



The George Washington University

Sexual Harassment Climate Survey Report

Spring 2024 Results

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Introduction

GW's Title IX Office is committed to building safe, respectful and inclusive education and workplace environments by responding to reports of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking and by providing prevention and awareness educational opportunities throughout the GW community. To achieve that work, it is vital that GW's Title IX Office has a comprehensive understanding of students' experiences and attitudes about the campus climate around sexual harassment.¹ Learning about these experiences and attitudes helps us learn how we can better prevent and respond to these issues at GW.

Sexual Harassment Climate Surveys are intended to provide valuable insight into multiple aspects of sexual harassment prevention and response. Some questions aim to gather information about personal experiences with acts of sexual harassment, as well as experiences with reporting and seeking support. Additional questions seek data on student perceptions of safety on campus, norms around consent and bystander intervention, and overall support and connection on campus to better inform prevention efforts.

This report will include a discussion of key findings in the results of the Sexual Harassment Climate Survey, originally issued in April 2024.

A survey is one part of multiple efforts to gather data from the student body and the larger GW community. GW's Title IX Office conducts ongoing data collection related to cases (as highlighted in the Title IX Annual Report), provides anonymous feedback forms to parties connected with the Title IX Office, and assesses feedback forms collected during all major training efforts, including the New Student Orientation Title IX two-part training. The Title IX Office also hosts twice monthly "Office Hours" where community members can meet directly with Title IX staff to share feedback, suggestions, and to ask questions.

Methods

GW's Title IX Office issued the 2024 Sexual Harassment Campus Climate Survey via Qualtrics between April 7 and April 17, 2024 to a random sample of undergraduate and graduate students. The survey was divided in six sections and contained 51 questions of varying formats. Each section contained content notes explaining the nature of the content included, which provided students the opportunity to make an informed decision on which sections to complete. Students had the option to skip individual questions or full sections of the survey if they felt that it would be emotionally distressing to engage.

The Title IX Office offered Whole Foods gift cards to students who participated to encourage wide-scale completion by a representative sample of GW students.

This Sexual Harassment Climate Survey was the first issued since 2018, following a previous pattern wherein the survey was issued every four years. While a survey was planned to be released in 2022, the 2022 reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) included a term that the Department of Education prepare and issue a standardized campus

¹ "Sexual harassment" will be used as an umbrella term that includes sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking.

climate tool to be administered biennially.² The GW specific survey was paused to avoid issuing two in-depth surveys in close succession. However, when the national standardized campus climate tool had not been issued by late 2023, the Title IX Office resumed plans to issue the GW specific survey to address the gap in data collection.

Many of the questions in the survey were taken directly from the 2014 and 2018 versions of the survey to allow comparison across years. However, there were expansions in the survey question pool based on the following themes that were inadequately explored in the previous versions. These questions focused on:

- Experiences related to dating/domestic violence and stalking
- Understanding and perceptions of consent
- Understanding and perceptions of bystander intervention behaviors
- Perceptions of campus safety, and
- General sense of belonging and support at GW

New questions were drawn and adapted from evidence-informed tools including:

- Climate Surveys: Useful Tools to Help Colleges and Universities in Their Efforts to Reduce and Prevent Sexual Assault³
- National Crime Victimization Survey⁴
- The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey⁵
- Safe Dates Physical Violence Victimization Scale⁶

These additional questions were intended not only to gain a more comprehensive view of all forms of sexual harassment, but to more accurately target and expand prevention efforts based on research-based risk and protective factors demonstrated to impact the likelihood of sexual harassment occurring.⁷

Sample Details

As previously described, the 2024 Sexual Harassment Climate Survey was issued to a random sample of 6,000 undergraduate and graduate students. After accounting for 15 bounced or failed emails, the final sample was 5,985 students, resulting in a response rate of 11.7% (including partial responses). This is similar to the response rate in 2018 of 11%, but lower than the 2014 survey, which had a response rate of 23%.

² The Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization Act of 2022 in Division W of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022; P.L. 117-103.

³ The White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault (2014). Climate Surveys: Useful Tools to Help Colleges and Universities in Their Efforts to Reduce and Prevent Sexual Assault. Department of Justice.

⁴ Bureau of Justice Statistics, US Department of Justice (2022). National Crime Victimization Survey.

⁵ Kresnow M, Smith SG, Basile KC, Chen J. (2021). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2016/2017 methodology report. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control.

⁶ Foshee, V. A., Arriaga, X. B., Linder, G. F., Heath, J. L., Bauman, K. E., McMahon, P. M., Langwick, S. A., & Bangdiwala, S. (1996). Safe Dates-Physical Violence Victimization Scale.

⁷ More information available on risk and protective factors at <https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/connecting-the-dots/content/discover-connections>.

Demographics

The results were approximately evenly split between graduate (49%) and undergraduate students (50%), with the remainder consisting of non-degree students or students in other degree or certificate programs. The undergraduate students were relatively evenly distributed between years.

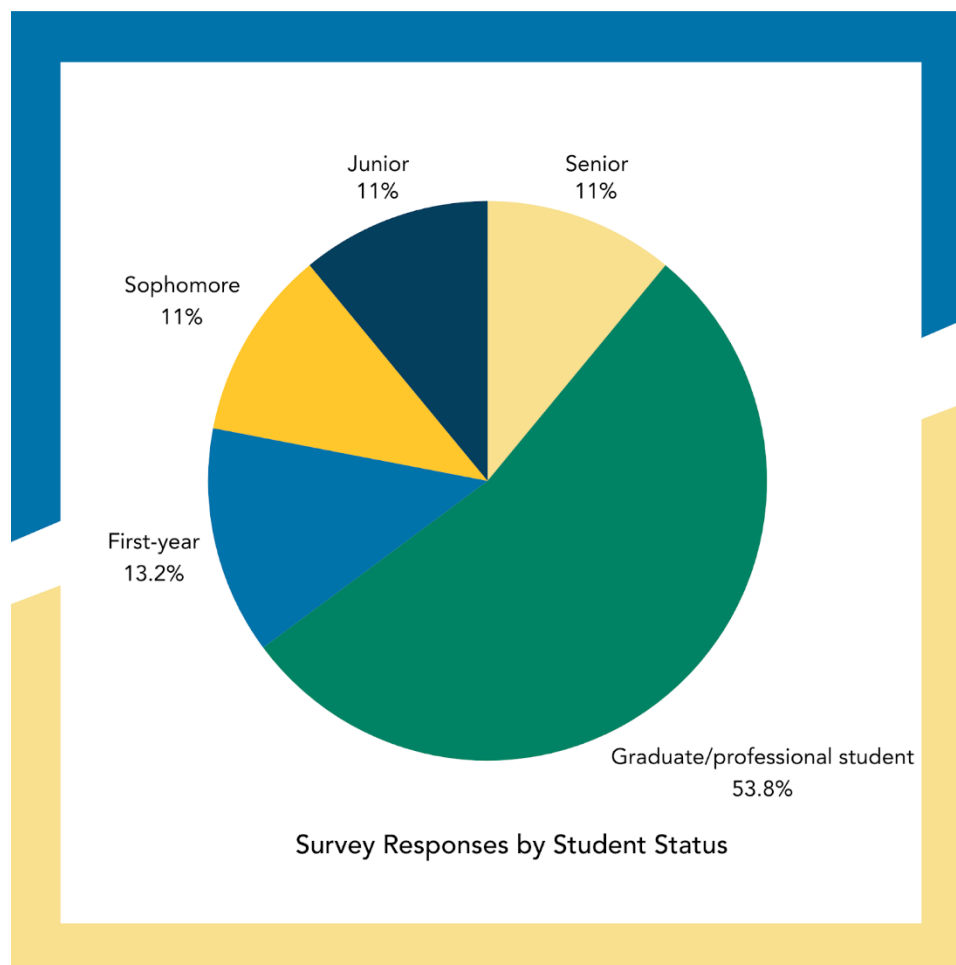


Figure 1: Pie chart representing the responses by student status.

The majority of students lived off campus (58%), while 30% lived on the Foggy Bottom Campus and 4% on the Mount Vernon Campus. The remaining students were enrolled in online programs.

Fifty-nine percent of students identified themselves as women and 28% as men. The next most common responses were non-binary (2%), gender non-conforming (1%), genderqueer (1%), and transgender (1%).

Seventy-one percent of students responding identified as heterosexual/straight. The next most common responses were bisexual (16%), queer (6%), gay (4%), and asexual (4%). The total of

all percentages exceeds 100% because students were given the option to select multiple responses and may identify with more than one of these categories.

The students responding were fairly representative of the GW population in terms of race: 57% White; 25% Asian; 9% Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish; 12% Black or African American; 6% Middle Eastern, Arab or North African; <1% American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. The sample was made up of 18% international students.

Fourteen percent of students reported having a disability that influenced their living, learning, or working activities.

Information Included and Excluded in Report

This report highlights the major findings of the survey. As the survey was long— 51 questions, many of which were broken down into multiple parts— not every response is included in this report. However, major themes and findings have been detailed in the following sections. The report includes limited data about the following two categories:

- Qualitative data (written responses to open-ended questions)
- Quantitative data on questions with fewer than 25 responses

This specific information has not been detailed as it may be personally identifying. The Sexual Harassment Climate Survey is confidential, and the Title IX Office has taken efforts to eliminate risks of sharing identifying content to the public. However, all of this data has been reviewed to pull major themes and, internally, each response and data point provides valuable feedback to the Title IX Office and other GW offices in tailoring prevention efforts and improving response services.

Definitions

The Title IX Office uses terminology that is consistent with federal law and may not be familiar to everyone. Below are the definitions of key terms around Title IX and general prevention concepts to assist reading and understanding.

Sexual harassment

An umbrella term that encompasses quid pro quo and hostile environment sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking.

Complainant

An individual who is reported to have experienced sexual harassment.

Respondent

An individual who has been reported to be the perpetrator of conduct that could constitute sexual harassment.

Confidential Resources

University community members who will not disclose personally identifying information about an individual to the Title IX Coordinator without that individual's permission.

Report

A report is when the Title IX Office is informed about suspected or alleged sexual harassment.

Consent

Voluntary and freely given agreement, through words and/or actions, to engage in mutually-agreed upon sexual activity. Consent cannot be obtained through force, where there is a reasonable belief of the threat of force, or when the other person is incapable of providing consent, including because of incapacitation.

Bystander Intervention

A prevention approach wherein bystanders (individuals who are aware of, witnessing, or present for a potentially harmful behavior) take action to de-escalate or disrupt potential acts of harm.

Risk and Protective Factors

Characteristics or experiences that may increase or decrease the likelihood of experiencing harmful outcomes or perpetrating acts of harm/violence.

Section 1: Training and Education

This section captures the proportion of students who receive education in Title IX and sexual harassment issues from different campus offices and student organizations. This measure may reveal the level of awareness students have in available resources for students who experience sexual harassment and are aware of prohibited conduct under Title IX.

Title IX, as well as other university offices, including, but not limited to, the Office of Advocacy and Support; Health Promotion and Education; and Campus Living and Residential Education conduct various forms of education year-round on topics related to sexual harassment. The Title IX Office currently disseminates the only mandatory training on these topics. All incoming undergraduate students are required to complete two separate modules of Title IX education (online and in-person), and mandatory online and/or in-person training is also provided to student organization leadership, all student employees, and to all faculty and staff.

Results

The largest proportion of responses indicated that they had received Title IX online incoming student training. These responses varied greatly between undergraduate and graduate students. In the responses from first year undergraduate students, 96% reported they received online Title IX training and 90% reported they received in-person training. These numbers decreased slightly for each progressive class year, as students were increasingly likely to say they did not remember receiving training. For example, among seniors, only 79% said they received online training, while 17% did not remember. Numbers among graduate and professional degree students were overall lower, with only 35% affirming that they received online Title IX training and 25% reporting that they did not remember receiving training.

Students who commented generally advocated for increased training and social marketing (posters, social media, etc.) or made suggestions for specific educational or outreach activities.

Analysis

While nearly all first and second year undergraduate students reported receiving both in-person and online Title IX training, this number decreases for juniors and seniors as more share that they do not recall receiving training. This is expected, since all incoming GW undergraduate students are required to receive both online and in-person training, and the completion of both trainings is enforced. Students receive a registration hold that prevents them from registering for the following semester if they do not complete both sessions. However, this may indicate a refresher session on Title IX may be beneficial for junior and senior students. The number of graduate and professional degree students who reported receiving Title IX training is significantly lower, which is likely due to the lack of universal mandatory training for incoming graduate students. These students may have also received a form of Title IX training that is not listed in the survey. These responses demonstrate a need to expand Title IX training opportunities and prevention efforts generally, but with targeted programming for juniors, seniors, and the graduate student population.

As mentioned, in the open-ended suggestions for improving awareness, students made multiple recommendations for new training or outreach activities, some of which the Title IX Office already engages in. For example, students recommended tabling across campus, while others recommended publishing annual reporting data (see GW's Title IX Annual Report). This finding indicates community interest in outreach and awareness activities already taking place, but broader dissemination may be helpful in increasing awareness and ensuring interested students and other community members have access.

Section 2: GW Climate

Campus climate is the overall environment, culture, or institutional norms and values around sexual harassment, as well as the norms, values, and behaviors of GW students, staff, and faculty. Campus climate is based on the perception and attitudes of all students, even as they differ in their personal experiences with sexual harassment and their interactions with prevention or response resources.

Results

The responses were mixed in this area, with some students feeling positive about GW campus climate and GW's response to issues of sexual harassment, but with a smaller but still significant proportion reporting negative perceptions. For example, while a plurality of students felt that GW was effective or very effective at creating a climate free of sexual harassment (39%), 21% believed it was ineffective or very ineffective. Almost half of students were neutral or unsure on whether sexual harassment is a problem at GW, with about a quarter agreeing that it is a problem, and another quarter disagreeing.

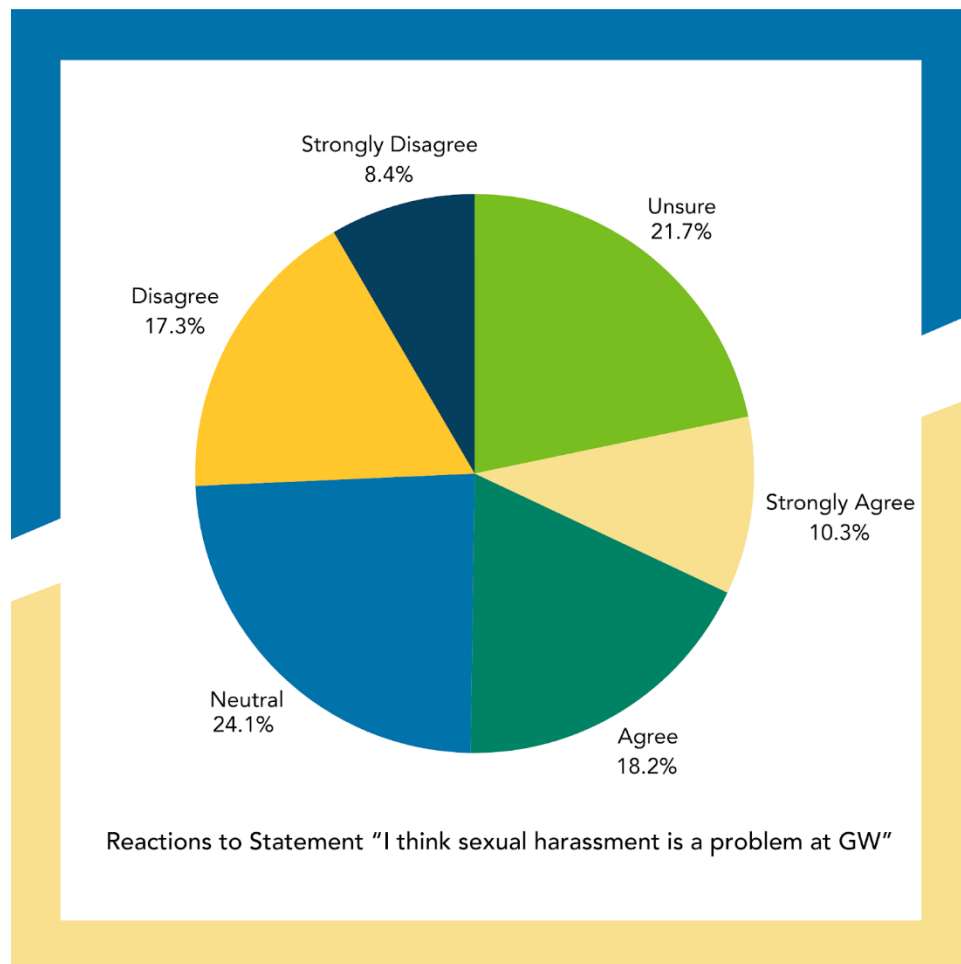


Figure 2: Pie chart demonstrating that answers were largely divided on the statement, "I think sexual harassment is a problem at GW."

In terms of perceptions of safety, students largely felt safe at GW during the morning and afternoon (over 80% of responses) and in the evening when classes were in session (74%). That perception of safety dropped at night after classes had concluded, although the most common response was that students felt "somewhat safe" during this time frame.

A large number of students wrote in areas of concern for them in an open-ended question, and the responses were far ranging. Many commenters focused on areas where non-GW community members had access, areas with less GWPD presence, less lighting, and less surveillance. These responses highlighted the area surrounding the Foggy Bottom Metro multiple times. Other commenters focused on areas where they perceived fellow students as posing a risk: residence halls, fraternity houses and other Greek Life areas. The Mount Vernon Campus was noted as having fewer security resources than Foggy Bottom. Some students reported that increased security and surveillance did not increase their sense of safety and in some cases made them feel less safe.

Students were largely unsure, neutral, or ambivalent about GW's effectiveness in responding to sexual harassment. The majority of responses suggested that college officials should do more

to protect students from harm (30% agree and 30% completely agree). However, there was broad uncertainty about campus response and the majority or plurality responded “neither agree or disagree” or “I’m not sure” to whether GW responds too slowly in difficult situations (51%), whether GW supports students who have experienced sexual harassment (51%), and whether GW officials handle incidents fairly and responsibly (49%)

Students most commonly responded that they agreed that they understood GW’s procedures for managing acts of sexual harassment (45%) and had faith in these processes (42%), while slightly over 20% responded that they were neutral for both of these questions.

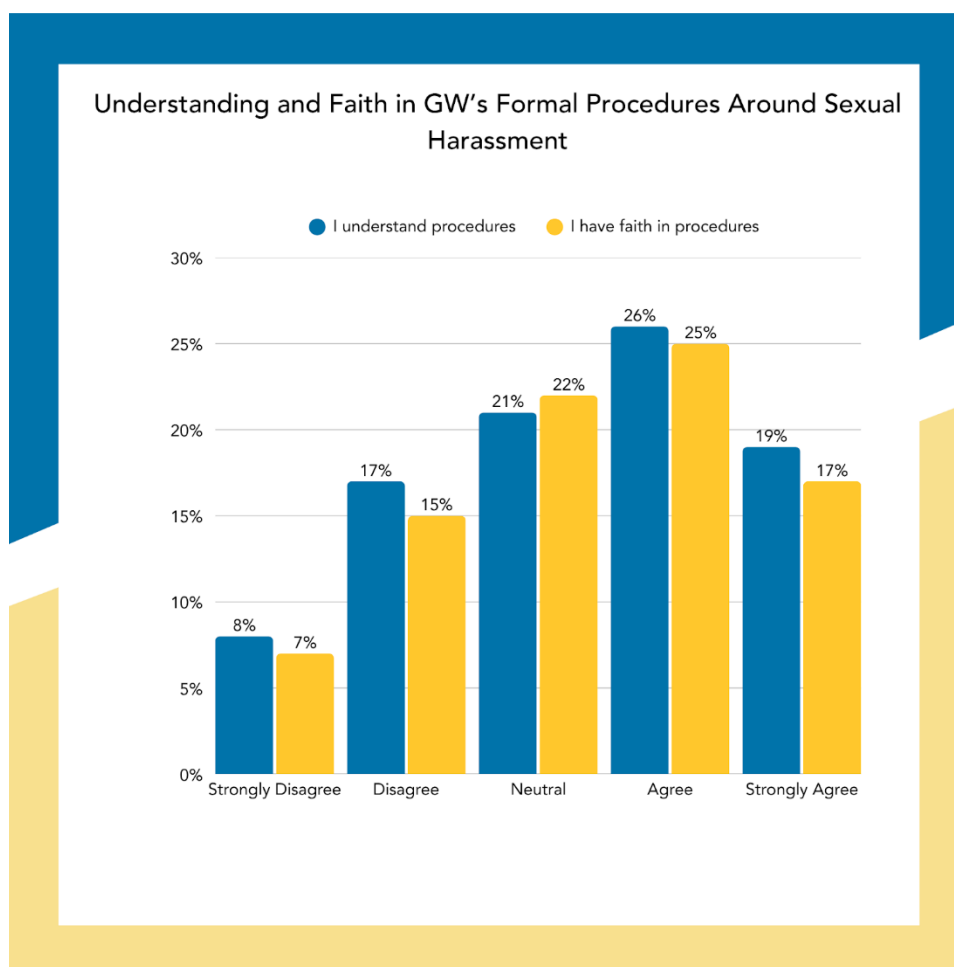


Figure 3: Bar chart displaying student responses on whether they agreed that they understood and had faith in formal GW procedures around sexual harassment.

This section also covered students' self-reported confidence in understanding consent, as well as their perceptions of their peers' competence in this area. There were large gaps between students' perceptions of their own knowledge and behaviors compared to their perceptions of other students' knowledge and behaviors. While 94% of students indicated that they understood consent and could explain it to someone (79% completely agree and 15% somewhat agree), only 57% of students felt that their peers generally understood consent (20% completely agree

and 37% somewhat agree). The survey expanded upon these topics in the subsequent section on specific bystander intervention and consent behaviors.

Positive findings in this section include a general student agreement that they felt valued at GW. Eighty-three percent agreed they felt valued in the learning environment, 81% felt they were treated fairly by faculty and staff, and 71% felt that staff were concerned about their welfare.

Analysis

The questions in this section covered a broad range of topics: student perceptions of safety, how students perceive the attitudes and response to sexual harassment, both from university officials and from their peers, and the understanding and practice of seeking and receiving consent before engaging in sexual activity.

The results to the questions specific to safety indicate that the majority of students feel safe most of the time on campus, but the write-in comments suggest that there are still a number of areas of concern and further analysis is needed for possible systemic improvements.

A large number of students reported a lack of clarity or neutral/ambivalent perceptions on how GW responded to sexual harassment. Processes around sexual harassment are managed privately, due to the sensitivity of the issues involved as well as legal protections around privacy (for example, FERPA). This prevents the university from sharing information beyond the directly involved parties, so it is not unexpected that many students feel unsure about the effectiveness and quality of GW's response to sexual harassment. As was noted in the open-ended questions, many students had not had direct experiences but based their knowledge on what they heard from friends, what they saw on social media, or on their general level of trust with university processes. Increased education and awareness may be an effective tool to address any gaps in knowledge by increasing transparency and building trust. Existing tools, like the Title IX Annual Report, may also provide additional clarity so broader dissemination of this tool could be valuable.

In terms of the questions focused on consent, the responses showed general confidence in students' personal understanding of consent, but that students may have less trust in their peers' ability to understand and practice consent. Regardless of the reason behind this gap, it demonstrates that consent education should expand to help all GW students fully understand this critical concept, but beyond that, students should be given tools to learn how to communicate this value and how to make it clear it is important to them.

A positive finding was the high percentage of students who reported feeling like they belonged at GW, and that they were supported and cared about by staff and faculty. A sense of belonging and support in a campus community can be a potential protective factor against a number of negative outcomes, including sexual harassment.⁸

⁸ More information on protective factors for sexual violence perpetration available in O'Connor, J., Smith, L., Woerner, J., & Khan, A. (2024). Protective factors for sexual violence perpetration among high school and college students: A systematic review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 25(2), 1073-1087.

Section 3: Bystander Intervention

In this section, students were asked about their level of confidence in their knowledge of sexual harassment issues, the availability of education and involvement opportunities, their likelihood of practicing bystander behaviors and actively seeking and receiving consent before any new sexual activity, and their perceptions of other student's likelihood of practicing these foundational behaviors. This information is significant for the following reasons:

- These responses help reveal additional needs for education and opportunities for student involvement.
- The answers provide a sense of how many students are participating in behaviors that contribute to sexual harassment prevention.
- The answers around perceptions of peers' behaviors can reveal the overarching climate of prevention at GW.

Results

A majority of students gave positive responses to questions about their personal capacity in understanding, responding and preventing sexual harassment. A solid majority of students felt well-educated about sexual harassment (39% agree and 38% strongly agree), and a more narrow majority of students thought they could do something about sexual harassment (57% agree). A majority of students (61%) agreed that preventing sexual harassment should not be the sole responsibility of GW officials, and students were split on whether there were currently enough opportunities to get involved in preventing these issues on campus.

This section also assessed students' likelihood to actively acquire consent in a variety of situations. A majority of students agreed they were very likely to get consent in each of the situations listed, although there was a range depending on the situation. For example, while 92% of students agreed they were very likely to stop having sex if their partner asked, even if they were previously engaged in consensual sexual activity, only 72% said they were "very likely" to get verbal consent, even in a long-term relationship.

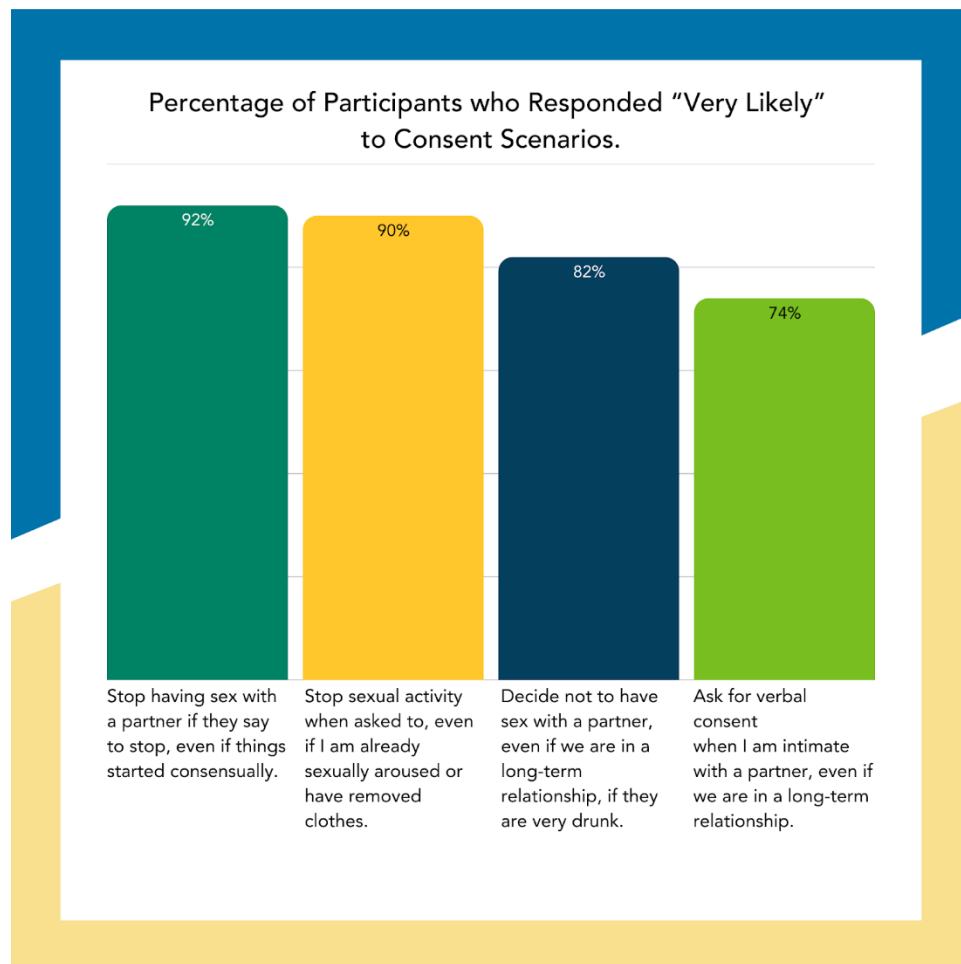


Figure 4: A bar chart showing the percentage of students who are very likely to seek and receive consent in scenarios.

Students’ responses also supported their general likelihood to support a peer experiencing sexual harassment, as well as their likelihood to report a peer engaging in harmful behaviors. For example, 91% percent of students said they would speak to a friend if they thought the friend had experienced harassment and would help them access resources, while 80% said they would report other students who engaged in sexual harassment, and 85% said they would report someone engaging in sexual harassment through force or coercion.

The majority of students also reported a likelihood to engage in active bystander behavior. Eighty percent said they would intervene in situations where other students engage in sexual harassment, and 78% felt they would intervene in a situation where a student was making inappropriate or negative sexual comments. The majority of students also shared that they did not believe barriers such as personal loyalties to the person causing harm or fear of punishments for infractions would deter them from reporting.

Students were asked the same series of questions about how they thought their peers would respond, and they responded with far less confidence in their peers’ behaviors. For example, the majority of responses indicated that it was “somewhat likely” or they were “unsure” if their

peers would engage in behaviors like stopping sexual activity when a partner asked them to. A narrow majority of students thought it was likely that their peers would support another student who experienced harassment, and were neutral on whether their peers would report if they knew someone engaging in sexual harassment. A majority of students believed their peers would let personal loyalties or fear of punishment for infractions prevent them from reporting.

Analysis

This section displayed similar themes to the previous section. While students self-report higher rates of actively seeking and receiving consent before engaging in sexual activity, intervening in potential acts of sexual harassment, and reporting incidents of sexual harassment, they feel less confident in their peers' likelihood to engage in these behaviors.

While it is encouraging to see the number of students who report getting consent in different situations and stopping sexual activity when consent is not present, there is a small minority of students who are reporting they are not likely to seek consent in these situations. As each of these situations, depending on the circumstances, could be considered a form of sexual assault, there is room for additional education in ensuring that every community member understands the nuances of consent and the necessity of freely given, reversible, informed, enthusiastic, and specific consent every time.

While a majority of students reported they believed they could do something about sexual harassment (57%), there is room for improvement, as students who are not confident in their ability to affect change may be less likely to engage in behaviors to prevent sexual harassment.

Section 4: Personal Experiences with Sexual Harassment

This section addressed students' individual experiences with sexual harassment, including sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, stalking, and hostile environment sexual harassment. Students were asked about whether or not they had experienced any elements of this conduct, their relationship with the respondent, and contextual factors, like timing, location, and the presence of substance use by any parties. Students were also asked whether or not they reported to the university and what actions, if any, were taken following their report. This information can provide insight into the most common forms of harm or violence students are experiencing, possible areas of underreporting, and ways to improve access to response resources.

Results

This section had fewer overall responses than others, with 381 responses. Of these, the highest percentage of students (29%) reported they had experienced unwanted sexual comments, jokes, gestures, etc. Similarly, 25% experienced an unwanted sexual touch, grab, or pinch, and 23% reported intentional brushing up against them. As displayed in Figure 5, fewer students reported incidents such as unwanted sexual contact other than kissing or unwanted removal of clothing. As a contextual note, 66% of the students who reported that they experienced an act of sexual harassment indicated that their answers reflected more than one incident.

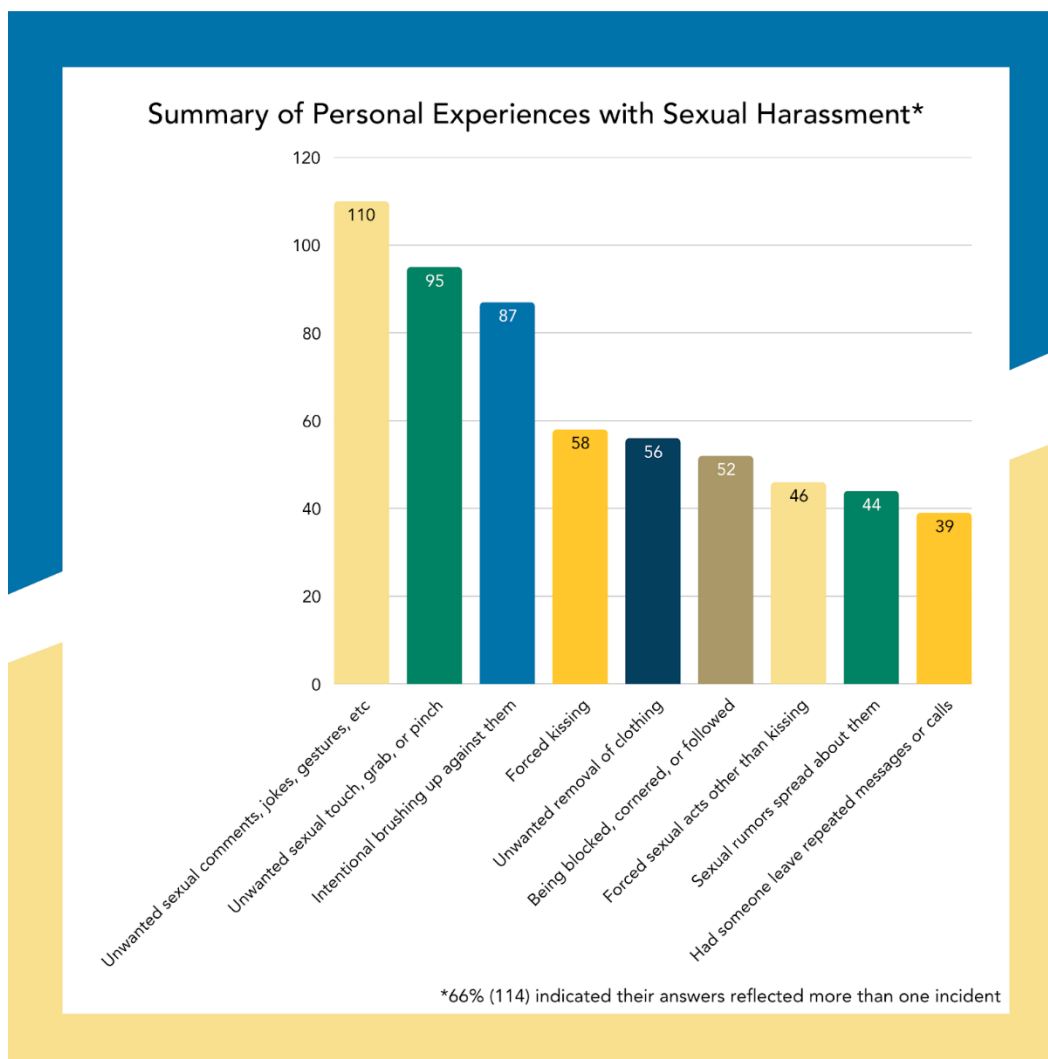


Figure 5: A bar chart showing the number of student responders who reported different forms of harm or violence.

When asked about the relationship to the Respondent, 54% of responses indicated the Respondent was not affiliated with GW, while 43% reported that the Respondent was a current GW student. Forty-eight percent of responses indicated that the Respondent was unknown to them, 28% reported the Respondent was a romantic partner, and 26% reported the Respondent was a friend.

Of the 201 responses indicating timing of incident, 76 of those responses indicated their experience occurred during their freshman year. Of the 155 responses about location of incident, 89 responses reported the incident occurred on campus. Forty-five of those responses indicated the incident occurred in campus housing.

When asked about the context of the incident, 44% of the 155 responses indicated the incident happened at a casual hangout or gathering. When asked about Respondent substance use, the majority of responses shared they were unaware of Respondent substance use, but 26%

reported alcohol use by the Respondent. When asked about their own substance use at the time of the incident, the majority (60%) said they were not using any substances. Twenty-three percent reported consuming alcohol in the context of their reported experience.⁹

When asked about disclosure and reporting, the majority (67%) reported they told a friend. The second largest group (26%) did not disclose at all. Seven percent of the responses indicated they disclosed the incident to the Title IX Office. Ninety percent did not file a report with any campus office, and of the 10% who did, the Title IX Office received the highest number of those reports. Almost three-fourths (73%) took no follow-up actions following their experience with sexual harassment.

Only 15 responses indicated that the student reported their experience. Of that small number, responses show that the GW Title IX Office received 9 of those 15 reports. It is unclear whether or not the small number of responses on reporting reflect sentiments of the student body as a whole, but the majority of students reported that they felt GW responded to the report with compassion and expediency. When asked about barriers to reporting, the following three responses were the most commonly cited reason for not reporting the experience: 1) the student did not think their experience was “a big deal,” 2) the student felt that they did not experience harm, or 3) the student was not sure if their experience “counted.” In the written comment section, some students shared that they were concerned about the Title IX Office being able to take actionable steps in response to their concerns.

Analysis

The data gathered in this section has a large breadth, but captures some distinct themes related to students’ personal experience with sexual harassment. Verbal sexual harassment and unwanted sexual contact were the most common experiences, and there was a high number of unknown Respondents and Respondents who were not GW community members. The low reporting rate among students illustrates how students may not be aware of resources available for those who have experienced verbal sexual harassment or unwanted physical contact, especially if the Respondent was not a member of the GW community. Lack of awareness about resources and supportive measures available through the Title IX Office indicates potential for more training and education in this area. Low reporting may also be due to lack of trust or faith that the university can take meaningful action. It is also notable that among the students who shared when their experience occurred, around 38% reported that it occurred during their first year, highlighting the particularly high risk for students in their first year in college.

Section 5: Theoretical Choices to Sexual Harassment Experiences

In this section, students shared what they think they would do if they were to experience a future act/acts of sexual harassment at GW. As most students responding to the survey did not report a personal experience with sexual harassment, this section provides additional insight on who they would disclose to and what services they might access. It also allows students who have

⁹ The survey included language in these questions reminding students that even if you had been drinking or taking other drugs, that they are in no way responsible for the harassment that occurred.

had personal experiences to express what they may do or do differently in the future. While hypothetical responses may not always accurately depict real-world behaviors, they can give us an indication of likely actions students would take as well as the level of understanding and trust in different resources.

Results

The vast majority of students responded that if they were to experience sexual harassment in the future, they would discuss the experience with someone. They were most likely by far to discuss the experience with a friend (89%). The next two most common responses were with a family member (54%) and with the Title IX Office (31%). Between 10-20% of students responded that they would contact the GW Police Department (GWPD), the Office of Advocacy and Support (OAS), CARE, a faculty member, Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), the Sexual Assault and Intimate Violence (SAIV) Helpline, GW Students Against Sexual Assault (SASA), or the District's Metropolitan Police Department.

Students gave mixed responses on whether they thought GW would respond compassionately, fairly, and in a timely manner if they were to experience sexual harassment and report it to the university. Fifty percent of students agreed that they thought GW would respond compassionately, 43% responded that they would respond fairly, and 27% said they would respond in a timely manner. The most common response to whether GW would respond fairly and in a timely manner was “unsure”, with 42% and 44%, respectively, selecting this option.

Many of the write-in comments alluded to having low trust in the processes and in GW bureaucracy more broadly, although many shared that they did not have any direct knowledge of these processes or resources. They shared that this perception was based on stories they have heard, experiences of friends or acquaintances, and occasionally distrust of university administration and systems as a whole, rather than GW-specific context.

This section also assessed the level of awareness students have of different campus resources, including whether they knew how to access them. GWPD had the most widespread awareness: 99% of students were aware of this resource, and 75% reported knowing how to access it. Awareness of the Metropolitan Police Department was similar. Among other campus resources, Counseling and Psychological Services/Student Health Center and Title IX had the highest level of awareness, at 87% and 90%, respectively, although only a little over half of students knew how to access both offices. General awareness of CARE (71% aware) and the Office of Advocacy and Support (72%) was somewhat lower, and only 52% reported awareness of the Sexual Assault and Intimate Violence (SAIV) Helpline.

The lowest level of awareness was for off-campus services. Over 60% of students reported they had never heard of the DC Victim Hotline, RAINN, the DC Rape Crisis Center, the DC Forensic Nurse Examiners, and the Network for Victim Recovery (now renamed Volare).

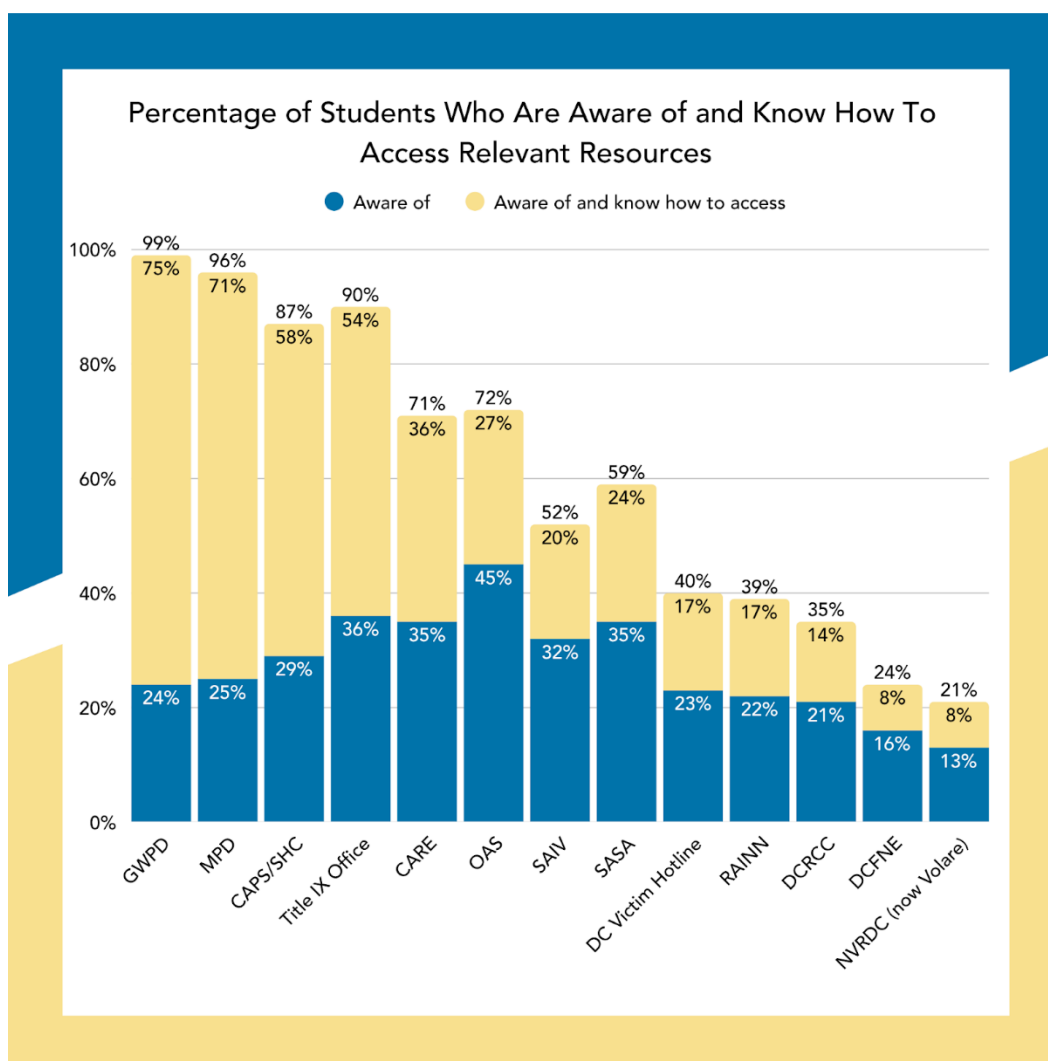


Figure 6: A bar chart showing the percentage of students who reported being aware of resources and of knowing how to access them. The lowest number is the percentage who know about a resource but do not know how to access it, the middle number is the percentage who are aware and know how to access it, and the highest number is the total.

Analysis

Students overwhelmingly reported that they would discuss a potential incident of sexual harassment with someone else. By far, the person they were most likely to turn to was a friend, followed by a family member, and then Title IX, but the likelihood decreased significantly for each of these options. This shows the value of equipping students with the knowledge, language and skills that will help them respond to disclosures in a sensitive, trauma-informed, and supportive manner as they will be the first person many impacted students turn to for support. Students who are well-informed about campus resources can play a critical role in connecting a friend who discloses to trained campus and community professionals for continued support.

Students reported a high level of awareness of resources that were used for reporting and that promoted public safety. GWPD and MPD had greater visibility than any other resource. While the majority of students were aware of confidential resources on campus dedicated to addressing sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking, they did not have the same level of awareness or understanding of how to access them, emphasizing the need to increase awareness of these resources.

Section 6: Participation in Incidents of Sexual Harassment

Results

The majority of students reported that they had never participated in (perpetrated) an act or acts of sexual harassment, however, a small number did report engaging in behaviors that would be implicated under the Title IX policy. Fewer than 10 students reported engaging in any of the listed behaviors. When asked to explain their answers, students reported reasoning including a lack of understanding of consent, acting in self-defense or in response to harm, thinking that the other person would like it or that it was funny.

Analysis

Like in the previous sections, this very small number of responses may provide insight into individual situations, but it is not a large enough sample to generalize to the broader GW population. Even in a confidential survey, many students may be hesitant to disclose perpetration of acts of sexual harassment, so the number of responses can not be extrapolated to assume the percentage of students who perpetrate acts of sexual harassment at GW. More information would be highly valuable in tailoring prevention and response strategies.

Major Changes since Previous Report

As previously shared, GW last shared the results of the 2018 Sexual Harassment Campus Climate Survey in [fall 2019](#). Although there are limits in comparison due to the additional questions and reformatting of the survey, some direct comparison is possible. Notably, when describing the harmful conduct in the survey, the 2018 survey used the language “unwanted sexual behavior,” while the 2024 survey used the phrase “sexual harassment” with the clarification that this includes sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking. There were also minor language updates to other existing questions. In addition, the 2018 survey did not go out to a random sample, which may have resulted in a less representative selection of survey respondents.

There were modest improvements in some of the response related to GW’s response to sexual harassment. In 2018, 27% of students reported that GW was doing enough to prevent incidents. This number increased to 39% in 2024, with 24% responding neutrally to this question. In 2018, 77% of students reported that unwanted sexual conduct happened “often” or “somewhat often”, while that number had dropped significantly in 2024. Only 46% of students responded that sexual harassment occurred often or somewhat often. This change may be influenced by the language shift from “unwanted sexual behavior” to “sexual harassment”, or the randomized

sample in 2024; the students who completed the 2018 survey may have been partially drawn to complete it because they were already concerned about sexual harassment.

The 2024 survey gave many more examples of personal experiences with sexual harassment that were not included in 2018. However, for the items that were included in both surveys, the percentage of students impacted were fairly similar.

Personal Experiences with Sexual Harassment 2018/2024		
Type of Incident Experienced	2018	2024
Unwanted sexual comments, jokes, gestures, etc.	30%	29%
Unwanted sexual touch, grab, or pinch	24%	25%
Intentional brushing up against them	22%	23%
Forced kissing	14%	15%
Unwanted removal of clothing	12%	15%
Being blocked, cornered, or followed	16%	14%
Forced sexual acts other than kissing	9%	12%
Sexual rumors spread about them	14%	12%

Figure 7: A table comparing the percentage of students who had experienced different forms of harm between 2018 and 2024.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The 2024 Sexual Harassment Climate Survey yielded an expansive dataset that provides guidance on possible improvements in the way Title IX approaches sexual harassment prevention and response. Some of the major recommendations for next steps are detailed below.

1. While the majority of students reported receiving some form of Title IX training, there was a proportion who did not receive training or did not remember, particularly among juniors, seniors, and graduate and professional degree students. This indicates a need to broadly offer and advertise training opportunities targeted towards more senior students and graduate students.
2. While a plurality of students reported generally favorable perceptions of GW's response to sexual harassment, there was no consensus. A significant proportion of students reported skepticism or distrust of university systems. Negative perceptions of any kind are reason for concern, as distrust may make students less likely to seek support that they would otherwise benefit from. While the large majority of survey-takers did not report having a direct experience with GW services (and some left comments saying their perceptions were based on general rumors/statements and that they were not sure of the truth), others reported that a personal negative experience or the experience of a friend influenced their lack of trust.
 - a. Trust and transparency with the GW student population is of the utmost importance to help students feel safe and comfortable in connecting with resources, and to feel comfortable and supported when interacting with university offices. To better address this, Title IX will continue to expand connections with the campus community: tabling across the campus, setting up regular training and outreach events, and partnering with student groups to facilitate one-on-one communication.
3. There were a number of comments suggesting resources/services that GW should put in place (such as online reporting, confidential advocacy, annual disclosure of Title IX reporting data) that are, in fact, already in place at GW. This suggests that students may be unaware of available resources and increased advertising through various mediums may increase usage and improve perceptions of available services.
4. A large proportion of students responded that they had an experience with sexual harassment while at GW, with 29% reporting forms of verbal harassment and 25% reporting forms of physical sexual harassment like unwanted sexual touches, pinches, or grabs. While GW's Title IX Office receives between 400-500 reports each year, this data supports that there is underreporting, consistent with national trends. Some of the reasons mentioned for not reporting included not thinking it was a big deal or not thinking it counted, indicating that providing a broader range of examples of the type of behaviors that Title IX can respond to may help students see their experiences reflected and that they deserve to access support.
5. A high proportion of students who reported experiencing an act of sexual harassment shared that it occurred in their freshman year. Incoming undergraduate students receive targeted education, outreach, and resources; however, this population may need additional connections to resources and the GW community may benefit from a reminder about ways to prevent acts of sexual harassment at the beginning of the academic year.
6. More awareness building about campus resources is necessary, particularly confidential resources like the Office of Advocacy and Support and the Sexual Assault and Intimate Violence Helpline, to ensure students are able to access these critical services when needed. Knowledge about off-campus resources was particularly low, so making sure community resources are more visible will also offer more pathways for students.
7. Prevention efforts should continue to transition beyond awareness building to empowering students in taking specific actions to contribute to cultures of consent and respect. This has been a goal of Title IX prevention efforts, and the results show that

students have a high level of confidence in their personal knowledge of consent, the regular practice of consent, and engaging in active bystander behaviors. However, their lower confidence in their peers' knowledge and behaviors may indicate a disconnect between what students believe and value versus what their actions communicate.

Next steps

The value of a Sexual Harassment Campus Climate survey is enhanced when the survey is issued regularly with the same question set, allowing comparison of shifts in responses and the impact of changes made in response to the results across years. GW's Title IX Office will continue to conduct Sexual Harassment Climate surveys to receive updated data in order to improve response and prevention efforts university-wide.

To get involved or learn more about the Title IX Office, consider following Title IX on Instagram at @gwttitleix, reviewing resources at titleix.gwu.edu, attending Title IX biweekly office hours, or emailing titleix@gwu.edu to learn more about how you can contribute to safe, respectful environments at GW.