



Key Findings and Implications

September 23, 2015

This document addresses issues of campus climate, harassment and sexual misconduct. Resources for readers who may experience difficulty with these issues or who would like to report sexual violence are provided on the last page.

Survey Overview

The University of Chicago conducted the Spring 2015 Climate Survey (“Sexual Misconduct Survey: Attitudes, Knowledge and Experience”) to examine the campus climate, focusing on questions of sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and sexual harassment. It was administered in April 2015 by NORC at the University of Chicago (“NORC”) and included all enrolled undergraduate, graduate, and professional school students 18-years-of-age and older. Detailed information about the survey and the survey process, including a copy of the Provost’s letter to the campus community accompanying the publication of the preliminary report in June 2015, is available here: <http://csl.uchicago.edu/get-involved/climate-survey-project/spring-2015-climate-survey-materials>.

The final report is intended to provide comprehensive feedback on the survey’s findings to the University community. NORC conducted the analysis of survey data, prepared the figures and tables contained in the report, and authored the report itself. The goal for the full report, together with future analyses of the survey dataset, is to provide empirical data that will foster a better understanding of how sexual misconduct impacts our campus climate, and to inform our ongoing efforts to improve sexual misconduct prevention, education and awareness programs, and to provide the best resources to victims and survivors.

The Spring 2015 survey instrument was designed by a University faculty committee, who referenced a similar survey conducted by MIT, as well as the “Not Alone” survey toolkit created by the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault. Individual and groups of students representing a diverse cross section from across the University were asked to provide feedback, which informed the survey itself, how it was administered and the communication efforts to maximize participation. The University also collaborated with peer institutions in developing the survey, and this engagement provided an avenue for further faculty and student input into the survey content and associated process. The Spring 2015 Climate Survey was sponsored by the Office of the President, the Office of the Provost, and Campus and Student Life. It had a field period of two weeks, ending on April 28.

- Over the field period, 12,485 students who spend most of their time at the University’s Hyde Park campus were invited to participate in the survey. Of those students, 3,995 completed the survey for an overall response rate of 31.7%.
- The highest response rate was from undergraduate females (41.2%) followed by graduate females (32.7%), undergraduate males (31.4%) and graduate males (24.7%).
- Of the students who took the survey, 49.9% identified as female, 46.3% identified as male, and 3.7% identified as another gender.

This document is intended to summarize the central findings of the Spring 2015 Climate Survey and to identify the key issues on which the University’s on-going and future efforts should focus to ensure that all students can feel safe, respected, and valued, and thus can participate fully and freely in our community.

Key Findings

UChicago students experience sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, at rates similar to those reported by other institutions. More than half of undergraduate female respondents and one in five undergraduate male respondents reported at least one instance of unwanted sexual experiences ranging from unwanted kissing to forcible penetration. About one in seven undergraduate women had experienced unwanted penetration or oral sex, and these results were similar regardless of sexual orientation or race/ethnicity¹.

Most cases of sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, occurred when the respondent was drunk or high. Unwanted sexual contact occurred when the respondent was drunk or high three times as often as when force or threats were involved.

More than 95% of students agree that it is important to get consent before engaging in sexual activity, but fewer are confident in their ability to judge whether someone is too intoxicated to give consent. About half of respondents also believe that rape or sexual assault can happen unintentionally, and about 5% of female and 15% of male respondents believe that someone who is sexually assaulted or raped while drunk bears some responsibility for putting themselves in that position.

Student respondents who have been sexually assaulted are concerned about sharing or reporting instances of sexual misconduct in part because they hold themselves partly at fault or do not think the act was entirely the fault of their assailant. This finding was consistent across men and women, and undergraduates and graduates. A range of other beliefs and attitudes also played important roles in reluctance to share or report sexual misconduct.

While one in six undergraduate female respondents reported sex-based harassment such as persistent unwanted contact or stalking since coming to UChicago, fewer than one-tenth of these cases were reported to the University. The most common forms of harassment reported by survey respondents were being watched or followed and receiving unwanted communications (i.e., calls, letters, emails, texts, IMs).

Fewer than half of survey respondents understand University processes for addressing sexual misconduct or whom to contact to seek confidential help. Undergraduate and graduate women respondents specifically report low rates of awareness of campus policies and resources.

Confidence in University response to reports of sexual violence is lowest among undergraduate female respondents. Only 21% of female undergraduate respondents think it is “likely” or “very likely” that UChicago would take corrective action to address factors leading to sexual assault.

Most students have experienced sexist jokes/remarks about women, inappropriate comments about bodies/appearance, and offensive jokes about lesbian, gay and bisexual people in University settings. Undergraduate women reported the highest rates of experiencing such remarks. Although such experiences most frequently occurred outside the classroom or lab settings, about a third to a half of female undergraduate respondents reported experiencing such comments in the classroom or lab. Both men and women were more likely to have heard sexist remarks directed to their own gender than directed to the other gender.

Implications and Action Steps

Although the results from the Spring 2015 Climate Survey indicate that the prevalence of sexual misconduct at UChicago is not markedly different than that reported at other universities, even one incident is too many. The survey indicates that a number of our students have had unwanted sexual experiences, including sexual assault, during their time at the University. Decreasing the frequency of these experiences is a goal that all campus-wide education, awareness and prevention strategies must address moving forward.

The relationship between alcohol and sexual assault found in numerous other studies is also seen in our survey results. While it is important to emphasize that alcohol and drugs do not cause sexual assault, the pervasive presence of alcohol in the unwanted sexual experiences of many survey respondents, and the perception among some respondents that drinking can mitigate responsibility, underscores the need for the University to enhance its efforts to educate students so they can make informed choices about their alcohol and drug use and to offer training in bystander intervention techniques.

While an impressive number of survey respondents agree that consent should be obtained before engaging in sexual activity, other survey results reveal significant gaps in knowledge of what constitutes consent and attitudes that assign to victims some responsibility for sexual misconduct when it occurs.

A particularly challenging finding is the ambivalence surrounding respondents' attitudes toward reporting sexual misconduct to the University. Many students who had experienced at least one incident of sexual misconduct since coming to UChicago did not make a report to the University. A majority of such students cited not wanting any action to be taken among the reasons for not reporting; yet almost half indicated as another reason that they did not think University administrators would do anything (which could imply that some University action would be seen as desirable). Further, 25% of students were concerned that that the University would take action without their permission, which suggests concern that that the course of action taken by the University would be wrong in some sense. Disentangling these apparently conflicting motivations, and understanding what University actions students believe are appropriate—and when—will be necessary in order to develop policies that students understand and support, and procedures that students find credible, helpful, and are willing to use.

The University has launched a number of initiatives related to sexual misconduct, in part informed by the early results of this survey. These efforts include the most recent revision of policies and procedures to address sexual misconduct, promotion of resources such as the confidential sexual-assault deans-on-call program and Title IX coordinator, and new educational and awareness programming offered through Campus and Student Life. They also include efforts to increase students' familiarity with key University policies and procedures and to increase confidence in the institutional response to reports of sexual misconduct. The University clearly continues to have work to do to address these deficits, and it is fully committed to doing so.

To address issues raised by the Climate Survey, the University is taking the following steps in the coming year, some of which are already taking place and others that are planned:

- Substantially redesigning the content and approach for sexual misconduct prevention training during the College's 2015 O-Week program, developed in part with student input;
- Providing training for all new graduate and professional students;
- Launching an autumn quarter campaign to promote the availability of confidential resources (Sexual Assault Deans-on-Call), to address issues related to giving, understanding, and confirming consent, and to raise awareness of intimate partner violence;

- Launching umatter.uchicago.edu, a student-centered website that will make University policies, procedures and resources much easier to access and navigate for students with questions or concerns about sexual misconduct;
- Releasing annual statistics on the number of student reports and complaints of sexual misconduct and information on how these matters were resolved (including the outcomes of University disciplinary proceedings);
- Recruiting students for focus and feedback sessions to discuss results from the Spring 2015 Climate Survey and to develop peer-to-peer prevention and education strategies to further the dialogue on these important issues throughout the year.

The efforts outlined above are only our first steps toward addressing what the Climate Survey has shown. During the autumn quarter, Campus and Student Life (CSL) staff will bring together interested students to discuss key findings from the Spring 2015 Climate Survey with a particular focus on how these findings can best inform the University's prevention and education strategies.

The University of Chicago is committed to ensuring that all students live and learn in an environment free from sexual misconduct. The robust exchange of ideas at the core of our intellectual culture depends on the full participation of every member of this community. We all play a role in creating a community focused on inquiry and free of unlawful harassment, discrimination, and sexual misconduct.

Information on the University of Chicago's policies and resources relating to sexual harassment and misconduct, including support resources such as the Sexual Assault Dean-on-Call Program, can be found on the [Campus and Student Life website](#).

Individuals who wish to raise concerns or file a report of misconduct under the [Policy on Harassment, Discrimination, and Sexual Misconduct](#) or [Title IX](#) should contact Belinda Cortez Vazquez, Interim Title IX Coordinator for the University and Title IX Coordinator for Students: belinda@uchicago.edu; 773.834.9710; Edward H. Levi Hall, 5801 S. Ellis Ave, Room 212.

ⁱ While reported rates depend heavily on the precise wording of survey questions, the findings here are similar to those reported recently by other universities. These institutions include MIT (<http://web.mit.edu/surveys/casatips/sources.html>); the University of Michigan (<http://sapac.umich.edu/article/climate-survey>); the University of Kentucky (<http://uknow.uky.edu/content/campus-safety-survey-reveals-student-perceptions-and-experiences>); Rutgers University-New Brunswick (<http://socialwork.rutgers.edu/centersandprograms/vawc/researchevaluation/CampusClimateProject.aspx>), and a multi-institutional study by the Association of American Universities (<https://www.aau.edu/Climate-Survey.aspx?id=16525>).