

The Association of American Universities (AAU) 2015 Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct for Dartmouth

Executive Summary

This executive summary is intended to provide a brief overview of the results in the Report on the AAU Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct for Dartmouth College, conducted by the American Association of Universities and carried out by Westat, a private research organization.

This overview is intended only to summarize key aspects of the Report and discuss the steps Dartmouth is taking to address sexual violence and other forms of sexual misconduct on campus. It is important to note that the survey covers many important issues, and that the definitions and methods used to analyze the survey data include significant nuances and details that make any summary complex but also incomplete.

The summary is organized into the following sections:

- I. Overview of the Survey
- II. Motivation for Participation in the Survey
- III. Survey Response Rates and Respondent Demographics
- IV. Key Results
 - Sexual Assault
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 - Student Perceptions of Sexual Assault and Misconduct on Campus
 - Student Knowledge of Resources Related to Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct on Campus
- V. Discussion & Next Steps

I: Overview of the Survey

The Association of American Universities (AAU) developed a survey to examine the attitudes and experiences of college students (undergraduate and graduate/professional students) with respect to sexual assault and sexual misconduct. The survey was conducted by Westat in Spring 2015 with students from 27 institutions of higher education (IHE),¹ including Dartmouth College.

Westat produced a report based on the aggregated data across the 27 institutions (hereafter referred to as the *AAU Aggregate Report*). Westat also produced institutional reports for each of the 27 IHE's based on survey responses. This Executive Summary covers the data reported by Westat in the *AAU Dartmouth Report*, and discusses some comparisons to the *AAU Aggregate Report*.

Survey Methods and Analysis

At all but one of the 27 institutions, the AAU survey was administered over a three-week period from April 1 to 17. At Dartmouth, email invitations to participate in the “AAU Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct” were sent to all enrolled Dartmouth students’ school email addresses through a Westat email account on the first day of data collection, April 2, 2015. The survey closed on April 23, 2015.

Survey researchers generally note that the name of a survey may affect which students choose to respond to the survey and which do not, an issue known as *selection bias*. In this study, response rates are also strongly correlated with the type of school. Private institutions such as Dartmouth had higher response rates overall compared to public institutions.

Since not all students responded to the survey, Westat employed a common survey research technique known as weighting (using a raking procedure) to address non-response.² That means the percentages provided in the AAU Dartmouth Report are *weighted estimates*.

Survey researchers commonly debate the pros and cons of using weighted estimates. According to the AAU Aggregate Report, additional statistical analyses of the weighting procedures suggest that the weighted

¹ 1) Brown University; 2) California Institute of Technology; 3) Case Western Reserve University; 4) Columbia University; 5) Cornell University; 6) Dartmouth College; 7) Harvard University; 8) Iowa State University; 9) Michigan State University; 10) The Ohio State University; 11) Purdue University; 12) Texas A&M University; 13) The University of Arizona; 14) University of Florida; 15) University of Michigan; 16) University of Minnesota, Twin Cities; 17) University of Missouri-Columbia; 18) The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; 19) University of Oregon; 20) University of Pennsylvania; 21) University of Pittsburgh; 22) University of Southern California; 23) The University of Texas at Austin; 24) University of Virginia; 25) The University of Wisconsin-Madison; 26) Washington University in St. Louis; 27) Yale University

² Specifically, the initial step was to create a base-weight for each respondent. A census was conducted at Dartmouth and a base weight of one was assigned to each respondent. The base weight was adjusted to reflect non-response. This adjustment consisted of a raking procedure that adjusted the base weight to the demographic data available on the frame (Deming and Stephen, 1940; Deville, Särndal, and Sautory, 1993; Cervantes and Brick, 2008). The variables used in the raking procedure included: 1) Gender (Male/Female); 2) Age Group (18-20, 21-23, 24-26, and 27+); 3) Year in School (Undergraduate freshman, Undergraduate sophomore, Undergraduate junior, Undergraduate senior, and Graduate/Professional year); and 4) Race/Ethnicity (Hispanic, White, Black, Other race, Nonresident alien). For more information, see pages 166-189 in the AAU Aggregate Report.

estimates reported are significantly higher than actual rates based only on the survey responses, (see pages 163-189, and specifically 167-168 in the AAU Aggregate Report).

II: Motivation for Participation

Dartmouth is committed to the safety, health, and well being of all of its students, staff, and faculty. In order to fulfill this commitment, Dartmouth seeks to eliminate incidents and associated harm of sexual assault and sexual misconduct, and when those incidents do occur, to strengthen our response.

Dartmouth's participation in the AAU Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct is a key part of our ongoing effort, highlighted by the Moving Dartmouth Forward plan launched by President Philip Hanlon in January 2015, to understand the extent and effects of sexual violence among our student populations.

Our goals for participating in the AAU survey are threefold: (1) to use these results to advance our efforts to provide sensitive, culturally-responsive support to reporting students; (2) to enable comprehensive and coordinated prevention, education, and awareness programs for our community; and (3) to identify gaps and inform areas that need to be addressed.

The AAU survey provided Dartmouth with the opportunity to participate in a comprehensive survey that measured a full range of experiences around sexual violence for both our undergraduate and graduate/professional student populations. Previous data collection efforts were more focused on isolated issues and populations.

Through the AAU effort, Dartmouth was able to leverage resources and experts that would have been otherwise unavailable, and to engage the student population during the 2014-15 academic year. In addition, using an external entity to conduct the survey helped to assure confidentiality and objectivity.

III: Survey Response Rates and Respondent Demographics

A total of 2,796 Dartmouth students took the survey, including 1,994 undergraduates and 802 graduate/professional students. The overall response rate for Dartmouth was 42 percent, placing us among the five institutions with the highest response rates in the AAU Aggregate Report (the overall response rate across all 27 institutions reported in the AAU Aggregate Report is 19 percent). The [AAU Dartmouth Respondent Characteristics](#) infographic shows more information on the demographic characteristics of the Dartmouth survey respondents.

The population categories used in this study and presented in both the AAU Aggregate and AAU Dartmouth Reports were defined by Westat, based on survey questions used by the US Census and other sources. Some categories have been collapsed to protect the anonymity of respondents.

IV: Results

The results presented below for Dartmouth are drawn directly from the report and tables provided by Westat in the AAU Dartmouth Report.

All results are weighted estimates.

Sexual Assault

To assess the overall risk of nonconsensual sexual contact, prevalence measures estimated in the AAU survey by Westat combine two behaviors constituting sexual contact (penetration and sexual touching) and four tactics (physical or threat of physical force; incapacitation; coercion; or absence of affirmative consent). The estimates include completed as well as attempted sexual contact. Some of the tables provided by Westat report percentages for rates for the two tactics of physical force and incapacitation separate from percentages for the four tactics all together.

Nonconsensual sexual contact events were counted once only. If both penetration and sexual touching were part of the same incident, the penetration was counted, which conforms to the counting rules established by the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting and the Clery Act.

Prevalence is estimated by counting the number of individuals who have been a victim at least once over the time period of interest.

Total experience with nonconsensual sexual contact measured by the AAU survey since entering college. At Dartmouth, 13 percent of students reported experiencing completed or attempted nonconsensual sexual contact by physical force or incapacitation since entering the institution (AAU Dartmouth Report, Table 4.6). The prevalence rate reported in the AAU Aggregate Report for data across the 27 institutions is 12 percent.

There are significant differences in the prevalence rates by gender and enrollment status (undergraduate vs. graduate/professional). Females are much more likely to report nonconsensual sexual contact. Female undergraduates have higher rates than male undergraduates, and female graduate/professional students have higher rates than male graduate/professional students. Overall, undergraduate students report higher rates than graduate/professional students (AAU Dartmouth Report, Tables 4.7a and 4.7b). These trends are similar across the 27 participating institutions, as noted in the AAU Aggregate Report.

Seniors Only. For Dartmouth female undergraduates in their senior year, the prevalence rate for attempted or completed nonconsensual sexual contact by the tactics of physical force or incapacitation is 34 percent (AAU Dartmouth Report, Table 4.8). The prevalence rate reported in the AAU Aggregate Report for data across the 27 institutions is 27 percent.

Some previous studies of sexual assault on college campuses, such as the College Sexual Assault study (CSA, Krebs et al, 2007), reported a widely publicized prevalence rate of about 20 percent (“1 in 5”), for female

undergraduates since entering college.³ It is important to recognize that the CSA rate included only completed nonconsensual sexual contact, whereas the AAU study also includes attempted contact.

Sexual Misconduct

Sexual Harassment. Harassment was defined as a series of behaviors that interfered with the victim’s academic or professional performance; limited the victim’s ability to participate in an academic program; or created an intimidating, hostile or offensive social, academic or work environment (AAU Dartmouth Report, pg. 22).

Overall at Dartmouth, 56 percent of students indicated that they have been the victims of sexual harassment (AAU Dartmouth Report, Table 5.1a). The AAU Aggregate Report shows 48 percent. Overall, undergraduate female and Transgender, GenderQueer, Gender Non-Conforming, Questioning, or not listed (TGQN) students reported the highest percentages for experiencing sexual harassment while a student at Dartmouth (AAU Dartmouth Report, Table 5.1a). Among all students, inappropriate comments about the reporter’s body or appearance, or about sexual activity, comprised the most common type of harassing behavior cited; this is followed by sexual remarks, or insulting or offensive jokes or stories. The offender’s affiliation to the College was most often described as a fellow student (95 percent).

While graduate/professional students also most often described the offender as a fellow student, they did report higher percentages of the offender affiliation as being a faculty member, compared to undergraduate students. Twenty-one percent of female graduate/professional students and 10 percent of male graduate/professional students identified the offender as a faculty member.

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). The survey questions addressing Intimate Partner Violence were intended to capture dating and domestic violence associated with relationships that would not be captured in the sexual violence section. These questions were administered to respondents who said they had been in any partnered relationship since enrolling in college (AAU Dartmouth Report, pg. 24).

At Dartmouth, IPV was experienced by 7 percent of students who had been in a partnered relationship. The AAU aggregate rate is 10 percent. At Dartmouth, IPV was reported most often by female undergraduates, followed by male undergraduate students and male graduate/professional students, and lastly by female graduate/professional students (See AAU Dartmouth Report, Table 5.2a for details).

Stalking. Stalking was based on definitions and behaviors used in the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS), the National Crime Victimization Survey, and the National Violence Against Women Survey.⁴ To be considered stalking, the respondent had to report behaviors by the same person that occurred more than once, either alone or in combination (AAU Dartmouth Report, pg. 25).

³ The rates reported in Krebs et al (2007) did not include *attempted* nonconsensual sexual contact, only completed, while the AAU study reports include both attempted and completed nonconsensual sexual contact by physical force or incapacitation. Krebs, C., and Lindquist, C.H., Warner, T.D., Fisher, B.S., and S. Martin. 2007. The Campus Sexual Assault (CSA) Study. Report of project awarded by the National Institute of Justice, Award 2004-WG-BX-0010. <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/221153.pdf>.

⁴ Black et al, Ibid; Catalano, S. (2012). Stalking victims in the United States--revised. (NCJ 224527). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics; Tjaden, P., & Thoennes, N. (1998). Stalking in America: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey. (NCJ 172837). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Overall, 3 percent of students reported that they had been the victims of stalking while attending Dartmouth (AAU Dartmouth Report, Table 5.3a). The AAU aggregate figure is 4 percent.

Student Perceptions of Sexual Assault and Misconduct on Campus

Responses to a report of sexual assault or sexual misconduct. At Dartmouth, 57 percent of students believe that it is very or extremely likely that the victim of sexual assault or misconduct would be supported by other students in making a report (AAU Dartmouth Report, Table 1.1). The AAU Aggregate Report shows 55 percent.

At Dartmouth, 68 percent said that it is very or extremely likely that a report of sexual assault would be taken seriously by campus officials. In the AAU Aggregate Report, 63 percent of respondents indicate this perception for their own campuses.

Students were asked if campus officials would protect the safety of individuals making the report. At Dartmouth, 60 percent said that it is very or extremely likely that the individual's safety would be protected. The AAU Aggregate rate is 57 percent.

Students were asked if they believe that campus officials would conduct a fair investigation in the event of a report of sexual assault or misconduct. At Dartmouth, 43 percent indicated that it is very or extremely likely that this would occur. The AAU Aggregate rate is 49 percent.

At Dartmouth, 45 percent of students said it was very or extremely likely that campus officials would take action against the offender. The AAU Aggregate rate is 45 percent.

Across all of these measures, female and TGQN students are less optimistic than male students.

Bystander Intervention. At Dartmouth, 29 percent of students said they suspected that a friend may have been sexually assaulted (AAU Dartmouth Report, Table 1.2). TGQN students and female undergraduate students report this in the highest proportions followed by undergraduate males and graduate/professional females. Among those who said this, 72 percent said they took some type of action. The AAU Aggregate rate for those who suspected a friend had been sexually assaulted and said they took some type of action is 66 percent (AAU Aggregate Report, Table 1.3)

At Dartmouth, 61 percent of students reported they had witnessed a drunken person heading for a sexual encounter, and 31 percent said they took some type of action. In the AAU Aggregate Report, 44 percent of students reported they had witnessed a drunken person heading for a sexual encounter, and 23 percent of them said they took some type of action.

Asked whether they had witnessed someone acting in a sexually violent or harassing manner, 25 percent of Dartmouth students indicated that they had witnessed such an incident, and 58 percent said they took some type of action. In the AAU Aggregate Report, 20 percent of students reported they had witnessed someone acting in a sexually violent or harassing manner, and 46 percent of them said they took some type of action.

Student Knowledge of Resources Related to Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct on Campus

Awareness of resources. The survey asked students if they were aware of specific college resources from a list (AAU Dartmouth Report, Table 2.1). For nearly all of the services offered, undergraduate students are more aware of their existence than graduate/professional students.

- Dick’s House is the service for which most students, both undergraduate and graduate/professional, are aware.
- For undergraduate students, services provided by Residential Life staff (Community Directors, UGAs), are the second-highest ranked service of which they are aware.
- For graduate/professional female students, Dartmouth Counseling is the second-highest known service.
- For graduate/professional male students, Dartmouth Safety and Security is the second-highest known service.

Knowledge about college sexual assault policies and procedures. Among Dartmouth undergraduates, 33 percent feel very or extremely knowledgeable about how the college defines sexual assault and sexual misconduct (AAU Dartmouth Report, Table 2.1). The AAU Aggregate Report shows 24 percent.

At Dartmouth, 44 percent of students say they know where to find help at the college if they or a friend are victims of sexual assault or sexual misconduct. The AAU Aggregate Report shows 30 percent.

V: Discussion and Next Steps

The results of the AAU study provide two, clear takeaways: 1) the rate of sexual assault and harassment—at Dartmouth, and on campuses across the country—is unacceptable; and 2) Dartmouth must continue and further strengthen its efforts in prevention, response, and accountability. In the last two years, Dartmouth College has introduced a tremendous number of new resources to address sexual assault and sexual misconduct, and these efforts must continue with the same degree of commitment and intensity.

Prevention and Response

In the past year, Dartmouth has implemented new disciplinary procedures to address sexual assault, sexual or gender-based harassment, dating or domestic violence, and stalking; enhanced private and confidential resources available to community members; and expanded sexual assault prevention and education efforts for all campus constituencies. With the appointment of a full-time Title IX Coordinator and Clery Act Compliance Officer, the College has advanced compliance with Title IX and the Clery Act by centralizing the administration of policies, procedures, data collection, and education. The College has also created “Sexual Respect,” a centralized webpage so that community members can easily access information about Title IX and the Clery Act; policies and procedures; resources and support services; and prevention, education, and outreach. A link to the Sexual Respect webpage is located on the Dartmouth College homepage.

These more recent initiatives complement programs that have been in place for more than two decades, including the Sexual Assault Awareness Program (SAAP) in the Student Wellness Center. The program both educates the Dartmouth community about sexual violence and prevention and empowers students to act toward the elimination of sexual violence.

Overall, the AAU Dartmouth Report indicates a generally-high level of student awareness of the resources Dartmouth has in place today. These findings are further reinforced by the degree to which Dartmouth students believe they would be supported in the aftermath of an assault. However, there is improvement to be made.

In the coming year, Dartmouth will continue to augment prevention and response. Notably, as announced by President Hanlon in January of 2015, Dartmouth is designing a comprehensive, four-year sexual assault and violence education and awareness program for students, as well as responder workshops for faculty and staff. In addition, this month the College introduced a Dartmouth-specific smart-phone safety app.

Of paramount importance, ongoing efforts must and will be inclusive in nature—recognizing, for instance, the prevalence of sexual harassment among TGQN students at Dartmouth, as reported in the survey results. Additionally, communicating via a number of touch points that resources for support and remedy exist and are available to all in the community will be essential. Simultaneously, communications must reinforce a message of accountability, and a culture of respect and inclusivity.

As President Hanlon has emphasized, creating a safer and healthier campus environment—in all of its forms—is a priority for Dartmouth. The introduction of the Dartmouth Citizenship Pledge, coupled with the aforementioned prevention and response initiatives, will help promote a healthier and safer campus.

Understanding the Data

The AAU Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct is one tool among many to better understand sexual assault and sexual misconduct on our campus.

President Hanlon has charged a Data Analysis and Response Team, chaired by Bruce Sacerdote, Richard S. Braddock 1963 Professor of Economics, to study the results of the 2015 AAU Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct in fine detail. This team will study both the aggregate information for all participating institutions and the information particular to Dartmouth, in order to break down the data as carefully as possible to generate clear understanding of the Dartmouth results. It will also compile and compare data from other recent and upcoming campus surveys and datasets regarding sexual assault, sexual misconduct, and related campus climate issues. The work of this group is not to set policy but to inform policy discussions moving forward. The team will be composed of faculty, staff, and students who bring together expertise in statistical and social analysis, student support services, and student life.

What we learn from these surveys will strengthen our already considerable efforts in sexual assault education, prevention, response, and accountability.