet you're just trying to work together as one combat team, and same thing with going home and being separated. While here it's males' room females' room, females in a male's room, you got to keep your door open, vice versa, while in the fleet if you're ashore, you go to a man's room or a woman's room and close the door behind you and you treat them the same."* (Male)

- **Focus group participants indicated that diversity goals can contribute to perceptions of sexism.**
  - *“Diversity issues are big. If you remove gender and race from all application stuff, which would never happen, but if you removed it and just based it upon standards, you'd have a completely different culture. The levels of how many of this and how many of that there are. I think that would make things different, obviously.”* (Female)
  - *“Women are held to a greater proportion, like 50% of the summer billets are females, 50% of the academic billets are females. My company officer sends up only females to brigade positions. It's fostering an environment of incompetency just because of gender. They don't say anything, but their actions speak loud, like he picked a female who didn't apply for any second class [junior] billet over all the guys who did apply for a second class billet. He arbitrarily just chose a girl.”* (Male)

### **Leadership Response**

Midshipmen were asked to share their opinions whether leadership at all levels take prevention of sexual assault and sexual harassment seriously. They were asked for examples to illustrate why they believed the way they did and to describe situations that had the most impact (positive or negative) on their opinions. The section also included a question on how well midshipmen felt prepared by the Academy to deal with issues of sexual assault and sexual harassment when they are commissioned and have leadership responsibilities of their own.

### **Perceptions of Leadership Response to Sexual Assault**

- **Focus group participants indicated that overall leadership takes sexual assault response and prevention seriously, evidenced by the emphasis and number of programs that address the issue.**
  - *“Obviously, they are because we wouldn't be having the higher emphasis on SAVI and SHAPE and things like that. Because they're more aware of it and pushing it further, then we're a little bit more aware of it as well.”* (Female)
  - *“I think it's all levels. I think if you went to your company officer or even your battalion officer saying something happened, they would take it very seriously.”* (Female)
  - *“The availability of help, assistance and awareness, all the programs here.”* (Male)
  - *“It's a higher priority than a lot of our military training. I get trained how to not rape people about four times as much as I get trained to kill them.”* (Male)

- **Focus group participants indicated that immediate response to inappropriate behaviors sets a high standard.**
  - *“We play a lot of pranks on each other. Two plebe guys barged in the female bathroom when I was in there to play a prank on me. My company officer like flipped out that they went in the female bathroom and made an example of you cannot do this, this is inappropriate. So that's a good example of even like it wasn't sexual harassment, but it was highly inappropriate, that even that stepping over that line just a little bit was not going to be tolerated.”* (Female)
  - *“We were at tables, and there are two firstie guys [seniors]. One of them said something pretty inappropriate to me. The other firstie just totally switched and yelled at him and said to me don't take that from anyone. I was like wow. He set the example for everyone at the table, like all the plebe guys [freshmen]. ‘Okay, that's how we should act.’ They look up to him.”* (Female)
  
- **Focus group participants indicated that company leadership takes sexual assault response and prevention seriously.**
  - *“In my company, my senior enlisted and company officer emphasize a zero tolerance policy for things like sexual assault and sexual harassment. If it's ever an issue or anything in general in school is an issue, it's addressed at formation. There's no tolerance for this or it's not going to happen in our company. So just the emphasis of zero tolerance from our leaders reassures you that they do care about prevention of assault and reporting of it.”* (Female)
  - *“Every once in a while, my chief just comes out and typically after these trainings is like ‘Hey, just again a reminder I'm here or there are other contacts should you need anything.’ It's really typically like five seconds and that's gone, but we do get that reminder a lot.”* (Female)
  - *“I feel like all the officers that I come into contact with, they do take it seriously. And if there was ever a situation, they would handle it right then, no ifs, ands or buts about it. But I don't feel like there's anything more they can do.”* (Male)
  
- **Focus group participants indicated that midshipman leadership emphasis changes over time.**
  - *“It varies by midshipmen. It varies by class. For my company, 2009 or 2010 took things a lot more serious.”* (Male)
  - *“It depends. My squad leader now is a firstie [senior] and I think he's great and I feel like he would back me up with anything.”* (Female)

- **Focus group participants indicated that coaches and other people in leadership positions sometimes address sexual assault prevention.**
  - *“My roommate's on a sports team, and I know she's talked about how her coach has talked to them a lot more about these things than I think we were even talked to as midshipmen, but I really think that's just her coach.”* (Female)

### **Perceptions of Leadership Response to Sexual Harassment**

- **Focus group participants indicated that leadership is also serious about sexual harassment prevention.**
  - *“They do a lot of education on what is sexual harassment. I think if somebody came forward to the chain of command and said ‘I'm being sexually harassed’ that the response would be immediate. I don't think there would be any tolerance or ‘Are you sure?’ I don't think the question would ever be asked. However, it's one of those things, I feel like it would have to happen first for them to really respond to it. Again, it's not something they say every morning like ‘Hey, be aware of this.’”* (Male)
  - *“It would be the idea of lack of tolerance. You know that if a senior chief's sitting at your table, you'd get in trouble if you said something you probably shouldn't have. He would definitely pull you aside afterwards and be like ‘Don't do that again.’”* (Male)
  - *“They all view it as negative and they just wouldn't let it slide.”* (Male)

### **Preparation as Future Leaders**

- **Focus group participants indicated that the training they receive as midshipmen is partially helpful in preparing them to deal with sexual assault involving personnel under their command.**
  - *“I feel like I'm pretty well prepared if somebody would come to me and say this has happened to me. But if my roommate comes and says ‘Hey, so-and-so is accusing me of doing this,’ I don't know what I'm going to say to him. I don't know what you do for somebody who's accused.”* (Male)
  - *“There's a lot of emphasis on how you recognize it and maybe the basics, while you're here at the Academy, how would you deal with this if you saw it developing. But as far as translating that from the fleet, the Academy is still fundamentally college. You still fundamentally have classes, sports, all this personal interaction. The fleet's nothing like that.”* (Male)
  - *“You could never fully be prepared. But we are at least getting the training enough to be respectful of people and realize they're going through something really tough. And if they're strong enough to come and try to get support from*

*you that you really need to focus on it and help them, because that's the hardest step, them coming forward.” (Female)*

- **Some focus group participants indicated that the training they receive as midshipmen does not translate well to the issues they will face as officers.**
  - *“If they were to incorporate the fleet more with the Academy because as of right now, they restrict everybody to the Academy and what's going on with midshipmen but we're not always going to be dealing with midshipmen. So really, you go into the fleet blind unless you've been there before and know what's going on. Even with the training that we're receiving here, you don't exactly know how to incorporate that into the fleet. Like what the fleet does for sexual harassment, this is what you're going to be dealing with. That would be helpful.” (Female)*
  - *“In a lot of ways the environment we have here actually makes it worse for when we go out in the fleet. I know here there's this idea of tolerance with jokes that's the norm, and I think sometimes in the fleet, we don't recognize that it shifts, that maybe what was the norm here isn't the norm there. That and ages change and all of a sudden, things that are funny to 18 years olds aren't funny to 25 year olds that you're working with in the fleet or vice versa. So I think in some ways, it hurts us.” (Female)*
  - *“They don't teach us how to really counsel somebody once we get out in the fleet, and I don't know if they will teach us that because you're jumping around your ship. How are you going to deal with that? I think it would be good for the Academy to implement something where you can experience that before you go out or at least know how to handle situations like that.” (Female)*
- **Some focus group participants indicated that preparation is largely a personal responsibility.**
  - *“I've prepared myself. The Academy alone isn't going to. You have to actually care. I got really mad during the first SHAPE brief because a kid in my company actually said when he was asked a question ‘Like I don't care or I don't know, I'm not a doctor, blah, blah.’ He's not going to be prepared at all. You have to want to prepare yourself and educate yourself because the tools are there, but nobody can shove the information, make you care.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated some of the SHAPE classes address getting help for people under your authority.**
  - *“I think that the second SHAPE session for firsties, since it happens at the end of the year, is all about who are the people that if someone comes to you with a problem, who are the people that you send them to. That that's where that part of it comes in, like transitioning to the fleet right before you're supposed to go out. I think ultimately one thing that tries to point out is that it's not necessarily*

*your job to sit there and counsel someone and talk to them about it. It's more your job to make sure that you get them the help that they need because those are the people who are trained in doing that.” (Female)*

- *“The first class SHAPE session went through a whole bunch of different scenarios and what do you do here, how do you respond, and most of them are all your young enlisted were coming to you with issues, what's your response. Also in the character capsule you do as firsties, they also ran through different scenarios not just sexual assault, sexual harassment, but personal financial things, all sorts of different issues that will be presented to you. They gave you all the resources.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that they know about the resources, but experience dealing directly with issues will not happen until they are in a position of authority.**
  - *“After graduation, if someone in one of our commands comes up with a problem, we'll know to go find the chaplain, go find the SAVI, the person out in the fleet. Certainly, that's been beat into us that's the appropriate chain. We know where to go, but in terms of the experience as to how to handle it the best we could, that's lacking. I'm not sure there's a great way to give that experience without having done it.” (Male)*
  - *“If you went out to the fleet and didn't exactly know, you would know where to start or where to be able to get them help. So you would be at an advantage from as far as somebody else just coming straight out of the civilian world.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that hearing about real experiences or hearing from officers would be helpful.**
  - *“I went to something once, it was voluntary on a Saturday. It was set up through one of the women's organizations or something. There was a series of round table rooms. One was about how to deal with sexual harassment on a ship or in your command. That's the only place I've ever had really good training where I went through a situation with an officer and she told me about specific events that had happened in her unit and how she dealt with them. We got to role play, and that was really good training. If you make it mandatory, you're going to get a really negative vibe around it, so I don't know how you deal with implementing that.” (Female)*
  - *“I would love to hear from a junior officer how they go in and how they establish the realistic climate, as far as an atmosphere of what's acceptable and what's not. How they handle things. Because I think anyone here will listen more to a junior officer than they are to a Power Point.” (Female)*

- *“Hearing stories is a lot more effective. I remember the first session we had was just talking about what constitutes sexual harassment. We didn't really have any specific examples. Whereas the second one I remember pretty vividly stories about girls that were sexually assaulted and how people stepped in to help them. So I feel if anything, that's going to prepare you more for the fleet and knowing how to deal with someone coming to you with sexual harassment or sexual assault claim than just talking about it in general.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated better understanding of resources available and legal procedures would help prepare them for dealing with sexual assault.**
  - *“Maybe the legal aspect of it on what you can and cannot do as a leader of someone that is convicted of an offense. Is there automatically going to be some sort of restraining order or whatnot that you have to enforce, or is that on someone else? What happens if they break protective order? They don't tell us any of that, none of the practical stuff or what to do there.”* (Female)
  - *“What resources, what you can direct them towards if they're an offender. Should you send them to counseling, should you find them a JAG, what should you do to help them? Maybe help them realize what they did was wrong, or if they're innocent, help them figure out how to get through the legal system. We've been told where to send people if they're a victim, but if they actually are an offender, you don't know what to do with that.”* (Female)

### **Training**

Results from the 2010 SAGR indicated that nearly all midshipmen had received some form of training in the prevention and response to sexual assault. Similar results were found for training in sexual harassment. However, when asked if the training was effective in reducing sexual assault or sexual harassment, the percentage of midshipmen who indicated “very effective” is down from previous surveys. Midshipmen were asked to describe their training briefly, then comment on the most and least effective training they received in the past year.

#### **Training Received**

- **Focus group participants indicated that the effectiveness of training depends on the trainer.**
  - *“The training is all midshipmen, so it's very dependent on how much that person cares and also how much that person can read the crowd. I've gone to a training where it lasted an hour and a half and we all just sat there twiddling our thumbs because we were talking about things that were completely common sense. And I've gone to one where it was 15 effective minutes of ‘Hey, let's get this in the front of our mind, think this through, okay, right.’”* (Male)
  - *“It depends on who you get. They may do it right, or it may be a complete joke. They blow it off and say go back to your room.”* (Male)

- *“We had one leader who took into account that most of the time, you don't want to be there. But still after having that factored in, they try to break it up with some rigid discussion then with better scenarios, and they actually make you realize how you would act in situations.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the effectiveness of training depends on one’s attitude toward the subject.**
  - *“The ones that you attend as a plebe [freshman] and a youngster [sophomore], you're still in that mentality like every mandatory thing you go to has no purpose, it's just a waste of your time. You go in with a negative attitude. But once you get to be a second class [junior] and first class [senior], you can actually see the value of what you're doing, so it's more effective.”* (Female)
  - *“I think SHAPE is getting to the point where we have it so often and it's always mandatory that it's starting to feel like they don't have any faith in us whatsoever to be decent human beings. It's like so beaten into us they expect us to have had sexually assaulted people in our past, like constant sexual harassment. I think that the SAVI program's a lot better because it's once a year and it's all the information we need in one brief, and I think SHAPE could definitely do that. They could say here's what in boundaries and here's what out of boundaries, and I think that's good enough for all of us. I think most people here are smart enough to be able to pick up on that themselves.”* (Male)
  - *“The peer pressure aspect is huge because if you go into any given SHAPE room, depending on the question that's posed or depending on what they're talking about, you will either have everyone silent and no one participating or throwing out the most outlandish things you've ever heard.”* (Male)
  - *“I think the biggest problem with SHAPE is that they tend to try to push things to extremes, they try to make everything black and white. They have an approach of we understand this is a grey area, but if you're on the wrong side of this grey area, then you're a terrible human being. Anybody who stands up and says ‘Hey, that doesn't make sense,’ immediately gets the death glare from half the room, and all of a sudden, now, I'm a rapist, too. When did that happen?”* (Male)

### **Side Effects of Training**

- **Focus group participants noted that the training and emphasis has had an effect on relationships between male and female midshipmen.**
  - *“It makes it a lot harder for us to be friends with the guys. I've noticed with a lot of guys in my company, they're scared to even give me high five, in case I call SAVI or something. They don't want to say the wrong thing because they didn't want anyone to peg them as sexual assaulter. So I do think it's helped, but at the same time, I do think there's a fine line.”* (Female)

- *“In my company, we're all really close with the guys, and it's like you're in one of their rooms just hanging out, it becomes sketchy because ‘What are you doing?’ and it's like ‘I'm just talking.’” (Female)*

### **Most Effective Training**

- **Focus group participants gave the following examples of memorable sexual assault prevention training.**
  - *“The Sex Signals, that was the best one. It was hands on and it made everybody think. I like the ones that make you think and not in a classroom.” (Female)*
  - *“The best training that or the training that I got the most out of was when we actually did role playing. Someone comes to you, what do you do? Or SHAPE training where it's more interactive. But I don't like getting videos that try to be like horrific to us. I don't think that that helps us at all.” (Female)*
  - *“The play. Humor is a great way to like get through, and so at the sessions, the one that I went to, there's this one part where she's like ‘Say when you think that something's wrong with the situation.’ [Described the situation] Everyone started laughing, but no one stopped it. That's what really hit home for me. I was like ‘Wow,’ but it got people talking at least.” (Female)*
  - *“Cop in the alley. They showed everyone a video. It's basically this cop describing when he got raped by a guy. They assert to the guys to try to make us understand what it's like for a woman to get raped. They showed it to the girls so they would understand what we understood so they would know they could go to us for help, and it was just a disturbing video.” (Male)*

### **Least Effective Training**

- **Focus group participants gave the following examples of sexual assault prevention training they considered ineffective.**
  - *“As much as they try and encourage peer leadership here, like sexual assault and harassment, that's not an area I think you can have peer leadership in. Or at least that we're capable yet of doing. I feel bad for the people out there that are trying to get their classmates to listen to them talk about this. That's where I think the officers could really do a good job doing that.” (Female)*
  - *“The stereotype is if you're a guy, you're a rapist, and if you're a girl, you're going to get raped. That's pretty much the stereotype of what SHAPE training is. It's a shame. Sometimes you do get a leader who does a good job. Other times, you're going to get the leader who doesn't care, and it's hit or miss. And it's more of the misses that get the stereotype than anything else.” (Female)*
  - *“We had one really bad one because it was a really ineffective. Whoever presented to us, the firstie [senior], she was really ditzy. She had really had an*

*attitude I think because she was maybe a little reserved and the guys were making jokes. She was totally letting them roll over her and making these sexual jokes in SHAPE training. We didn't learn anything.” (Female)*

- *“The times that they put it at, those are the most inconvenient time, and it really makes people resent it. Like it's just a night that's the worst possible timing.” (Female)*

### **Training Recommendations**

- **Focus group participants indicated training would be more effective if it addressed social maturity.**
  - *“The vast majority of us are good intentioned. We're mature enough about these things we can deal with it on our own. I think what we need is training on sexual maturity instead [of the current SHAPE agenda]. Empowering people to make good decisions as opposed to here's what to do when a problem arises will have a greater effect. If we have people who know that if you make plans beforehand, if you talked about sex before you went to the party and then you're both wasted and you do what you planned beforehand, there's no grey area. That might decrease the grey area at least.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants recommended speakers who have been victims telling how the incident affected them.**
  - *“If we could have a real life speaker come, someone who's actually been a victim and now talks about it. I know those are rare, but a lot of the guys and people here in general who have never interacted [with a victim]. I had never known anybody up until this year, and then actually, three people that I'm friends with told me they had been raped at some point in their life. That totally changed my perspective to actually hear that from someone and watch them just break down in front of me. If they [midshipmen] could hear that story, it would be more real to them. It's hard to imagine until you actually see someone whose life is completely different.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated training would be more effective if it were offered at a better time.**
  - *“I think the classes are helpful, but if they did them at a different time. I just think the times that they do it, it's not really when a midshipman wants to be there. Sunday night, you come back from liberty — you're bummed coming back on brigade. I know Sunday nights, I hate my life. Saturday mornings I'm sure no one wants to wake up at 6:45 or whatever it is and go sit in a classroom and get a brief. So if they did it like a noon session with maybe lunch, definitely, it would be more involved.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants indicated training would be more effective if it were not led by midshipmen peers.**
  - *“For upper class, like the second [juniors] and firsties [seniors], I think they should switch over to officers trying to train. That way, you can acclimate more of the training towards the fleet and everybody would pay attention. Especially the men who just think everything's a joke, they'll actually have to pay attention. As far as the plebes [freshmen] and youngsters [sophomores], it goes the same way. I think it'll help if there were upper class like the second and firsties actually teaching them as opposed to other youngsters who are just now learning to train.”* (Female)
  - *“If they're going to give us this training, I think they should do it right and not have midshipmen run these SHAPE sessions. It's become a complete joke. It gets out of control. Everyone's just making jokes left and right, and the way I see it, if there's a lieutenant or a captain leading these sessions, then we wouldn't say half the things that we do in these sessions.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that repeating some of the training at the beginning of the sophomore year might be helpful.**
  - *“And I think that while it's really good at the beginning of plebe [freshman] year, do a re-emphasis when they finish. You're not a plebe any more, you're going to be a real midshipman, and this is things you need to keep in mind about how you conduct yourself. I think sometimes that gets lost over the course of summer training and then coming back and re-integrating and realizing you're not a plebe.”* (Female)

### **Awareness Campaigns**

- **Focus group participants indicated there was a sexual assault awareness campaign in April.**
  - *“We had a panel with upcoming officers and senior enlisted who are victim advocates in the fleet to talk about stuff they've experienced. Last year I think we had it over the brigade, but it's optional. I think there were maybe 40 or 50 mids come out. We're going to have that again this month.”* (Female)
  - *“I think April is sexual awareness month.”* (Male)
  - *“I think there's a 5K run associated with the week.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants had heard of the DoD “Hurts One, Affects All” campaign but could not describe it.**
  - *“I just saw a poster, that's all. I saw it on a poster.”* (Female)

- *“I think it's just trying to focus on the team idea and the potential that these events have to affect our readiness for a command.”* (Male)
- *“I saw the poster. That's about as much — I think it's pretty self-explanatory from the poster. It says ‘Hurts One, Affects All.’”* (Male)
- **Some focus group participants had the “Hurts One, Affects All” campaign confused with other campaigns.**
  - *“There's a few posters down in the admin spaces. I see them because I pass by them on the way to class every day. I couldn't off the top of my head tell you what the slogan on it means, but I know it has a number and it has a pretty sharp looking female enlisted with a guy standing behind her. [The poster was for the ‘My Strength is for Defending’ campaign].”* (Female)

### ***Bystander Intervention***

2010 SAGR presented a scenario involving a party and potential sexual assault. Focus group participants were read the scenario and asked to share their opinions of the actions midshipmen would most likely take to step in and prevent a sexual assault.<sup>20</sup> They were asked if the scenario was realistic for their Academy, why someone would intervene or not, and how midshipmen typically perceive their responsibility in such situations.

#### ***“The Party Situation”***

- **Focus group participants had mixed reactions to whether such a situation could occur at USNA.**
  - *“Instead of saying getting drunk at a party, maybe perhaps you could say you're on summer training and you hit home port in a foreign country. You go to a nightclub with a lot of your friends or acquaintances from the Academy. You find your friend starts physically falling for a guy at a party, what would you do when you know she's actually really drunk?”* (Female)
  - *“[Described a similar situation.] And a group of them are like ‘Oh, it's cool because they're friends and they're not going to care if they hook up because they're just friends.’ I didn't want one of them to wake up and be like ‘Oh, God. What if something happened?’ God forbid she would get pregnant or something bad. I was like, ‘You know, let's just go back.’ She ended up staying*

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<sup>20</sup> The text of the party situation reads as: “Suppose you see a female midshipman, who you do not know very well, getting drunk at a party. Someone tells you that a guy from your company is going to take her to a back room to have sex. What are you most likely to do in this kind of situation?”

- Nothing
- Leave the party to avoid any kind of trouble
- Find someone who knows the woman and can help her
- Talk to the woman/try to get her out of the situation
- Stop the guy from leaving with the woman
- Other action”

*with me and they took the guy. So this is realistic for me. That was hard because I'm friends with both of them. I have obviously stepped in and helped, but I don't think really a lot of people would.” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants indicated there are a number of considerations that drive one’s decision to act.**
  - *“Depends on how drunk she's getting and how the guy is acting towards her.” (Male)*
  - *“Do you know him and what's your relationship with him, what's your relationship with her?” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants agreed that most midshipmen would intervene if they perceived the situation posed a threat to either party.**
  - *“If a friend of mine's going to do that, I don't want him to compromise himself or put himself in a situation where he could get in trouble, so I'd talk to him.” (Male)*
  - *“For the guy, depends on the guy and who the other guy is. They don't want to [interfere with another guy’s advances]. For the girls, I think girls would intervene unless they were scared for some reason. I think most of the girls at the Academy stick together. We would definitely intervene if she was drunk and you know she wasn't interested in the guy and he wasn't drunk or whatever the situation.” (Female)*
  - *“The other weekend, I was at a bar and it was one of my friend's birthdays. One of the guys in my company came up ‘You know your friend's had a couple too many drinks.’ It was her 21st, and this other guy she was dancing with just took her to the bar to go get another drink. And obviously she does not need any more drinks. So I had a guy in my company come up and tell me that about one of my friends, so that was nice.” (Female)*

### **Reasons for Avoiding Intervention**

- **Focus group participants indicated that of the 17% of male respondents who said they would do nothing or leave, the primary reason might be that men do not want to interfere with another man’s attempt to engage in a relationship.**
  - *“The issue is definitely if the guy's from your company. It's like great, I've had drinks with this guy 20 times before. He knows me. He knows my attitude. I know him. I know what his attitudes are. If I just go up to him, tell him ‘Hey, dude, this is wrong,’ obviously, he doesn't think it's wrong if he's trying to do it right now. So it would actually probably end up being physical. ‘No, you're not.’ ‘Yes, I am.’ Have you been drinking, too? Probably. Are you making the smart decision that you just get to a point where it's just not worth making a call.” (Male)*

- *“A lot of people think that it's not their business, like whatever someone wants to do. People insinuate something bad is going to happen, and maybe something bad doesn't happen. Maybe someone walking someone back to the hall. It's hard to tell, and I know a lot of people just would rather stay out of it because it's personal.”* (Female)
- *“The second you take positive action, not in any situation but in a situation like this, then you become the moral police, and some people don't see that as their role.”* (Male)
- *“Assumption of guilt. You're going to be involved in all this, and the Academy is going to assume you did something bad.”* (Male)
- *“I've heard so many guys say that they wouldn't and it's not their business. Which is so funny here where everybody thinks anybody's your business. There's very few people that I think would actually step in for situations like that.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that sometimes people make assumptions about the woman in a situation that keeps them from intervening.**
  - *“I've seen instances where someone will say, ‘This guy was bothering me or this guy tried to touch me or something like that.’ And I've heard other women say ‘Well, what were you wearing, what were you doing, why were you drinking, why were you wearing a short skirt, why were you wearing this?’ I don't really know how the military would deal with this necessarily, but I think there's a lot of issues with women not supporting other women. I notice that specifically in instances of sexual harassment. I don't really know how you would make a training program, but I've seen a lot of the perception of ‘Well, maybe it was her fault, what was she wearing, what was she doing?’ That can be a big instance of why people do or don't intervene.”* (Female)

### **Perceptions of Responsibility**

- **Focus group participants indicated that taking the initiative to intervene is a difficult decision.**
  - *“People have different personalities, and people are not confrontational.”* (Female)
  - *“A lot of people think things, but they just don't have the spine to actually do something about it. The rejection, the confrontation, like what are you doing, like ‘Uh, that's not cool,’ and I think that pretty much sums it up. That might not be the cool thing to do, but it's without a doubt the right thing to do. I think it's that line balancing between the two for a lot of people. They worry a little bit too much about what's the cool thing to do.”* (Female)

## **Watching Out for Each Other**

- **Focus group participants indicated that they typically watch out for each other.**
  - *“You go out with a group of people normally, and for me, that's my safety check. I'll go out with my roommates, and we go together and we leave together. We don't leave anybody behind, we don't go separate ways, and that's an agreement that we had before ahead of time. So I think people do step in and say ‘You're coming with me, we're going back to the hall, you're not going somewhere else shady with someone from my company.’” (Female)*
  - *“I think also a lot of guys in our company, although they may say stuff, but when it comes down to us, they treat us like sisters. So one of the guys in your company sees something, if they don't think it's right, they're going to step in. I'm seen that a couple times where they're like ‘Hey, she's with us, go away.’” (Female)*
  
- **Focus group participants indicated that their training addresses bystander intervention.**
  - *“Our last session was on bystander intervention. Basically, they just asked you if you see a situation, how involved do you feel as a bystander? Do you understand what your role as a bystander is? We did a little bit of role play situation. Generally in my session, we went around and asked every single person would you do anything or how do you feel about what's going on in front of you. So they really try to make us aware of the different situations that call for either some sort of intervention or at least recognition that what's going on maybe isn't truly okay.” (Female)*



## Chapter 4: U.S. Air Force Academy

Nine focus group sessions were conducted at USAFA from April 19-21, 2011. Each session was scheduled for a 90-minute period. There was one male and one female session held for each class year and one mixed-gender session. Each session had between five and ten students.

### ***Sexual Assault***

Understanding how cadets view various aspects of sexual assault and the incidence rates of sexual assault from the 2010 SAGR survey were primary topics addressed in the 2011 SAGR focus groups. Cadets were provided the definition of unwanted sexual contact (i.e., sexual assault) used in the 2010 SAGR survey.<sup>21</sup> The facilitator shared the sexual assault incidence rates for men and women at USAFA from the survey and asked if participants had seen or were briefed on the survey results. Participants then discussed the factors that might have contributed to the increase in the sexual assault rate for women from the 2008 SAGR survey.<sup>22</sup> Focus group participants then discussed the role of force and alcohol in sexual assault as well as situations where consent can or cannot be given. This section ended with a discussion of results of the survey where cadets were asked if sexual assault occurs more or less often at their Academy than in civilian colleges or universities.<sup>23</sup>

### ***Familiarity With Incidence Rates From 2010 SAGR***

- **Some focus group participants indicated they had heard the results of the 2010 survey.**
  - *“There was a giant uproar last semester because they were pretty high percentages. I think it was more about sexual harassment.”* (Female)
- **Other focus group participants had not heard any results of the 2010 survey.**
  - *“[Multiple no]”* (Female and Male)
  - *“I don't think we were made aware of the results.”* (Female)
  - *“If we got an e mail about it, we probably deleted it.”* (Female)

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<sup>21</sup> Unwanted sexual contact refers to a range of activities that the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) prohibits, including uninvited and unwelcome completed or attempted sexual intercourse, sodomy (oral or anal sex), penetration by an object, and the unwanted touching of genitalia and other sexually related areas of the body. For this report, sexual assault includes all of the behaviors included in unwanted sexual contact.

<sup>22</sup> On 2010 SAGR, at USAFA 11.9% of women and 1.1% of men indicated they experienced unwanted sexual contact (sexual assault) in the timeframe of June 2009 through spring 2010. This is a statistically significant increase for women from 2008 (9.7% for women in 2008). The rate for men in 2010 was not different from the rate of 1.4% in 2008.

<sup>23</sup> The results of 2010 SAGR showed a decrease in the percentage of respondents who said it occurs less often at USAFA than civilian colleges/universities (among women it was 73% in 2010 versus 87% in 2008; and for men it was 88% in 2010 versus 95% in 2008).

- *“I'd say they probably covered it, but I just don't remember.”* (Male)

### **Reactions to Incidence Rates**

- **Some focus group participants indicated the incidence rates from the 2010 survey were about what they expected for their academy.**
  - *“I'm not happy with the number, but it's not that surprising.”* (Female)
  - *“It seems about right. It primarily doesn't surprise me because of how many alcohol hits we get. If it's a sexual assault, it's probably related to an alcohol problem.”* (Female)
- **Other focus group participants indicated the incidence rates from the 2010 survey were higher than what they expected for their academy.**
  - *“I think it's pretty surprising in a single year it went up.”* (Female)
  - *“Technically, one out of ten. Just wouldn't have thought that.”* (Male)
  - *“I think it should be lower. I think if anything, it should go down. I feel like now our leadership has really stepped it up and making sure nothing happens. Because I don't see anything like that, ever. It depends on who you are and what squadron you're in. I never expected the number to be like that.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the increased sexual assault incidence rate found on the survey for women might be due to the level of emphasis being placed on prevention and response.**
  - *“It could also be that people are more up front about things now and are more honest in the survey.”* (Female)
  - *“I feel like the environment now is a lot more conducive, even to someone anonymously reporting. I think our leadership here, the overall attitude is that it's okay to talk about these things and come forward, and they have gotten better. So maybe that contributes to more people actually answering the questions. But I don't know — it's anonymous, so that may not have been an issue at all. I feel more comfortable writing it down on a piece of paper.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the increased sexual assault incidence rate found on the survey for women might be due to the greater availability of reporting channels.**
  - *“With more substantial reporting methods, it's probably easier, a little bit more accessible — call, text, go online, e-mail. More people are educated on how to report, so they may feel more inclined to report something.”* (Female)

- **Focus group participants indicated that the increased sexual assault incidence rate found on the survey for women might be due to greater understanding of the behaviors that constitute sexual assault.**
  - *“I think an emphasis on making sure that people know what's included would also increase responses.”* (Male)
  - *“They're more aware of it. Maybe two years ago or whatever, they wouldn't have come out and filled out a survey, but now we have all this training. And you give it a broader definition.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the increased rate of sexual assault on the survey for women might be an artifact of the culture or generation in general.**
  - *“I would say it's not a change at the Academy but a change in culture in general. I would say that today at age 13, what a girl is expected to do sexually, or where we're headed, I think if you looked at any college across the country, that percentage would be higher than four years ago. I don't think that it's a fault of our leadership. I think that our leadership is very much involved.”* (Female)
  - *“It could possibly be our generation in general. College is the place to go and experiment and people put themselves in bad situations. On a survey they might think, ‘Well, I'm not reporting it, it may be my fault, but this is what I experienced.’”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the incidence rate for sophomore women<sup>24</sup> might be higher due to the lifting of restrictions on relationships.**
  - *“I'm not surprised for sophomores. Freshman year, you can't even interact with the upper three classes. When you get into sophomore year, you have a little more freedom. I think the upper two classes are a little more comfortable.”* (Female)
  - *“You hear ‘Freshmen are now on the market,’ as soon as graduation hits, so they become available.”* (Female)
  - *“Just because the way the culture of the Academy is. We have restrictions on the freshmen, so the way how it really works is upperclassman guys see freshman girls and they know they can't pursue them, and as soon as they become sophomores, that happens.”* (Male)

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<sup>24</sup> 16.5% of sophomore women at USAFA indicated experiencing unwanted sexual contact on the 2010 SAGR survey.

- **Focus group participants indicated that the incidence rate for sophomore women might be higher due to new opportunities for relationships when they change squadrons.**
  - *“They're also going to be in squadrons and things, so it gives them a chance if they wanted to be a different person or try something new or different. They're in a new environment with people that don't know them. They're not around established friends as much as the upperclassmen.”* (Female)
  - *“You go out more and put yourself in different situations. Maybe you back off of that a little bit as a junior and senior just because you're more comfortable with yourself at the Academy. And you're also transitioning to a new squadron and so you're hanging out with a bunch of new people and you're more likely to go out and be in situations that you wouldn't have before, just to try to get comfortable in your new living group.”* (Female)
  - *“Also, in a new environment, they may be trying to fit in your squadron, so they may be trying to fit in where they don't have any close knit group of friends, they're not sure who they should be hanging out with, that might put them in a compromising situation.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the incidence rate for sophomore women might be higher due to the lifting of restrictions on freshmen and fewer responsibilities than the upper class years.**
  - *“It's the whole sophomore class. Each year it's like the lost class, the problem class. Freshmen, especially here, but anywhere else, they're kind of scared. They're getting used to a new habitat. But the upper two classes, they're far enough along that they're looking towards their future. In the sophomore year, you don't really have too prevalent of jobs. Here we have CQ, which is just like a duty that we do, and that's really all that we have. And academics, we're not necessarily in our majors classes as much, so we're kind of wandering around with a bunch of free time.”* (Male)
  - *“The big difference between sophomore and freshman year, when you're on lockdown all year, then you get that freedom, and you let loose and you find yourself in more situations where that kind of thing might happen. So you'll go out on more weekends or stuff like that and find yourself at just random places where it's more likely than in the dorm room.”* (Male)
  - *“I'd also say that freshman year, you have so much pressure on you and there are so many rules and regulations. And then sophomore year, that's all released, but you still don't have the freedom to leave. You're stuck here. And cadets do really weird things, when they're stuck here, with freedom.”* (Female)

- **Focus group participants indicated that the incidence rate for sophomore women might be higher due to attempts to fit in or impress others.**
  - *“When you're a junior or senior, you're the top dog. And not that that should affect it, but there you're not trying to prove yourself. I could see more people that are sophomores trying to show that they belong there or they want to impress a guy or something, and that could impact it.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants did not recommend major policy changes with regard to the policy on assigning sophomores to new squadrons at the beginning of the year.**
  - *“I think so [that the policy on shuffling is good – changing squadrons after freshman year]. I think you've got to make sure people get integrated into the squad the right way. There's a problem with the cadet wing that sophomores get forgotten when they enter a squadron. They don't get integrated in. People just don't take the time to make them part of the squad. It depends on which 40 squads you go to, but my freshman year, they just left us alone. So there are only those individuals that would come and make an interaction, rather than the whole squad trying to pull you in.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants also indicated that it makes sense that the incidence rate of sexual assault would come down by the beginning of the junior year.**
  - *“And then when you hit junior or senior year, you're committed [where payback is required for failing to complete the degree], and you have that pressure maybe not to maybe screw up.”* (Male)
  - *“We tend to get rid of weird people during the sophomore year, junior year. In our squadron, if we don't like you, you probably won't make it through your sophomore year. Your sophomore year is really hard academically, and then if you come back, you have that commitment.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that men might be more reluctant than women to report sexual assault which might contribute to the incidence rate for men staying even and not changing as it did for women.**
  - *“It seems like all the time we're having briefings about it. I've talked to people in other classes, and it seems like it's more frequent since we've been here than with other classes. And people are more up front and willing to talk about it and almost willing to admit it because there's so much help that's out there for us. So I know that might be a portion for why it would increase for women, just that they're willing to report it more. And maybe there's still a stigma for guys to report it. But that's one thing I think I would attribute to the increase in women.”* (Female)

- *“If a guy reports it, not too many people are going to believe it, just because ‘Oh, sure, she raped you’ and they would see it more as a joke. Whereas for women, if we say something about that, people are more willing to take it more seriously because it is an actual issue.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the room assignments might contribute to the incidence rate for men.**
  - *“I’m sure that number is understated, with the nature of men. I’m sure the three man room doesn’t help with that. Now, whether it’s adolescents messing around, horsing around and turning it into sexual assault, sexual harassment. I’m sure if you put three men into a small room, incidents will occur.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the different perspectives people bring to the Academy might contribute to the incidence rate for men.**
  - *“I think when you come here, people may think it’s a joke, maybe the other person doesn’t, and a lot of people don’t know each other.”* (Male)

### ***Circumstances of Sexual Assault***

- **Focus group participants indicated that consent to engaging in sex can be given in circumstances where one cadet is senior to another.**
  - *“When people are mature enough to be able to handle that kind of relationship and know where their boundaries are, it can be.”* (Male)
  - *“Their experience with relationships before that, just their viewpoint on it. Not everyone views a relationships the same, or like how they can stand up if something does go wrong. It just depends on the situation and the people involved.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that there is not much influence one cadet can exert over another.**
  - *“You don’t really have much authority over the cadets. You might be their boss on paper, but you don’t have much power over them. You can’t really affect much, except one small aspect of their military performance appraisal. And so they don’t have any more power over you than they would in a normal social situation. With four degrees [freshmen], possibly, but not with the three degrees [sophomores].”* (Male)
  - *“I don’t think that the authority among cadets is strong enough to feel enough pressure to allow that to go on. There’s not that much authority between each different class. Once you’re recognized, you’re pretty much treated the same as some of the levels. Maybe with permanent party it would be a little bit different, but even in those, I don’t think that is a factor here.”* (Female)

- *“The understanding between ranks is once you're not a freshman, you can pretty much do anything.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that cadets can feel comfortable saying ‘no’ to an inappropriate sexual approach.**
  - *“It's less emphasized [situations involving commissioned officers and cadets]. I'd feel like I still could say ‘no,’ or anybody else could.”* (Male)
  - *“There's always the possibility that a cadet just totally digs their first lieutenant or captain or whatever. But I definitely don't think a captain would be able to go up to any one of us and say, ‘You will have sex with me or your grade will diminish because I have that power and we'll just bring it.’ We've been told plenty of times this is wrong. ‘No, bye, I can get you fired,’ so...”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that sometimes circumstances can be confusing with regard to consent to engage in sexual behavior, especially with freshmen.**
  - *“I think it might happen if it's a freshman. That's why you have the frat rules. If you're a freshman and a senior guy gives you attention, you might be more likely to say ‘Yes’ because you don't feel comfortable with it. You have to get used to the whole idea of cadet chain of command here. You have to realize that, as a freshman, you really are nothing and a senior/firstie has all the authority, and you might be intimidated by that.”* (Female)
  - *“Freshman to senior, consent can be given, but sometimes it's not. Sometimes freshmen date seniors; sometimes freshmen date juniors or sophomores. In that position of power, in our class it happened a couple of times where consent was forced because they used their power against them. But a lot of times freshmen date upper class men by their choice as well, even though it's against the rules, but it happens.”* (Female)
  - *“If they're in a direct supervisor position or direct chain of command, there's always going to be the authority aspect present, whether it's on or off duty. So whether the individual believes they can give that consent, I don't think they can, because it's very hard for them to make that switch and go back to work or act.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that sexual relationships between staff and cadets are not something they have ever noted.**
  - *“No. I've never heard of that happening.”* (Multiple Females)
  - *“I haven't heard about this, but the faculty thing, it would definitely be harder to give consent for a cadet/faculty thing.”* (Male)

- **Focus group participants agreed that physical force is not necessary for sexual assault to have occurred.**
  - “No.” (Multiple Females)
  - “Not necessarily. Say if alcohol is involved, there's no need to force it. Or you've lost control of yourself.” (Female)
  - “Force isn't always used, necessarily. There could be unwanted sexual contact without using force, necessarily, especially with some of these definitions, like sexually touched. That could occur without force.” (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that a person who has been drinking cannot consent to sexual relations.**
  - “Legally, no.” (Female)
  - “The Academy's definition, when you've been drinking, you can't consent to anything. You have no idea what's going on.” (Male)
  - “You're not able to make rational decisions. Any alcohol at all, you're not allowed to give consent.” (Male)
- **Some focus group participants indicated that a person who has been drinking can consent to sexual relations up to a point.**
  - “We had a briefing that said that if you're in a state of blackout, where you don't have any short term recall, definitely not. And that's not a gray area. But between the levels of all other levels of intoxication, there is a gray area, and nowhere has it been defined, or attempted to. They only look at extreme cases.” (Male)
- **Some focus group participants indicated that legally if both parties have been drinking they cannot consent to sexual relations, but practically it depends on circumstances.**
  - “Legally, no. But honestly, in my personal opinion, there's a fine line between ‘We went to dinner and had drinks’ or ‘I'm a little buzzed,’ and this person, it's not something they would normally do. This is something out of the ordinary. Or this is just something where they have lost control of themselves.” (Female)
  - “Two people who have been drinking can definitely both consent, but there's obviously a point at which either one or both people cannot rightfully consent for themselves. Like if a girl is puking or she's all over the place or if she can't stand. There are definitely limits of where it obviously, clearly, that nothing should happen from there.” (Female)

- *“If you two are just meeting and he's taking a drunk woman back to his room, then most likely it's rape, because she's not thinking clearly or she doesn't have the capacity to think clearly. But if you two have been dating and you've had sex multiple times, it's hard to fight the whole ‘Well, it wasn't consensual this time’ thing. So that's a little hazy to me.”* (Female)
- **Survey results in 2010 showed that 48% of women who experienced sexual assault indicated that alcohol was involved in some fashion. Focus group participants commented that 48% seemed low.**
  - *“I thought alcohol would be involved a lot more. Maybe just drawing back from what I've seen before, that makes sense to me. Alcohol is usually the reason why people would do something. A lot of people, when they're not using alcohol, don't do something like this.”* (Male)
  - *“I'm surprised it's so low. 80%, 90%, up there to where bad situations, bad things happen. Not necessarily the fault of anyone, but just being in that situation is going to make something more likely to happen.”* (Female)
  - *“I think alcohol is a big factor when it comes to sexual assault. For me, if there is alcohol involved, you have people who aren't respecting boundaries of others.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the Academy has taken a more reasonable approach to alcohol-related issues.**
  - *“I feel like the way that they are approaching it now is getting better. There was a time period at our Academy that it became kind of a hammer job, and that just forced people to do stupid stuff and try to hide it, as opposed to just being open. They wouldn't pick people up because they were afraid they would get an alcohol hit. That person might be underage, they might have drunk too much. It just led to bad stuff. But as far as now, we're on the right track. There's that common sense element to the decisions now.”* (Female)
  - *“And I think they want to try to promote responsible drinking, like at Haps [on-campus bar] they don't have hard alcohol. They try to limit what you're drinking so you're not taking shot after shot. So it helps.”* (Female)
  - *“And they provide services. There are numbers you can call to get picked up for free. And you talked about a wingman, and you get alcohol hits, so there's always the fear of getting in a lot of trouble if you're underage.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants offered suggestions to improve training on alcohol use.**
  - *“I think in relation to alcohol, know your limits. In the Navy they do a program. When you turn 21, if you want to drink or stuff like that, you actually go to a place on base and you have people there that actually show you how to drink type thing. The Academy doesn't have that. Once you turn 21, it's like,*

*here, go have fun, throw you out in the real world. Maybe something like that, you get to know your limits, that way you know how far you can go.” (Male)*

- *“If these assaults happen when someone is intoxicated, it might cause people to think more. Just knowing that [the percentage alcohol involvement in sexual assault], as opposed to throwing their inhibitions out the window.” (Male)*
- *“I’m a fan of having in-squad responsible drinking. You should know how to drink socially. You should know that you can have two beers and have a good time. You should be educated on alcohol. A lot of people don’t know their limit until they reach it. And to have that, it would be way better than book talk.” (Female)*

- **Even though use of alcohol contributes to sexual assault, focus group participants indicated that most people handle themselves responsively.**

- *“A lot of us have been to the different colleges in Colorado Springs and party with them. Whenever I go out to party with my friends from the Academy, it’s different. We are a lot more responsible, actually, the cadets are, with partying and stuff like that. They actually check up on each other. Boulder, the ones I went to, that really didn’t happen.” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that the Academy has policies regarding alcohol use, but a shift in focus might reduce the likelihood of sexual assault.**

- *“If we shifted the focus, not say, ‘Oh, underage drinking is fine.’ But if we shifted the focus to just watch what you’re drinking, watch how much you’re drinking, you’re mixing your alcohol. That way I think that it might lower the number of sexual assaults because of the blacking out, not knowing what you’re doing, and then you get yourself in trouble.” (Male)*
- *“I think focusing on how much you’re drinking, and trying to decrease the amount you’re drinking is important. A lot of women and men put themselves in compromising situations when they drink way too much. It’s definitely a situation that could be avoided if you hadn’t been drinking as much.” (Male)*

### **Comparison to Civilian Colleges and Universities**

- **When asked why the percentage of cadets who indicated sexual assault occurs less often at the Academy was down slightly from the previous survey, focus group participants noted that there is greater awareness.<sup>25</sup>**

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<sup>25</sup> The question posed in the focus groups was “On the survey, we ask if sexual assault occurs more or less often at your Academy compared to civilian colleges/universities. We have seen a shift in perceptions over the years. The results here at USAFA show a decrease in the percentage who said it occurs less often at USAFA than civilian colleges/universities. For women, in 2010 73% said sexual assault occurs less often here at USAFA, which is down from 87% in 2008. For men it was 88% in 2010 versus 95% in 2008. Can you help us understand this finding? Why would this be so?”

- *“It's more talked about. I think that might be it. Some people have questions about the first two [unwanted touching and attempted sexual behaviors], are these really sexual assault? Where do you draw the line? I know a lot of my girlfriends who went to a civilian college, that was normal to them. That wasn't sexual assault. So the fact that we are trained and we know where it starts and stops, maybe we understand it a little better.”* (Female)
- *“I think about that too [greater awareness]. We had one of our briefings — we were by far the most educated on sexual assault as far as in the nation.”* (Male)
- *“Maybe because this place is making a bigger deal about sexual assault and stuff since then. Then people are more aware of the preventive stuff and who to call if something happens, people think it happens more often maybe.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the percentage of cadets who indicated sexual assault occurs less often at the Academy was down slightly from the previous survey might be due to a general upward trend at all colleges and universities.**
  - *“I would say that the numbers at colleges are higher in general, so if you're looking from a frame of reference. I know two sophomores last year who were assaulted at USAFA. That kind of frame of reference of seeing the numbers increase around us could taint the positive view of USAFA. I think that most of us would say it's lower, but it's increasing from all schools, and so we don't necessarily consider the fact that it's increasing at other colleges as well. But it's very prominent. We see it and we notice it here.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the percentage of cadets who indicated sexual assault occurs less often at the Academy was down slightly from the previous survey might be due to improvements at civilian colleges and universities.**
  - *“Maybe a civilian institution, a lot of them are getting a blue light thing. I don't know if maybe people think that those are getting safer, not that the Academy is getting less safe.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the percentage of cadets who indicated sexual assault occurs less often at the Academy was down slightly from the previous survey might be due to the perception that more incidents must be occurring.**
  - *“I think it might be because we actually hear more about incidents that occur here than we have in the past, at least from my experience. I don't remember hearing about it as much when I was a freshman or sophomore like we have in the last few years. We have more announcements or more incidents that occur, that go around. It's either we hear something or the Commandant talked to us a*

*couple of weeks ago, just about some sexual assault prevention measures. And then you also just kind of hear rumors. This place is a huge rumor mill.”*  
(Male)

- *“I think it's because they're pushing it so much. They're making it such a big deal. We're already under the microscope. We are targeted for this specifically. The whole Air Force is. So when you focus so much on one thing, it appears that it's a bigger problem than it may actually be.”* (Female)
- *“With all the briefings we've had on sexual assault (basically we have one every month or every two months), I feel maybe it's happening a lot. That is why they're giving us all of the briefings. So perhaps the number is declining as far as perception. There has to be something wrong for us to get this many briefings.”* (Male)

- **Some focus group participants believe there is less sexual assault at the Academy.**

- *“I went to college before coming here, so for me coming here, I do want to believe in the whole trust, we all work together, we all live together, compared to a civilian college, where you don't know anyone, could care less about the person next to you. So I want to believe that sexual assault and sexual harassment occurs less here than it does at another college.”* (Male)

- **Focus group participants indicated that although the percentage is lower than in previous years, the Academy is still a very safe place compared to other colleges and universities.**

- *“At a civilian college, people don't look out for each other, people who are drinking on a weeknight. I feel like more things go down and there's not as many people looking out for you all the time, whereas here, they're strict on accountability, everybody knows where you are. If you're not back by a certain time, people are already looking for you. But at a normal school, if you don't tell your roommate or you don't tell someone where you're going, no one is going to know. So I think that's why I feel safer here. My mom personally feels safer with me being here.”* (Female)
- *“I think this institution promotes respect a little more, actually a lot more, than colleges, respecting women and what we're doing, and guys and what they do, and our side of things. So it promotes that mutual respect. Although some people don't follow it, I feel like it's more so than in a regular college. Because we're both under professionals' arms, we all work together, we're going to be lieutenants working together.”* (Female)

- **Focus group participants indicated that media coverage might influence the perception about the frequency of sexual assault at the academies.**
  - *“The kids coming in now were in high school when that whole scandal hit at the Air Force Academy. It was huge here. Everyone knew. Some people hated cadets, stuff like that. It was a big deal. So maybe the kids coming in now remember that from being back there.”* (Female)
  - *“I would say the media too. Because at some random college, like junior college or whatnot, if something like that happens, it's not going to make the front pages. But an Academy cadet, the big sex scandals at the Academy. So we're thinking to ourselves, ‘Okay, it happens here.’”* (Male)

### **Reporting**

The objective of this section was to understand from cadets’ perspectives why someone who experienced sexual assault would report it or not. The questions first asked why the number of actual reports was higher in 2010 than in 2009,<sup>26</sup> then questions addressed to whom cadets would most likely make a restricted or unrestricted report. Cadets were also asked for their recommendations on how to encourage more victims of sexual assault to come forward and make a report. The questioning in this section ended with a discussion of the treatment of alleged offenders during an investigation and trial period.

#### **Increase in Actual Reports of Sexual Assault**

- **Focus group participants thought the increased number of reports in 2010 from 2009 might be due to increased comfort in reporting.**
  - *“And there were incidents in 2010 in our class. Our class is where sexual assault occurred. Maybe it came out into the open, and maybe people felt more comfortable about it too.”* (Female)
  - *“I think now they're providing so more much resources that people feel more comfortable reporting it.”* (Female)
  - *“It's probably more awareness that there's the help. With how often we talk about it, it almost seems like it's much more acceptable to seek the help, not just here, but in general. You'd feel comfortable. If something did happen, I'd say you can report it, so you wouldn't feel bad about it. There's options too. We all know the options, whether it's going to get reported all the way up, like the restricted and unrestricted. Just by knowing that there's help in any avenue you can get, it's a little easier.”* (Female)
  - *“I remember my freshman year, there was a distinctly negative stigma about girls who would report things. And I remember specifically one instance where*

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<sup>26</sup> There were eight reports of sexual assault in 2009 and twenty reports in 2010.

*some girl reported something, and it was a huge deal. So I think there's maybe a little less of that now.” (Female)*

- *“I think the way the Academy is run right now is making it less taboo — being able to talk about it more openly. Having programs for people and stuff like that. That would make people more open to talk about it to somebody, and eventually that leads to, hopefully, reporting it.” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants thought the increased number of reports in 2010 from 2009 might be due to better knowledge of what constitutes inappropriate behaviors.**

- *“Having an understanding of what actually constitutes sexual assault or sexual harassment. A lot of times people will just brush things off because they're not sure. Or they would tell their friend, ‘Move on,’ when actually it's something that they should bring up of importance. I think that also plays a role in the amount of people that are starting to come forward and say, ‘Yes, this happened to me.’” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants thought the increased number of reports in 2010 from 2009 might be due to better knowledge of how to report.**

- *“Reporting options have gotten better, and people know about it more. Like in our basic, they gave us SARC [Sexual Assault Response Coordinator] water bottles that have a phone number. I think that the whole restricted/nonrestricted, it's a good way to go, so I think that because they like the options available to them, they can report them.” (Male)*
- *“They have step by step things. Like you could call SARC, you could report it up the chain. And they have briefings and 50-minute lessons of how to do it. So it's facilitated that way.” (Male)*
- *“Almost every briefing we have is on sexual assault or how to prevent it, how to report it. So I think people are just more aware of what to do and how to take care of it, how to prevent the situation if it does happen, where to go, who to talk to. And then on top of that, there's a confidential and un-confidential reporting that you can do, so I think people are more willing to do that.” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants thought the increased number of reports in 2010 from 2009 might be due to increased confidence in the reporting process.**

- *“I feel like people will feel like they can report and make it clear. You can report stuff and then there's not going to be any repercussions for being a victim, and I think maybe that helps.” (Male)*
- *“It's focused on the victim and not the act, which is very important.” (Male)*

- *“Increased awareness, especially with the SARC — how you can report it in different ways and it never goes away. Or even having the chaplain coordinate, where it's complete confidentiality, regardless of what you say, I think it increases reporting.”* (Male)
- *“I feel like there's more awareness about reporting. In the last couple of years, there's been more of an emphasis on the fact that anybody in the sexual assault is a victim, instead of part of the instigator problem. And also, there's just been the fact that people, if they do report, they're helping to stop a future incident. There's been emphasis there as well.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated the increased number of reports in 2010 from 2009 might depend on where the incident occurred.**
  - *“If it's something that happened at this institution with another cadet, then I think she will be less likely to report it. One, because it could be a friend that she doesn't want to get in trouble or doesn't want to ruin a career. Or if she did report it, how would all of their other mutual friends look at it? I think that's a big factor.”* (Female)
- **Even though there was an increase in the number of reports made in 2010, focus group participants indicated most incidents remain unreported.**
  - *“No.”* (Multiple Females)
  - *“Statistically, no. Of the girls who are sexually assaulted, only a few went and reported, so.”* (Male)

### ***Recipients of Restricted and Unrestricted Reports***

- **Focus group participants indicated that someone would most likely seek a chaplain to receive a restricted report of sexual assault.**
  - *“Chaplain.”* (Multiple Males)
  - *“It depends on the person. There might be someone who would feel way more comfortable talking to a chaplain versus a PEER [Personal Ethics and Education Representative]. It's really personal, in general.”* (Female)
- **Some focus group participants would not go to a chaplain to discuss sexual assault.**
  - *“I think a PEER, if it's one of your friends. I wouldn't talk to the chaplain. I would talk to a SARC or a PEER, if I liked them.”* (Female)

- **Focus group participants indicated they would go to the SARC to make a restricted report of sexual assault.**
  - *“The SARC people are extremely welcoming. Like every time I walk in there, whatever they're doing, they'll put it down and just take you to the side. The majority of them are like on call. They'll come here on a Sunday evening. You can talk to them on the phone for hours. You can text them. They're always available.”* (Female)
  - *“They're [chaplains] still restricted. But SARC is also good.”* (Male)
  - *“She's [SARC] one of the people — I don't think anyone would be scared to approach her, but I feel like people would want to talk to their chaplain or their PEER, someone they're closer to in their squadron.”* (Female)
- **Some focus group participants indicated they would not make a restricted report of sexual assault to the Peak Performance Center.**
  - *“Every time I've been in there for other types, not sexual assault related, they're extremely cold. There are some people that work in there that are very sincere, but there's also some people that need to be a little nicer when you interact with them.”* (Female)
  - *“I had a friend who went in there. First of all, she didn't have an appointment, and they basically turned her away. She's standing at the window, crying, and they're like, ‘You need to leave.’ Well, she's not coming back, so thanks. They're not very welcoming to people.”* (Female)
  - *“At Peak Performance, at least leadership, they're making them have different hours, evening hours and stuff that you can go. But I feel like there's a disconnect between, honestly, what's being presented of what they do and what actually happens when you walk in there. But it needs a lot of work, from every time I've been in there.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated they would be reluctant discussing something as personal as sexual assault with medical personnel at the clinic.**
  - *“The clinic is terrible, terrible, for the most part. The actual hospital, I've never had a bad visit there. At the clinic, it just depends on who you get to, the actual doctors or the nurse practitioners or the physician assistants — most of them are caring. But if you get the med techs in the front, it's like, ‘Oh, my God, do I have to explain to you ten times in the lobby? What's wrong with you? Can I talk to the nurse, please? Thanks.’”* (Female)
  - *“I have been in the clinic, and you can hear — three girls have been told they're pregnant. You can hear stuff. I probably wouldn't walk in there and...”* (Female)

- **Focus group participants indicated they would make an unrestricted report of sexual assault to their Air Officer Commanding (AOC).**
  - “AOC.” (Male)
  - “[Commissioned office in squadron].” (Multiple Males)
  - “AOC, it depends on your squadron. I think some people have different but our squad is really good. I would go to our AOC.” (Female)
  - “I would think the AOCs and AMTs [Academy Military Trainer] would be the first bet for some people.” (Female)
  - “If you wanted immediate results, like the hardest punishment and stuff like that, I would go to an AOC. If you wanted the toughest punishment, immediate reaction, that's when I would go to an AOC.” (Female)
- **Some focus group participants would not make an unrestricted report of sexual assault to their cadet chain of command.**
  - “They don't have much authority. They'd just tell the next and then the next, then the next, and that's five more people knowing your personal story.” (Male)
- **Some focus group participants would not make an unrestricted report of sexual assault to their military chain of command.**
  - “I don't like them getting involved. Sometimes you get lucky and you have a really good commander who will be supportive, but then other times, I don't think chain of command — they're not trained on any of this stuff. If it's a sexual assault case, they have no idea what the hell is going on. They don't know how to interact. My commander is a male. He's going to assume that I'm lying, first of all, just because he's going to include other factors that are in the Academy, like honor system and all of this.” (Female)
  - “I would feel way more comfortable with the AMTs or the medicals than I would the AOCs. The AOCs are the ones that have to punish you for things.” (Female)
  - “It would be way too much to talk to your AOC because it opens too many cans of worms. It's way too much. The whole squad is going to know about it.” (Female)
  - “I would not go to my AOC. Maybe my AMT. But I would feel much more comfortable about talking to somebody that's directly in charge of me that I guess maybe won't look at me the same afterwards.” (Female)

- **Some focus group participants would not make a restricted report of sexual assault to a PEER because they would feel uncomfortable discussing such a personal issue with another cadet.**
  - *“SARC and VAs are professional. A PEER is just a regular cadet at our school.”* (Female)
  - *“It's a job title for some, not for most. But you live with them. They're your friends, so you don't really want your friends knowing that sort of stuff about you.”* (Female)
  - *“Because you live with them. Although they are technically sworn to secrecy, it's still one of those things that I'm telling someone in my class. So it's like how do I know that this person my age, maybe younger than me, is not going to tell their friends about this? It's a big risk.”* (Male)
- **Other focus group participants would make a restricted report of sexual assault to a PEER.**
  - *“It depends on if you're comfortable or not with the chaplain. Personally, I would want to go to a PEER, especially if I knew them. One of my good friends, she's a PEER, and I would go to her first.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that PEERs have gained in reputation at USAFA as a source of help, but would not necessarily make a restricted report of sexual assault to one.**
  - *“I've seen a lot more use of the PEERs in the last year, I'd say, but not necessarily for sexual assault cases or anything like that. Something like counseling, I guess you could say, and just for any sort of situation that you want to talk about, you're allowed to go to them. I've seen them used a lot more, but like I said, not necessarily sexual assault. That's the only reason I would think that cadets would be more willing to go to them now, just because they've gotten this new reputation as people you could talk to.”* (Male)

### **Reasons for Reporting**

- **Focus group participants indicated that someone might make a report of sexual assault to stop the offender from hurting anyone else.**
  - *“Just to protect the other women.”* (Female)
  - *“If it's happened five, six, seven times, then they'd be, ‘Okay, you've got to stop now.’ Or if it's something that was just really serious, just gone way too far.”* (Male)
  - *“Make sure it doesn't happen to anyone else.”* (Male)

- **Focus group participants indicated that someone might make a report of sexual assault to seek justice or punish the offender.**
  - *“Seek justice.”* (Male)
  - *“They feel like that's the person that committed the crime, and he needs to be punished and needs to stop. If you go restricted, then it might still continue; but if you do it unrestricted, it's going to stop.”* (Male)
  - *“They want to get the perpetrator in trouble.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that someone might make a report of sexual assault to seek help dealing with an emotional incident.**
  - *“I think you go forward when the assault is interfering so much with your daily routine and job, when you're not going to class, when you're not doing things that you're supposed to, when you have depression, PTSD [Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome] from it, whatever it is that is completely destroying your morale. That's when you end up at SARC because you need the help because you're not able to deal with it on your own anymore.”* (Female)
  - *“To get help. If you get sexual assaulted, you're probably having some mental issues, it would be a traumatic experience. Or you want to get back at them because you're angry.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that someone might make a report of sexual assault to raise awareness that it occurs at the Academy.**
  - *“I would probably make an open report because I'd want to let them know that this does actually happen. It's not like, ‘Oh, we are talking about it to make sure it doesn't happen.’ This does actually happen. Make it an example.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that someone might make a report of sexual assault to identify a fellow cadet who is acting inappropriately.**
  - *“I know if I had been assaulted by a cadet, I would report it. Because if there is someone at this institution who is obviously showing that they can't professionally be an officer or to be a person of the grade that we are supposed to be, I would report that immediately. ‘Get this person out. This person should not be here.’”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants noted that there is an assumption that many women report sexual assault to get out of trouble.**
  - *“‘Like, did you just regret it?’ That comes from some experience. But it's not just guys that you're going to have to struggle with. You're going to have girls*

*sit there and be like, 'Yeah, right. You consented, and now you feel bad.'*" (Female)

- *"Another aspect of the whole reporting thing is — my experience was that, for a couple of instances, girls haven't necessarily been sexually assaulted and are using it as a scapegoat so they don't get in trouble. They are not accepting responsibility for their action."* (Female)
- *"It's part of the whole college, growing up, being away from home, and people just go wild a little bit. Then when life hits them, they are reeling. And that's what happens. I've seen that quite a few times [false reporting to get out of trouble]."* (Female)

### **Implications of Reporting**

- **Focus group participants discussed the positive effects of someone making a report of sexual assault.**
  - *"If you go restricted, I think there's a lot of confidence in that, to know that no one's going to talk about it. It stays confidential until you want to, if you choose to, report it."* (Male)
- **Focus group participants discussed the potential negative effects of someone making a report of sexual assault.**
  - *"I've heard horror stories about people who were told when they're going to go unrestricted, it's going to concern the people that it had something to do with, and then it spreads like wildfire. People don't want their business known by everyone at the Academy. It's not going to be contained to just the people who are in it. It's going to be the whole chain of command, and then, of course, rumor mill just goes like crazy. That's one thing that dissuades people, that it won't be their business anymore. Now the entire Academy knows exactly who it is."* (Female)
  - *"Did you see what happened to the girl that was an unrestricted report and it wasn't her choice and she had to leave the Academy? That's one of the choices that you have to make if you do go and report that. 'Well, I'm getting rid of this person, but I'm willing to leave.' But that's almost an accepting aspect of reporting unrestricted — it does suck. I don't know, though, if any of us could really stand through that and stand through losing the trust of every guy around you. As far as unrestricted, I think it's great in theory, but I think it would be a lot harder in reality."* (Female)
  - *"Hearing it depends on the situation. I heard this story from one of my friends who had to deal with it, and it became unrestricted and it was a mess, a complete mess. There were a lot of people who were skeptical of the whole situation and didn't believe her. It's hard to figure out where you stand on a*

*situation like that. And it's not like a complete horror story, but it's pretty bad, because I wouldn't want to deal with something like that.” (Female)*

- *“Some people have the fear that if they report it, then everyone's going to know their business. I feel like there's a lot of people around here that you feel like you know something about everyone and you just don't want everyone to know what's going on in your life. That would be why some people would not report anything.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants indicated the length of time it takes to resolve an incident discourages people from reporting.**

- *“The majority of the time, these cases are not solved in a matter of weeks. It will probably take a year, and if I'm getting ready to leave, I just don't want to put up with it. I don't want to put up with the stress. And going through just a couple of weeks of it is bad enough. I can't imagine going through like a year of an open sexual assault case, having to deal with it constantly. Even though they tell you, ‘You're not really involved, you're the victim, you'll just be questioned,’ that's not really it. I feel like a year-long wait, or two years, however long it takes.” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that not hearing the results of an investigation can also discourage people from reporting.**

- *“It's like at the end, you never really hear of anything big, final verdict. It kind of all goes away or it's been decided and nobody ever talked about what the decision was. And to know that some people have come forward with it and it's never even been convicted, we don't ever hear the results. We get told honor cases up front. We have to read about them. We have to read about disciplinary, alcohol issues. I know you can't just say, ‘Here's this whole case.’ But we don't even get ‘This is the situation.’” (Female)*
- *“I feel like it would be held confidential [with regard to trust that the system would keep a report confidential]. You always hear the statistics that, out of all the reported cases, only about 1% or 2% anything ever happened to them.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants offered some suggestions to encourage reporting.**

- *“Maybe provide statistics about second chance offenders, people who do it once and then go back and do it to another person. So maybe just say, ‘Hey, this might be tough for you, but in the end you could put more emphasis on helping those people.’” (Male)*
- *“It means that everyone is doing their job and they're keeping everything confidential [not hearing the outcomes of investigations and cases]. On the*

*other hand, I think it would encourage more people to come out about it if they found a success story.” (Female)*

- *“[Having a friend or peer recommend someone report an incident would be an incentive.] I'm not going to guarantee this or anything, but I would be willing to bet that before anybody reports, they have told a close friend. And based on that, if that friend was really pushing for them to come forward unrestricted, they would be more likely.” (Male)*
- *“I've heard stories about people trying to report, and then when they go to report it, they're like, ‘Well, that's not really an incident,’ or something like that. So sometimes people are inclined to not believe the person reporting. Maybe they could be more empathetic.” (Male)*
- *“I think a great way would be to inform people that if we're a family, we don't want someone with bad intentions in our family. Whether someone can go out and sexually harass me and I didn't say anything about it, well, then I'm allowing them to do it by not reporting it. I'm putting everyone around me in my squad and the Academy in danger. I know someone is weird who's done it before and is capable of hurting others and I'm going to stay quiet and let them continue doing this, as opposed to saying it's the right thing to do.” (Male)*
- **Other focus group participants indicated that there is not much more the Academy can do to encourage reporting other than provide the necessary information on how to do so if one chooses.**
  - *“We have periodic SARC briefings. There are flyers about how to contact the SARC all over the bathrooms and everywhere, in the dorms, throughout Fairchild. So I don't see how the Academy could do something else to make us aware.” (Female)*

### **Treatment of Alleged Offenders**

- **Focus group participants indicated alleged offenders are sometimes treated as though guilty.**
  - *“I think a lot of times, too, it seems like the guy is guilty. That happened to a friend of mine. It ended up not going through, but by the time everything was done and they cleared his name, the damage was done. They took away all of his cadet jobs, and his squad didn't like him anymore. It was all before the decision was being made. People make up their minds before the decision is made.” (Female)*
  - *“Right now it's shoot first, ask questions later, guilty until proven innocent. At least the people that I talk to when they announced this from the staff tower at breakfast, everyone was against the guy, ‘How could he do this?’ It is presupposed that he was guilty. I think that care needs to be taken for the*

*alleged offender as well, because suddenly he's being accused of something, and if he didn't commit it, then this has impacts on the rest of his life, jail time. You need to respect his privacy and try — just innocent until proven guilty — or not guilty until proven guilty.” (Male)*

– *“Everything at the Academy is guilty until proven innocent.” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that at other times alleged offenders are supported especially if the allegations are perceived as false.**

– *“It goes the other way too. You hear like ‘So and so cadet is bringing up a rape charge.’ And everyone goes, ‘Oh, really, she's going to try and get him on that?’ Clearly, you know he cheated on her, so she's trying to get back. Rumors just go around really quick. I've heard a lot of stuff like that.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that allegations against a cadet set up complex situations.**

– *“We had a case here at USAFA where a guy and a girl — it was a stupid mistake. There was drinking involved, of course, but a misunderstanding. But it was really hard because you were torn between the two. We still supported him, even though he made the mistake of being drunk. I still think that they need to have support and still have their rights to everything, but realize that he did do something wrong and try to talk to him about it, but understand why he did it. Or if he doesn't want to talk about it, just don't talk about it, and treat him with respect.” (Female)*

– *“I think it also depends on the situation and who is reporting it. Let's say it's a guy and a girl. If the girl is reporting it, and she's known to like mess around with a lot of guys and not be honest and all of that. Then I think a lot of your buddies are like, ‘Dude you didn't do anything. She's just trying to...’ There's a lot of variables that go into it.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that the training they receive contributes in some cases to judgments against an accused offender.**

– *“Well, they paid a guy to come in and call us a bunch of rapists. It scares a lot of guys, where you'd be having what you thought was consensual sex and suddenly — I'm not trying to point fingers, I'm not trying to point blame or anything, but you have someone in a situation where, I really regret having sex, he raped me. And suddenly you're demonized, and that's what all of the training tells you. They really focus on the victim, which is important. I think they need to find a way to either keep it anonymous or make it so that the accused attacker is not instantly demonized.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants indicated they are instructed not to discuss incidents.**
  - *“In our squad, if anything serious happens, the AMT and AOC are like, ‘Don’t ask about it. It’s between these people. They’ll deal with it how they want.’”* (Male)
  - *“A guy moved from his squad into our squad temporarily until the whole decision came through. It was just an intra-squad action. No one told. Because it was only the permanent party who knew about it in our squadron, so they didn’t release it to us.”* (Male)
  - *“They should not be allowed to talk about it. That’s what influences a lot of stuff — everybody knowing your business. They might get a no contact order, but they are involved in it, so there’s usually a ‘Do not talk about this at all,’ like a silence thing. And I think that if they’re held accountable to that, you’re not being punished for it at all. So both parties should be held to ‘You can’t talk about this unless it’s like with whatever.’ But I don’t understand how you do that either, because you would be telling the victim, ‘She can’t talk to me.’ So it’s a tough line, but I think that would cut down a lot on the trauma that’s associated with it.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated it is best to treat the alleged offender neutrally until a case is proven one way or the other.**
  - *“I think you have to take the side of both until a clear decision has been made on the case. Until it goes through a court case or an investigation or something, just make sure that you’re not punishing somebody for something that they didn’t do.”* (Female)
  - *“Innocent until proven guilty. Because here, you’re in squadrons, so any time someone messes up or does something, they take a big hit and they get outcasted from the squad and stuff. Even if they’re innocent, ‘Hey, you did this, you’re accused of that.’ I think people should be aware and treat everyone equally no matter what.”* (Female)

### **Advice About Avoiding Sexual Assault**

In this short section of questions, cadets were asked what advice they would give to an incoming cadet, or what advice they would have liked to have received when they were new, regarding places or activities to avoid.

#### **Advice to Incoming Cadets**

- **Focus group participants offered advice on how to conduct themselves and choosing trustworthy friends.**
  - *“You have to have friends that you’re comfortable with. And you’re like, ‘Don’t let me go home with someone tonight, because I’m probably going to get drunk.’”*

*And that goes back and forth between people, and that may sound pretty bad or promiscuous but I feel like we're doing a lot better than a lot of other women would just by talking about it and being honest and open about it and comfortable with what decisions we make.” (Female)*

- *“It's also not a bad idea to have those guys that you go out with that you really trust, and you're like, ‘Hey, you will drive me home tonight? I don't want to go home with anyone else. Make sure I get back to my bedroom,’ if you know that you might get out of hand or something like that. Because a lot of guys here will stand up for you. And to have that strong arm in a situation is really helpful, and I think a lot of girls need to rely on some of their guy friends for that. So just the communication, being open about it, will help a lot.” (Female)*
- *“I think the wingman is really the biggest thing. I've never heard of a case of one person getting sexually assaulted and them having their buddy right next to them. If you go out with a group of people, the odds of that happening would go down a lot.” (Male)*
- *“Be with people you trust. Make friends that you trust, and when you go out and do things, or even here, do it with them and be trusting of them and trust their opinions, too, of other people. So if they say, ‘That guy seems like bad news,’ then trust their judgment on that.” (Male)*
- *“One thing that we address in our squadron is that a lot of times you can send the wrong perception or the wrong image of the type of person you are. It might seem like you're a female who is trying to put herself out there when you're not. So being conscious of the perception that you're conveying to people is also important.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants offered advice on use of alcohol.**
  - *“Just be careful with alcohol. In any instance, that can be a killer for anybody, if you misuse it. And I think that's just general knowledge. But I'll just reemphasize, because that can cause some problems.” (Male)*
  - *“It's very much in my mind, localized circles you hang out with, people, the environments you put yourself in. I had a fourth degree [freshman] who tried clubbing for the first time and found out it wasn't for her. So if she had been told that beforehand.” (Male)*
  - *“Don't be stupid with alcohol. That's the main thing.” (Male)*
  - *“Just make sure that you lock your doors at night so drunk people don't wander in.” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants offered advice that even though cadets are a select group, they are not always on top of every situation – they can be naïve – and need to be cautious.**
  - *“I think a big thing to get to the freshmen and females is that you're not going to be on the top of the world here, and that's a huge emotional blow for a lot of people. And that leads them to sometimes put themselves in situations where bad things can happen or make decisions that they're not comfortable with, and they won't speak up if they're not, and then that raises the caseload.”* (Female)
  - *“The biggest thing I would tell any of the freshmen — no matter what they [upper class men] say or how nice they're starting it, be cautious in everything, be cautious in every e-mail and every conversation. And it sucks that you have to have your guard up all the time, but you do. You really do need to keep it up because it just builds and builds. You may not mean to at all, you may think it's just a normal conversation, but you're still always new meat, and whether you think you're hideous in basic or not, you're still the new meat.”* (Female)
  - *“We took aside the basic girls and talked to them about frat [fraternization with upper class men] and basically said, ‘Do not even go there. Because you're going to get a lot of attention coming into your squad. It's not worth it, and you're demeaning yourself.’”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants offered advice on ways to avoid risky situations.**
  - *“Especially for girls, you can always say ‘No.’ You don't have to feel any pressure from any upper class men or anything. And do your best to avoid that. Because sometimes just talking to them can start up something bigger. But do your best to just avoid that situation because it will help in the long run and everything.”* (Female)
  - *“Even as a freshman, you have so much power to keep things professional and say, ‘This is not going to happen.’”* (Female)
  - *“As far as advice to new girls coming in, this place is about learning which rules to break and which rules not to. You can't survive nine months without a TV and a fridge, but frat is one rule you don't want to mess with. Don't even go near it.”* (Female)
- **When asked if there were places or events to avoid, focus group participants were positive about safety on campus.**
  - *“I'm not scared of going anywhere on campus. I went to a civilian school, so I didn't go anywhere after dark myself. But USAFA, it's patrolled heavily. Not heavily, but if someone wanted to do something on campus, not necessarily cadet area of campus, but the Academy campus is huge and not well lighted and*

*all of that. Something could happen, but I just don't ever see that happening.”*  
(Female)

- *“But frankly, I'm more afraid of bears at night. As far as the campus itself, I'm not afraid to walk out at night.”* (Female)
- *“There's no shady part of the Academy. If I'm going to feel unsafe, it's definitely not here on base.”* (Female)
- *“It's a sense of trust. I'd feel safer here than anywhere else.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that advice on being more aware and more assertive would help when potentially risky situations arise.**
  - *“I think the majority of the girls who come to this school did very well in their high school. So when they come here, I feel like they're a little bit more naive, they're less likely to, if something were to happen, come forward, because they're kind of naive. So maybe if this issue were addressed direct, very strong, head on and address it in basic training and enforce it. Just as much as we have honor briefings, I think sexual assault should be a little more heavily enforced. Education or teaching you how to stand up for yourself if you're going to someone's house with a girlfriend and you see that your friend's, like, one too many guys are all around her. She needs that friend to be taught, ‘Good bye, we're leaving.’”* (Female)

### **Sexual Harassment and Sexist Behavior**

In this section cadets were provided the sexual harassment and sexist behaviors incidence rates from 2010 SAGR<sup>27</sup> and asked to discuss why these behaviors occur and how their training affects the behaviors.

#### **Sexual Harassment Incidence Rates**

- **Most focus group participants acknowledged that crude and offensive behavior, such as jokes and locker room talk, is pervasive, but is not regarded as sexual harassment.**
  - *“Because people make those comments all the time. A lot of the cadets are sincerely joking. Some are definitely not. But you've got a bunch of the guys saying a lot of stuff or making lame jokes.”* (Female)

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<sup>27</sup> 84% of women and 47% of men indicated they had experienced some form of sexual harassment in the past year (crude/offensive behavior was highest) but of those percentages, only 53% of women and 10% of men would describe their experience as harassment. 88% of women and 39% of men experienced some form of sexist behavior in the past year.

- *“Like joking around, particularly the dirty jokes and stuff, that's what people do. I know that sounds like a generalization, but it's what people do. I don't think that should be labeled so harshly as sexual harassment.”* (Female)
- *“So a lot of people wouldn't consider off color jokes like sexual assault/sexual harassment. But the other thing, like coercion or whatever, yeah, that's sexual that's blatant sexual harassment.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that oftentimes sexual harassment behaviors result from poor judgment and the maturing process.**
  - *“We have to realize who we are dealing with. They are kids just out of high school and have no experience with that. They're still trying to find themselves, mature and to grow, and that's a process. It doesn't happen overnight. And because it's a learning process, people are going to make mistakes, whether it is making jokes or putting up a calendar that shouldn't be up.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that their training helps them understand the behaviors associated with sexual harassment.**
  - *“You receive pretty good instruction on what the sexual harassment line is, and that crosses — when you say, ‘I'm uncomfortable with what you just said. Please stop.’ After that statement, that's when sexual harassment begins. You have to have the confidence to say, ‘Please stop.’ And if they don't, that's when it's sexual harassment.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that they understand crude and offensive behavior is going to occur in a predominantly male culture.**
  - *“Being at the Academy too, with so many guys and so few girls, sometimes jokes get said, not necessarily thinking about the girls that are going to overhear them.”* (Male)
  - *“Welcome to an 80/20 ratio.”* (Female)
  - *“This is a male dominated culture. It's a very male dominated, 20% females right now. So the way guys act around other guys is not necessarily appropriate when women are involved. I don't know how much of it is sexual harassment or is intended as sexual harassment. But the crude jokes, you might be treating them [women] like one of the guys, which it happens a lot because you live with them, eat with them in the same area.”* (Male)
  - *“I think some of those numbers might go back into the ratio of guys and girls here. Because you might just be hanging out with a big group of guys and somebody says a sexist joke and then you look around and you say ‘Whoops, there's a female cadet right here.’”* (Male)

- *“My response before was, ‘Oh, it’s the Academy. You have to get used to it,’ because this is a reflection of the military. You can try and change the military, but it’s known for being locker room talk. If you feel more offended by it, then let people know, and maybe they’ll be more cautious. But coming into the military, you’re knowing that this is what you’re getting yourself into.”*  
(Female)
- **Focus group participants gave various reasons why a small percentage of men indicated they had experienced behaviors they considered to be sexual harassment.**
  - *“Every single group of guys that you talk to has one guy within the group that gets picked on by his own friends for whatever reason. It might be that one guy might just be the weaker one of the group or whatever. He might have done something that was kind of feminine that he might be picked on for that.”*  
(Female)
  - *“It wouldn’t surprise me if the majority of those were guy-on-guy sexual harassment. Because I’ll be with all my guy friends, and someone they know will walk by and grope them, and they’ll be like, ‘What was that?’ It won’t go any further than, ‘That was completely uncalled for,’ but it happens. There’s so many guy cadets that just don’t know their boundaries or they think it’s funny to do the whole pushing the homosexual boundaries with guys and freak them out a little bit.”* (Female)
  - *“I see a lot more of that as being general behavior, where they heard something that they thought was offensive to somebody that was next to them and they feel like that shouldn’t have been said in that situation. I think that probably pops up more than somebody is sexually harassing them personally.”* (Male)
  - *“It could be how they were raised. If someone went to a public high school, they heard so many more just pointless jokes about anything. If they went to more of a private or a religious school or home school where they didn’t get exposed to that type of stuff, they were strict on how they were raised and whatnot, it could just be very different. ‘I can’t believe someone actually said that. That’s just horrible.’”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants also noted that the designation of a behavior as sexual harassment depends on the individual.**
  - *“Sexual harassment is a big gray area. What you say to one person, ‘Oh, yeah, funny joke,’ you say to another person, ‘Whoa, did you really just say that to me?’”* (Male)

- **Focus group participants also noted that the designation of a behavior as sexual harassment depends on the intent.**
  - *“If it's in passing, if it's in general, that's one thing. But if it's someone that says that directly to me, that's inappropriate.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that offensive comments or jokes need to be stopped because if unchecked, it will continue to occur.**
  - *“I took care of it. And my first reaction was shock, and I really couldn't believe that. And my second reaction was, well, this guy is not going to get away with it. I didn't really take it personally because it was not true. I know myself. But I took care of it because I don't believe someone like that needs to be here around all of these other women, making similar comments to other women, which I have heard from people in his squadron does happen all of the time.”* (Female)
  - *“Especially here, there's a lot of professionalism. If you're going to be an officer; you're going to be working with females. You're going to act like a jerk? Are you kidding me? In passing, on occasion, share a little joke every now and then, sure. But if it's something like that, we're in the military; we're going to be officers. No way, not when you're going to be in the real Air Force and have airmen beneath you who are women who don't feel like they can stand up and stop you from saying offensive things to them when they're in your chain of command.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that when someone pushes back on an inappropriate comment, it typically stops.**
  - *“You can say, ‘Hey, man, I don't appreciate that.’ I think people would stop right away.”* (Male)

### **Sexist Behavior Incidence Rates**

- **Focus group participants were not surprised that sexist behavior incidence rates are higher at the Service Academies than active duty or Reserve component activities.**
  - *“Here we're brother and sister. And in a work environment, when you're on active duty, and you're there in a uniform for that amount of time, you have social relationships with those people. But here, literally it's a brother and sister thing. A lot of people don't even mean it. Most of those guys would be the first ones that would stand up for you if somebody outside of the Academy said something to you.”* (Female)

- *“Since we live and work here 24/7, all of the time, you're probably going to hear more of that stuff. You're not going to be joking as much in the workplace. This is our home too.” (Male)*
- *“I think they're more respectful of rank. They understand the professionalism of their job. We live together, we do everything together, and there's no break. We have to eat our meals together, we have to do this, we have to do that.” (Female)*
- *“It might be different versus active duty because we're not really in a regular job, like roles, working. Going to class, we don't get a chance to really see our female classmates perform and work with us. I was in training with a lot of girls, and they were awesome. They changed my perspective on females here.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that much of the sexist talk is not intended to be malicious.**
  - *“I feel like a lot of them aren't necessarily serious. It's almost like a running joke for most guys. I don't think the majority of them actually mean what they say.” (Female)*
  - *“You feel like you're joking with your sister half of the time. That's how I feel. I see the girls as my sister. But somebody else does it and ‘Whoa, who are you?’ I protect them like they're my sister.” (Male)*
- **Some focus group participants indicated that sexist behavior is pervasive.**
  - *“You can't have an attitude. Because those types of things are going to happen. Girls only started coming here in 1980. It's been 31 years. Yes, a lot has changed, but yet a lot has stayed the same, because guys are still guys, girls are still girls. There's nothing you can do about it. You're still going to get these comments, and you're still going to have to deal with it.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that there are still some issues about women at the Academy.**
  - *“Sometimes you hear stuff like ‘Oh, girls shouldn't be here.’ There's definitely guys at the Academy that think girls shouldn't be here. I think they're definitely in the minority.” (Female)*
  - *“There was a time when one gender was the only gender here. And all of a sudden the class of 1980 comes along, and some guys might say it ruined everything. So it really just depends on the guy and how they were raised, how they were brought up, and what they believe now.” (Female)*
  - *“These schools have a tradition of being a boys' club. That's like an unspoken culture, that it's a boys' club.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that the competitive culture at the academy contributes to sexist comments.**
  - *“You're constantly compared ‘Okay, what's your PFT score?’ ‘Well, here's my PFT score.’ ‘What's your GPA?’ It's a constant comparison in every little aspect. And if I score higher, if I get like a 375 and some guy gets a 350, then he says, ‘Well, I could have gotten that if I took the girls PFT.’ That's the kind of thing that you're constantly compared to each other with.”* (Female)
  - *“Active duty, you're working collectively for the betterment of everyone. Like here, you're trying to ‘Oh, I need to be at the higher end of the order.’”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants suggested a balance between individual achievement and group achievement might be helpful.**
  - *“I think the one detriment is that everyone who comes here, they're highly motivated, they're very smart, and they're all focused on succeeding individually. I don't know how to overcome that culture. Maybe perhaps integrate, I guess, a more open environment [emphasis on individual accomplishment needs to be balanced a little bit more by cooperative accomplishment]. Right.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that different physical fitness standards generate sexist behavior at USAFA.**
  - *“The guys' standards [PFT] are crazy, just for the number of pull ups... There shouldn't be the same standard, but... It would be interesting to see the distribution of scores for guys and girls. If the median is shifted over to the right a little more, that would be frustrating. [If the distributions are equal] I think that would shut a lot of guys up about it.”* (Male)
  - *“Every single time a PFT comes around, you hear a mass of men saying, ‘Oh, the girls have it easier. Maybe if I was taking the girl's PFT, I would be able to max it,’ blah, blah, blah. Just look at the physical structure of a female versus a male.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that people make sexist comments about leadership positions and diversity goals.**
  - *“One of the girls got about 450 on the PFT, so it's possible for a female to do just as well as an athlete — it's equitable in that sense. But that's not the only area of sexist comments, which is where it comes to leadership positions. For instance, we just got our first female wing commander in a while, and there's already talk about how, ‘Oh, we're going to have that time of the month chocolate party.’ It's stupid.”* (Female)

- *“It's the fear of meeting some quota, some percentage, leadership has to be given to such a minority or something. If you could completely eliminate the whole — certain number of flight commanders have to be girls, just get rid of that, and whoever wants the job ought to get the job. Whoever is most qualified for the job ought to get the job. Eliminate that completely, and that would get rid of it [sexist attitudes].”* (Male)

### **Leadership Response**

Cadets were asked to share their opinions whether leadership at all levels take prevention of sexual assault and sexual harassment seriously. They were asked for examples to illustrate why they believed the way they did and to describe situations that had the most impact (positive or negative) on their opinions. The section also included a question on how well cadets felt prepared by the Academy to deal with issues of sexual assault and sexual harassment when they are commissioned and have leadership responsibilities of their own.

### **Perceptions of Leadership Response to Sexual Assault**

- **Focus group participants indicated that all levels of leadership at USAFA take sexual assault seriously.**
  - *“They're [leadership] the most serious about sexual assault I've ever met in my entire life.”* (Male)
  - *“I think we all take it dead serious. I don't know a cadet who doesn't take it seriously.”* (Male)
  - *“Even the most relaxed AOC or AMT, if there's anything they're going to take seriously, it's going to be sexual assault.”* (Male)
  - *“The whole commandant staff, they're awesome. They want to know, they want to help, they know their problems. I think they're very responsive and they're very caring.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that overall leadership takes sexual assault response and prevention seriously, evidenced by the emphasis and number of programs that address the issue.**
  - *“They give us that green dot or red dot thing there.”* (Male)
  - *“I think because we have so many briefings on sexual assault and prevention. Of course, we assume that comes from the upper leadership saying these are things we've got to go through, because we've had them so often.”* (Male)
  - *“It's like we are the most educated of all. Just the fact that they bring in so many people to do that talk, that shows it right there. We get briefings all the time, four to five times a semester, minimum.”* (Male)

- **Focus group participants indicated that their AOCs and AMTs take sexual assault response and prevention seriously.**
  - “[AOCs and AMTs are as serious as senior leaders] Multiple yes.” (Multiple Males)
  - “Seeing my AOC take action. He pulled us all in and said, ‘I took this kind of action because I told you on day one I wouldn't have tolerance for this. And this is what I did.’” (Female)
  - “One of the first nights after basic, in transition week, my AOC and my squad commander got all the freshmen aside and started talking about some stuff and said, ‘Girls, stay after.’ And so there were several of us at that point, and they talked to us about the environment of the Academy. This was 10 o'clock at night, and my AOC was still here talking to us, just to make sure we understood. And he said, ‘If you have any questions, I want you to be comfortable. Everything is open right now.’ I really respect him for giving us that time and giving us that respect, to let us know what was up.” (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that immediate response to inappropriate behaviors sets a high standard.**
  - “My AOC, we had a sophomore who was really reckless and doing stupid stuff with the freshmen, and we made sure that it didn't recur. He's a really great guy, but that's something he really does not like at all, so he took action.” (Male)
  - “There was an incident in one squadron and the kid was moved out. In two or three hours, he was gone from the squadron. All of his stuff was moved out within three hours of him coming into his AOC's office and finding out what happened.” (Female)
  - “When an incident occurs, everybody does a really good job of not blowing it out of scale.” (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that leadership perspectives on sexual assault vary.**
  - “Depends. I think it depends on who it is. I've had really good AOCs and really bad ones. In our freshman year, we brought up issues to her, and she basically told us, ‘You're trying to get revenge on this upper class man.’ We were freshmen and didn't know any better. So it depends on who your leader is sometimes.” (Female)
  - “I think the honor system is a curse on this place when it comes to sexual assault. Our chain of command, they're always suspicious that we're lying about something, whatever it might be.” (Female)

- **Focus group participants indicated that advice from leaders makes a big impact.**
  - “[Discussing a conversation with an Air Force officer] He was giving examples of different ways to do it [present oneself], and his whole point behind it was to make sure you're taking care of yourself. If you constantly stand up for yourself because you think you're trying to prove something and you say you're not going to put up with anything but you really are, you're going to get bad results. This is a colonel in the Air Force who has been flying his whole life and definitely had fun for the first 20 years of his career. And he was just dead on ‘This is what you need to do if you experience something.’ So to have someone that has a party mentality, and a reputation of being like a crazy pilot, parties all the time, ‘This is not acceptable and you need to stand up for it,’ was really powerful to me.” (Female)
  - “Our AOC — we had a situation. He was really calm about it. He talked to the squadron. He wasn't freaking out, he wasn't threatening anybody. ‘We have a problem, we need to recover from it. We need to do the best the squadron can do.’ I thought he handled it very well.” (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the cadet chain of command takes sexual assault seriously.**
  - “The people who are in our cadet chain of command, they express that they care. If we actually had a concern and we brought it up to them, they would definitely take it seriously. I haven't seen anything from any one of my leaders that has told me that they really wouldn't care if I told them something. I think that's why they're in the position that they're in.” (Female)
- **Some focus group participants indicated that there is not much more that Academy leadership can do with respect to gender-related issues.**
  - “I can't really think what else — there's only so much that leadership from the top can do. I feel like they're doing a good job and they're trying. Every single person in here said they're serious about it. If someone is going to go out looking for trouble, they're going to get in trouble. And sometimes you just get flat out unlucky. And maybe consent one day is ‘I didn't mean to do it’ the next day. I don't know how you could really prevent it.” (Male)

### ***Perceptions of Leadership Response to Sexual Harassment***

- **Focus group participants indicated that leadership is also serious about sexual harassment prevention.**
  - “In the context of education and getting the information out there, I think there's the same emphasis.” (Male)
  - “I wouldn't tell an off color joke in front of my AMT.” (Male)

- *“My AMT was giving some brief. And someone made a joke, and then he was like smiling, laughing, and then immediately he just stopped smiling and he said, ‘That’s not cool. You shouldn’t have said that. You’ve got to be thinking about other people’s feelings.’ The kid who said it felt all bad. So they’re serious about it.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that cadet leadership might not be as serious about sexual harassment prevention as other leaders.**
  - *“Maybe not cadets. They’re more laid back than your leaders. You’re more inclined to tell an off color joke as being something amusing as opposed to being viewed as sexual harassment. That may be more just because you’re friends with them. I wouldn’t necessarily say I’m friends with my AMT in the sense that I’d go hang out with them, because there’s a line there, but I’d go hang out with the squadron commander.”* (Male)

### **Preparation as Future Leaders**

- **Focus group participants indicated that the training they receive as cadets has helped prepare them to deal with sexual assault involving personnel under their command.**
  - *“I think we are as well prepared as we as possibly could be.”* (Female)
  - *“I feel prepared and briefed a lot. We go through lots of training. The best training I got on rape and sexual assault — we had a law professor come in, who was also a commander of a detachment of Marines. He had a lady who was raped, and she tried to kill herself. He really stressed that it’s not about getting the guy. Because it used to be about getting that guy, and bringing the whole, entire wrath of God down upon him. I think they really need to focus on your primary mission as a leader is to look out for your people. And not just the victim, but the victim and the accused. I think you need to take care of them, and I think bringing punishment down is secondary to that. I think that you need to look after your people first.”* (Male)
  - *“Law class. We had true cases of harassment and sexual assault, and we had to analyze it, and what you did. First thing you do is go to the JAG [Judge Advocate General]. You had to know the UCMJ rules and how to act as an officer. It’s law class, and that helps.”* (Male)
  - *“I took a class called ‘Law for Commanders.’ It’s a 400-level class. It was awesome. We used the book that the actual commanders got. The AOCs and AMTs and generals and stuff, they have this book. It’s a huge book. It has all the regulations laid out easy, and we used that book and went through all of these different scenarios. But that was really, really helpful. And I still have the book, and if anything ever happens, I’m going to read it.”* (Male)

- **Other focus group participants indicated that the training they receive as cadets helps them understand their limitations in dealing with sexual assault involving personnel under their command.**
  - *“What we've been taught pretty well is they've told us about all of the programs out there. And as a commander, you should know that it is not your business to deal with it; it is to turn them over to a professional.”* (Female)
  - *“My AOC has a really good philosophy on this. If someone comes in and I even hear a hint of sexual assault or sexual harassment, I will be like ‘Stop. Are you sure you want to talk to me about this? Or do we need to go to SARC instead?’ And he won't even touch the whole unrestricted unless the person is positive that the person wants to do it, which I think is an awesome way to deal with it. If someone wants to talk to you, that means you have to be really cautious, because there's a lot of intricacies with sexual assault that you may not be prepared for. I think they prepare us well enough to know what channels are out there and where to go, as far as directing people.”* (Female)
  - *“[Regarding an offender under one's authority] My first call would be to legal and the SARC office and what I can and can't deal with. That's the best thing the Academy does: It makes us comfortable asking for help.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that seeing how their leaders handle situations is helpful in preparing them to so in the future.**
  - *“Our AOC has talked to us about the training stuff, and it helps us see how he handles it. Because anything that comes to him, the first thing, ‘Have you talked to the SARC or chaplain?’ Or something like that. Because he doesn't want to immediately go to the unrestricted reporting. He wants to make sure that they've looked at their other options. So I think that's important.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated their training is helpful in understanding how to get help for people under their authority.**
  - *“Prepared so I know where I can help them out. I won't be able to personally help them out. [Knowing the resources available] Yes.”* (Male)
  - *“I don't know how to help you, but I know who to send you to. We'll go see this person.’ I feel like they do that, but not to the greatest extent. A lot of people still probably wouldn't be comfortable in that situation. But they provide that little bit for it.”* (Female)
  - *“As a commander, you have a lot of resources that will help you with that. You've got all of those resources and the decision process, making sure you use them and making sure the victim and the accused use them as well.”* (Male)

- **Focus group participants indicated that they know about the resources, but experience dealing directly with gender issues will not happen until they are in a position of authority.**
  - *“It's one of those things where we have all the theory behind it, but until we actually put it into practice, how are we supposed to know?” (Male)*
  - *“Unless you personally go through it yourself and you see the AOC handling it, you get the statements taken, I really don't think we have any training in that. If I was a second lieutenant and someone came up to me and said, ‘I was sexually harassed,’ if I had not just gone through what I went through last semester and I saw the process, I would have no idea what to do. I would probably ask someone else to help me.” (Male)*
  - *“If we actually had somebody under us who was a victim of sexual assault, then maybe we would have that experience, but unless we did, the only thing we would have coming out of here is our SARC briefings and stuff like that.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that hearing about real experiences or hearing from officers would be helpful.**
  - *“There were a couple sessions. I remember last year, it was a one-time thing they had I think it was Captain Phillips put together a bunch of panels. And that was so helpful right there. I really hope she does it again.” (Female)*

### ***Training***

Results from the 2010 SAGR indicated that nearly all cadets had received some form of training in the prevention and response to sexual assault. Similar results were found for training in sexual harassment. However, when asked if the training was effective in reducing sexual assault or sexual harassment, the percentage of cadets who indicated “very effective” is down from previous surveys. Cadets were asked to describe their training briefly, then comment on the most and least effective training they received in the past year.

#### ***Training Received***

- **Focus group participants indicated that the effectiveness of training has improved over the years.**
  - *“Yes.” (Multiple Females)*
  - *“I think the training is good, it's letting us know these are the rights, these are the rules, these are the definitions, if it happens do something about it.” (Female)*
  - *“Now cases are coming up, and you didn't know it because people are getting trained on it. ‘Wait, this is sexual harassment. This is sexual assault.’*

*Whereas before, you wouldn't have thought of it as that. And so more cases are coming up.” (Female)*

- **Other focus group participants indicated the effectiveness of training has gone down because it is so repetitive.**
  - *“At some point I'm going to fall asleep. Honestly, I'm sick and tired. You hear 'sexual assault' all the time, and I feel like I'm living in an environment where this happens on a nightly basis or this happens on a weekly basis. Now, whether that's true or not, I can't attest to. But at some point I'm like, 'I think I've learned what you've told me. If you keep spoon feeding me, I'm not going to listen.’” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated their training might not necessarily fix problem people, but helps everyone deal with them.**
  - *“As far as making people aware and mitigating problems, training helps. Because even if you can't change those character flaws in some people who just automatically think it's okay and dismiss any sort of other opinions, you can at least mitigate it on the reaction side, how people are going to handle it. I think that is what the training is more targeted towards than necessarily changing those few people that have character flaws.” (Female)*
  - *“It's probably not too effective [in preventing sexual assault]. It just increases reporting.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that the effectiveness of training depends one's attitude toward the subject and the frequency of training.**
  - *“You look at a survey and you're like, 'I've had that 20 times this semester.' You get cynical as a cadet, and you're probably more likely to go, 'Maybe it's not that effective anymore, because I'm tired.' Obviously, numbers received it is effective; it's just that cadets, we tend to be more cynical about this stuff. And over and over and over. And then maybe we receive it as maybe it's not that effective. But obviously, it is, but we're more aware of it, and we know what's going on. Some of the stuff, we don't have a baseline to compare it to.” (Male)*

### **Training Versus Personal Characteristics**

- **Focus group participants generally agreed that training will not change certain personal characteristics.**
  - *“The type of people that do this type of stuff, I don't think there's any type of training that really gets to them, necessarily.” (Male)*
  - *“I personally feel like there's three kinds of people: The kind of person that's already made up their mind that they're not going to commit sexual assault; the*

*person that training could help them; and there's people that, no matter what kind of training you give them, nothing is going to happen.” (Male)*

- *“It's like the active minorities. The majority of people are passive about it. They are overall good people, or neutral people, but they'll never intentionally sexual assault anybody. But that minority of the people that will, they'll be the ones that consistently skip out on those [briefings] or would just not take anything. So what the briefings and all the training does, it just lets the majority of people know what's happening.” (Male)*
- *“I think if you're actually going to go sexually assault someone, I don't think a briefing or a personal story is going to stop you.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that the training is focused on prevention by others more so than changing the behavior of a potential offender.**
  - *“I feel like it's more designed to have other people recognize it and try to prevent it rather than a person who wants to do it. More having someone else stop an offender rather than having the offender stop themselves.” (Male)*

### **Most Effective Training**

- **Focus group participants gave the following examples of memorable sexual assault prevention training.**
  - *“They bring in a guy who's giving a briefing that is kind of funny but kind of very straightforward.” (Female)*
  - *“They have a lot of outside professional speakers that are hired to come in and talk to people about it.” (Female)*
  - *“They've brought in guest speakers, too, before. Those have been more memorable, that's for sure. They teach you something.” (Male)*
  - *“I think SARC tries very hard to give us good briefings [referring to the recent presentation and discussion of a case by a lawyer]. I thought that was a very good briefing. There was a ‘May I Kiss You’ one too, and a victim came in, and they broke it up by girls and guys.” (Female)*
  - *“That one [Sex Signals], you could joke around with it. Hold up the stop sign way too early or whatnot. But you were still learning from it. It was that attitude where you're supposed to joke, which for people our age, something a little bit uncomfortable, you want to joke around with it a little bit. Joking around with it helps in that case.” (Male)*
  - *“This woman used to be in the Navy, and it was a little group, and she was like, ‘I'm going to give this to you, and I'm going to talk about it until you understand. Because I want you to know what's up and I want you to*

*understand what your rights are, and you can always be fought for.’ That one was the best one. And it was great because it was smaller and it was a lot of information that you understood.” (Female)*

- *“The woman was good because she didn't start out with definitions of sexual assault or anything. She made it about us, ways to make us feel better, to empower us. Then she told us her story, but she didn't tell us it was her. She explained or just told us what to do, and how to become a stronger person helped her get through that time, and I think that helped.” (Female)*

### **Training Recommendations**

- **Focus group participants indicated training would be more effective if it were not so repetitious.**
  - *“I think the basic thing is we get what seems to be the same sexual assault briefings over and over and over again with the cadets. I think it discourages people from stepping in or taking it seriously. I think varying it as much as possible it would probably be the best thing the Academy could do. And as far as cadets, try to be more accepting of it.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated training would be more effective if there were more true examples and less about policies and rules.**
  - *“Make it about people. Right now it's all about actions and consequences. It's not about people. I think if you make it about people, not only will briefings be more interesting — I won't remember what you say, but I'll remember your stories.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that many cadets are socially immature and steps could be taken to improve social skills.**
  - *“Address the awkwardness. Some of these cadets have no social skills. And it's developed as you go along, but when they first come in, it's really bad sometimes. Maybe more focus on building up a personality in somebody. Because that also helps. You can't take a class on being social. Maybe if they had more events that helped them get together and just talk to people.” (Male)*

### **Awareness Campaigns**

- **Focus group participants had heard of the DoD “Hurts One, Affects All” campaign but could not describe it.**
  - *“Pretty much every bathroom has those. I think that's really useful. Because if it was on the wall, I'd probably walk by and not see it. But when it's in the bathroom, I do see it.” (Female)*

- *“I don't think I've heard that message as much as other messages that have come across in briefings or talks [commenting on the description of the campaign]. I haven't heard that stated very much at all. It makes sense in relation to the poster. But I honestly didn't get that from the poster. So actually, that message hasn't been told as much. It makes perfect sense, though, and it's definitely true.”* (Female)
- *“I've seen posters, that's it.”* (Male)
- **Some focus group participants commented on the goal of the “Hurts One, Affects All” campaign.**
  - *“Like with anything, just seeing people in squad, if someone is affected by something, something is bothering them, we're so close. You feel pain for them because you're so close with them. They're the people who you work with, they're the people who someday could save your life or you'll be there for them to save their life. I know I've had personal issues, especially lately, with friends who have gone through some tragedies in their life, and you hurt so badly for them because you're so close to them. And that's just a given in the military.”* (Female)
  - *“I remember looking at one of those in the bathroom. It was a woman in the front and a guy in the background and then a bunch of people on the side. And when I think of sexual assault, I don't think of an audience like that. I think of one person being a victim. I don't think automatically, ‘Oh, that's going to affect all of these other people.’ I think those posters are stretching it for me.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the Green Dot Campaign has had some positive effects.**
  - *“I think this green/red dot thing should go on. I was at a party the other day, and somebody was talking, and they were like, ‘Watch out for the red dot.’ Granted, they made a joke of it, but that means they're thinking about it.”* (Female)
  - *“I hang out with some guys who love making sexist jokes because I'm like the only girl who sits with them at lunch or whatever. And it's constantly like, ‘Oh, make us a sandwich, ha, ha, ha.’ And now it's turning to, ‘Oh, guys, that's a red dot. Hold on.’ They make it a joke, but it's still like they're thinking about is my behavior acceptable now?”* (Female)
  - *“He was just joking [about a news article], but it was off color. And it went to the point where they were like, ‘You're getting a red dot, and I'm getting a green dot for stopping it.’ So it does help. It gets people to talk about it.”* (Male)

- *“I’ll give a positive side. Like the red dot/green dot campaign, maybe you’re not going to go type in a big, long e-mail every time you do something right, but it puts the thought in the back of people’s mind, they’re thinking like, ‘Oh, well, I did something good.’” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated some problems with the Green Dot Campaign.**
  - *“It’s blurring the seriousness [joking about green dots]. If I file a serious report that deserves a green dot and people are just like, ‘Really.’ Whoever makes these programs really has to look at the culture of the Academy, and they just do not do that at all. Cadets are supposed to be mature, but they baby us so much that it makes people still be immature.” (Female)*
  - *“I think it’s silly. In order to report a green dot, you have to e-mail a certain Website and the information about it and stuff like that, where I think people don’t want to put the effort into it.” (Male)*
  - *“I do agree they should keep it up, but they need to clarify. If you donate cans, you can get a green dot for your squad. If you donate canned food, somehow that ties into sexual harassment and providing a good environment for that. So I don’t know where that came in. Just kind of strange. I think they need to fix that program a little bit.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that campaigns and awareness activities have benefit.**
  - *“I think it depends on the approach. I think it’s good that they keep trying new things and different speakers, different posters, the green dot, all of that. They’re at least trying to get things out in different ways, because not everyone is going to be reached by the same things. Some campaigns are probably more successful than others. I think the green dot is probably a really good example of a successful campaign.” (Female)*
  - *“I think some of them [awareness campaigns] can be [effective], if they’re done the right way. They definitely need to be careful about not letting them become a joke, so they don’t need to be overemphasized. There’s definitely a fine line between underemphasized and overemphasized. Before they start this campaign, ‘How is this going to be received?’ A brainstorming session.” (Male)*

## ***Bystander Intervention***

2010 SAGR presented a scenario involving a party and potential sexual assault. Focus group participants were read the scenario and asked to share their opinions of the actions cadets would most likely take to step in and prevent a sexual assault.<sup>28</sup> They were asked if the scenario was realistic for their Academy, why someone would intervene or not, and how cadets typically perceive their responsibility in such situations.

### ***“The Party Situation”***

- **Focus group participants indicated that such a party situation could occur at USAFA, but the circumstances might be different from a typical party.**
  - *“It could happen. We don't party like normal college people do. So it's a realistic situation, real to the real world, but here you're not going to see it as much. I'm just saying you're not going to find it as much here as you would anywhere else.”* (Female)
  - *“I think the situation is fairly rare too, just because it seems like cadets do go everywhere in packs. So the odds of a woman being somewhere by herself without her friends there, you don't usually see that. So you don't have to worry about it, because most of the time their friends are going to be there. You don't have to depend on somebody you don't know.”* (Male)
  - *“This is a totally plausible situation, because when we go out on the weekends, we're all going to be at the same places. It's not going to be just an Air Force Academy party, but we are all going to go to the same college party at whatever colleges are around here. So we could definitely be in that situation. As freshmen, most of us are not of age, and so most of us are going to make the right decision and not drink.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated there are a number of considerations that drive one's decision to act.**
  - *“Even if you think someone looks all right, you should walk up to them and like, ‘You're okay, right? Do I need to take you back?’ Or something like that. If you talk to the person, then you can get a better judgment are they really okay. And that goes back to communicating with your friends on what is okay, what is not okay. Having the plan at the beginning, you're like, ‘I don't want to go*

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<sup>28</sup> The text of the party situation reads as: “Suppose you see a female cadet, who you do not know very well, getting drunk at a party. Someone tells you that a guy from your squadron is going to take her to a back room to have sex. What are you most likely to do in this kind of situation?”

- Nothing
- Leave the party to avoid any kind of trouble
- Find someone who knows the woman and can help her
- Talk to the woman/try to get her out of the situation
- Stop the guy from leaving with the woman
- Other action”

*home with anybody tonight,' and even having your friends go back and think about 'How many drinks did she have?' It takes a lot of effort to look out for each other." (Female)*

- *"It also depends if — I guess they're assuming that they're not dating. But if they are dating, I'd be more likely to do nothing. But if I knew that there was nothing between them, then I'd be more inclined to step in and intervene." (Male)*

- **Focus group participants agreed that most cadets would intervene if they perceived the situation posed a threat to either party.**

- *"If you asked me this question maybe a year — about maybe a year and a half ago, I probably would say I wouldn't do anything, but now I just feel more empowered to help people out." (Male)*
- *"I try to associate myself with people who won't be in that kind of situation; so that if they are in that situation, then I would step in, with no questions asked." (Male)*
- *"We came here because we wanted to make a stand for something. We are strong, more outspoken people, and when we see stuff that isn't right, we would say something. I think that's the case for most girls who came here. First of all, we'd probably go up to the girl and see if she wanted to do that." (Female)*

- **Some focus group participants indicated that most people would not intervene.**

- *"I actually feel like most people would do nothing. 'Oh, well, somebody else is going to take care of that.' In a one-on-one situation, I see more people responding at a party when there's a bunch of people around. But I don't know this person. Somebody else obviously is watching out for them, is what most people justify it as." (Male)*
- *"Most people would say that they would do it, but in all actuality, most people would just do absolutely nothing or just try and distance themselves from it. At least in small groups, you can also imagine less confrontational, and they'd be trying to avoid that. Just say 'Oh, well.'" (Male)*
- *"No. Because if you just see a random girl going into the back room and you don't know her, you don't know what the situation is. You intervene with that person, you're getting into someone's business. They might know each other. So maybe you should go get her friend, somebody you mutually know 'Hey, does she actually know that guy?' But otherwise, you're putting yourself into a situation looking like a total jerk because you have no idea what their relationship is. You have good intentions, but at the end of the day, you're sticking yourself with that." (Female)*

## **Reasons for Avoiding Intervention**

- **Focus group participants indicated that of the 10% of male respondents who said they would do nothing or leave, the primary reason might be that men do not want to interfere with another man’s attempt to engage in a relationship.**
  - *“Everyone's like, ‘You're a buzz kill.’ But overall, I think it's a good thing.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants gave other reason why someone might not intervene.**
  - *“The guy who's trying to take her in the back room could start getting belligerent, and a fight could break out as well.”* (Male)
  - *“It's largely freshmen or people who would be underage. If they start to intervene and it gets called as a sexual assault in some way and their name comes out, if they're at a party, which is an alcohol hit, which is not a situation you want to put yourself in.”* (Female)
  - *“If anything, we learned about this in our management class, and even if you're around drinking or anything like that and something bad goes wrong, you get in trouble too, for even just drinking or being there. A lot of the cases, it's mostly at a bar. If there's a bar fight that breaks out and you're there and you witness it, you still get in trouble. So people watch out for themselves.”* (Female)
  - *“It can cost you a friendship.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated current alcohol policies might discourage someone from intervening.**
  - *“That discourages the wingman concept. You're tolerating other people drinking. Your friends are out there and then they get drunk, and then they call you, saying, ‘Hey, can you pick us up?’ Even though you're being a good person, going out there to pick them up, they catch the people in there obviously drunk, you'll get it too, for tolerating it. I think what they're wanting you to do is get them and turn them in. You're helping out a friend. You should be rewarded for that.”* (Male)
  - *“They've been trying to say they've changed the drinking policy on toleration. They tried to tell us that it's better for you to be a good wingman. They say you're not going to get a toleration hit if you stay there, but I have not heard of someone not getting a toleration hit. So I have a problem with that. And so leaving the party — yes, we are outspoken, but at the same time, we sometimes think of ourselves first. So leaving to avoid the trouble is also, I think, very possible.”* (Female)
  - *“Some of the policies we have conflict each other. We're told from the beginning to take care of each other, but yet if you tolerate someone drinking*

*alcohol, we're going to put you up for disenrollment. So we have this internal conflict where do we help someone, or do we try to not get kicked out of the Air Force Academy? Do I go and pick this person up because they're in my squadron, or do I leave them there because they have been drinking? If I drive them back, am I tolerating or they're underage; do I bring them back to the Academy? So I feel like that would discourage people from doing that. It would be the conflict of trying to not break the rules, even though making any kind of action, you're going to break one of the rules. It's just, which one are you going to break?" (Female)*

- *"You should never have to question, should I do the right thing? Now we have to question it. 'Well, should I do this?' Because I'm going to ruin my life; I'm going to destroy my future." (Female)*

### **Watching Out for Each Other**

- **Focus group participants indicated that they typically watch out for each other.**

- *"The whole thing is just to watch out for your friends, and watch out for the people you hang out with and who you go out with. From everything I've seen all of our friends, we watch out for each other. We're taught that, and that's what we do." (Male)*
- *"You can pretty much call one of your friends or somebody you know. If you're in a bind or in some situation, they're going to help you out. Drive to the airport or wherever it is." (Male)*
- *"We just get a call that 'Hey, Amy's stuck up at ...' or 'John's stuck up at...'. These are the same exact thing, 'Hey, one of our squad mates is stuck up here.'" (Male)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that good communication can prevent serious problems.**

- *"A lot of these problems can be solved just by talking it out ahead of time. Just like you don't want to see one of your friends get raped or something, guy friends or girl friends. You don't want to see your buddy get in trouble for sexual assault or anything either. So you'd say, 'Are you sure about this? Is it okay? Think twice about it.' Just talk it over with him real quick and a lot of times you can prevent any kind of problem there." (Male)*
- *"If you have that safety, I think with your group, you all need to agree that if they make a judgment to step in, you're not going to get mad at them. If they make the call to step in, then trust them." (Male)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that their training addresses bystander intervention, but the quality varies.**
  - *“I think sometimes it depends on the training you get, like the CPME [Cadet Professional Military Education] lessons with our AMT who has personal stories about what to do in those situations. But that's not a guaranteed thing that even would get — it depends a lot on the instructor.”* (Female)
  
- **Focus group participants offered suggestions on improving bystander intervention training.**
  - *“How do you overcome a bystander effect? I know they're trying to train leaders to take the initiative and make decisions regardless of the opinions of people. So maybe you could work from that to give people who are still 18, 20 years old, trying to grow, trying to mature, maybe giving them tools in making a decision. I don't know what those tools are or how to do it, but...”* (Male)

## Chapter 5: U.S. Coast Guard Academy

Nine focus group sessions were conducted at USCGA from March 21-23, 2011. Each session was scheduled for a 90-minute period. There was one male and one female session held for each class year and one mixed-gender session. Each session had between eight and twelve students.

### **Sexual Assault**

Understanding how cadets view various aspects of sexual assault and the incidence rates of sexual assault from the 2010 SAGR survey were primary topics addressed in the 2011 SAGR focus groups. Cadets were provided the definition of unwanted sexual contact (i.e., sexual assault) used in the 2010 SAGR survey.<sup>29</sup> The facilitator shared the sexual assault incidence rates for men and women at USCGA from the survey and asked if participants had seen or were briefed on the survey results. Participants then discussed the factors that might have contributed to the increase in the sexual assault rate for women from the 2008 SAGR survey.<sup>30</sup> Focus group participants then discussed the role of force and alcohol in sexual assault as well as situations where consent can or cannot be given. This section ended with a discussion of results of the survey where cadets were asked if sexual assault occurs more or less often at their Academy than in civilian colleges or universities.<sup>31</sup>

### **Familiarity With Incidence Rates From 2010 SAGR**

- **Focus group participants thought they had received information on the results of the 2010 survey.**
  - *“The Admiral sent an e-mail saying, ‘These are the results of all of the Academy surveys. We reported this many percentages.’ He told us what we were compared to the others.”* (Male)
  - *“They sent an e-mail out with the aggregate information.”* (Female)
  - *“I know that we had a break-out group one morning and they said the numbers have risen.”* (Male)

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<sup>29</sup> Unwanted sexual contact refers to a range of activities that the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) prohibits, including uninvited and unwelcome completed or attempted sexual intercourse, sodomy (oral or anal sex), penetration by an object, and the unwanted touching of genitalia and other sexually related areas of the body. For this report, sexual assault includes all of the behaviors included in unwanted sexual contact.

<sup>30</sup> On 2010 SAGR, at USCGA 7.8% of women and 2.9% of men indicated they experienced unwanted sexual contact (sexual assault) in the timeframe of June 2009 through spring 2010. This is an increase for women: up from 5.6% in 2008. Men did not change from 2.4% in 2008.

<sup>31</sup> The results of 2010 SAGR showed a decrease in the percentage of respondents who said it occurs less often at USCGA than civilian colleges/universities (among women it was 86% in 2010 versus 92% in 2008; and for men it was 90% in 2010 versus 97% in 2008).

## **Reactions to Incidence Rates**

- **Some focus group participants indicated the incidence rates from the 2010 survey were higher than what they expected for their academy.**
  - *“I think it's surprising. It seems high. We don't really hear anything like that, so I guess it means that that much goes on without an investigation or without it being addressed.”* (Female)
  - *“I'm surprised by that. That's still pretty high. It's just surprising to me. I consider it a lot for here.”* (Male)
- **Other focus group participants indicated the incidence rates from the 2010 survey were lower than what they expected for their academy.**
  - *“I am actually kind of surprised. I thought it would be higher than that.”* (Female)
  - *“You would think it would be a lot higher, especially all the stats that you hear about.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the increased sexual assault incidence rate found on the survey for women might be due to an actual increase in the number of incidents.**
  - *“This is all hypothetical, but it could be potentially that there's actually more people who got sexually assaulted in 2008 than 2010. It was just in 2010, a higher percentage of people in 2010 realized that what happened was sexual assault and they reported it as such.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the increased sexual assault incidence rate found on the survey for women might be due to greater comfort in reporting or admitting it occurred.**
  - *“They've come a long way in making you feel more comfortable in reporting things here, so it's a lot easier for anyone to come and say something like that.”* (Female)
  - *“Increased awareness, the more we talk about it, the more people feel comfortable admitting. I would say that's the primary reason. I don't think the number went down, the number of acts. I think the number of reported went up.”* (Male)
  - *“I also think that maybe here, compared to a civilian school, people are apt — they'd be more comfortable. Some girls may be more comfortable in a military setting to come out and admit something like that. People are more accepting here.”* (Male)

- **Focus group participants indicated that the increased sexual assault incidence rate found on the survey for women might be due to a sense of honesty in answering the survey.**
  - *“Could just be the people nowadays feel they can be more honest than they used to be.”* (Female)
  - *“Some people might have actually put more time and thought this time around than before.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the increased sexual assault incidence rate found on the survey for women might be due to the level of emphasis being placed on prevention and response.**
  - *“The Admiral has been saying — every year he puts in his opening speech to each class things he will not tolerate. I don't remember him saying it our freshman year, but I do have vivid memory of any sexual harassment [and sexual assault] will not be tolerated. I feel like it's something they've started to stress a lot more. So people see it as much more inclusive here than they would other schools. That's where it goes down. Our definition here is so much more broad than other schools would see it.”* (Male)
  - *“It's the same thing with CASA [Cadets Against Sexual Assault] on base. Whenever they give us that training, they say sexual assault happens here. It happens, it happens, it happens.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the increased sexual assault incidence rate found on the survey for women could be an artifact of having so few women at USCGA or the changing proportion of men to women.**
  - *“I would say a larger increase in the sizes of classes and the male-to-female population. You know, our class is like a third percent female to two-thirds male. The male number is steadily getting smaller. You have a larger number of female cadets in the Corps. You're bound to see an increase in something.”* (Male)
  - *“We have such a small number of women here that the increase could be due to one or two people. It's like two percentage points.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the increased sexual assault incidence rate found on the survey for women might be due to greater understanding of the behaviors that constitute sexual assault.**
  - *“Maybe with all the emphasis people are realizing, actually, and people see what happened to them, it finally qualifies as sexual contact.”* (Male)
  - *“It might just be that climate of half the Corps has moved out these past two years and a new half of the Corps has moved in. Maybe some people that had*

*unwanted sexual contact, somebody else would have thought that didn't really matter. That female wouldn't have recognized it whereas this new set did.”* (Male)

- *“I think it's just really everyone's responsibility to be very cognizant of what potential effects your actions could have, because it doesn't matter what you intended, it matters how the person feels.”* (Male)

- **Focus group participants indicated that men might be more reluctant than women to report sexual assault.**

- *“I think the guys have a little more pride and they just don't want to say they've been sexually assaulted. I would say that number should be actually a little higher.”* (Male)
- *“It's an emasculating thing. Even if people know about it, they're still not going to — even the trainings aren't going to help change that aspect.”* (Male)

### **Circumstances of Sexual Assault**

- **Focus group participants indicated that consent to engaging in sex can be given in circumstances where one cadet is senior to another.**

- *“I think some of the cadet leaders are still just peers, too. It's not like they're anyone different. They just have another stripe or something.”* (Female)
- *“I'm not saying that authority doesn't have an influence on it in some situations, but I think its situation based.”* (Female)

- **Focus group participants indicated that there is not much influence one cadet can exert over another.**

- *“We don't have any power over somebody who's not directly underneath you in your division. But it's in your best interest just to stay away from your chain of command, anyway.”* (Male)
- *“Sometimes authority doesn't come into play. People don't even question it. They're like, it doesn't really have a factor. If someone's not your upper class from your company but upper class, you're just a number in a different company. There's no relation even though rank is higher.”* (Male)

- **Focus group participants indicated that under some circumstances one cadet could exert influence over another.**

- *“Just being in a position of authority doesn't exclude you from anything, but once you start using that authority, then that's definitely not...”* (Female)

- *“It all depends on leverage. If a team captain, for example, can really promise something, then, yeah, I guess it could happen. But most people aren't going to sacrifice their dignity for that.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that cadets can feel comfortable saying ‘no’ to an inappropriate sexual approach.**
  - *“Everyone here is a human being. There's no line that you shouldn't cross when someone above us is trying to get us to do something to harm our bodies. It's pretty much if you want to do it or you don't want to do it.” (Male)*
  - *“It falls under the same sort of thing that you have the responsibility to not carry out an illegal order just because somebody has authority over you. If you're feeling that it's wrong, it's your responsibility to say, ‘This is wrong, I'm not going to do it.’ Just because they're subordinate doesn't mean they're not capable of making their own decision.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants agreed that physical force is not necessary for sexual assault to have occurred.**
  - *“Is it usually like coercion, they don't specifically force you, but they can make it seem like your only other option is to do one of these things.” (Female)*
  - *“They can threaten, too. It doesn't have to be just physically forcing you. They could say, ‘I'm going to do this if you don't.’” (Female)*
  - *“There's coercion and stuff like that, like talking someone into it. It doesn't always have to be physical.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that a person who has been drinking cannot consent to sexual relations.**
  - *“I think the challenge is that someone could have one beer and feel they can make a fine decision. What are you going to do? Have the person that you met in the bar go back to your place and blow in a Breathalyzer and see if it's .08 before you decide to do anything? The reason they make that line of not drinking is that if you have been drinking, you can't give consent. There's no other way you can draw the line if judgment is too impaired.” (Male)*
  - *“We had a training that mentioned this. I can't remember how much, but any alcohol impairs your judgment. You might say yes at the time but you might wake up the next morning and be like, ‘What did I do?’ It's really soon after you start drinking that you aren't able to consent because your judgment is already impaired.” (Female)*

- **Some focus group participants indicated that a person who has been drinking can consent to sexual relations up to a point.**
  - *“When you have one or two drinks, you still have some sense of control over your decision making, but when you're really, really drunk, you don't have control over your faculties.”* (Female)
  - *“It's unrealistic to expect that if anybody drinks at all, they're not going to be able to consent. That's just doesn't make any sense. Some people can have a beer and still be fine, be coherent. But legally drunk, is that the actual time to not be able to give consent anymore? That's not a decision I make. I think that is a little too far. It should be a little before that, but definitely not just drinking at all.”* (Male)
  
- **Some focus group participants indicated that legally if both parties have been drinking they cannot consent to sexual relations, but practically it depends on circumstances.**
  - *“Looking at it from the book perspective, alcohol involves no consent. From an actual real-world application, if two people get drunk and then have sex, is it really rape.”* (Male)
  - *“It depends on every person. It depends on the character as well. Let's say they're not used to actually saying no or they're just going to go along. It's their personality. Mix that with alcohol, that would be a bad mess, obviously. Let's say a person with a stronger character who's used to actually saying no and knows how to voice out, unless they're completely intoxicated where they're passed out, they still have that ability. It depends.”* (Female)
  - *“If two people were impaired, I would say that you can't really place fault on either person necessarily.”* (Male)
  
- **Survey results in 2010 showed that 48% of women who experienced sexual assault indicated that alcohol was involved in some fashion. Focus group participants commented that 48% seemed low.**
  - *“Around 50%? That's surprisingly low, in my opinion.”* (Male)
  - *“I thought the 50% seemed low and that 77% [from 2008 SAGR] it's just more probable to happen with alcohol.”* (Female)
  
- **Focus group participants indicated that alcohol involvement in sexual assault might be a little lower than expected because people at the academy might be more likely to consider the repercussions of alcohol and sexual behavior.**
  - *“You look at civilian colleges and there's reports every weekend of someone getting alcohol poisoning and almost dying. People do drink here and*

*sometimes they go overboard and they're a little young, but that really won't happen here just because people have so much to lose.” (Male)*

- *“The last year or so you get an alcohol incident here, that goes on your permanent record as opposed to just the cadet record, which disappears. So maybe that's part of it.” (Male)*
- *“It could be the pride thing again where if somebody was sexually assaulted, they don't want to admit that they were. I don't know. Because they might think that it was their fault, if they got too drunk or something.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that drinking makes consent to sexual relations a complicated situation.**

- *“I think that the gray area between the definition and the moral concept of it, like the legal aspect is yes. Neither of them technically consented because they're both under the influence of alcohol. But from a realistic standpoint, the common person would say they both were drunk so that means it's all right.” (Male)*
- *“Maybe at the time it might be consensual because they're under the influence of alcohol, but when they're sober they might regret it. I guess it could be consensual at the time, but then it wouldn't be so consensual when they sobered up.” (Female)*
- *“Alcohol does give you the confidence to do something that you want to do in the back of your head but you know you wouldn't normally be able to do when you're fully sober.” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants offered no further suggestions to improve training on alcohol use as a way to reduce sexual assault.**

- *“I don't think you can possibly do any more about alcohol here.” (Female)*
- *“We had one training with a first class who had an alcohol offense. He talked about his consequences. I think that was probably the most meaningful one. It was only about 10 minutes, but seeing it, a cadet who had troubles with that, it was more effective than a chief who's not really related to what the actual cadets do on weekends.” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that the Academy has policies regarding alcohol use, but a shift in focus might instill greater responsibility.**

- *“The Academy treats alcohol as if it's some insanely dangerous drug that is impossible to be used responsibly, and I believe it's a completely wrong approach. Like anything else pretty much in life, whether it's alcohol, food, drugs, anything has the ability to be abused and be dangerous, but you need to learn the skills to be able to use it responsibly. The best training I had was*

*Captain O'Connor talking to our class and saying, 'Here's my alcohol policy.' He talked about how he only drinks beer bottles because he knows how much alcohol is in that and that way he can keep track of how much alcohol he's drinking. That was, I thought, perfect, and that was like, you can drink alcohol but just know what you're doing and be responsible about it."* (Female)

- *"The Academy — it's getting better than it used to be, but they have traditionally encouraged total abstaining from alcohol use. I think they need to teach responsible drinking as opposed to not drinking at all because until you turn 21 people here didn't drink. It's totally in secret and hush hush, but if people just learned how to drink responsibly at the Academy, then I feel like we'd have a lot less issues."* (Female)

- **Focus group participants also indicated the policies on conduct could be improved as a way to reduce sexual assault related to alcohol use.**

- *"The condoning policy could be updated. People can get in trouble for something someone else does. For instance, if one person drinks too much and needs medical attention, if someone takes them to get medical attention but doesn't report them, they can get in trouble. It makes it very difficult for people to help other people out, to see someone who's getting drunk, they need some intervention, but if you intervene, you could get in trouble for not reporting them. You could get in trouble. They should make it so you're able to help out with your classmates, your shipmates, without getting in trouble yourself."* (Female)
- *"You're stuck, you get caught either way, because if you just leave them, you're considered abandoning. Then you're isolated by everyone else when they find out. But if you do help them, then the administration just cracks down on you. If you're trying to do the right thing, you shouldn't be punished for it."* (Female)

- **Focus group participants recommended improving activities on-campus to lessen the risky situations cadets experience off campus.**

- *"I think there should also be more on-base activities for us to do, like more opportunities for us to drink safely on base. I know there was a long time ago when people in the military 18 and up could drink. I know people are going to drink under age. If the military allows it, it's going to be a lot safer than hiding it in a hotel room."* (Female)

## **Comparison to Civilian Colleges and Universities**

- **Focus group participants indicated they thought sexual assault occurs less often at USCGA than other colleges and universities.**
  - *“I think maybe because we make a bigger deal about it. At other schools, they just kind of sweep it under the rug.”* (Female)
  - *“We're not even allowed to shut our door when a boy is in the room, and then at normal colleges they live right next door.”* (Female)
  - *“Probably happens less often here than in civilian colleges. I would say it happens more at the other academies than it does here because it's so much more under the microscope here. If something happens here, everybody knows about it within one or two days.”* (Male)
- **When asked why the percentage of cadets who indicated sexual assault occurs less often at the Academy was down slightly from the previous survey, focus group participants noted that there has been training, publicity about previous cases, and sensitization about what constitutes sexual assault.<sup>32</sup>**
  - *“There were cases published in past reports. The Corps was made aware of certain events. I would say on the whole that I think this happens much less but it gets more publicity because the Academy is so open about it. There's a lot of transparency in what goes on here.”* (Male)
  - *“We have so many trainings that everybody thinks that, ‘Oh, it must be a problem because they give us so many trainings on it.’”* (Female)
  - *“The education we have on it now, things wouldn't have been considered sexual assault or harassment before, we do report now.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants agreed that the emphasis on sexual assault is proper.**
  - *“I don't think you can over-emphasize it, especially where we're going to be in positions of management. You need to be very, very sensitive of your actions, specifically with this. This is almost a no-brainer. It's pretty intuitive.”* (Male)

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<sup>32</sup> The question posed in the focus groups was “On the survey, we ask if sexual assault occurs more or less often at your Academy compared to civilian colleges/universities. We have seen a shift in perceptions over the years. The results here at USCGA show an decrease in the percentage who said it occurs less often at USCGA than civilian colleges/universities (among women it was 86% in 2010 versus 92% in 2008; and for men it was 90% in 2010 versus 97% in 2008). Can you help us understand this finding? Why would this be so?”

- **Focus group participants indicated that the percentage of cadets who indicated sexual assault occurs less often at the Academy was down slightly from the previous survey might be due to the increased number of women entering the academy.**
  - *“The number of females increases every year, so as there are more females, you'd think that there'd be more opportunity for that to occur. It's still based on the numbers, I would say. It might happen more because there are more women.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that each cadet’s frame of reference might influence the perception about the frequency of sexual assault at the academies.**
  - *“I think it's just people's perception. That can be influenced by so many things. Did they have a friend back home who experienced it at a civilian college? Do they know someone here who experienced it? How has it been portrayed about how bad it is? If you asked me do I think it's worse at a civilian college, that's dependent on the fact, what do I know about the atmosphere at civilian colleges.”* (Male)
  - *“I'd be interested to know if there was an incident that happened right before the survey or closer to one survey than the other, because this tends to be influential in trainings based upon circumstances that happen at the Academy. The thing about sexual assault is a lot of it goes unreported, so if say you have an incident that happens and it's reported, it's going to have a lot more influence than one that was unreported.”* (Male)

### **Reporting**

The objective of this section was to understand from cadets’ perspectives why someone who experienced sexual assault would report it or not. The questions first asked why the number of actual reports was higher in 2010 than in 2009,<sup>33</sup> then questions addressed to whom one would most likely make a restricted or unrestricted report. Cadets were also asked for their recommendations on how to encourage more victims of sexual assault to come forward and make a report. The questioning in this section ended with a discussion of the treatment of alleged offenders during an investigation and trial period.

#### **Increase in Actual Reports of Sexual Assault**

- **Focus group participants thought the increased number of reports in 2010 from 2009 might be due to increased comfort in reporting.**
  - *“Each company has like an OD [Officer of the Day] cadet, who is not that far away, so I guess the amount of people that we could report it to is a lot higher, where at civilian colleges, if something was to happen, an individual might not*

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<sup>33</sup> There were no reports of sexual assault in 2009 and four reports in 2010.

*know off the bat what to do, whereas we have a chain of command and we have lots of people that we could talk to about it.” (Female)*

- *“There is so much awareness about it now that cadets feel more comfortable talking about it, especially when they know there is restricted and unrestricted reporting.” (Male)*

- **Other focus group participants indicated they thought the number of reports in 2010 would have been higher because of the environment the academy has established for reporting.**

- *“I’m just kind of surprised at the lack of incidents reported here. I feel like women would be more apt to report it just because it’s more of a protected and enclosed environment.” (Male)*
- *“It seems like we have a training almost every other week on sexual assault and sexual harassment and you could report it without anybody else knowing. You can go and make a restricted report and have nobody else find out, yet the people still don’t report it?” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants thought the increased number of reports in 2010 from 2009 might be due to better knowledge of how to report.**

- *“We’ve always had a lot of training on sexual assault reporting, but if it increased, I feel from when we first started as freshmen to now we get more trainings on who to go to and there are more people to go to.” (Female)*
- *“I think they’ve done a really good job letting us know how we can report.” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants thought the increased number of reports in 2010 from 2009 might be due to a change in focus in training to a more victim-oriented approach.**

- *“They’ve changed the way that they’ve trained over the years. Freshman and sophomore year, definitely it was ‘Please-report-these’ type trainings and ‘This is how you do it.’ It was more talking about the subject, just throwing a lot of stuff at us. Then in the last two years they changed the approach. It was like detailing the process and how to work through the process, and it was more of a victim approach of what’s available to victims.” (Male)*
- *“The training was accusatory the first two years. They’ve definitely done a lot better job making it clear, ‘If this happens, this is your option.’ A lot of the training we had earlier on was almost scare tactics, ‘You probably have done this.’ Now they have taken a much different stance, I think.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants thought the increased number of reports in 2010 from 2009 might be due to constant emphasis on sexual assault and reporting.**
  - *“Extra awareness. It seems like we've had three trainings a year about sexual assault, how to report it, restricted or unrestricted, all that other stuff. It's an internal sense. Okay, I finally know what this is. I know who to go to.”* (Male)
  - *“The new lieutenant who gave us the lectures about sexual assault, I think that I've probably been to like four by now and I've been here less than a year. She's pretty thorough about it. You can tell. And the CASA cadets, on sexual assault, they also gave a training about reporting it, so it gets out to everybody.”* (Female)
  - *“That's definitely a result of the focus on reporting. The training saying restricted, unrestricted. Just because it's zero to four doesn't mean that there were less or more.”* (Male)
- **Even though there was a slight increase in the number of reports made in 2010, focus group participants indicated most incidents remain unreported.**
  - *“If they weren't [reported], they probably weren't because there's such a feeling of loyalty among all of us. It's just we're all like brothers and sisters. We don't want to get anyone in trouble because we care about each other.”* (Female)
  - *“Because it puts that person in a compromised position, points out that they were, at one time, vulnerable. So like for males it could be emasculating. For females, especially here, you're going to be an officer, trying to be a leader. It showed one time you were vulnerable to another person.”* (Male)

### **Recipients of Restricted and Unrestricted Reports**

- **Focus group participants indicated that someone would most likely seek a chaplain to receive either a restricted or unrestricted report of sexual assault.**
  - *“Chaplain and counselor.”* (Male)
  - *“We have really good chaplains here. In my opinion.”* (Female)
  - *“A CASA or the chaplain, because I don't know where the official person is. I would go looking for him. I know where the chaplain is, though.”* (Female)
- **Some focus group participants indicated they would make a report of sexual assault to either a CASA member, the SARC [Sexual Assault Response Coordinator], or their company chief petty officer.**
  - *“We always feel that company chiefs are here for us, out for our best interests. I would go to my mine first.”* (Female)

- *“There's always a CASA member with the CASA phone or whatever it is. That's a pretty direct way. Sometimes it's hard to find a company officer or chief, especially if it's not during the workday.”* (Male)
- *“Most cadets would maybe go to a CASA member or a chief, because they're familiar with them. I could also see someone going to the victim advocate because she doesn't want anyone else in the school to know about it. She just wants it to be completely separate from school. Not that it gets out from the CASA person or chief, but they might just want it to be completely separate. But I would say the victim advocate is the least.”* (Female)
- *“CASA representatives. They have a special name tag in front of their door. They're trained to handle a restricted report, too.”* (Male)
- *“I believe they'd take it to the SARC.”* (Male)
- *“I would probably start with the company officer, company chief. That way it would keep it out of the cadet ranks and I'd rather just start that a little bit higher and maybe get a little less scuttlebutt going around the Academy.”* (Male)
- **Some focus group participants indicated someone might make a report at the clinic.**
  - *“They're medical counselors, down in the clinic.”* (Male)
  - *“Counselors, doctors.”* (Male)
- **Other focus group participants indicated that cadets would be reluctant discuss personal matters at the clinic.**
  - *“Our medical system here doesn't really instill confidence in people to report. People don't want to go to the clinic to try to get treated. Basically, you get forced down that pipeline if you do report. People would rather take care of it behind closed doors. Go to the hospital. I think the reporting at the clinic has a direct result on people not reporting sexual assaults.”* (Male)
  - *“As a female, when I go into the clinic, the front desk and waiting room are right next to each other, so any private matters I have to discuss at appointments or why I'm visiting and what the matter is, oftentimes I don't feel comfortable, so I'll call. It's intimidating having maybe a classmate or under class sitting right there and you're trying to tell someone what your problem is.”* (Female)

- **Focus group participants indicated that oftentimes a cadet would first talk to a friend, parent, or roommate.**
  - *“When you tell your roommate, the roommate would probably take over because they know you don't want to talk about it. Once you tell your roommate, a lot of us would say, ‘You're probably going through a lot, so I'll try to help you with this.’ That's what we all do for each other. ‘I see you can't handle this right now so I'll try to help you with it until you want to talk about it more.’”* (Female)
  - *“I'd call my sister.”* (Female)
  - *“Parents.”* (Female)
  - *“One of my best friends is a firstie. He's a senior. If something like that was to happen, I trust this guy so much, maybe I'd talk to him. It's all about who you socialize with, who your friends are, who you're involved with. I don't really visit the chapel, I don't really like the coach, so I'd definitely go somewhere else where you have more trust in the person.”* (Male)
- **However, focus group participants indicated that if they discuss an incident of sexual assault with a fellow USCGA cadet, that cadet is required to report the incident.**
  - *“If I'm not a CASA representative, if somebody came up to me, I have a duty to report that. We're all bound by a code to report that.”* (Male)
  - *“The interesting thing with that is if you tell a friend who's not a CASA rep, technically, you've gone unrestricted. When somebody else knows, they consider it unrestricted.”* (Male)
  - *“If someone comes to you and you're like the person in charge of the company for the day and they're about to make a report, you have to let them know right away, ‘Anything you tell me when I'm on duty, anything you tell me, I have to report.’”* (Male)
  - *“One of the problems, you could go talk to your roommate. It automatically is unrestricted. So if you tell your roommate and then your roommate gets the logic in your head, now that you told me, it's going to be unrestricted, like you don't have a choice. I think that would stop a lot of people [from reporting], especially in a small school. We all know each other. You don't want that going around.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that people have different reasons for choosing among recipients of a report of sexual assault.**
  - *“It depends on what type of person you are. Some people feel more comfortable sharing that with someone they know while someone else wouldn't want*

*someone to they know really well to be the first to know. They'd rather tell it to someone who's more of a stranger.” (Female)*

### **Reasons for Reporting**

- **Focus group participants indicated that someone might make a report of sexual assault to stop the offender from hurting anyone else.**
  - *“If they think that it could happen again, if someone else could be hurt by that person, I think that's a human motivator. Doing it out of the fact that you don't want to be selfish and potentially see someone else get hurt by the same person.” (Female)*
  - *“They don't want that person to do it to somebody else again.” (Male)*
  - *“It also puts you in charge of it. That's why a lot of people would report it. They're not going to allow somebody else to become a victim, so they're going to take control from there. And you also think, you don't want it to happen to somebody else.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that someone might make a report of sexual assault to seek closure on the incident.**
  - *“When you have a situation that happens to you, it's fear of that situation looming over you. It's like closure if you can talk about it with someone else or you can do something to fix it, because if you don't, you're just letting the situation happen over and over again. If you make a motion to stop it, it can clear your conscience a bit more about the situation.” (Female)*
  - *“If other people already know about it and they think something will be done.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that someone might make a report of sexual assault because cadets care for each other and would notice something wrong.**
  - *“If it's having an effect on their life, like their performance or their happiness has gone in a totally different direction, then a lot of times, especially here because it's so small and you have — not people breathing down your neck but you have a lot of people who would probably notice if something was wrong. So even if you didn't want to tell anyone, people would not pressure you but they'd be like, ‘What's wrong? What's wrong?’” (Female)*
  - *“It would be hard for me just to tell a chaplain about it and none of my friends, because your friends are going to know something happened to you because you're not going to be acting normal, so I think that would be really hard.” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that someone might make a report of sexual assault to seek justice or punish the offender.**
  - *“If they feel like they didn't do anything wrong, they're completely in the right. Any of their actions were not questionable at all and they feel 100% violated.”* (Male)
  - *“You just want the guy prosecuted for what he did.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that someone might make a report of sexual assault to seek medical or mental health assistance.**
  - *“Personal health and safety.”* (Male)
  - *“Medical help. That would be a big one. And psych stuff as well, emotional.”* (Male)
  - *“If you're injured emotionally or physically.”* (Male)

### ***Implications of Reporting***

- **Focus group participants indicated that they are trained to deal with situations at the lowest level, so in some cases they do not report sexual assault because they did not see the need to do so.**
  - *“There's a lot of training on how to handle things at the lowest level. Why take it all the way up the chain if you can deal with it?”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants discussed the potential negative effects of someone making a report of sexual assault.**
  - *“People aren't going to come forward if they don't think people will believe them. Even if 95% of the people do believe you, having 5% of the people who don't probably would deter a lot of people, just having those people outright hate them and not believe them.”* (Female)
  - *“A lot of the times these people get a really bad reputation and then everybody knows about them for the rest of your career, so I feel that that would deter me from wanting to report it, just because I know all these cases, and the fact that I know all these cases, it means somebody else will know my case.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated the length of time it takes to submit and resolve an incident discourages people from reporting.**
  - *“It seems like you can get dragged through the mud if you report something, just because it's such a lengthy process. Maybe you want to just stop thinking about what happened and it's just there. It's always there. You have legalities*

*to deal with. That can be really hard for someone, especially if they're a victim of sexual assault.” (Female)*

- *“Maybe it was unwanted, but maybe I don't want to go through all this paperwork or having to talk and go through all this work. It wasn't that big a deal.” (Male)*
- *“We're busy all the time. With everything we have to do, having that on your plate, too, along with everything else might not be worth it. Might just not be worth it to go through.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that cadets might not report sexual assault for fear of getting themselves into trouble for other behaviors.**

- *“When you're reporting something you might not want to because of alcohol or something. There's a lot of other things that you'd still get in trouble for. If you get yourself in a sketchy situation — if you had done anything else in that time where you could get in trouble, you wouldn't want to tell that because you'd still get in trouble.” (Female)*
- *“They have told us if you were sexually assaulted and come forward about it that you would get amnesty, but we've seen that not happen.” (Female)*
- *“If somebody reports something and it's related to a Saturday night at the bars and alcohol, there's a real high probability that they're going to get an alcohol offense on top of it. A lot of people don't report it because they don't want to deal with the fact that they're going to be restricted for the next three months for being involved in an alcohol incident.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that cadets might not report sexual assault for fear of getting others into trouble for other behaviors.**

- *“It's also that if you told, that you would get in trouble. It's everyone that was there. Regardless if you reported yourself and that other person, it's every single person that was involved at the party. Now you've got 20 people in trouble and it's just like a huge mess.” (Female)*
- *“People don't want other people getting in trouble, or themselves.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that cadets might not report sexual assault as a way of dealing with a difficult situation.**

- *“There are a lot of reasons people don't report sexual assault throughout the entire world. One of them is they think if you don't report it, then you don't have to admit that it happened to yourself. That's a very real reason that people don't report it.” (Male)*

- *“Having restricted and unrestricted reporting here at the Academy, a lot of people would rather not disclose the fact that it happened to the entire Corps and so they deal with it on a closed-door basis with a couple people that they trust. I feel like that's why a lot of it here is unreported. It's reported but it's contained.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants offered some suggestions to encourage reporting.**
  - *“The last training — it was freshmen and the second class, and I didn't like that. We had to do it with them just because they are our superiors. It's awkward, and a lot of them were joking around the entire time. So, since here we are freshmen and we see them joking around throughout the whole thing, that kind of pressure, the freshmen to do the same thing, not take it seriously.”* (Female)
  - *“I just know when we go to the trainings they make it such a big — well, it is a big deal. There's all these rules that I don't even remember, who's restricted and who's unrestricted. If somehow they can make it easier for people to report it. I remember them pulling up this flow chart. There's no way I'm going to remember this. It was nice they made a visual, but it just showed you how messy the whole process is.”* (Male)
  - *“I feel it should be as simple as going to whoever you report it to, the first company officer or chaplain. It should be as simple as, ‘Okay, I want it unrestricted or restricted. There's a whole big process which seems kind of ridiculous, especially if somebody has gone through a traumatic incident like sexual assault. Everything in the military requires so much paperwork, and this is no exception. There should definitely be an exception to the whole paperwork.”* (Male)
- **Other focus group participants indicated that there is not much more the Academy can do to encourage reporting other than provide the necessary information on how to do so if one chooses.**
  - *“I don't think we need any more trainings on it, I think they drilled that in, so it would have to be something else. I think that's their go-to solution.”* (Female)
  - *“They do a really good job with it.”* (Female)

### **Treatment of Alleged Offenders**

- **Focus group participants indicated alleged offenders are sometimes treated as though guilty.**
  - *“People find out and people hear half the story and not always the truth. I know if any of the guys found out that one of the guys from the school hurt us, that would not be okay with them. They probably would not associate with them even if they found out it really wasn't true, like that person is still going to have bad feelings. It makes a mess.”* (Female)

- *“Your name gets dragged in the mud whether you did it or not at that point. Even if you were proven innocent, you were still involved in a situation.”*  
(Male)
- *“It can be completely false allegations but it doesn't matter. It's guilty.”*  
(Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that, because USCGA is so small, most people have opinions of most cases based on knowing the people involved.**
  - *“Even before there's a trial, you know everything that happens. You pretty much already are able to know just from knowing the people, since you know everyone. There's like 900 cadets in total. If they are guilty, everyone would know. If they're actually innocent and a really good person, they just got caught up in a bad situation, you'd know and be understanding of that.”*  
(Female)
  - *“[If someone is acquitted] Everybody will know that happened and they'll remember it, whether or not it turned out that they were guilty.”* (Female)
  - *“A lot of it is perception-based. You could have someone be a victim of sexual assault and then the Corps react the same way, ‘Oh, well, it's their fault.’ Because they have a bad reputation, people are going to assume, ‘Oh, well, that figures.’ I'm not saying that that's correct. I don't believe that we should do that. I'm saying that that does happen.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that how an alleged offender is treated depends on how well people know the parties involved.**
  - *“If it's unrestricted, people are going to know who they are. They're going to be looking out for whoever the victim was to make sure they aren't around that person. So there's always going to be people looking out for you even if it's not official.”* (Female)
  - *“If you didn't think it was that bad, you'll still be friends with them, or, if you were really offended by it, every person — if that was your best friend and they got acquitted, you're probably still going to be their best friend. There are a lot of cliques. They're going to last after that. If it was your friend, you're going to go stand up for them. If it was outside of your group, it will probably maintain or still stay.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated moving an alleged offender to a different company during an investigation is not a good idea.**
  - *“That's a terrible idea because now you're moving someone from somewhere comfortable where everyone knew them. At the other academies, it's a huge school. We're a very close school, but when you have 4,000 people, it's not that*

way. So now you're sending off someone who is innocent until proven guilty. I don't think the new company would be welcoming." (Female)

- *"It would make it a lot more obvious to the rest of the Corps. If you didn't want everybody to know, that wouldn't be an easy way. 'Why are you leaving your room?' 'There's no good reason for it. I just wanted a new room.' No one's going to believe that. If you're trying to keep it discrete, that wouldn't be a good way of talking about it."* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated it is best to treat the alleged offender neutrally until a case is proven one way or the other.**
  - *"Treated normally until proven guilty. Typically when you go out on active duty, usually there is a separation. It's almost harder at the Academy to create separation, interact with one another. It's almost impossible."* (Female)
  - *"Technically the investigating officer is not supposed to talk about an investigation with anyone else, so I think it shouldn't be brought up here. Until like it goes to Mast, we shouldn't be treating that person any differently. That's a situation where everyone's privacy should be respected. The investigation should be carried out, found whatever the facts of the investigation are."* (Male)
  - *"Nothing. You're innocent until proven guilty. When there's investigations, it's supposed to stay within the investigation. There will always be someone who says, 'Why don't we wait until the investigation finishes and hear all the facts.'" (Male)*

### **Advice About Avoiding Sexual Assault**

In this short section of questions, cadets were asked what advice they would give to an incoming cadet, or what advice they would have liked to have received when they were new, regarding places or activities to avoid.

#### **Advice to Incoming Cadets**

- **Focus group participants offered advice about making good decisions.**
  - *"I think people also have been realistic about what they're getting themselves into. You're a college student, in your 20s or about to be in your 20s. If you're taking the risk you want to take, you have to accept the consequences. If you go out for an hour and you're immediately sexual assaulted, that's one thing. If you're blacked-out drunk by the time you get sexually assaulted and you can't find your way back to your room and you're, 'I think something happened,' that's a completely different situation."* (Male)
  - *"Don't be stupid. Just generally use smart common sense and if it doesn't seem right, it's not. Don't keep pushing at it. I would also tell him to just stay away*

*from sexual contact with anybody on base. That's just going to cause a whole world of trouble.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants offered advice on use of alcohol.**

- *“I don't think there are really issues on campus. It's when people go off campus, especially when alcohol gets involved, that stuff happens. People get stressed out after being here, just want to unwind, let it go, have too much alcohol, impair judgment, bad things happen. It's just all about moderation and having friends there to help keep you straight.” (Female)*
- *“In general, before you go out — let's say you were planning on drinking that night or doing something you wouldn't normally do. Just make sure you're with people you trust. A lot of people go out, ‘I'll just hang out with some new people tonight,’ and they might not be watching out for you or they might call rape because you didn't know them very well. Just be smart about who you're hanging out with. Protect yourself.” (Female)*

- **Focus group participants offered advice about how to stay safe while out by watching out for each other.**

- *“Stick together with the people that you trust when you go out. Look out for others. Look out for people who are off by themselves. If you're staying with your friends, they might do a better job keeping you from making a bad decision.” (Male)*
- *“Just go out with a group of friends and don't leave anybody. All the big issues happen when somebody gets separated from their group and they're by themselves and they do stupid stuff.” (Female)*
- *“They always tell us to look after your shipmates. That would be a big thing. Then, if you're with a girl or a guy who goes to school with you and there's someone creeping on them, it's your responsibility as a shipmate to look after them. That's the only thing I can think of that pertains to sexual assault.” (Male)*
- *“I don't know if it's proved by statistics, but the chances of getting sexually assaulted while with a group of people you're really close with — we're close to everyone here. We at least understand everyone here because we went through the same stuff. The chance of getting sexually assaulted by an outsider when you're surrounded by other people is a lot lower.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants offered advice on places to avoid.**

- *“We are warned about it a thousand times but they still — it's like the big warning, ‘Don't go to other colleges/universities.’” (Female)*

- *“Other colleges/universities, that’s just where you don't want to go for anything because you can get in trouble for so many things. That's where a lot of people get in trouble.”* (Female)
- *“It's easy to get caught up in what real or civilian college is like. It's notorious for kids getting in a lot of trouble. It's really close, like easy to get over there.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants offered advice on ways to avoid risky situations.**
  - *“We just had a formal ball for the freshmen and that can put you in a sketchy situation, because at that point they don't know. They've only been here a few months so they don't know their classmates really much. We [seniors] know the guys that we trust in our class so we wouldn't go in a hotel room partying with them, but a lot of the first class [meaning freshmen] just go to the hotel rooms. They might make unwise decisions about who to hang with.”* (Female)
  - *“Be careful when you go downtown with your friends. The bars there are pretty much all full with cadets. I know that we take a lot of our stress out on the weekends, so we drink a little bit more normal. As long as you're careful. I would just recommend being careful there. Just make sure you have your cell phone.”* (Female)
  - *“They also said that we go on Eagle this summer [shipboard deployment training], so we're going to port and we will get an overnighiter. We're in Europe. The drinking age is 18. Every year they said third class [sophomore] gets an alcohol offense on Eagle, people taking pictures and stuff. They just said be smart about that.”* (Male)
- **When asked if there were places or events to avoid on USCGA grounds, focus group participants were positive about safety on campus.**
  - *“We aren't allowed to drink on campus or anything unless it's at the O' Club, and then you can't drink a lot, so it's pretty regulated here. There's nowhere it's not safe to go.”* (Female)
  - *“We have people who patrol all over base so there's really nowhere to go to be alone ever.”* (Female)
  - *“Even walking alone in the street at night doesn't feel uncomfortable. You see police walking around.”* (Female)
  - *“We really have a safe campus.”* (Female)

## **Sexual Harassment and Sexist Behavior**

In this section cadets were provided the sexual harassment and sexist behaviors incidence rates from 2010 SAGR<sup>34</sup> and asked to discuss why these behaviors occur and how their training affects the behaviors.

### **Sexual Harassment Incidence Rates**

- **Most focus group participants acknowledged that crude and offensive behavior, such as jokes and locker room talk, is pervasive.**
  - *“You just dismiss it. That's just guy behavior.”* (Female)
  - *“I also feel like the laughing or the joking, that this kind of sexual behavior is inappropriate. I don't think people want to sound bad, but I feel it's the culture today. I feel like that happens not just here but anywhere.”* (Female)
  - *“From a male perspective, I think everyone builds a really tough skin here because that's just the way the culture has been as long as I've been here. You get here and you get used to those sorts of jokes real fast. It's not right, but that's the way it is.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that in most instances crude and offensive behavior is not regarded as sexual harassment.**
  - *“There's a lot of stuff in the Academy and fleet that people do that's just supposed to be a joke. I don't think most people would take it as harassment.”* (Female)
  - *“I don't think any of us take that seriously. We know they're just joking. Sometimes they do it just to get on your nerves or just to get you to laugh. You know they don't mean it. Some of them might be your best friends. We have very close guy friends, for instance. They don't mean a thing about it. It's like an older brother.”* (Female)
  - *“It's not always considered malicious. Sexual harassment means malicious. He's not joking around at all. Joking around. Maybe you might pop a joke and someone might get offended, but to you it's just a joke. Turn the other cheek.”* (Male)

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<sup>34</sup> 78% of women and 59% of men indicated they had experienced some form of sexual harassment in the past year (crude/offensive behavior was highest) but of those percentages, only 29% of women and 17% of men would describe their experience as harassment. 80% of women and 49% of men experienced some form of sexist behavior in the past year.

- **Focus group participants indicated that sometimes sexual harassment behaviors might be offensive, but people do not react to that.**
  - *“I hear jokes sometimes that I might take offense to, but I won't say anything about. Sometimes if you go up and you say, ‘Hey, don't say something like that,’ people look at you and think it's not a big deal. But it is a big deal. It's perception.”* (Female)
  - *“They don't even realize it until they talk about it with somebody else after the fact and somebody else points out that was inappropriate.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that their training helps them understand the behaviors associated with sexual harassment.**
  - *“I think there's a fine line where harassment becomes assault. It happens really fast. It keeps escalating. All of a sudden, it's assault.”* (Male)
  - *“Yes [greater awareness].”* (Multiple Females)
- **Focus group participants indicated that crude and offensive behavior is not limited to the Academy.**
  - *“I think it's not only at the Academy but that's life in general. You're going to hear those comments. That's not just something exclusive to the Academy, it's something that's everywhere. And then I think that the low percentage of people that recognize it as sexual harassment is because you recognize it as part of life, not as something that you know is sexual harassment. So, those numbers really don't surprise me at all because I think people, for the most part, have a perspective on what's normal when it comes to that, and what's not.”* (Male)
  - *“I would also say take a look at your generation, what you see on TV and how people act. That's just how it is. That's just the way our generation is. Look at Family Guy. They say some pretty ridiculous things.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants gave various reasons why a small percentage of men indicated they had experienced behaviors they considered to be sexual harassment.**
  - *“I don't think that locker room talk among the same gender is sexual harassment. Everyone's participating in it and no one feels like they need to say something for it to stop. If I'm uncomfortable and I don't want to participate in it, I'll leave or I'll say something. In general, people respect me for that. If everyone's participating in it willingly, then how is this sexual harassment?”* (Male)
  - *“I sit at an all-guys table at lunch and a lot of times it just breaks down into locker room talk, at lunch, which is not really correct and it's very*

*unprofessional. There's just an assumption, since everyone is a guy, everyone's cool with it. Maybe they're not. Who knows?"* (Male)

- *"It's not serious. It just kind of goes back to the joking nature. That's just how it is. If you read it, it would be considered a sexual harassment, but it's done in the nature of a joke, not in the nature of, 'I'm trying to sexually harass you.'"* (Female)

- **Focus group participants also noted that the designation of a behavior as sexual harassment depends on the individual.**

- *"Everyone here is hypersensitive about things like that. John walks by, 'Hey, you look good.' It could be misconstrued. It may be a joke. You could technically define that as harassment if he took it that way. That behavior happens here a lot because that's our culture. There definitely is an understanding of what is true harassment, what is truly inappropriate and what's not. There definitely are comments that are made and jokes, because that's how we interact with each other."* (Male)
- *"That depends on what guy you talk to. You've got to really do a lot to make me feel uncomfortable — All right, you need to stop — as opposed to someone else where just a simple comment may make them uncomfortable. The line is very gray. It depends on who it is that's doing it. Is it a friend of yours or is it someone that you don't really know? All those lines dictate where the joke and fun stops and where the sexual harassment and sexual assault begins."* (Male)

- **Focus group participants indicated that when someone pushes back on an inappropriate comment, it typically stops.**

- *"If someone ever acts offended or says, 'Stop,' that's when the jokes stop. You understand. All right. Joke's not funny anymore."* (Male)

- **Focus group participants indicated that changing the attitude about sexual harassment is something the cadets could do themselves.**

- *"That's just up to the people who make up the culture. If somebody tells a joke, you're not going to report it to the Admiral, but if you say something like, 'Hey, that was really kind of not respectful,' and if a lot of people started saying that, then we could change it."* (Female)

### **Sexist Behavior Incidence Rates**

- **Focus group participants were surprised that sexist behavior incidence rates are higher at the Service Academies than active duty or Reserve component activities.**

- *"I'm shocked that it's that high. I never really felt like that, that you're not wanted here."* (Female)

- *“I don't think I've ever felt segregated because I'm a woman, or treated differently, here at least.” (Female)*
- **Some female focus group participants indicated that they do not hear much sexist talk.**
  - *“The only thing I've ever heard girls be criticized for is our physical fitness standard, because we all have the same jobs. More than one kid brought that up in class. The teacher smoked him. ‘It has nothing to do with your jobs, it's your physical fitness.’ That's like the only criticism I have ever heard about girls.” (Female)*
  - *“Sometimes there's the comment that there are more women in the Service now or something like that. That's just a statement of fact, it's not a sexist statement.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that much of the sexist talk is not intended to be malicious.**
  - *“Much like the sexual harassment type we were just talking about, there's a lot of jokes and comments. I don't think people, when they make them, think of it like that at all. For me, calling someone like a wimp, that's like part of my vocabulary. That's been ingrained in me since I was a kid. I don't see that as like a gender-related issue, to be honest, but I think that those jokes are probably rampant around the barracks. I don't know about thinking that women should be here or anything like that. I really haven't seen anything along those lines, in my experience.” (Male)*
  - *“I think if there's malice involved with it, then it's inappropriate, but a lot of the times it's nothing meant to hurt anyone.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that sexist behavior might result from being together most of the time at the Academy and of a similar age group.**
  - *“I think what's also taken into consideration is that there are a lot more active-duty military and that there are different age groups in life. It's more like the working stage in life; whereas, at the academies, essentially it still is a college and you're going to get a lot of immaturity that comes along with that. And while we like to think of our service as mature military people, a lot of those sexist stigma activities are more associated with an age group. I'm just saying that's probably more the reason I see it being higher at the Academy than the military.” (Male)*
  - *“If I have a couple girls that are friends here and I would joke around with them like that, they would do the same with me. So I feel like here we get closer with your female counterparts because we live right next to them. Maybe it just happens more.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that sexist behavior is common in the military.**
  - *“Not so much just the Academy, but I think maybe just the military in general.”* (Female)
  - *“A lot of times people can say it in joking ways, so that's why that occurs so much, because we hear it a lot just as a joke. Some people think it's funny just because it's a common theme in the military, women being allowed, so a lot of the people think that they could joke about it, and really it's not that appropriate to be saying stuff like that.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that there are still some issues about women at the Academy.**
  - *“There's a touch of the old Guard still, the good old boys. It was an all-male service. They record the day when the first female graduated. That's something we have to know. You don't know those facts at a state university, but you do here. And then it's made a bigger deal. Also, females and males are held to different standards. I'm not saying it's a bad thing or a good thing, but that probably plays a role, too. Physical standards. There's different standards.”* (Male)
- **Other focus group participants indicated that their attitudes have changed over time.**
  - *“Macho military. That's what I think of it. I remember when I started to come to the Academy, I thought, hey, I've got to be able to knock off 50 [pushups] no problem. Any person that's behind me can't do that 50. Well, something's wrong. Now I'm a firstie and I know the different aspects of the military now. We need a diversity of people in the Armed Forces. So I backed off of that tremendously. Now I'm like, I need that guy to write some policies for me, because when I'm out there, he can help me out. And I'm glad females are in the military. Seriously, I am very glad they're in the military.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that sometimes decisions, such as berthing or position assignment, can be viewed as unfair to one gender.**
  - *“It's just some of the stuff, ‘This is only open for girls,’ or ‘This is only open for guys.’ Some people are, ‘That's unfair. I should be able to do whatever the guy does.’ Sometimes it's not possible for that to happen. For summer assignments last year, there weren't enough ships for every single third class [sophomore] girl to go on. Girls went to stations. Some guys were like, ‘That's not fair. I want to go to a station. They didn't ask me.’ It's like logistics. I feel like a lot of people come back and are mad about that. When we took the survey, it was right around the time we all found out.”* (Female)

- **Focus group participants indicated that the competitive culture at the academy might contribute to sexist comments.**
  - *“Everything is based off class rank. I think that if you rank above someone else, you can get your first choice of what you want. I think it has some effect.”* (Female)
  - *“We're competitive, but we look out for each other and make sure everyone gets through. Not to the point where we're going to sabotage someone's career to make sure you get that billet you want.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that different standards confuse situations at USCGA.**
  - *“There generally is some attention on gender-based issues. For example, there are different standards. We've had high-profile cases, the case where a female committed several offenses of a higher nature than an underclass male and he was kicked out, she was retained. It's a very confusing thing. Gender and race was brought into it. Overall, I don't think people go out and are blatantly sexist in any way, shape or form, because it's pretty suppressed, but there definitely is some tension.”* (Male)
  - *“It's a bad test to begin with, like if it's a really skinny cross country person, long-distance runner. But at the same time, the standards are so lowered. I understand lowering them some, but they're so lowered that you see a girl who's not that athletic gets a blue star when a guy who's very athletic just struggles to pass, and that's not really right.”* (Male)
  - *“There was a big uproar about the Physical Fitness Exam and lowering the standard for males down to the female standard because it wasn't equal. My personal opinion on that is that's just ridiculous. Physical standards. I'm sure women would agree that males and females have different bodies. We have different genetic makeups and, in most areas, men are stronger physically. Anyway, if you find offense to that — I find it offensive that another male at the Academy was saying this, saying it's not fair, it's not fair.”* (Male)
- **Female focus group participants indicated that placing women in leadership positions is evidence that they are recognized for their skills and contributions.**
  - *“If the Academy was really oriented toward men you would never see a woman in a command position, but we have women CCs [cadet commanders]. We had all women red staff last fall. I think if girls weren't getting those positions, it would be one thing to look at. In the top 10 of our class, we had three or four girls. We're not being held back or anything.”* (Female)

- *“I’d almost say in some situations they want to put women in higher positions just so they’re, ‘We have girls that go here.’ A lot of times we’re promoted in a lot of ways, but in all of those, we’re equal. We are respected.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that diversity goals can contribute to perceptions of sexism.**
  - *“It’s a well-known fact they have a diversity quota they have to fill every year. Is that fair? No, but it’s just a fact.”* (Female)
  - *“Girls don’t want to get a position because they are female.”* (Female)
  - *“A lot of it is just males being sarcastic — that push for diversity and equal opportunity for every one — that makes you not equal opportunity if you’re an average male.”* (Male)

### ***Leadership Response***

Cadets were asked to share their opinions whether leadership at all levels take prevention of sexual assault and sexual harassment seriously. They were asked for examples to illustrate why they believed the way they did and to describe situations that had the most impact (positive or negative) on their opinions. The section also included a question on how well cadets felt prepared by the Academy to deal with issues of sexual assault and sexual harassment when they are commissioned and have leadership responsibilities of their own.

### ***Perceptions of Leadership Response to Sexual Assault***

- **Focus group participants indicated that all levels of leadership at USCGA take sexual assault seriously.**
  - *“I think all the way down to the cadet leadership, people feel like it’s definitely a priority and something to take seriously.”* (Male)
  - *“Because we have such a small academy and we have leaders at every level, we understand our responsibility towards each other so we take our responsibility seriously.”* (Female)
  - *“One of the coaches had a speech in the beginning of the year and he said, ‘I’m coming to your trial if you steal or murder someone, but if you sexually assault a girl in any way, I’ll be there to watch them hang you.’”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that overall leadership takes sexual assault response and prevention seriously, evidenced by the clear no-tolerance policy.**
  - *“The tolerance policy for three things: drugs, alcohol and sexual assault. If you’re found guilty of sexual assault, you’re going to get kicked out.”* (Female)

- *“One of the first things that I remember the Admiral told at the beginning of every year, he was giving a speech and talking to us, we will get kicked off—the three easiest ways to get out of here: sexual assault, sexual harassment, alcohol.”* (Male)
- *“Just the fact that we have a no-tolerance policy. If a kid is found guilty, then he's kicked out. That's the rule of our superiors.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that overall leadership takes sexual assault response and prevention seriously, evidenced by the emphasis and number of programs that address the issue.**
  - *“Just the emphasis we've had on training over the last four years. It's been brought up so much that they take it very serious. I take that straight to the top because of the fact that the Admiral has laid out his things that he has no tolerance for. If you get in trouble for that, you're being disciplined no matter what. Sexual assault is one of those things that he identified to us. I think because of the fact that he has a focus on it, that has helped to make it that everyone at the Academy has a focus on it.”* (Male)
  - *“We got sent out the entire report [on a completed case of improper gender-related behavior]. Once the cadet got the punishment, we all got sent out the report of the incident so we all know exactly what happened.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that overall leadership takes sexual assault response and prevention seriously, evidenced by the number of trainings that address the issue.**
  - *“Training after training after training, but then also, every time we have a meeting with them, beginning of the semester. Then they laid out their no-tolerance levels for this. They always bring it up just to make sure we're all on the same page.”* (Female)
  - *“You can see that we have a lot of trainings, so that shows that they're not joking around. We get those little CASA cards once a semester, too. Put those in your wallet so you have it. Every CASA member is allowed to put things outside their door, so it's not like they're hiding them. They're pretty obvious. ‘I'm a CASA member.’ That's pretty proactive.”* (Female)
  - *“An early morning training. I think all of us are miserable because it's early. You don't want to hear it. It's a boring subject if you hear it five times a semester. Our last person that came out was super funny. Real energetic. Got us all involved instead of sitting in a 90-degree gym falling asleep. She kept us entertained. I think that shows and the command realized we weren't getting anything out of the other trainings.”* (Female)

- *“They probably have a hand in scheduling all of the sexual harassment and those types of trainings for us, so they wouldn't schedule them for us to be part of it if they didn't find importance in it.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that immediate response to inappropriate behaviors sets a high standard.**
  - *“Just immediate attention to it. When people see that happen, that's a deterrent.” (Female)*
  - *“Immediate action on anything. Like a whisper of anything, they're all over it. They really try to get it taken care of.” (Female)*
  - *“I've said like one small joke that I thought wasn't a big deal, then later, a third class [sophomore] came up to me who's a really good friend of mine. He's like, ‘No, no, no, you can't say anything like that around here.’ It gets nipped in the bud really quick.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants cited several examples of helpful comments from leadership regarding sexual assault.**
  - *“My guide on second class [junior] was a CASA. I remember during a training he said that we joke around about, like, ‘Oh, that test raped us.’ I remember him telling us to not use that verbiage because that verbiage still holds very, very serious, feelings for people. Don't belittle the meaning of that word with your petty problems. That word affects people's lives, so don't use that. That really stuck out in my mind.” (Male)*
  - *“At a training they told us how we should respond if someone we care about comes to us with that same problem. Don't be violent, because it's usually a violence occurrence or something like that. Don't worsen the problem. Help them. It was a helpful training, for sure.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that the cadet chain of command takes sexual assault seriously.**
  - *“It doesn't really come up much, but I think they do, definitely.” (Female)*
  - *“Especially with CASA. Those are our cadets. There's a lot of them.” (Female)*
  - *“I think it's the same all the way down. Then you get to the cadet level and it's serious still, but not as much, because if you have somebody who's been in the Coast Guard for a long time versus an average cadet.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that leadership perspectives on alcohol use have changed over the years as a step toward sexual assault awareness and prevention.**
  - *“I think it's gotten better since I've been here. When I was a freshman, they didn't think that cadets drank, that that never went on. Like cadets never went out and did anything. I think they've become more realistic to the way that things actually go. I think Captain O'Connor is much more practical.” (Male)*
  - *“Definitely freshman and sophomore year it was just, ‘Don't drink, don't drink, don't drink,’ whereas now it's much more, ‘Be responsible in what you do, take care of each other.’” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that leadership could send a more effective message if it were not so repetitive.**
  - *“It seems like every semester we get told the identical thing. It's repetitive. People are moaning, ‘Oh, great, we have stupid training on it.’ This is my fourth semester here now. It seems like we've heard it eight times. If you're going to tell somebody about it, do it in a different way, in a manner we haven't seen or heard of before, to keep us involved.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that over-reacting to situations discourages reporting and taking care of each other.**
  - *“The whole self-incrimination. ‘I was at this party, too. Like everyone here was really drunk.’ If you're going to report that, now your friends A, B and C are also in trouble because they were present. They didn't stop it. They were really drunk as well. They're also in the incident. So now your friends are involved in this investigation. They sometimes turn it into a witch hunt, is what happens.” (Male)*
  - *“The thing that I would say is in regards to their response to our answers to these questions and the results of the survey and the results of numbers, it would be, ‘Don't overreact. Don't overreact.’ Don't make these over-arching policies that restrict our freedom in such a way that now it's not even about sexual assault or whatever, now it's about just making ridiculous rules. The Academy, along with I think the military, has a way of just overreacting to different things. I would say make things right. I would say, don't take our responses and blow it out of proportion and don't overreact, because in life, stuff happens.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that they sense an imbalance in treatment between the genders.**
  - *“The Corps sees equality across the genders; however, sometimes that doesn't translate through command and punishments with offenses. I think the command needs to do the same as the Corps and just gender equality across*

*everything. There may be some things that we're not aware of but there is definitely a feel sometimes that if you're a white male and you go before a Mast [commander's punishment], you're going to get a bigger punishment.” (Male)*

- *“I think more transparency with Mast report punishment. [Discussing rationale] they don't come out and say that. It causes a lot of resentment against the different social groups. The lack of transparency promotes a lot of speculation.” (Male)*

### **Perceptions of Leadership Response to Sexual Harassment**

- **Focus group participants indicated that leadership is also serious about sexual harassment prevention.**
  - *“Sexual harassment within just everyday context is more loosely defined, but if it is brought up to your leader, it's going to be dealt with as much as sexual assault would be.” (Male)*
  - *“I went to a civilian college before coming here and I can't tell you anything about a sexual harassment program they had or didn't have. It's very obvious here who is involved and who is not and where to go in case you experience something. It's a lot better. It definitely gives cadets an avenue to get it off their chest and talk.” (Male)*
  - *“Actual sexual harassment, yes. Joking, no, because everyone's joking. We're a very serious school but we joke a lot. I think for actual sexual harassment, where someone actually feels violated, they take that seriously.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that cadet leadership is also serious about sexual harassment prevention as other leaders.**
  - *“In terms of cadet leaders, if some of their peers are making sexual jokes or whatever and one of the cadets says something about it, like, ‘Hey, that's not really appropriate.’ Or ‘Can you kind of tone it down?’ that's a good example for us to look up to.” (Female)*

### **Preparation as Future Leaders**

- **Focus group participants indicated that the training and experiences they receive as cadets is helpful in preparing them to deal with sexual assault involving personnel under their command.**
  - *“As officer of the day in our companies we have to be prepared for people to come up to us and report a sexual assault or a sexual harassment. So we already know basically what you have to do, who you have to go to in order to do that. It relates to what you have to do out in the field.” (Female)*

- *“We take the class criminal justice, so we go through the UCMJ. We take down all the different sexual assault and harassment offenses. What we learned in that class, I feel helps me a lot. Now I recognize what the situations mean to enlisted folks and another officer actually out in the field.” (Male)*
- *“I think the fleet is going to have a little bit more harassment and assault, potentially, so being here in this environment, it's really important. Look how important it is. We are here for an hour and a half doing a survey, addressing these issues, so I think it really prepares us to be able to handle it in the fleet, too, as officers and leaders.” (Female)*
- *“I think being here has made us realize that it's not always black and white as to what happens, especially when it's two of your really good friends involved. There are two sides of every story. If you have a victim's version, you empathize with them, but then when you hear the other person — I think the trainings here and just going through them prepares you for both sides. Let's you be a little more unbiased when you're trying to help out.” (Female)*
- **Other focus group participants indicated that the training they receive as cadets does not apply directly to dealing with sexual harassment and assault involving personnel under their command.**
  - *“They teach us here — everything's completely black and white. You talk to officers who have actually gone through not just sexual harassment cases but just random things that don't fit the same way that cadets do. I think the way we're prepared is we can go out there and we can apply the UCMJ and then the person could get punished, get kicked out, get court martialled. But I don't think that anyone at the Academy is trying to teach us actually how you would deal with it in real life. I don't think it's all going to fit.” (Male)*
  - *“I don't personally feel prepared. I don't know what I would do administratively, or what exact things you're supposed to do. But I feel like that in general about fleet, so that in particular follows.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that they know about the resources, but experience dealing directly with issues will not happen until they are in a position of authority.**
  - *“You can't really prepare for something until it happens. Every single situation is going to be different so you can't prepare for a situation — you're just going to have to deal with it when it comes.” (Female)*
  - *“The training at the Academy has definitely prepared us to handle these situations when we're in the fleet, but for me personally, I feel unprepared until I'm put in the situation. I know I'm prepared to handle it, and I will, but I'm going to feel unprepared until I handle my first sexual harassment case and get it done and realize that I am ready to do that.” (Male)*

- **Focus group participants indicated that hearing about real experiences or hearing from officers is helpful.**
  - *“We had a training where two female officers who had been involved in an incident came in and talked to us. Those kind of trainings make us understand our role as an officer in those incidents.”* (Female)
  - *“Especially the law class that we had to take. We got an actual JAG [Judge Advocate General] lawyer. He talks a lot about his experiences.”* (Female)
  - *“If you hear case studies, if something happens, you'll have actual tools to pull out. And if you can tell your friend, ‘I've heard bad things about this one, I think we should do this one instead.’ You've been told, the more you can actually compare and analyze one situation, that could then help you when you're in the fleet. If you've heard a story before about somebody in a similar situation, you can at least then have a good or bad experience to make your own decisions off it.”* (Female)

### **Training**

Results from the 2010 SAGR indicated that nearly all cadets had received some form of training in the prevention and response to sexual assault. Similar results were found for training in sexual harassment. However, when asked if the training was effective in reducing sexual assault or sexual harassment, the percentage of cadets who indicated “very effective” is down from previous surveys. Cadets were asked to describe their training briefly, then comment on the most and least effective training they received in the past year.

#### **Training Received**

- **Focus group participants indicated that the effectiveness of training has improved over the years.**
  - *“The trainings, some are getting better, but we also have more of them so we still have the typical PowerPoint, flow charts, then we have another one that's a speaker.”* (Female)
  - *“The non-cadet-run ones are better. When we have to go through a 7 o'clock training, we usually rush through it and we're out of there, basically. Nobody wants to listen to their peers, anyway.”* (Female)
  - *“Sometimes we have really good training that was really solid. The next time it came out of the woodwork.”* (Male)
  - *“As I've moved along it's gotten better. I remember freshman year we had some ridiculous training. It was a waste of time. It was below our level of education.”* (Male)

- *“We had one or two of those focus groups where we would meet in smaller gender-based groups and it would be like a Saturday morning. The entire Corps would have it but split you up by gender. Not necessarily by class, but gender, with 20 people, and you would sit down with a CASA member and go through results from a recent sex survey or something like that.”* (Male)
- **Other focus group participants indicated the effectiveness of training has gone down because it is so repetitive and scheduled for inappropriate times.**
  - *“I don't see any correlation between effectiveness of training and the number of assaults going up because I think the message from the training has been drilled into our heads, or at least since we've been here for four years. Maybe that's why it seems that the trainings are getting less effective.”* (Female)
  - *“I'm not sure in terms of reducing behaviors, but I see it not being as effective because I think that they become very monotonous after a while. That's why people don't take them seriously or pay attention. Especially here. There's other things people would rather do. They're not taken seriously.”* (Female)
  - *“Especially like the times when they have trainings, because at 7 in the morning and 7 at night, both of those are bad times to really pay attention. Because 7 in the morning, you're just dead, and then 7 at night you have a lot of homework and other stuff to worry about.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that their training could be improved by being less accusatory.**
  - *“I've heard from a lot of guy friends that they feel like they're often the target of all these trainings. Like it's the white male's fault. So just try not to target one group of people so they don't feel like they're constantly the focus of all this. And they're not.”* (Female)
  - *“Freshman year, maybe sophomore year, we had a couple trainings that were anti-male — could be construed as anti-male. ‘Of the guys at this table, two have been rapists.’ This is a majority male school. We already get talked down enough. It turned negative. It did not work. Everyone shut it down, didn't listen to it after that.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants indicated that their training could be improved by being more straightforward.**
  - *“I would make one recommendation. Don't get so creative with the sexual assault and harassment. We've had two or three of these things that have just diverged into a gigantic Corps-wide joke. The garbage can and Rocky Balboa impersonator. We took the message serious, but the training itself no one took seriously because it was absurd and ridiculous. Just be blunt.”* (Male)

- *“Treat us like adults. That's the biggest thing. That training was ridiculous [referring to the comment above].” (Male)*
- *“I think I would say quality, not quantity, in regards to sexual assault training. You can throw a hundred trainings into the year that are just garbage that no one's going to pay attention to and no one's going to pull anything away. Or you can have speakers come in and have a training and fully relate to most of the audience. If you have, say, three of those trainings, you can probably reach everyone.” (Male)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that their training could be improved by including more small-group discussions.**
  - *“Or even discussion. It doesn't have to be the whole company at one time. I feel like we're getting a lot out of this right now. Small groups, something like that.” (Male)*
  - *“One thing that maybe would help is if they had it in like a lunch, a small-group discussion style where we have like a CASA member at each table to facilitate the discussion. It would be during lunch. You can get a small-group discussion and have a hand-out with some of the information you need instead of having a PowerPoint. It also frees up the 7 and 7, the night training blocks, which everyone hates to go to. Either you're not awake or stressed about homework.” (Female)*
  - *“That's a great idea [referring to the comment above], but I would recommend not having a CASA member. I would recommend having an actual adult in the organization. At least for the first year. We're so closed off here and we're pretty much taught to keep all of our personal thoughts and opinions inside of us, so we don't share. A lot of the groups, if you have another cadet leading it, they're not going to go anywhere. You would have to have an actual adult or representative from some organization that helps people actually care.” (Female)*

### **Training Versus Personal Characteristics**

- **Focus group participants generally agreed that training will not change certain personal characteristics.**
  - *“If someone's going to act that way, they're going to act that way. And going to a training, you might learn about it, but they're not going [to change].” (Male)*
  - *“I would agree with that if a person has been brought up with a certain lack of respect or it's another type of person that could predispose them to have that type of behavior. That couldn't really be changed by going to a training.” (Female)*

## **Most Effective Training**

- **Focus group participants gave the following examples of memorable sexual assault prevention training.**
  - *“We had a speaker one time. Basically, all she did was come in and told her story. That was it. And that was one of the better ones we had.”* (Female)
  - *“We had a play one time. I really liked that one, but it was optional. Sex Signals.”* (Female)
  - *“There was one that was really good. She was a woman who came here and she wrote a book, and she was reading the first chapter of her book. Then, at the end of it, she said, ‘That was my experience.’ That was one that stood out in my mind, along with the other one about the sorority girl who was raped.”* (Female)
  - *“I think outside views are really important, too. We live in this bubble here. It's really nice to have an outsider come in like the man who spoke that all captured our attention. He was an attorney. It would be nice if an attorney came and said, ‘This is what I deal with every single day, this is the real-world stuff. Let's talk about it. What do you think?’”* (Female)
  - *“There was a Navy person they sent out. It was bunch of different situations and you have to choose from a couple choices on what you would do. They would show you what next happened because of your action, what you chose to do in a situation.”* (Male)
  - *“There was a training that we all had to go to. They had a guest speaker come and talk about taking action against people. He told us a story about these college girls who were drunk and they were getting sexually assaulted down the hallway. Everybody knew about it but they didn't do anything to stop it. I think that that really hit home with everybody, that something like that could happen and nobody would do something about it.”* (Female)

## **Awareness Campaigns**

- **Focus group participants indicated there have been sexual assault awareness campaigns at USCGA.**
  - *“I think they do them. It's one of those things that's not mandatory, so you can sign up for some of the stuff.”* (Female)
  - *“I can only think of one campaign here and I did it last year. It's the day of silence. That is the only campaign that I can think of.”* (Female)

- **Focus group participants indicated that the One-in-Four training made an impact on people.**
  - *“We had a One-in-Four training. That was probably one of the better ones we had. It was called One-in-Four. A lot of girls left crying. It was a really intense training.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that campaigns and awareness activities have benefit.**
  - *“We're all getting more training on how to be more respectful and act ethically. That's a huge two-day event every year.”* (Female)
  - *“People say ‘Watch Out For Our Shipmates,’ and people think about that all the time. I'm going to go out drinking, I'm going to go with a friend and I'm looking out for him and her, and they're looking out for me, too. I think that works out pretty well.”* (Male)

### ***Bystander Intervention***

2010 SAGR presented a scenario involving a party and potential sexual assault. Focus group participants were read the scenario and asked to share their opinions of the actions cadets would most likely take to step in and prevent a sexual assault.<sup>35</sup> They were asked if the scenario was realistic for their Academy, why someone would intervene or not, and how cadets typically perceive their responsibility in such situations.

#### ***“The Party Situation”***

- **Focus group participants indicated that such a party situation could occur at USCGA, but the circumstances might be different.**
  - *“I would say less realistic for us than for other Services. I went a whole semester at another Academy and I would still see someone I'd never even seen before. Here I know who everyone is.”* (Male)
  - *“We don't have parties. At a bar, maybe.”* (Female)
  - *“You really know everyone that's down there. You recognize who leaves with who.”* (Male)

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<sup>35</sup> The text of the party situation reads as: “Suppose you see a female cadet, who you do not know very well, getting drunk at a party. Someone tells you that a guy from your squadron is going to take her to a back room to have sex. What are you most likely to do in this kind of situation?”

- Nothing
- Leave the party to avoid any kind of trouble
- Find someone who knows the woman and can help her
- Talk to the woman/try to get her out of the situation
- Stop the guy from leaving with the woman
- Other action”

- **Focus group participants indicated there are a number of considerations that drive one's decision to act.**
  - *“You either do one extreme or the other. You either leave and not do anything or you like physically grab the girl and drag her back with you, in which case, she's not going to be too happy with you and her friends are not going to be too happy with you.”* (Female)
  - *“Sometimes the easiest choice is just to do nothing because you're not sure of the reaction it will get or you're just caught off guard by the situation and you're extremely uncomfortable. It's easy to say, not looking at the situation, that you would. ‘Oh, I'd talk to them. I'd say something. I'd intervene.’ Sometimes it's being in the situation.”* (Female)
  - *“People would say, ‘Oh, something bad is happening. I'm going to intervene.’ I can't think of anything specific, but there could potentially be situations similar to that, but it's not going to be that obvious. And there's too much doubt because you don't know them very well. There's too much doubt in your mind because I'm not aware of the full situation to actually get that momentum in your mind to say, I need to intervene now, because you can assume too much. We have a tendency to trust each other and so you trust that they're okay.”* (Male)
  - *“It really depends on the context. If the girl and the guy seem to be a couple, then you're not going to stop them. That's normal. I don't know if it's just the generation, that's normal for people to hook up. If this girl is falling over and the guy's standing straight up, obviously looking like a predator or something, you're definitely going to say something. It definitely depends on context as well.”* (Male)
- **Focus group participants agreed that most cadets would intervene if they perceived the situation posed a threat to either party.**
  - *“If it doesn't look like they should be doing it, then people step up in this case.”* (Male)
  - *“You would know whoever it is, because we're a small school. You would know her well enough to go and say something, but it wouldn't be a stranger. You would at least know them.”* (Female)
  - *“I think for the most part, people are going to help each other out. You can always see, on a Saturday night, if you're coming back, just carloads of someone who is doing rounds and just like collecting. It doesn't matter if they're friends with them or not. If there's someone drunk, someone from a bar, from the Academy, they get tossed into the car.”* (Male)

- *“As much as we discredit some of the training that's been given to us, I was able to think, I recognize this, I know this is not good. If anything, the training has worked because you can assess the situation. You look at it, you make a decision, you think about what's going on.”* (Male)
- *“In a real situation, people's tendency is not to be confrontational, but to shy away from it. If the situation appears like you need to step in, hands down, somebody would step in.”* (Male)

### **Reasons for Avoiding Intervention**

- **Focus group participants indicated that of the 4% of male respondents who said they would do nothing or leave, the primary reason might be that men do not want to interfere with another man’s attempt to engage in a relationship.**
  - *“Some people might not think it's as big of a deal. To some people, sex is nothing. Maybe some guys are — I don't want to say only guys would do it, but maybe some guys are just thinking that.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated someone might not feel it is not their responsibility to intervene.**
  - *“You feel that it's not your place. A lot of people would just think to themselves, ‘Oh, she got herself in that situation, she should be able to take care of herself.’ And while we should be looking out for each other, a lot of people don't, necessarily.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated fear of getting in trouble yourself might discourage someone them from intervening.**
  - *“We're in a case right here. There are five people involved in the case. Everyone who was trying to help is getting in trouble. Failure to use good judgment is a big one. If they don't really have a good offense to give you, they'll give you failure to use good judgment or failure to report a situation, if it does come out. There's failure to use leadership, condoning. There are so many punishments. If your name is in an investigation, you're going to get something, even if you did absolutely nothing wrong.”* (Female)
  - *“I can see where people would say that to not get into any trouble. I think recently they had a case where someone went to the hospital and someone else joined them, and the person who joined them to take care of them got in trouble as well. I don't know the full details of that. I just know that there were a lot of people up in arms that they tried to help and got themselves in trouble.”* (Male)
  - *“From my perspective, it's hard because you want to help out, but at the same time, you don't want to get stuck with a condoning [charge].”* (Female)

- *“If you know something, you can get in trouble. Even if you try to do the right thing, you can still get in trouble. You need to help your shipmates, but this makes it hard to do because you can still get in trouble. If there's any investigation involved in a situation like this, every single person there would be investigated for alcohol, for drinking, for wearing civilian clothes when you're not allowed to. Basic uniform policy. There are so many different things you can get in trouble for. Some people just might not want to get involved.”* (Female)
- **Focus group participants indicated that the risk of being made fun of could offset making a really good decision to help someone.**
  - *“Compared to what the outcome could be if you were right. If you were wrong and they were just leaving, then you're known as the over-reactor. But if you were right and you did end up helping that girl, you have the chance to do something really good, or you have the chance of making a fool of yourself. Is it worth not tarnishing your name but doing something like that and being wrong and having people make fun of you? But is it worth taking the chance of being wrong, to be right, and saving that girl from who knows what?”* (Male)
  - *“If you're wrong, you look like an ass.”* (Male)

### **Watching Out for Each Other**

- **Focus group participants indicated that they typically watch out for each other.**
  - *“I think that we all really look out for each other still, especially here. Because we are so small, we know every one of our classmates. I feel safe. I feel safe here. It's more like a family than a school.”* (Female)
  - *“Even if you really don't know someone, people are really good about taking care of each other. That's the Academy environment.”* (Female)
  - *“One thing is you definitely have people looking out for you, even if you don't notice it. If you're not really doing something smart or something, you're pretty much sure to find a cadet that will come up to you, ‘Hey, you might want to watch what you're doing, be careful.’ Even if you may not get advice when you first get here, you will learn quickly what's acceptable, what's not acceptable and how to be smart when you're out drinking or out with your friends doing whatever.”* (Male)
  - *“Over the summer, if you're going out, if you're off ship during the day, you don't really need somebody, but if you start going into town, you need to take someone.”* (Female)

- **Focus group participants indicated that good communication can prevent serious problems.**
  - *“Have a plan when you go out. Just have a plan with your friends. Make sure your friends all go together and leave together.”* (Female)
  
- **Focus group participants indicated that they have received specific training in bystander intervention and intervention is important for preventing sexual assault, as well as in other situations.**
  - *“They flew out a guy, a professional speaker, to talk to us solely about intervening.”* (Female)
  - *“The guy was talking about intervening in violent assaults and he had some story about how he intervened and found a terrorist in an airport. So in all situations, he said, it's better to be safe than sorry.”* (Male)
  - *“We had a training with a guy who talked a lot about that and then had people talk about their stories where they intervened in situations. He told a story I thought was really good.”* (Female)
  - *“Usually it doesn't take a lot. Something quick usually can diffuse the whole situation and at the training we learned that. Something small.”* (Male)
  
- **Other focus group participants indicated that their bystander intervention training varies in quality and coverage.**
  - *“We had a bystander training a couple months ago. We all had to attend, but I personally didn't really like it. I didn't like the speaker. He was making light of a girl getting raped.”* (Female)
  - *“There's no training to talk about how to act, how to get back safely, who to trust, who not to trust, what to look out for. I don't think we have had any training on roofies or other drugs that are prevalent in any bar scene. They don't teach you how to watch your drink to make sure no one is putting anything in.”* (Male)
  - *“I know they have a training specifically with the boys alone. Guys are less likely to date cadet girls because of the trainings they have and the talks they have. It's like, ‘We're your sister so you need to look out for your sister.’ That's really what the trainings are. So I think they definitely prepare guys for taking care of your classmates and your peers, especially if a girl is in trouble. When we go on port and call, come in port, they always say, ‘Make sure you go with a female. Don't let her go anywhere alone. Look out for each other.’”* (Female)

- **Focus group participants offered suggestions on encouraging bystander intervention.**
  - *“I think the Academy can do a better job. They always ask us, ‘What do we need to do to make people look out for each other more?’ I think part of that is that there's a chance if I pick up someone drunk on the road, there is a distinct possibility that I will somehow get roped into getting in trouble if they do something. Just the fact that I saw them that drunk and didn't bring it up. Even though I took care of them, put them to bed, it can still come back that I didn't turn them in or something like that. For me, I'm still going to stop and pick someone up and just go with that risk.” (Male)*
  - *“It's unreasonable to say that if you're helping out a classmate, you run the risk of getting in trouble yourself.” (Male)*
  - *“There was some talk about doing some kind of amnesty policy where the police wouldn't try to punish people for underage drinking if they brought in people with alcohol poisoning and stuff. I think it might be complicated, but try to do something like that at the Academy. If they were honestly trying to help, then you won't punish the person who was trying to help.” (Female)*
  - *“Change the Cadet Rights a little bit. The Cadet Rights are very old. They're bringing in a language that's extremely complex and hard to understand. We actually have trainings on how to decipher the cadet rights. If you're taking action to help out a shipmate, you don't have to talk about any of the other instances that were involved that might incriminate yourself or another classmate.” (Female)*
  - *“We're a humanitarian service. We're supposed to be helping each other out. This type of environment doesn't promote that at all. Just think about that. We're supposed to be helping people and then, in reality, everything that we do at the Academy, you just get in trouble for trying to do the right thing. It's always you watching your back rather than doing the right thing.” (Male)*
  - *“Don't punish people who try to help. There's not always going to be a CASA member or victim advocate where a party is happening or where sexual assault is taking place. There are going to be friends, other cadets, other people that you know, so you have to be able to trust them to make good judgments, not punish them for the judgment that they use.” (Female)*
- **Focus group participants indicated that promoting esprit de corps would help increase respect for each other and reduce improper behavior.**
  - *“Anything that promotes the esprit de corps to me is one of the big things. If you get people to understand what it means to be a part of the Corps, the more general respect for their fellow classmates and shipmates should be, take more*

*pride in where they're living, the sexual harassment and assaults come into focus.” (Male)*



**Appendix**  
**2011 Focus Group Protocol**



## 2011 Focus Group Guide

### Introduction to the Focus Group

Good morning/afternoon. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am with the Defense Manpower Data Center. My colleagues with me this morning/afternoon are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ also with DMDC. We have asked you to be here with us to help us investigate issues of sexual assault and sexual harassment prevention and response. You might recall that last year students at your Academy were asked to participate in a paper and pencil survey on these topics. This year, as was done two years ago, a series of focus groups are being conducted to provide information to DoD and Academy leadership. Similar focus groups are being conducted all three Service Academies. Focus groups will also be done at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy.

<b>Time for briefing and introductions: 5 minutes</b>
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This is a **voluntary focus group**. The Academy staff member who invited you to participate in this session should have informed you that we would be discussing gender-related issues and asked if you were willing to participate. If you prefer not to sit in on this focus group, you are free to leave or to sit quietly while others participate.

- Let's begin by talking about why we are doing the focus group. While the press and others may claim to know what is going on at the Academies, members of Congress and your senior leaders want to hear directly from you about the issues that affect you. Congress directed the Secretary of Defense to conduct an annual assessment cycle of surveys and focus groups in alternating years on gender issues at each of the Academies. [For U.S. Coast Guard say – While this Congressional requirement does not cover your Academy, your leadership asked to participate because they know these are important issues].
  - This is an opportunity for you to share your perceptions and recommendations directly with senior leaders.
- Focus group participants sometimes say “I have not experienced any of these behaviors, so why should I stay for this session?”
  - The purpose of this focus group is to understand these issues at your Academy. You're the experts on what it's like to go to the Academies and we want to hear your opinion about Academy life. It doesn't matter if you *have* or *have not* had gender-related experiences. We do not want to discuss your personal experiences with sexual assault and sexual harassment. We do want to discuss issues in general so we can provide guidance to leadership to create the best environment possible for you.

I want to thank you in advance for participating in this important focus group and go over a few ground rules for the focus group:

- Please respect each others' opinions. We know you will have different perspectives on issues covered in this focus group. We want to hear those

views—that's why we are here today. So there are no right or wrong statements or opinions.

- If you don't feel you have anything to contribute, there's no pressure for you to do so, and if you need to leave during the session, please do so in a quiet manner, so as not to disrupt the group.
- I will lead the discussion and \_\_\_\_\_ will be helping us to take notes. We will record comments but will not record names or other identifying information. Only an analysis and summary of the data will go in our report. If you would like to see how comments are being recorded, please examine what \_\_\_\_\_ is typing.
- This is a non-attribution session. Although we are taking notes on your comments and suggestions, we will not share anything outside this room that can be attributed to any one of you specifically. We ask your cooperation in protecting the privacy of the comments made within this session, so please do not discuss the focus group proceedings after you leave.
- Please keep the crosstalk to a minimum. Let me be the focal point for questions and discussion.
- Any questions?

I have several questions to ask you today, with a few subtopics in each. I will watch the time so we will be able to cover all questions by the end of this session at (give specific end time).

Let's begin our discussion today with some results of the survey on sexual assault.

<b>Time for Question 1: 15 minutes</b>
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## 1. Sexual Assault

- You might recall that we were here a year ago conducting a survey of gender-related issues at the Academies. Did any of you participate? (Warm up question)
  - Do you recall hearing any of the results of the survey? (Have a poster with our Web site so they can easily access the survey report if interested)
  - Here at (name of Academy) X% of women and Y% of men indicated they experienced unwanted sexual contact (or sexual assault) in the timeframe of June 2009 through spring 2010. This is an (increase, decrease, or the same as the results of the previous survey in 2008 – give actual % from 2008)
  - Were you aware that this rate (went up, went down, had not changed)?
- (Where the rates are higher in 2010 ask the following) Why would it have gone up?
  - Have you seen any changes in culture, climate, or behaviors among students that might have contributed to this increase?
  - Are there any other indicators or factors that have led to an increase?
- (Where the rates are the same in 2010 ask the following) With all the emphasis on sexual assault, why would it have not gone down?
  - Are there any other indicators or factors that have led to no decrease?
- An interesting finding on the survey is that sophomores typically experience a higher percentage of unwanted sexual contact behaviors.
  - Does that make sense to you?
  - Why would sophomores be more likely to experience such behaviors?

- Are they more vulnerable somehow?
- Now let's talk for a minute about the behaviors that constitute unwanted sexual contact or sexual assault. On the survey we ask the following question (give this to each participant as a handout so they can read along):
  - "Since June 2009, have you experienced any of the following intentional sexual contacts that were against your will or which occurred when you did not or could not consent in which someone...
    - Sexually touched you (e.g., intentional touching of genitalia, breasts, or buttocks) or made you sexually touch them?
    - Attempted to make you have sexual intercourse, but was not successful?
    - Made you have sexual intercourse?
    - Attempted to make you perform or receive oral sex, anal sex, or penetration by a finger or object, but was not successful?
    - Made you perform or receive oral sex, anal sex, or penetration by a finger or object?"
  - Do you agree that these behaviors constitute sexual assault? Which ones are not?
  - Does a person have to physically force herself or himself onto another person for a sexual assault to have occurred?
  - Can a person consent to engage in a sexual act if they are intoxicated?
  - Can two intoxicated people engage in consensual sex?
  - Can consent truly be given if the person is in a position of authority over you (faculty/staff, cadet/midshipman leader)?
- Last question in this section. On the survey, we ask if sexual assault occurs more or less often at your Academy compared to civilian colleges/universities. We have seen a shift in perceptions over the years. The results here at (give specific Academy name) show a decrease in the percentage who said it occurs less often at USCGA than civilian colleges/universities (give % in 2010 and 2008).
  - Can you help us understand this finding?
  - Why would this be so?
  - Has the increased emphasis on sexual assault somehow contributed through greater awareness?

OK, now let's switch gears and talk about reporting sexual assault.

**Time for Question 2:  
10 minutes**

## 2. Reporting

- Earlier we discussed the results of the 2010 survey that showed (increased/no change) in sexual assault at (Academy name). We saw a parallel increase in the number of actual reports of sexual assault in the past year here at (Academy name). There were X (give actual number for the specific Academy) total reports of sexual assault in 2009 and Y (actual number) reports in 2010.
  - Why would the number of reports have gone up?
  - Is there an increased confidence in reporting?

- Do you think the majority of incidents of sexual assault at your Academy are reported or not reported?
- You will recall that there are two types of reporting – restricted when a victim of sexual assault can seek counseling or medical help but not involve the chain of command or trigger an investigation, and unrestricted where the chain of command and investigators are notified. So, the decision regarding to whom you report combines what kind of report you want to make with who you can report to and who you would be most comfortable reporting.
  - With an unrestricted report, you can talk to anyone. Who do you think a victim would contact for unrestricted reporting? (Probe for level within chain of command, medical authorities, IG, military police, investigative authorities, civil authorities). Why would someone choose one over another?
  - When a victim wants to initiate a restricted report, there are only a few people they can contact. Here at (Academy), would a victim be more likely to report to the SARC, Victims Advocate, or the (CASA, SAVI, PEER as appropriate for that Academy)? Why?
  - Why wouldn't a victim contact (based on the discussion)?
- Now let's discuss reporting in general. Why would someone report sexual assault?
  - (Probe for additional reasons if not mentioned such as getting help, prevent further assaults against you or others, catch the offender, punish the offender, because it's a crime, it's the right thing to do, it's an honor violation)
  - Can you suggest any changes that the Academy could make to encourage reporting?
  - Do stories about victims' experiences after they report keep others from reporting? Have you heard any such stories?
- Now let's take a different approach and talk about treatment of offenders. When a peer comes forward to report a sexual assault, what actions should be taken with regard to how the alleged cadet/midshipman offender is treated? (Probe: What do you consider to be fair treatment of a cadet/midshipman who has been accused of a sexual assault? How do you balance the treatment of the offender with the treatment of the victim?):
  - During the investigation?
  - During a trial/courts-martial?
  - After a trial/courts-martial? If convicted? If acquitted?

We have talked a while about sexual assault and reporting, now I want to talk to you a little about the factors that might contribute to sexual assault.

<p><b>Time for Question 3: 10 minutes</b></p>
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### 3. Factors Affecting Sexual Assault

- If you were talking to a new (cadet/midshipman), what advice would you give them about places or activities where they should be more cautious?
  - Any specific locations? On campus or off campus?
  - Any specific events, like after a sports event? On an activity away from campus?
  - What would you tell someone to look for as an indicator of a threat?

- Our survey showed that (give % for that Academy) of unwanted sexual contacts involved the use of alcohol?
  - Does that make sense to you? Is that high or low?
  - Can you suggest any changes needed to address alcohol use or any of the other factors you just mentioned?
  - Are there any policies that the Academy could make or change?
  - Are there any cultural changes at the Academy that would help?

Let's turn our discussion specifically to sexual harassment for a few minutes.

<b>Time for Question 4:</b> <b>10 minutes</b>
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#### 4. Sexual Harassment/Sexist Behavior

- Let me share with you some findings from the 2010 survey here at (Academy). X% of women and Y% of men indicated they had experienced some form of sexual harassment in the past year but only X% of women and X % of men would describe their experience as harassment.
  - Does this relationship surprise you?
  - Can you help us understand why sexual harassment behavior is this high at (Academy) but identifying behavior as harassment is so low?
- Also, X% of women and Y% of men experienced some form of sexist behavior in the past year. This is gender based, like saying women do not belong at the Academy, or men who cannot do 100 pushups are wimps. These rates are the highest we see in all of our surveys of active duty and Reserve components.
  - Do these figures surprise you?
  - Can you help us understand why sexist behavior is this high at (Academy)?
  - (Probe if no discussion - is there competition between men and women that manifests itself in such behaviors?)
- Regarding sexual harassment experienced by males, is it male-on-male primarily?
  - When it occurs, what is the focus of the harassment?
  - Has training in sexual harassment possibly contributed to this increase by making men more aware of the behaviors that constitute sexual harassment and that they do not have to tolerate it?

Let's discuss leadership's response to sexual assault and sexual harassment for a moment.

<b>Time for Question 5:</b> <b>10 minutes</b>
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#### 5. Leadership Response

- Do your leaders take sexual assault prevention seriously?
  - Can you give me a few examples of how they demonstrate that?
  - Is this true of leaders at all levels? (Based on the actions they describe, ask for examples at higher or lower levels of leadership)
  - What else can leaders do to make the Academy a safer place?
- Do your leaders take sexual harassment prevention seriously?
  - Can you give me a few examples of how they demonstrate that?

- Is this true of leaders at all levels? (Based on the actions they describe, ask for examples at higher or lower levels of leadership)
- From your perspective, what actions from your leaders have the most impact on creating a command climate that discourages sexual assault and sexual harassment?
  - Can you give a few examples of leadership actions that have most impressed you with regard to discouraging improper gender-related behaviors?
  - What else can leaders do? Should leaders take different actions to discourage sexual harassment than sexual assault?
  - Are there any negative leadership actions? (If no discussion, probe if there is any tacit approval of sexist or aggressive sexual behavior)
- As a future leader, do you feel the Academy has prepared you to deal with a Service member under your command who is a victim of sexual assault?
  - Are you prepared to deal with an alleged offender?
  - How could the Academy better prepare you?

Now let's turn our attention briefly to the topic of training at your Academy.

**Time for Question 6:  
10 minutes**

## 6. Training

- Do you receive training in sexual assault and sexual harassment?
  - How often do you receive this type of training?
- We have heard that training is getting better in the sense that there are less PowerPoints and more dynamic speakers with real-life stories. Is it getting better?
  - Can you describe briefly the training you receive? (Ask about different formats and venues)
- Our survey results show the perceived effectiveness of training is decreasing while there is a marked increase in most sexual harassment and assault. So - is training perceived as less effective because of the increase in negative behaviors?
- Are cadets/midshipmen more likely to attribute sexual assault and sexual harassment to a personal characteristic that is not likely changed by attending a few classes? Probe for reasons why this is happening.

**Time for Question 7:  
10 minutes**

I want to ask you a couple quick questions about sexual assault awareness campaigns next.

## 7. Campaign Awareness

- Did you see the "Hurts One. Affects All" campaign?
  - Please describe briefly the campaign.
  - What do you think the connection is to military readiness?
  - Explain how a (company/squadron) might respond to the sexual assault of one of its members?
- Are you aware of any other sexual assault awareness campaigns?
  - What do you recall of campaign themes?

- Are such campaigns effective? In what ways?

Now let's turn our attention a very important topic having to do with bystander intervention – we are almost done for the day.

<b>Time for Question 8: 10 minutes</b>
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## 8. Bystander Intervention in Sexual Assaults

- We presented the following scenario to (cadets/midshipmen) on the 2010 survey. “Suppose you see a female cadet/midshipman, who you do not know very well, getting drunk at a party. Someone tells you that a guy from your company/squadron is going to take her to a back room to have sex. What are you most likely to do in this kind of situation?
  - Nothing
  - Leave the party to avoid any kind of trouble
  - Find someone who knows the woman and can help her
  - Talk to the woman/try to get her out of the situation
  - Stop the guy from leaving with the woman
  - Other action”
- Is this a realistic situation? What would be more realistic?
- In response to the scenario above, most cadets/midshipmen said they would intervene in some way. Do you think they really would?
  - What can your Academy do to encourage bystander intervention?
- A small percent (X%) said they would do nothing or leave to avoid trouble. Why would someone choose not to intervene—what's the downside for intervening?
- Does your training address intervention?
  - Can you describe some of the principles that you are taught?
  - Do they work in practice?
  - What prohibits it?
  - Are there any additional actions your leaders can take to encourage someone to intervene in a situation that appears to be an instance of sexual harassment or sexual assault?
- Are you aware of any actual situation where a fellow student stepped in to prevent someone from being sexually harassed or sexually assaulted? Can you describe the situation without giving names or identifying details?
  - (Probe for ways this situation could have been handled better, what was good or bad about it, what could the Academy have done to better prepare people)
- Are there any other recommendations you can make to help people prepare themselves to deal with a situation of sexual assault or sexual harassment? To prepare themselves to intervene?

I said that you are the experts on Academy life and as the last topic for today I want to see what your recommendations are for improvements.

<b>Time for Question 9: 10 minutes</b>
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## 9. Recommendations

- What more can the Academy or your Service do to decrease the incidence of sexual assault?
- What can (cadets/midshipmen) do to reduce sexual assault?
  - Any more thoughts on how friends and bystanders can be more effective?
  - What can (cadets/midshipmen) do to create a climate of respect?
- What more can the Academy or your Service do to decrease the incidence of sexual harassment?
- What can (cadets/midshipmen) do to reduce sexual harassment?
  - How can friends and bystanders be more effective?
- Are there issues we should know about that we have not touched on so far?
- Do you have any final comments you would like to make?

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this focus group. As I mentioned at the beginning, we will treat all of your comments anonymously. There is no attribution to any of you for the specific comments you made today. Please also respect that non-attribution when you leave here today. Our goal is to provide the best data possible and you have helped us greatly today with your comments and insights. Thank you again for your participation.

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