

## Criminal Incidents at Postsecondary Institutions

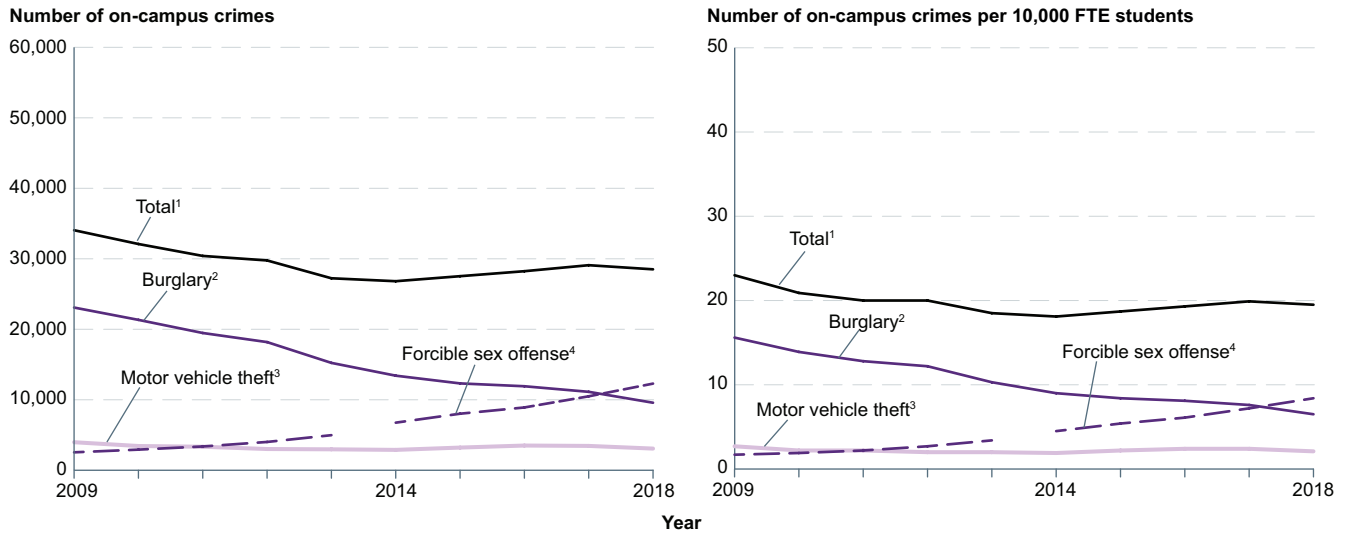
*In 2018, about 28,500 criminal incidents on campuses at postsecondary institutions were reported to police and security agencies, representing a 2 percent decrease from 2017, when 29,100 criminal incidents were reported. The number of on-campus crimes reported per 10,000 full-time-equivalent students also decreased, from 19.9 in 2017 to 19.5 in 2018.*

Since 1990, postsecondary institutions participating in Title IV federal student financial aid programs have been required to comply with the *Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act*, known as the *Clery Act*. The *Clery Act* requires institutions to distribute timely warnings about crime occurrences to students and staff; to publicly report campus crime and safety policies; and to collect, report, and disseminate campus crime data. Since 1999, data on campus safety and security have been reported by institutions through the Campus Safety and Security Survey, sponsored by the Office of Postsecondary Education of the U.S. Department of Education. These reports include on-campus criminal offenses and arrests involving students, faculty, staff, and the general public, as well as referrals for disciplinary action primarily dealing with persons associated formally with the institution (i.e., students, faculty, and other staff). Due to underreporting, figures for reported offenses, arrests, and disciplinary referrals likely do not capture all incidents that actually occurred. For example, according to reports in a student survey administered at

several dozen large universities, officially reported sexual assaults represented only a minority of sexual assaults that occurred.<sup>1</sup>

In 2018, a total of 28,500 criminal incidents against persons and property on campuses of postsecondary institutions were reported to police and security agencies. This translates to 19.5 on-campus crimes reported per 10,000 full-time-equivalent (FTE) students.<sup>2</sup> Among the various types of on-campus crimes reported in 2018, there were 12,300 forcible sex offenses, which constituted 43 percent of all criminal incidents. Other reported crimes included burglaries<sup>3</sup> (9,600 incidents, or 34 percent of crimes) and motor vehicle thefts (3,100 incidents, or 11 percent of crimes). In addition, 2,200 aggravated assaults (8 percent of crimes) and 800 robberies<sup>4</sup> (3 percent of crimes) were reported. These estimates translate to 8.4 forcible sex offenses, 6.5 burglaries, 2.1 motor vehicle thefts, 1.5 aggravated assaults, and 0.6 robberies per 10,000 FTE students.

**Figure 1. Number of on-campus crimes reported and number per 10,000 full-time-equivalent (FTE) students in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by selected type of crime: 2009 through 2018**



<sup>1</sup> Includes other reported crimes not separately shown.  
<sup>2</sup> Unlawful entry of a structure to commit a felony or theft.  
<sup>3</sup> Theft or attempted theft of a motor vehicle.  
<sup>4</sup> Any sexual act directed against another person forcibly and/or against that person's will. Data on reported forcible sex offenses have been collected differently since 2014. Beginning in 2014, schools were asked to report the numbers of two different types of forcible sex offenses, rape and fondling, and these were added together to reach the total number of reported forcible sex offenses. In years prior to 2014, schools only reported a total number of reported forcible sex offenses, with no breakouts for specific types of offenses.  
 NOTE: Data are for degree-granting institutions, which are institutions that grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Some institutions that report *Cleary Act* data—specifically, non-degree-granting institutions and institutions outside of the 50 states and the District of Columbia—are excluded from this figure. Crimes include incidents involving students, staff, and on-campus guests. Excludes off-campus crimes even if they involve college students or staff. Some data have been revised from previously published figures.  
 SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, Campus Safety and Security Reporting System, 2009 through 2018; and National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2010 through Spring 2019, Fall Enrollment component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, tables 329.10 and 329.20.

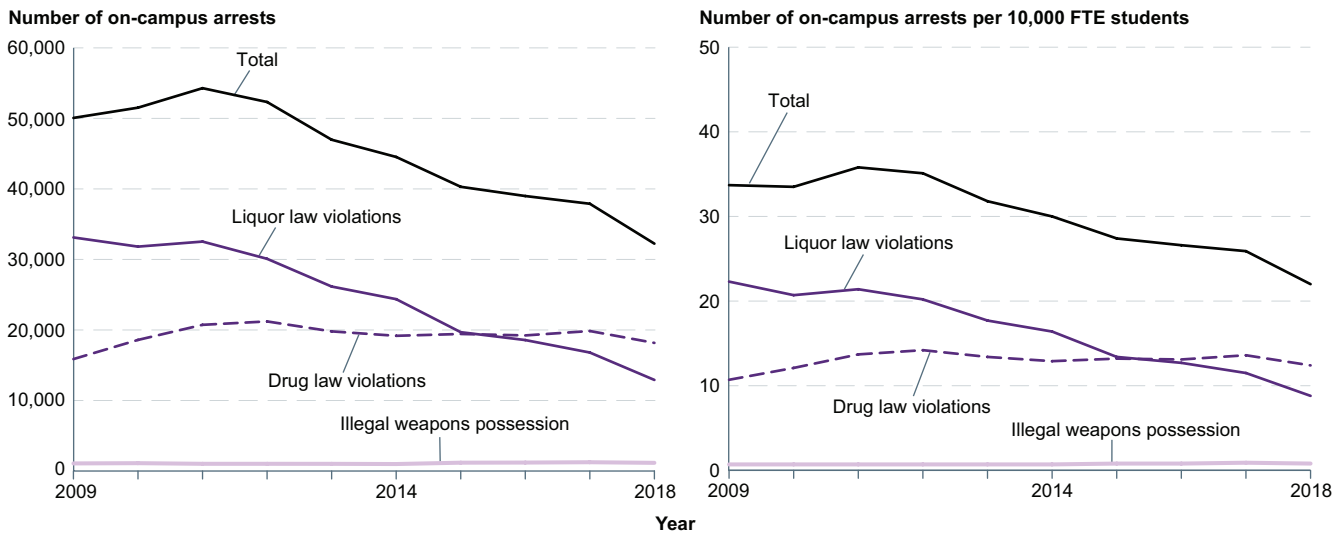
Between 2009 and 2018, the overall number of reported on-campus crimes decreased by 16 percent (from 34,100 to 28,500). Although the general trend was downward during this period, the number of reported on-campus crimes increased by 8 percent between 2014 and 2017 (from 26,800 to 29,100). When examined by the specific type of crime, the number of on-campus crimes reported in 2018 was lower than the number reported in 2009 for most categories except forcible sex offenses, nonforcible sex offenses, and negligent manslaughter. Two negligent manslaughter offenses were reported in 2019, while none were reported in 2009. In both years, 65 nonforcible

sex offenses were reported. The number of reported forcible sex offenses on campus increased from 2,500 in 2009 to 12,300 in 2018 (a 383 percent increase). Readers should take note that reporting guidelines for forcible sex offenses changed in 2014,<sup>5</sup> which likely contributed to the largest single-year percent increase in that year (36 percent, from 5,000 to 6,800). However, the number of reported forcible sex offenses on campus continued to increase steadily between 2014 and 2018, from 6,800 to 12,300 (an 82 percent increase, or an average increase of about 16 percent per year).

Over this same period in which the overall number of reported on-campus crimes was decreasing, the number of FTE students enrolled in postsecondary institutions was also decreasing. This has implications for the rate of crime, or the number of crimes per 10,000 FTE students. Specifically, although postsecondary enrollment also decreased between 2009 and 2018, the number of reported on-campus crimes decreased at a faster rate (see *Digest of Education Statistics 2019* for details about college enrollment). As a result, the overall number of on-campus crimes per 10,000 students was lower in 2018 than in 2009 (19.5 vs. 23.0 per 10,000 FTE students). A closer examination of this period reveals that changes in the rate of on-campus crimes follow the patterns observed for the overall number of reported on-campus crimes. Specifically, despite the general downward trend over the period, the number of on-campus crimes reported per 10,000 students increased between 2014 and 2017 (from 18.1 to 19.9). The rate per 10,000 students was lower in 2018 than in 2009 for all types of reported on-campus crimes except forcible and nonforcible sex offenses and negligent manslaughter.<sup>6</sup> The rate for forcible sex offenses increased from 1.7 per 10,000 students in 2009 to 8.4 per 10,000 students in 2018.

In 2018, the number of crimes reported on college campuses per 10,000 students differed by level and control of institution (ranging from 5.2 at 4-year private for-profit institutions to 30.6 at 4-year private nonprofit institutions), although to some extent this reflects the presence of student residence halls. Crimes involving students on campus after normal class hours, such as those occurring in residence halls, are included in campus crime reports, while crimes involving students off campus are not. In 2018, institutions with residence halls reported higher rates of on-campus crime than institutions without residence halls (25.0 vs. 5.7 per 10,000 FTE students). The rate for each individual type of crime was also higher for institutions with residence halls. For example, more forcible sex offenses were reported at institutions with residence halls than at institutions without them (11.3 vs. 1.1 per 10,000 students), and more burglaries were reported at institutions with residence halls than at institutions without residence halls (8.3 vs. 2.1 per 10,000 students).

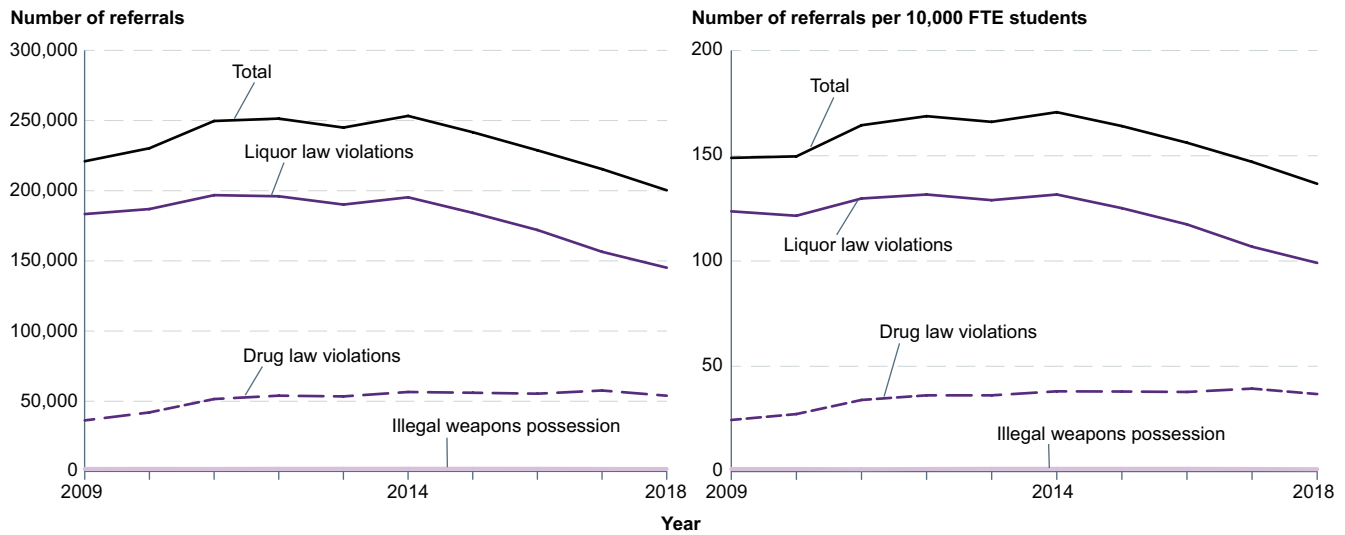
**Figure 2. Number of on-campus arrests and number per 10,000 full-time-equivalent (FTE) students in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by type of arrest: 2009 through 2018**



NOTE: Data are for degree-granting institutions, which are institutions that grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Some institutions that report *Clergy Act* data—specifically, non-degree-granting institutions and institutions outside of the 50 states and the District of Columbia—are excluded from this figure. Arrests include incidents involving students, staff, and on-campus guests. Excludes off-campus arrests even if they involve college students or staff. Some data have been revised from previously published figures.  
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, Campus Safety and Security Reporting System, 2009 through 2018; and National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2010 through Spring 2019, Fall Enrollment component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, tables 329.10 and 329.20.

As part of the *Clergy Act*, postsecondary institutions are also required to report the number of arrests made on campus for illegal weapons possession, drug law violations, and liquor law violations. The total number of these reported on-campus arrests decreased between 2009 and 2018 (from 50,100 to 32,200), a trend driven by the decrease in the number of arrests for liquor law violations. Between 2009 and 2018, the number of arrests for liquor law violations decreased from 33,100 to 12,900. In contrast, the numbers of arrests for drug law violations and illegal weapons possession were both higher in 2018 than in 2009 (18,200 vs. 15,900 for drug law violations, and 1,200 vs. 1,100 for illegal weapons possession).

Similar patterns can be observed for the number of arrests per 10,000 FTE students, overall and by type of violation. The total number of arrests per 10,000 students for these three types of incident decreased between 2009 and 2018 (from 33.7 to 22.0). The number of arrests per 10,000 students for liquor law violations decreased from 22.3 in 2009 to 8.8 in 2018. In contrast, the numbers of arrests for drug law violations and illegal weapons possession were both higher in 2018 than in 2009 (0.8 vs. 0.7 for illegal weapons possession, and 12.4 vs. 10.7 for drug law violations).

**Figure 3. Number of referrals for disciplinary action resulting from on-campus violations and number per 10,000 full-time-equivalent (FTE) students in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by type of referral: 2009 through 2018**

NOTE: Data are for degree-granting institutions, which are institutions that grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Some institutions that report *Cleary Act* data—specifically, non-degree-granting institutions and institutions outside of the 50 states and the District of Columbia—are excluded from this figure. Referrals include incidents involving students, staff, and on-campus guests. Some data have been revised from previously published figures. Excludes cases in which an individual is both arrested and referred to college officials for disciplinary action for a single offense.  
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, Campus Safety and Security Reporting System, 2009 through 2018; and National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Spring 2010 through Spring 2019, Fall Enrollment component. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, tables 329.10 and 329.20.

In addition to reporting on-campus arrests, institutions report referrals for disciplinary action for cases involving illegal weapons possession, drug law violations, and liquor law violations. Disciplinary action counts only include incidents for which there was a referral for institutional disciplinary action, but no arrest. In 2018, there were 200,300 referrals for disciplinary action for cases involving illegal weapons possession, drug law violations, and liquor law violations, with most of the referrals (92 percent) involving violations in residence halls. The largest number of disciplinary referrals (145,200 referrals, or 72 percent of referrals) involved liquor law violations.

Changes over time in the number of disciplinary referrals varied by type of violations. The total number of disciplinary referrals increased from 221,000 in 2009 to 253,300 in 2014, before decreasing to a period low of 200,300 in 2018. A similar pattern was observed for the number of referrals for illegal weapons possession

between 2009 and 2018, which increased from 1,300 in 2009 to 1,400 in 2014 and then decreased to 1,200 in 2018. The number of referrals for liquor law violations decreased from 183,400 in 2009 to 145,200 in 2018. In contrast, the number of referrals for drug law violations increased from 36,300 in 2009 to 53,900 in 2018.

Similar patterns can be observed for the number of referrals per 10,000 FTE students, overall and by type of violation. Between 2009 and 2018, the total number of disciplinary referrals per 10,000 FTE students increased from 149.0 in 2009 to 170.7 in 2014, before decreasing to 136.7 in 2018. The number of referrals per 10,000 FTE students for illegal weapons possession also increased from 0.9 in 2009 to 1.0 in 2014 and then decreased to 0.8 in 2018. The number of referrals per 10,000 FTE students for liquor law violations decreased from 123.6 in 2009 to 99.1 in 2018. In contrast, the number of referrals per 10,000 FTE students for drug law violations increased from 24.5 in 2009 to 36.8 in 2018.

**Endnotes:**

<sup>1</sup> Cantor, D., Fisher, B., Chibnail, S., Harps, S., Townsend, R., Thomas, G., Lee, H., Kranz, V., Herbison, R., and Madden, K. (2020). *Report on the AAU Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Misconduct*. Rockville, MD: Westat. Retrieved November 11, 2020, from [https://www.aau.edu/sites/default/files/AAU-Files/Key-Issues/Campus-Safety/Revised%20Aggregate%20report%20%20and%20appendices%201-7 \(01-16-2020 FINAL\).pdf](https://www.aau.edu/sites/default/files/AAU-Files/Key-Issues/Campus-Safety/Revised%20Aggregate%20report%20%20and%20appendices%201-7%20(01-16-2020%20FINAL).pdf).

<sup>2</sup> The base of 10,000 FTE students includes students who are enrolled exclusively in distance learning courses and who may not be physically present on campus.

<sup>3</sup> Unlawful entry of a structure to commit a felony or theft.

<sup>4</sup> Taking or attempting to take anything of value using actual or threatened force or violence.

<sup>5</sup> In years prior to 2014, schools only reported a total number of forcible sex offenses, with no breakouts for specific types of offenses. Beginning in 2014, schools were asked to report the numbers of two different types of forcible sex offenses, rape and fondling, and these were added together to reach the total number of reported forcible sex offenses. For instance, about 6,700 rapes and 5,600 fondling incidents were reported in 2018.

<sup>6</sup> The rate for negligent manslaughter was higher in 2018 than in 2009 (0.001 vs. 0.000). The rate for nonforcible sex offenses was also higher in 2018 than in 2009, though the rates round to 0.044 in both years.

**Reference tables:** *Digest of Education Statistics 2020*, tables 329.10, 329.20, and 307.10

**Related indicators and resources:** [Hate Crime Incidents at Postsecondary Institutions](#)

**Glossary:** Forcible sex offense; Incidents; Nonforcible sex offense