

Unprocessed Rape Kits Lower Rape Prosecutions (Project Censored #23)

By Jessica Bales, Nathan Bowman, Jared Kinggard, and Susan Rahman | [Project Censored](#)



Rape and Sexual Assault: A Renewed Call to Action, a report by the White House Council on Women and Girls issued in January 2014, revealed that nearly one in five US women have experienced rape or attempted rape in their lifetimes. Furthermore, the report indicated that, although the testing of rape kits—forensic exams that collect evidence of rape or sexual assault, including the perpetrator’s DNA—can be “vital for the prosecution of cases,” a backlog of untested rape kits may factor into low rape prosecution rates.

The [White House report](#) cited a 2011 study of more than 2,000 law enforcement agencies, which found that 44 percent of the

agencies did not send forensic evidence to a laboratory because the suspect had not been identified; another 15 percent said they did not submit the evidence because the prosecutor did not request it; and 11 percent cited the lab's inability to produce timely results. The White House report described a DNA Backlog Reduction Program, administered through the National Institute of Justice, which would fund 120 state and local crime labs to conduct DNA testing.

Writing for *Truthout*, Emily Homrok reported that a five-month [study](#) conducted by CBS News in 2009 had found a minimum of at least 20,000 unprocessed rape kits across the US. Homrok's article detailed Jessica Ripley's case. In February 2012, Ripley was raped in a parking garage in Salt Lake City, Utah. When the responding officer interviewed Ripley, he alluded several times to the fact that she was intoxicated and should not have been somewhere the officer "would never allow his daughter to go." At the hospital, a rape kit was used and police were contacted—yet despite evidence produced by the kit, no investigative advances have been made in Ripley's case. Ripley's kit never even made it to the lab for testing; it was one of 788 that got destroyed or was left untouched by the Salt Lake City Police Department over an eight-year period, Homrok wrote. Rape tests are often not taken seriously by police officers because the victims are seen as "dumb drunk girls."

[\[Read more here\]](#)

Sources:

Emily Homrok, "How Often Do Rape Kits Go Unprocessed?," *Truthout*, October 3, 2014, <https://www.truth-out.org/news/item/26561-how-often-do-rape-kits-go-unprocessed>.

Nora Caplan-Bricker, "The Backlog of 400,000 Unprocessed Rape Kits Is A Disgrace," *New Republic*, March 9,

2014, <https://www.newrepublic.com/article/116945/rape-kits-bac-klog-joe-biden-announces-35-million-reopen-cases>.



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