



2015 Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct: Executive Summary of Cornell Results

In spring 2015, Cornell participated in the 2015 *Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct* as part of a consortium of 27 colleges and universities organized by the Association of American Universities. Of the 20,547 Cornell students invited to participate, a total of 3,906 completed the survey for an overall response rate of 19%. This report provides a summary of initial results from the survey. A detailed narrative report and tables of survey results showing comparisons by demographic and enrollment status (undergraduate or graduate/professional) are available [here](#).

Perceptions of Campus Climate

The survey asked students about several aspects of the campus climate related to sexual assault and sexual misconduct: their expectations regarding a campus response to a report of sexual assault or sexual misconduct; whether they had ever witnessed an incident and whether they intervened; whether they perceive sexual assault or sexual misconduct as a problem on campus; and the likelihood that they would be victimized.

Expected Campus Responses to Reports of Sexual Assault or Sexual Misconduct

- Almost two-thirds (64%) of Cornell students who responded to the survey think it is “very” or “extremely” likely that campus officials would take a report of sexual assault or sexual misconduct seriously, with an additional 25% saying such a response from campus officials is “somewhat” likely. More than half (57%) of students believe it is “very” or “extremely” likely that other students would support the person making such a report, with another 33% saying this response is “somewhat” likely.
- Expectations of campus climate differ significantly by gender of the respondent. Female students, particularly undergraduates, and students who identify as transgender, genderqueer or nonconforming (TGQN) reported less optimistic views of campus responses to reports of sexual assault or misconduct.

Bystander Intervention

Students were asked if they had witnessed various scenarios of sexual assault or misconduct on campus, how they intervened in the situation, and the reason for their intervention decision.

- Almost half (48%) of all students who responded to the survey had witnessed a drunken person heading for a sexual encounter, with undergraduates reporting this more often than graduate/professional students (e.g., 57% of female undergraduates vs. 37% of female graduate/professional students). Of those students who had encountered this scenario, 22% did not intervene in the situation because they “weren’t sure what to do” and 57% did not intervene “for another reason.”
- Students were less likely to have witnessed someone acting in a sexually violent or harassing manner (20%). Of those who had encountered this situation, fewer than half (44%) intervened in some way.

- Eighteen percent of students reported having suspected a friend was sexually assaulted. Almost two-thirds of these bystanders intervened, by speaking with the friend or someone else to seek help (54%) or by taking action in another way (8%).

Perceptions of Prevalence and Personal Risk of Sexual Assault or Sexual Misconduct

- Seventeen percent of Cornell survey respondents reported that sexual assault or misconduct is “very” or “extremely” problematic at Cornell, and an additional 35% think it is “somewhat” of a problem.
- Fewer than 5% of students said it is “very” or “extremely” likely they will experience sexual assault or misconduct on or off campus, while an additional 11% said they were “somewhat” likely to experience this on campus, and 15% thought this was “somewhat” likely to occur at an off-campus university-sponsored event.
- Female students perceive themselves to be at much greater risk of sexual victimization than do male students, and female undergraduates perceive greater personal risk than female graduate/professional students; for example, 9% of female undergraduates think they are “very” or “extremely” likely to experience sexual assault or misconduct on campus compared with 5% of female graduate/professional students, 2% of male undergraduates and 1% of male graduate/professional students.

Knowledge of Campus Policies, Procedures and Resources

- Most of the Cornell students who responded to the survey reported being “somewhat,” “very” or “extremely” knowledgeable about: where to seek help at Cornell if they or a friend are victims of sexual assault or misconduct (65%); how Cornell defines sexual assault and sexual misconduct (47%); and where to report such incidents (56%). A much smaller percentage felt knowledgeable about what happens when a student makes a report of sexual assault or sexual misconduct (28%).
- Undergraduate students reported being more knowledgeable about these policies and procedures than graduate/professional students.
- About half of students (53%) had attended an initial orientation that included information about sexual assault or sexual misconduct. Undergraduate students were much more likely to have done so than graduate/professional students (76% versus 21%).

Prevalence of Nonconsensual Sexual Contact

The survey considered two forms of nonconsensual sexual contact: *penetration* (vaginal, anal or oral; completed or attempted) and *sexual touching* (kissing; touching, grabbing, groping or rubbing against the other in a sexual way).

Nonconsensual Sexual Contact by Physical Force or Incapacitation

- Eleven percent of survey respondents said they have experienced nonconsensual sexual contact as a result of physical force, threats of physical force or incapacitation since enrolling at Cornell. Acts of nonconsensual sexual touching are more common than acts of completed or attempted penetration (9% versus 5%).
- Rates of this type of victimization differ significantly by gender and enrollment status. Eighteen percent of female students and 11% of students who identify as TGQN reported experiencing nonconsensual contact by physical force or incapacitation since entering Cornell; this compares with 4% of male students.

- Undergraduate student respondents reported three times the victimization rate of graduate/professional students (15% and 5%, respectively, since entering Cornell).
- Cornell's rates of this type of victimization are largely consistent with results aggregated across the 27 institutions participating in the AAU survey, with one exception: Cornell's prevalence rate among female undergraduate seniors is higher than the AAU aggregate rate (32% vs. 27%). Sixteen percent of Cornell senior females who responded to the survey reported experiencing nonconsensual completed or attempted penetration, and 25% reported nonconsensual sexual touching.

Nonconsensual Sexual Contact by Absence of Affirmative Consent (AAC)

The survey asked if students had experienced sexual contact without their “active, ongoing voluntary agreement,” including someone initiating or continuing sexual activity despite their refusal or cues to stop or slow down. The prevalence rates for nonconsensual sexual contact where there was an absence of affirmative consent (AAC) shown below *exclude* the use of other tactics (i.e., physical force, incapacitation or coercion).

- Seven percent of all students who responded to the survey reported experiencing nonconsensual sexual contact by AAC since entering Cornell. These incidents more often involved sexual touching (5%) than penetration (3%).
- The percentage of students reporting nonconsensual sexual contact by AAC differed by gender and enrollment status. Female undergraduates reported the highest rate of this form of victimization (13% versus 5% of female graduate/professional students, 3% of male undergraduates and 1% of male graduate/professional students).
- Cornell's rates of this type of victimization are largely consistent with results aggregated across the 27 institutions participating in the AAU survey, although, again, Cornell's prevalence rate among female undergraduate seniors is higher than the AAU aggregate rate (17% vs. 14%).

Prevalence of Sexual Harassment, Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and Stalking

Students were asked about their experiences related to three other forms of sexual misconduct: sexual harassment, stalking and intimate partner violence (the latter form of misconduct was asked only of students who reported they had been in a partnered relationship).

- Fully half (50%) of Cornell survey respondents said they had experienced sexual harassment (defined as behaviors that interfered with academics and/or created a hostile social, academic or work environment) since enrolling at Cornell.
- Sexual harassment rates are highest among female undergraduate students (67%) and TGQN students (69%), and lowest among graduate/professional males (31%).
- Among students who had been in a partnered relationship, 8% reported experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) since enrolling at Cornell. TGQN students, overall, reported the highest rate of IPV (28%), followed by undergraduate females (11%).
- Four percent of students reported being victims of stalking since entering Cornell. Females were more likely to have been stalked (6% of undergraduates and graduate/professionals) than males (2% of undergraduate and graduate/professionals).
- Cornell's rates of sexual harassment, IPV and stalking are consistent with rates aggregated across all institutions participating in the AAU survey.