



ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 21, 2015

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AAU RELEASES CAMPUS CLIMATE SURVEY ON SEXUAL ASSAULT AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Results Will Assist Universities in Ongoing Efforts to Address Problem of Sexual Assault on Campus

Washington, DC – September 21, 2015 – The Association of American Universities (AAU) today released the aggregate results of the [Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct](#), a survey it undertook in partnership with 27 universities.

“AAU undertook this initiative to assist our universities in their ongoing efforts to address sexual assault and sexual misconduct on campus,” said Hunter Rawlings, president of AAU. “Our universities are working to ensure their campuses are safe places for students. The primary goal of the survey is to help them better understand the experiences and attitudes of their students with respect to this challenge.”

More than 150,000 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students at 26 AAU universities and one non-AAU institution participated in the survey during April and May of 2015. It is one of the largest surveys on sexual assault and sexual misconduct to provide insight into students’ perceptions of campus climate in terms of both number of schools and number of students.

“The leaders of our universities are deeply concerned about the impact of these issues on their students,” Rawlings said. “Their participation in this and other climate surveys is an important part of their efforts to combat sexual assault.”

Rawlings said that the data from the AAU survey would also provide federal policymakers with additional information as they consider legislative and administrative responses to the issue of sexual assault, and would provide researchers with a significant amount of new data as they continue to study this complex issue.

The survey was developed by [Westat](#), a leading social science research firm, and a multidisciplinary team formed by AAU. The team comprises recognized experts on survey design and methodology and campus leaders directly responsible for dealing with sexual assault and sexual misconduct.

The aggregate survey results are generally consistent with other campus surveys on sexual assault and sexual misconduct. However, the survey found significant variations in many of the measures across participating institutions. Overall, 11.7 percent of student respondents across 27 universities reported experiencing nonconsensual sexual contact by physical force, threats of physical force, or incapacitation since they enrolled at their university. The incidence among female undergraduate student respondents only was 23.1 percent; it was 5.4 percent for male undergraduate student respondents.

The survey also looked at whether or not victims of sexual assault and sexual misconduct report the incident to either the university or another organization, such as law enforcement. Overall rates of reporting were low, ranging from five percent to 28 percent, depending on the specific type of behavior. When students were asked why they did not report incidents of sexual assault and sexual misconduct, the most common reason was that it was not considered serious enough. Other reasons included because they were “embarrassed, ashamed or that it would be too emotionally difficult,” and because they “did not think anything would be done about it.”

Finally, the survey revealed that more than six in 10 student respondents (63.3 percent) believe that a report of sexual assault or sexual misconduct would be taken seriously by campus officials. Fifty-six percent said it was very or extremely likely that the safety of those reporting incidents of sexual assault and sexual misconduct would be protected by university officials.

Each participating university has received a report on survey results for its campus. AAU has not received those results. Each campus will decide whether or not to release its own data.

An important and unique aspect of the survey is that it provides estimates of campus climates across a large number, and significant variety, of campuses. The survey provides ranges to show the variations without identifying individual campuses. The analysis by the survey team did not find a clear explanation for the wide range of findings and response rates across institutions. The overall response rate was 19.3 percent.

“We hope the data our universities have collected in this survey will help guide their policies and practices as they work to address and prevent sexual assault and sexual misconduct on campus, and to ensure that reports of sexual assault and sexual misconduct are handled with care, compassion, and a commitment to fair, prompt, and impartial review and resolution,” said Rawlings.

The full AAU Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct aggregate report, including an executive summary, a description of the methodology, and extensive data and analysis, is [available on the AAU website](#). The survey instrument (including background information on questions) and a fact sheet on the survey are also available on the site.

The AAU universities that participated in the survey are:

Brown University
California Institute of Technology
Case Western Reserve University
Columbia University
Cornell University

Harvard University
Iowa State University
Michigan State University
The Ohio State University
Purdue University
Texas A&M University
The University of Arizona
University of Florida
University of Michigan
University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
University of Missouri-Columbia
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
University of Oregon
University of Pennsylvania
University of Pittsburgh
University of Southern California
The University of Texas at Austin
University of Virginia
The University of Wisconsin-Madison
Washington University in St. Louis
Yale University

Dartmouth College, which is not an AAU member, also participated in the survey.

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The [Association of American Universities \(AAU\)](#) is an association of [60 U.S. and two Canadian public and private research universities](#). It focuses on issues such as funding for research, research policy issues, and graduate and undergraduate education. AAU member universities are on the leading edge of innovation, scholarship, and solutions that contribute to the nation's economy, security, and wellbeing. AAU's 60 U.S. universities award nearly one-half of all U.S. doctoral degrees and 55 percent of those in STEM fields.

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