

# The Impact of Influencers on the #MeToo Movement

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**Warning:** This article may contain graphic or unsettling content.

The #MeToo movement gained traction in 2017 with celebrities and influencers using the movement to come out about their experiences with sexual harassment, assault, and abuse. The involvement of influencers in this movement caused an uproar of more common women speaking up about their own encounters with sexual harassment, assault, and abuse.

As a white woman raised with my two sisters by my mother in the United States that surrounds and creates relationships with other women I see the struggles of women both through first hand and second hand experiences.

Women were less likely to come out about these experiences until celebrities and influencers started using the #MeToo movement to come out about their experiences. Many of the women in my life have gone through the experiences that the #MeToo movement focuses on and I have witnessed the movement causing more and more women to become more comfortable with speaking up.

The utilisation of the #MeToo movement by celebrities and influencers has caused more common people to speak up about these problems because we see influencers as untouchable people that undergo so much criticism so we think that if they can do it, we can do it too.

Figure 1



Figure 1 shows people marching at the #MeToo march.

In an interview with a survivor of sexual assault, Amy Jones (renamed to remain anonymous) now 28, reflected on her experiences with sexual assault at age 21 in 2013.

"It happened when I was in college, I had gone out to the bar with some of my friends and we got split up. I went outside to catch my breath and to try to call them when it happened. After it happened I felt like my body no longer belonged to me.

“I remember feeling like I was the one that was guilty for being raped and not being mad at my attacker, but at myself. I felt ashamed for coming off as so vulnerable that someone thought they could take advantage of me. I never told the authorities, my parents, or my friends about what happened because I felt that it was my fault.”

Sexual violence is more common than we think and statistics from RAINN (Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network), the United States' largest anti-sexual violence organization, show it. Statistics from RAINN state that every 73 seconds an American is sexually assaulted and on average there are 433,648 victims of sexual violence every year in the United States.

Despite sexual violence being so common, it often is not reported to authorities. RAINN statistics from 2005-2010 show that the reasoning behind not reporting it below (figure 2).

Figure 2

- Reasons Victims Choose to Report—or Not**
- Of the sexual violence crimes reported to police from 2005-2010, the survivor reporting gave the following reasons for doing so:<sup>5</sup>
- 28% to protect the household or victim from further crimes by the offender
  - 25% to stop the incident or prevent recurrence or escalation
  - 21% to improve police surveillance or they believed they had a duty to do so
  - 17% to catch/punish/prevent offender from reoffending
  - 6% gave a different answer, or declined to cite one reason
  - 3% did so to get help or recover loss
- Of the sexual violence crimes not reported to police from 2005-2010, the victim gave the following reasons for not reporting:<sup>5</sup>
- 20% feared retaliation
  - 13% believed the police would not do anything to help
  - 13% believed it was a personal matter
  - 8% reported to a different official
  - 8% believed it was not important enough to report
  - 7% did not want to get the perpetrator in trouble
  - 2% believed the police could not do anything to help
  - 30% gave another reason, or did not cite one reason

Figure 2 displays the reasonings behind why victims choose not to report acts of sexual violence.

It is likely that if the incident of sexual violence is reported that it the abuser will not be justly tried or will even walk free.

Figure 3

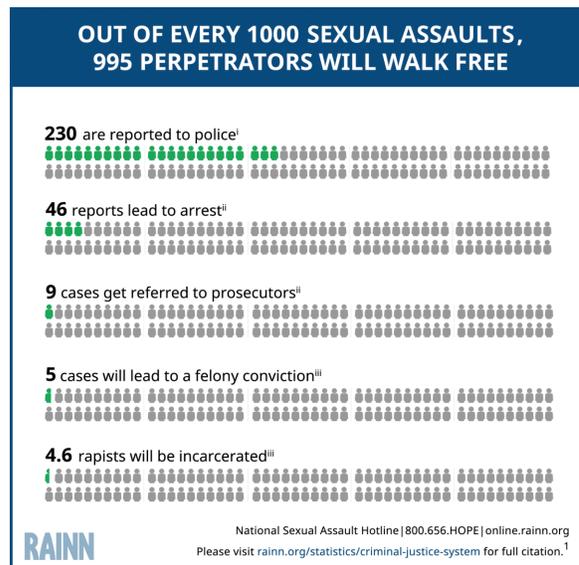


Figure 3 shows statistics from RAINN on how many sexual assault perpetrators walk free.

Amy Jones was empowered by the #MeToo movement that gained a lot of publicity in 2017 through its affiliations with influencers caused her

to confront the memories she had been suppressing.

"I saw that Ashley Judd [an actress] had accused Harvey Weinstein of sexual assault when I was on my phone one day and it brought everything back to me. I didn't realize it was a part of a movement but it really made me think about what happened to me.

"Gradually I saw more and more women coming out about their experiences with sexual violence, eventually using #MeToo, and it made me realize I wasn't alone. I started confronting what had happened to me as something that wasn't my fault."

**The #MeToo movement spread through celebrities and influencers** to more common people and they started using it. Jones admitted that she saw more and more people becoming more comfortable with speaking about their experiences with sexual violence throughout the height of the movement.

"I saw the comments on #MeToo posts of celebrities like Busy Phillips [an actress] of normal people congratulating her and some even sharing that they were happy to see they weren't alone.

"I remember having a conversation with my mom and sisters about the #MeToo movement. I remember my mom saying that she knew so many women that had been victims of sexual violence but never said

anything... that moment was when I told my mom about what I had been through.

"I remember crying so much and my mother asking me why I hadn't told her about it. I had lived with that secret for 6 years and a huge weight was lifted off of my shoulders. I honestly believe that I gained the strength to speak about my experience because of the influencers involved in the #MeToo movement."

**Influencers were the catalyst of the #MeToo movement** that was originally just a term 'Me Too' that was created in 2006 by Tarana Burke to help other survivors of sexual violence know that they were not alone. Influencers and celebrities turned this phrase into an entire movement to counteract sexual violence in their industries in 2017.

The major transformation occurred when Alyssa Milano interacted with the twitter posts below (figure 4).

Figure 4



Figure 4 shows a tweet from Alyssa Milano supporting the #MeToo movement.

This interaction on social media caused a surge of searches related to #MeToo and caused a spike in engagement with the movement.

**#MeToo strengthened distrust in the justice system** according to statistics from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), the United States' database for crimes. Statistics from the BJS show that the #MeToo movement didn't increase the amount of victims of sexual violence reporting the incident to the police.

The BJS investigated the statistical difference of sexual violence being reported years shows that "from 2015 to 2018, the rate of violent victimizations not reported to police rose from 9.5 to 12.9 per 1,000 persons age 12 or older, while the

rate reported to police showed no statistically significant change" (Criminal Victimization, 2018.).

This increase in victims not reporting violent acts could be because of the #MeToo movement outing the fact that it is likely that perpetrators will walk free.

The **#MeToo movement was a catalyst for healing** for many people like Amy Jones because social media made them confront memories they had been suppressing. The #MeToo movement gave these survivors a boost to speak up as well as the support they needed to know that they are not alone.

The #MeToo movement has its own website where victims can find information on how to report incidents, other people's stories, and how to start healing. This movement isn't just influencers trying to get attention because they have started a movement of protest against how the justice system handles cases of sexual violence.

### Works Cited

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