

# Perceptions of Female Students Safety: The Buddy System

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## Abstract

- Research Question: What are the factors that effect the perceptions of safety at night of female undergraduate students who live on-campus?
- Purpose: To investigate the perceptions of safety of female undergraduate students living on campus and their relationship to their going out behaviors.
- 84 respondents of the survey → sample size of 37 female undergraduate students who lived on campus.
- 18 item survey, consisting of measures about age, “going out” behaviors, and perceptions of safety.
- Data analysis: running *t*-Tests to test if walking with a friend or walking alone affects students perceptions of safety and if walking with a male or female friend also has an influence.

## Methods

- Recruiting Sample: sending an anonymous link to the survey to private groups and to a resident assistant to distribute to residents of an on-campus dorm.
- IRB approval for this study was obtained through Miami University’s research review board.
- Respondents who were not female undergraduate students who attended Miami University and lived on campus were cleared from the data analysis.
- Likert scales used in this study were adapted from two other studies that included surveys from Ball State University and from from the *Journal of Crime & Delinquency*
- Measures on a five point scale, a rating of “1” indicated “strongly disagree” and a rating of “5” indicated “strongly agree” on perceptions of safety statements (Menning, 2009). Other measures assessed risk perceptions for certain situations “1” indicating “low-risk” and 5 indicating “high risk”.
- Mean age of female students = 18.95
- Mode number times participants reported going out on average during the week = 2-3 times
- Mode for the average time students leave their residence to go out and come back home are 10:00pm-11:59pm and 12:00pm-1:59am.
- *t*-tests were conducted by assigning “1” and “0” to the two independent nominal variable groups and testing them against the interval perceptions of safety variable

## Measures

Figure 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 Survey Items 17, 14.1-14.9, 12.1-12.9 taken from Qualtrics

If you were walking on campus at night to your residence, would you feel safer walking with a female friend or a male friend?

Female friend

Male friend

Either/or

Please indicate your opinion on the following statements ranging from: 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

	1. Strongly Disagree	2. Somewhat Disagree	3. Neither Agree or Disagree	4. Somewhat Agree	5. Strongly Agree
I am generally more afraid of being a victim of crime during the night.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am afraid of having my property stolen at night.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am afraid of being sexually assaulted at night.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel safe at this University at night.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel safe at this University during the day.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel the University has sufficient measures to protect students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel safe at night on campus.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel safe at night off campus or uptown.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I try to avoid going out alone at night because of crime.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How do you typically travel back to your residence? (Please check all that apply)

Walk alone

Walk with a friend

Walk with friends (2 or more)

Taxi alone

Taxi with a friend

Taxi with friends (2 or more)

Drive

Get a ride (not taxi)

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Not applicable

## Findings

Table 1. *t*-test Results Comparing Female Students that Typically Walk Home and Those That Do Not on Perceptions of Safety

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Please indicate your opinion on the following statements ranging from: 1 (strongly disagree) to 5...- I try to avoid going out alone at night because of crime.	.052	.821	-3.122	35	.004	-1.391	.446	-2.296	-.486
			-3.171	25.858	.004	-1.391	.439	-2.293	-.489

Table 2.1 & 2.2. *t*-test Results Comparing Female Students Who Would Feel Safer Walking with a Female Friend Home and Female Student Who Would Feel Safer Walking with A Male Friend Home on Perceptions of Safety

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Please indicate your perceived level of risk on campus for the following crimes (1=very low risk...-Being sexually assaulted	.699	.415	2.488	16	.024	.954	.383	.141	1.767
			2.270	6.216	.062	.954	.420	-.066	1.973
Feel safe at night off campus	1.556	.230	2.477	16	.025	1.07692	.43480	.15518	1.99866
			2.716	8.913	.024	1.07692	.39648	.17867	1.97517

## References

Menning, C. L. (2009). Unsafe at any house?: Attendees' perceptions of micro level environmental traits and personal safety at fraternity and nonfraternity parties. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 24(10), 1714-1734.

Wilcox, P., Jordan, C. E., & Pritchard, A. J. (2007). A multidimensional examination of campus safety: Victimization, perceptions of danger, worry about crime, and precautionary behavior among college women in the post-Cleary era. *Crime & Delinquency*, 53(2), 219-254. doi: 10.1177/0097700405283664

## Findings Cont.

There was a significant difference in the level of agreement with the statement “I avoid going out at night because of crime” for female students who typically walk alone (N=13 Mean=2.69 St. Deviation = 1.25) and those who do not walk alone from going out (N=24 Mean=4.08 St. Deviation=1.32);  $t(25.86) = -3.17, p = .004$

There was a significant difference in the level of perceived risk of being sexually assaulted for female students would would feel safer walking with a female friend (N=5 Mean=3.8 St. Deviation = .84) and for female students who would feel safer walking with a male friend and for those who would feel safe with either (N=13 Mean=2.85 St. Deviation = .69).  $t(16) = 2.49, p = .024$

There was a significant difference in the level of agreement with the statement “I feel safe at night off campus or uptown” for female students who would feel safer walking home with a female friend (Mean=4.00 St. Deviation = .71) and for female students who would feel safer walking with a male friend at night and for those who would feel safe with either (Mean=2.92 St. Deviation = .86).  $t(16) = 4.48, p = .025$ .

## Discussion

The original hypotheses that female students going home at night would feel safer with a friend present is not supported. But the findings from testing the other hypothesis that female students going home at night would feel safer going with a male friend than a female friend, are mixed. While those female students who reported feeling safer walking with a female friend also reported having perception of risk of being sexually assaulted, they had a higher perception of safety at night off campus or uptown.

The female buddy system provides mixed perceptions of safety at night on or off campus, but also provides an increased perception of risk of sexual assault. The strengths of this study include its specific measures of perceptions of safety and risk, in addition to the mode of transportation for female students. Some of the limitations would include the small sample size and the lack of generalizability of this study, which could be due to an unrepresentative sample demographically. Further research, with a bigger sample size should be conducted to investigate the other factors contributing to the many components that make up the perception of safety.