

# Drop in UGA Rape Reporting May Be Due to Changing Interpretation of Law

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ATHENS, Ga. – A recent change in the interpretation of the Violence Against Women Act regarding how federally funded universities report rape statistics may be the reason for a sharp decline in rapes reported on UGA’s campus.

According to the [Federal Register](#), The Violence Against Women Act of 2013 requires that federally funded institutions record all reported crimes and make them accessible to the public.

The 2016 Edition of [The Handbook for Campus Safety and Security Reporting](#) states that if police cannot determine the location of the crime, they do not have to include it as long as a note is made in the annual security report.

The [Crime Statistics section](#) on UGAPD’s website includes a main chart with the number of known locations of sexual crimes, as well as a section at the bottom for unknown locations. The reporting of unknown crimes is only present from 2014-16.

Savannah Austin, a junior at UGA, said, “I feel like sexual assault victims may feel so traumatized that they can’t speak out, or they’re scared to. I doubt rape reporting has increased or decreased in the last 5 years.

Rape reporting decreased by 80 percent from 2016 to 2017, according to [the University of Georgia Police Department](#), and referenced in the chart below. This decrease occurred directly after the Campus Safety Handbook was updated in 2016.

“No police department, no matter what they tell you, has any way to truly assess how many of any incident is actually occurring. We solely rely on what people tell us,” said Captain Fouche of UGA Police Department in a journalism class conference.

According to Linnea Ionna, the Director of Adult Services at [The Cottage](#), 32 UGA student sexual assault survivors received their services in 2018. According to UGAPD’s crime statistics, 19 reports of sexual crimes were made in 2018.

When shown the disparity in reported sexual crimes, Austin Grant, UGA freshman said, “I feel like students have many different outlets to report sexual crimes. During freshman orientation, I felt like the [UGA] police department was stressed as a final resource.”

The Clery Act of the Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act was enacted as federal law in 1990 after the murder of student Jeanne Clery. This act mandated the reporting of crime statistics on college campuses, according to [Congressional Research Service](#).

## Rape Reporting - UGA PD

