



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

Creating a Safer Community for All: Sexual Harassment and Assault on Campus

The University of Sydney, 2016

This report was produced by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Registrar) Portfolio.

The University thanks the members of the Safer Community working group for their contribution to the development of this survey and recommendations. Sincere thanks to all the students who completed the survey and shared their stories and perspectives on how to create a Safer Community for All.

Creating a Safer Community for All: Sexual Harassment and Assault on Campus

Executive Summary

In September 2015 a survey entitled Creating a Safer Community for All: Sexual Harassment and Assault on Campus was launched. All currently enrolled students at the University of Sydney were invited to complete the survey, which aimed to gather information about student experiences of sexual harassment and assault on campus, as well as their experiences with and perceptions of existing institutional procedures for reporting. It was completed by a total of 1926 students over two weeks.

Of the 1926 students who completed the survey 71.7% were undergraduate and 28.3% postgraduate students; 85.1% were domestic students and 14.9% international students; 62.6% identified as female and 34.1% identified as male. Close to one quarter (25.3%) of respondents reported sexual orientation other than heterosexual.

Incidence and behaviour types

Of the 1926 students who responded to the survey, 6.2% (119 of total respondents) reported experiencing one or more occurrence of stalking, sexual assault or harassment while on campus, at a residential college, participating in University affiliated sporting events or while on fieldwork. Twenty five percent (24.7%, n=476) of all respondents reported experiencing some form of unacceptable behaviour, unwanted sexual harassment or assault over the time they were enrolled at the University, with the majority of these incidents occurring off campus. The incident frequency analysis in Table One (pg 5) includes responses relating to incidents experienced across all of the on campus contexts listed above.

The highest proportion of all incidents which respondents indicated had taken place on a University of Sydney Campus were those in which a respondent had been stalked, followed, or received repeated unwanted messages, texts, emails, etc. from someone that made them uncomfortable. The majority of these students were female and domestic students. Higher reported rates of sexual assault or rape occurred in the domestic and female cohort. There also appears to be a heightened risk level for LGBTIQ students.

Reporting

Of the students who indicated that an incident occurred on campus, 23 reported this in an official capacity, 19 of these reports were made to the University of Sydney. Females were slightly less likely to report than males (21% vs 30% reporting rates).

Awareness of existing processes for reporting and support was not widespread, with 56.83% of respondents indicating that they would benefit from additional information about where and how to seek help on campus if they wanted to report an incident of unwanted sexual experience.

Safety on campus

A majority of all respondents (75.7%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they felt safe on campus. There is a drop in agreement regarding safety in students identifying as LGBTIQ, where 62% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt safe on campus. A majority of students felt positive about the University of Sydney's concern for their welfare:

- 83% of respondents agreed and strongly agreed that faculty, support and management staff respect what students think
- 78% of students agreed and strongly agreed that faculty staff are generally concerned about their welfare
- 84% of students agreed and strongly agreed that faculty, support and management staff treat students fairly.

Analysis of the Safer Community survey has informed the development of five recommendations for action in areas of concern highlighted by respondents to the survey: a public stance on acceptable behaviours, increased student awareness of reporting mechanisms and responsibilities, robust reporting and support mechanisms, safety on campus and staff training and referral pathways.

Recommendations

- It is recommended that the University develop a clear statement regarding acceptable behaviour on campus as complimentary to, but standalone from, the existing Student Code of Conduct.
- It is recommended that clearer communication mechanisms be established to routinely reinforce to students their responsibilities under this code, and to reinforce awareness of procedures and protocols for incident reporting and accessing support.
- It is recommended that there be a further review of the incident and complaint handling mechanisms to clarify and simplify points of contact and procedures for incident reporting.
- It is recommended that a review be undertaken of existing Campus Security with a view to strengthening security and safety measures on campus.
- It is recommended that the internal staff consultation and triage hotline be augmented to provide additional guidance to staff on appropriate responses to reported incidents of sexual harassment and assault.

Background and detailed results

Young people between the ages of 18 and 24 were the most likely group to have experienced some form of violence in 2012, according to a report released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). As part of the University of Sydney's ongoing and comprehensive commitment to effectively addressing the issue of assault, harassment and unacceptable behaviours, the University of Sydney distributed a climate survey to all students in September 2015. The Creating A Safer Community For All: Sexual Harassment and Assault on Campus survey asked students about their attitudes, perceptions and direct experiences of unacceptable behaviours, as well as their opinions on the University resources and practices related to preventing and dealing with instances of misconduct.

The survey was developed by staff within the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Registrar) portfolio, based on international best practice exemplars and in collaboration with student representatives. The student consultation mechanisms and survey purpose were endorsed by the Senior Executive Group of the University in 2015. A standing group of student representatives and University staff was formed to assist in the development of the survey and to ensure the student voice was reflected in the terminology and questions contained within. The survey was approved by the University's Human Ethics Research Committee. This survey was launched in September 2015 and all currently enrolled students were invited to respond. It was completed by a total of 1926 students over two weeks. Preliminary results of both the quantitative and qualitative data were presented to the student working group, and their feedback informed recommendations presented to the Senior Executive Group in 2016 for endorsement and implementation.

Results

A majority of students who completed the survey had not themselves experienced an incident, indicating that there is strong student interest and engagement in this issue.

Demographics

The results set forth in this report were compiled from 1926 survey respondents, (a response rate of 3.85% of the entire student population). In reference to demographics, 71% percent of the survey participants were undergraduates and 28% percent were postgraduate students. Sixty two (62%) percent were women (n= 1198), 34% percent were men (n= 652), and 110 (7.11%) other gender identified people: transgender, non-binary, agender and genderless) excluding cisgender 202 (10.56%) and people preferred not to say 26 (1.36%). International student representation in completing the survey was low in comparison to the number of currently enrolled students (14.9%).

Incidence patterns of unacceptable behaviours

Twenty five percent (24.7%, n=476) of all respondents reported experiencing some form of unacceptable behaviour, unwanted sexual harassment or assault while enrolled at the University. There were differences in incidence rates by unacceptable behaviour type (stalking, sexual assault, rape or sexual harassment). Detailed data was collected on the context, reporting, and demographic differences for each behaviour type are reported in more detail below.

Over the period of student enrolment at the University, the highest proportion (9.4% n=181) of all respondents had experienced an incidence of sexual harassment (defined in the survey as: unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal conduct of a sexual nature or if conduct creates a hostile environment). Of all respondents less than one-tenth (7.8%) reported that they had been stalked, followed, or received repeated unwanted messages, texts, emails, from someone that made them uncomfortable and less than five percent (3.8%) of all respondents reported that they had been in a relationship that was controlling or abusive (physically, sexually, psychologically, emotionally, or financially). About three percent (2.6%) indicated that they had been sexually assaulted and less than 1% (0.88%) indicated that they had been raped during the period of time where they had been enrolled at the University.

Interrogating the data by gender, over one third (39.76%) of undergraduate women had been victims of at least one unacceptable behaviour experience since enrolling at university irrespective of the site of the behaviour: 11.88% were victims of stalking; 1.6% of women were raped; 5.1% were sexually assaulted, 4.22% report being in abusive relationships and 16.96% were sexually harassed. The self-reported rate of sexual assault or unacceptable behaviours among males was low (12.8%, n=83) across all types of behaviours. Respondents who did not identify themselves as either male or female (5.75% of total respondents) were at an elevated risk for unacceptable behaviours (36.8% of this student cohort reported experiencing some form of behaviour listed in the survey).

Across enrolment patterns, for most types of unwanted behaviours, there was a decreased rate of incidents from undergraduate to postgraduate status, for stalking 10.31% to 8.41% and for sexual assault 3.96% to 2.56%. For reported rape there is a significant decline from 1.47% to 0.23% and sexual harassment from 13.44% to 7.96% from undergraduate to postgraduate study. There were marginal increased rates of abusive relationships from undergraduate to postgraduate student status, 4.62% to 5.62%.

Incidence of unacceptable behaviours occurring on campus

Of all those respondents who specified an incident type, one quarter reported that the incident took place at The University of Sydney (n=119, 25%), while on campus, at a residential college, participating in University affiliated sporting events or while on fieldwork. There was no significant difference in rates for location of any type of behaviour, thus all figures will be reported for University campus generally. The majority of these students were female and domestic students. There also appeared to be a heightened risk level for LGBTIQ students.

The highest proportion of all incidents which had taken place on a University of Sydney campus were those in which a respondent had been stalked, followed, or received repeated unwanted messages, texts, emails, etc. from someone that made them uncomfortable. Table One below identifies type of unacceptable behaviours occurring on campus, by gender and international or domestic status.

In regards to on campus incidents, undergraduate domestic female students and students from the LGBTIQ communities have the highest reported rates of all behaviour types.

Table One: Total on campus incident types and demographic profile of students

Incident Type	Total (n= 1926 respondents)	On-Campus Incident Frequency Demographic Analysis				
		Female (n=1198)	Male (n=652)	LGBTIQ (n=442)	International (n=284)	Domestic (n=1625)
All Incidents	6.17% (n=119)	7.51% (n=90)	3.07% (n=20)	11.09% (n=49)	4.57% (n=13)	6.46% (n=106)
Stalking	6.12% (n=118)	7.34% (n=88)	3.07% (n=20)	11.08% (n=49)	4.57% (n=13)	6.40% (n=105)
Sexual Harassment	3.37% (n=65)	4.01% (n=48)	1.38% (n=9)	6.56% (n=29)	2.46% (n=7)	3.51% (n=58)
Sexual Assault	1.29% (n=25)	1.50% (n=18)	0.61% (n=4)	2.49% (n=11)	1.76% (n=5)	1.23% (n=20)
Rape	0.41% (n=8)	0.42% (n=5)	0.30% (n=2)	1.13% (n=5)	0.35% (n=1)	0.43% (n=7)

Note: on campus incidents occurring over the duration of a students' enrolment at the University. Students may have experienced more than one type of unacceptable behaviour and thus appear in multiple cells.

Safety and resources

Participants were asked their views on safety on campus and resources available to them related to sexual assault, as well as the level of confidence they had in the university when it came to effectively preventing and dealing with sexual assault. Over 75% of all students agreed or strongly agreed that they feel safe on their campus. More male respondents reported feeling safe than female respondents. People who reported feeling less safe while on campus are people who identify themselves as homosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer LGBTQI (68%). Fifty-seven percent of the respondents were not aware where to go on campus to get help in the event of an incident, while 40% reported they have confidence that the University would take them seriously if they reported an unwanted sexual assault or experience.

In open text feedback, respect of specific improvements for safety on campus, the most frequently cited concerns were:

- insufficient security personnel
- insufficient surveillance
- insufficient lighting on campus
- concerns about getting to forms of transport
- concerns around events, especially those involving alcohol.

Students were asked to indicate if they had told anyone about their sexual assault or unacceptable behaviour, and if so to whom they disclosed. A relatively small percentage (eg. 1.4% or less) of even the most serious incidents are reported. The rate of reporting within the University was 1% of incidents reported to an official on campus. Understanding disclosure post-assault is significant for a number of reasons including reactions and action(s) taken by those to whom the individual discloses. Those students who did tell the University of Sydney were asked to indicate whether the University helped resolve their issue. Forty one percent (n=9) of the students who reported the incident to the university said that the university's formal procedures did not help them deal with the problem. It should be noted that the number of respondents who reported their experiences were low, however the proportion reporting that the University response was unhelpful requires serious consideration.

Of the students who indicated that they had experienced an incident of sexual harassment or assault while enrolled at the University of Sydney, irrespective of the site of the behaviour, only 18.9% (n=27) had reported this incident to anyone either internal to or external to the University. The majority of respondents to the survey reported not knowing where to access reporting or support mechanisms provided by the University. Only 23.25% of respondents were confident they would know where to go on campus if they, or a friend, were sexually assaulted; this was compared to 53.83% of students who definitely did not know where to obtain assistance in response to an incident of sexual assault.

This lack of awareness about university mechanisms is supported in the qualitative data; a number of respondents also highlighted their lack of awareness of resources as a problem.

A majority of students, however, felt positive about the University of Sydney's concern for their welfare. Most (83% of respondents) agreed and strongly agreed that faculty, support and management staff respect what students think. Seventy-eight (78%) of students agreed or strongly agreed that faculty staff are generally concerned about their welfare, and 84% of students agreed or strongly agreed that faculty, support and management staff treat students fairly. Respondents are unsure about the University's ability to respond effectively to incidents of sexual assault. While the majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the University would handle a situation well (60%) and in a fair and responsible manner (71%), respondents also felt that the University responded too slowly to incidents (62%).

In respect of specific support, the services most frequently mentioned by respondents were psychological and academic support. The University already provides these services and therefore the focus should be on examining whether there are additional training requirements to ensure staff are able to appropriately respond and triage reports of unacceptable behaviours. Other suggestions for support included financial assistance, temporary accommodation, legal support, liaising with the police, and safe transport. When considering the implementation of these measures it is important to focus on what victims of sexual violence are looking for from the University:

“How do you see this affecting your ability to continue this semester? Will you need special consideration?” - that is literally all I wanted to hear. I'd had a police officer tell me six weeks was too late to effectively file a report, I wasn't looking for the uni to fix me but I needed them to help me cope.”

Male, Undergraduate Student

The findings from the survey indicate of the need for increased efforts to disseminate information about the many ways the University of Sydney addresses unacceptable behaviours, and to highlight appropriate sources of information and assistance. Students' interest in learning more about what they can do about unwanted sexual experience, as captured by this assessment, points to an opportunity for administrators, faculty, staff, and students to elevate conversations about the issue and inform the student population. The findings support continued investment in campus safety, prevention and response efforts on campus. These findings directly inform recommendations to the University for preventing and responding to unacceptable behaviours in order to provide a safe and supportive learning environment for all students.

“A campaign as loud and visible as Disability Awareness Week about the university staff saying no to sexual harassment and assault. I'd like to see videos and glossy photos of Senate members wearing red t-shirts saying they won't put up with that anymore in front of the quad, instead of dealing with this issue behind the scenes. I want to be proud of my University, the staff, the senate, the students, to be able to point to a vocal campaign to end the sexual assault on campus – show us that you support us, be loud and clear – be leaders!”

Woman, Postgraduate student

Recommendations

This summary outlines five key recommendations for action proceeding from a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the survey results with further refinement and feedback from a focus group comprised of staff and student representatives. All recommendations have been noted and endorsed by the Senior Executive Group for implementation and address areas of concern highlighted by respondents to the Survey: a public stance on acceptable behaviours, increased student awareness of reporting mechanisms and responsibilities, robust reporting and support mechanisms, safety on campus and staff training and referral pathways.

Recommendation One

It is recommended that the University develop a clear statement regarding acceptable behaviour on campus as complimentary to, but standalone from, the existing Student Code of Conduct.

Recommendation Two

It is recommended that clearer communication mechanisms be established to routinely reinforce to students their responsibilities under this code, and to reinforce awareness of procedures and protocols for incident reporting and accessing support.

Recommendation Three

It is recommended that there be a further review of the incident and complaint handling mechanisms to clarify and simplify points of contact and procedures for incident reporting.

Recommendation Four

It is recommended that a review be undertaken of existing Campus Security with a view to strengthening security and safety measures on campus.

Recommendation Five

It is recommended that the internal staff consultation and triage hotline be augmented to provide additional guidance to staff on appropriate responses to reported incidents of sexual harassment and assault.



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