



CAMPUS CLIMATE SURVEY ON SEXUAL ASSAULT AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the purpose of the survey?

The survey is a scientific initiative to help universities better understand the attitudes and experiences of their undergraduate, graduate, and professional students with respect to sexual assault and sexual misconduct.

The data resulting from this survey will help university administrators formulate policies and practices intended to make students safer and to help them feel safer. In addition to the survey's value to participating universities and their students, the aggregate data and analysis will provide useful information to policy makers as they work on possible legislative and administrative initiatives. Researchers will also benefit from the important contribution this survey will make to the body of research on this critical and complex issue.

Who developed the survey?

AAU established a multi-disciplinary survey design team to work with Westat, a leading social science research firm, to develop the survey.

Dr. Bonnie Fisher, a nationally recognized expert on sexual assault, was hired by Westat to work closely with the AAU-Westat team to shape the content and analysis of the sexual assault climate survey. Dr. Fisher's article published in 2000 is one of the most widely cited publications on the sensitivity of sexual assault data to the type of measurement employed.

The AAU team was led by Dr. Sandra Martin, Professor and Associate Chair for Research, Department of Maternal and Child Health, Associate Dean for Research, Gillings School of Global Public Health, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Dr. Martin's research, teaching, and public service focus on the public health problems of sexual and domestic violence, including sexual violence on campuses. She was involved as a co-investigator on the Campus Sexual Assault Study (led by Chris Krebs of RTI International). She has authored more than 100 peer-reviewed manuscripts, as well as book chapters and reports, on a wide range of violence-related concerns, including sexual violence.

Overall, the survey team included a number of recognized experts on survey design and methodology, as well as campus leaders directly responsible for dealing with sexual assault, issues of gender, health, and student affairs. The multidisciplinary team had significant and specific expertise on these issues.

How was the survey developed?

AAU informed the AAU presidents and chancellors (and other constituents) in June 2014 – and the public in November – that the starting point for the survey design team was the survey instrument developed by the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, which was included in the notalone.gov April 2014 report. Dr. Victoria Banyard was the primary author, and the survey had been viewable in the public domain for nearly a year. That survey instrument was recently piloted by Rutgers University. The AAU design team deliberated for months on the survey instrument. Most members of the survey design team consulted extensively with their university colleagues in reviewing the draft survey instrument. Items and topics were submitted by researchers and considered by the team in developing the final instrument. In addition, students provided feedback on questions in a number of ways, including cognitive testing and pilot administration to groups. Questions were adjusted as appropriate.

Is the survey proprietary?

No. The survey instrument is now in the public domain. It is posted on the AAU website along with the aggregate report on the survey. It contains background information on the questions asked. Westat is preparing more in-depth documentation of the methodology to aid researchers in their use of the survey.

Who received the results of the survey?

Each participating university received its own report and data files. AAU received only the aggregate results.

Was the survey anonymous?

Yes. Confidentiality of respondent data was an extremely important issue. Respondents remained anonymous, and their email addresses were not linked, in any way, to their responses.

Why did the survey contain direct questions about sensitive topics?

To more fully understand the climate on university campuses, the researchers designing the survey concluded that it was important to ask direct questions in this way so that students were clear as to what was being asked of them. The questions were based on the latest work conducted by sexual violence researchers and survey researchers.

The survey included a consent statement and a trigger warning about the explicit nature of some of the questions. Each page of the online survey contained links to on- and off-campus resources that a student could access if upset over the survey.