



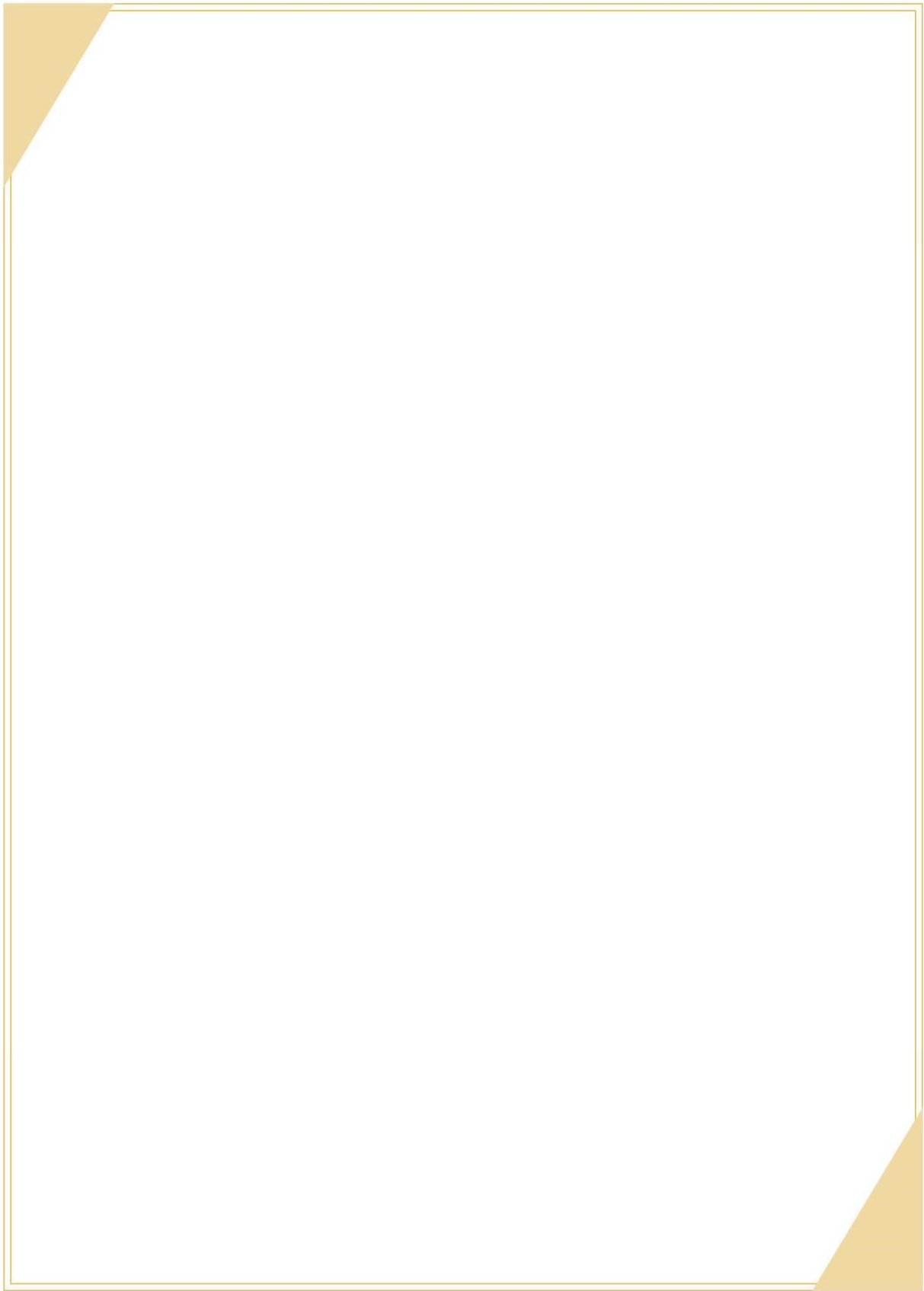
VANDERBILT
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Executive Summary

2019 AAU Campus
Climate Student
Survey on Sexual
Assault and
Misconduct

October 15, 2019
[Updated contact information, August 2023]



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1. INTRODUCTION

Some of the language used in this report is explicit and some people may find it uncomfortable.

If you have been the victim of sexual misconduct or want to report an incident of sexual misconduct involving others, please contact [Project Safe](#) (615-322-SAFE (7233)); the [Vanderbilt University Title IX and Student Discrimination Office](#) (615-343-9004); and/or [the Vanderbilt University Office of Equal Employment Opportunity](#) (615-343-9336).

You can find a list of resources and other information at Vanderbilt University's [Gender Harassment Web Portal](#).

In February 2019, Vanderbilt administered the 2019 AAU Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Misconduct. Vanderbilt was one of a consortium of 33 higher education institutions administering this survey in spring 2019.

All Vanderbilt students (12,201) received the survey from Westat, the third-party social sciences firm that administered the survey. Four thousand and eighteen (4,018) responded, giving a response rate of 32.9 percent. The data were compiled and analyzed by Westat.

Westat's report detailing the aggregated findings for all 33 institutions was released on October 15, 2019. Vanderbilt released its report from Westat on the same day, as did most other participating institutions. The full report is available at:

www.vanderbilt.edu/genderharassment/campus-surveys/ [edit August 2023:
www.vanderbilt.edu/dsa/whole-community-data/]

The goals for the survey were to:

- estimate the **prevalence** of sexual assault and other misconduct;
- gain insight into the **circumstances**, student responses and consequences associated with instances of sexual assault and other misconduct;
- assess how **bystanders** react in different situations related to sexual assault and other misconduct;
- assess **student perceptions** surrounding sexual assault and other misconduct; and
- assess **student knowledge** of school resources and other procedures.

This was the second time Vanderbilt had surveyed its student population to understand the campus climate on sexual assault and misconduct. In 2015, Vanderbilt administered two instruments (EAB and EverFi), with students randomly assigned to one or the other instrument.

This Executive Summary provides an overview of Vanderbilt's results and some comparative information to the AAU peer set when relevant. It also provides some reflections on trends between the 2015 and 2019 survey instruments, although as these were different instruments

drawing conclusive findings about trends is challenging. The Westat reports do not provide comparative analysis.

This Executive Summary is not exhaustive. Those interested in more detail should read the Westat reports for Vanderbilt and AAU. Further questions can also be directed to the ~~Vanderbilt Office for Planning and Institutional Effectiveness (PIE), pie@vanderbilt.edu~~. [edit August 2023: Office of Data & Strategic Analytics, dsa@vanderbilt.edu.]

2. RESPONDENTS

All Vanderbilt students (12,201) received the survey from Westat, the firm hired to administer the survey. Four thousand and eighteen (4,018) completed the sections on prevalence of assault and misconduct, giving a response rate of 32.9 percent.

Table 2.1: Survey response rates

	Vanderbilt	AAU
Overall response rate	32.9% (4,018)	21.9% (all institutions) 30.8% (private institutions)
Women	38.7% (2,595)	17.5%
Men	25.9% (1,423)	26.1%
Trans, Genderqueer, Questioning, Non-binary/not identified (TGQN)	34% (53)	22%
Undergraduates	33.4% (2,207)	20.4%
<i>Women</i>	<i>42.4% (1,442)</i>	<i>25.1%</i>
<i>Men</i>	<i>23.8% (765)</i>	<i>15.4%</i>
Graduate / Professional	32.4% (1,811)	24.5%
<i>Women</i>	<i>34.9% (1,153)</i>	<i>27.7%</i>
<i>Men</i>	<i>28.8% (658)</i>	<i>21.1%</i>

The survey data is reported back to Vanderbilt at the level of five identifiable and distinct populations:

- Undergraduate women
- Undergraduate men
- Graduate / professional women
- Graduate / professional men
- Trans, Genderqueer, Questioning, Non-binary/not identified (TGQN)

These populations were self-identified in the survey instrument.

In the Westat reports, the analysts frequently did not combine these populations into a single, aggregated result because the data showed that the lived experiences of these populations were very distinct.

3. PREVALENCE AND CIRCUMSTANCES

3.1 NONCONSENSUAL SEXUAL CONTACT BY PHYSICAL FORCE OR INABILITY TO CONSENT/STOP WHAT WAS HAPPENING

The definitions of the key terms are as follows:

- **Sexual Contact**
 - **Penetration:** Putting a penis, finger, or object inside someone else's vagina or anus. When someone's mouth or tongue makes contact with someone else's genitals.
 - **Sexual Touching:** Kissing. Touching someone's breast, chest, crotch, groin, or buttocks. Grabbing, groping, or rubbing against the other in a sexual way, even if the touching is over the other's clothes.
- **Non-Consensual**
 - **Physical Force:** Being held down with body weight, pinning arms, hitting, kicking, or using/threatening to use a weapon.
 - **Inability to consent or stop what was happening:** Due to being passed out, asleep, or incapacitated due to drugs or alcohol.

Almost 27% of undergraduate women report having experienced nonconsensual sexual contact by physical force or inability to consent or stop what was happening, 12.2% of those during the year of the survey (2018-2019). Just under 8% of undergraduate men report the same experience, 3.6% during the year of the survey. Rates for graduate and professional men and women are lower (6.6% for women while at Vanderbilt, 2% for men). Rates for TGQN populations are almost 30%, 10% during the year of the survey.

Table 3.1: Nonconsensual sexual contact by physical force or inability to consent or stop what was happening

	Vanderbilt		AAU All	
	<i>Since Enrolling</i>	<i>This Year</i>	<i>Since Enrolling</i>	<i>This Year</i>
Undergraduates				
<i>Women</i>	26.9%	12.2%	25.9%	12.8%
<i>Men</i>	7.8%	3.6%	6.8%	3.5%
<i>TGQN</i>	-	-	22.8%	11.1%
Graduate / Professional				
<i>Women</i>	6.6%	2.2%	9.7%	3.3%
<i>Men</i>	2%	1.1%	2.5%	1%
<i>TGQN</i>	-	-	14.5%	6.7%
VU TGQN	29.8%	10.3%	-	-
<i>n.b.: Vanderbilt's TGQN responses could not be broken out into undergraduate and graduate / professional students as the pool was not large enough. The AAU pool at national level was large enough to allow these populations to be broken out.</i>				

One form of nonconsensual sexual contact the survey asked about was penetration, including oral sex. Thirteen percent of undergraduate women report having experienced this form of nonconsensual sexual contact while at Vanderbilt.

Table 3.2: Nonconsensual penetration by physical force or inability to consent or stop what was happening

	Vanderbilt		AAU All	
	<i>Since Enrolling</i>	<i>This Year</i>	<i>Since Enrolling</i>	<i>This Year</i>
Undergraduates				
<i>Women</i>	13.3%	4.9%	12.8%	4.7%
<i>Men</i>	2.6%	1.3%	2.9%	1.2%
<i>TGQN</i>	-	-	12%	4.9%
Graduate / Professional				
<i>Women</i>	3.6%	1.1%	4.6%	1.2%
<i>Men</i>	0.8%	0.4%	0.9%	0.3%
<i>TGQN</i>	-	-	7.6%	3.3%
VU TGQN	17%	-	-	-

Vanderbilt’s rates of nonconsensual sexual contact for most populations are largely in line with those of the other surveyed institutions, showing that this remains a very serious issue. However, the rate for TGQN at Vanderbilt appears to be higher than at other AAU institutions.

Undergraduate students are most likely to be victims of sexual assault or misconduct during their first year on campus, a pattern which holds true across the AAU.

The majority of incidents (64.2%) occur on campus or in an affiliated property.

In the majority of incidents of nonconsensual sexual contact involving women as the victims, alcohol use was involved.

About 80% of all incidents involved one perpetrator. In at least 80% of the cases, students were the perpetrators, with most others being people not associated with Vanderbilt. In most cases, the perpetrator was known to the student, often but not always a friend or current or former partner.

COMPARISON TO 2015

Because of different definitions used, the data from 2015 are not directly comparable. In the 2015 EAB survey, 17.5% of undergraduate students and 2.7% of graduate / professional students indicated that they had experienced at least one incident of sexual misconduct, defined as someone sexually touching or penetrating them or trying to sexually touch or penetrate against their consent.

The EAB data showed that in 2015 about three-quarters of incidents occurred on campus, and that in over 70% of cases in the 2015 survey the respondent reported that alcohol had been involved.

In 2015, about 40% of perpetrators in the EAB survey were peers or acquaintances and, in 2015, 72% of cases affiliated with the university in some way.

3.2 HARASSING BEHAVIORS

The definitions of the key terms are as follows:

- **Harassing behaviors** include:
 - Sexual jokes or stories that were insulting or offensive to you
 - Inappropriate or offensive comments about someone’s appearance, sexual activities
 - Crude or gross sexual things or unwanted sexual conversation
 - Continued to ask you out, etc., when you’d said no

Table 3.3: Harassing behaviors

Since Enrolling	Vanderbilt	AAU All
All Students	43.7%	41.8%
Undergraduates		
<i>Women</i>	64.9%	59.2%
<i>Men</i>	47.2%	36.2%
<i>TGQN</i>	-	65.1%
Graduate / Professional		
<i>Women</i>	31%	36.6%
<i>Men</i>	23.3%	23%
<i>TGQN</i>	-	53.4%
VU TGQN	62.8%	-

While women and TGQN students experience higher rates of harassing behaviors than men, almost half of undergraduate men have felt that they were subject to harassing behaviors at some point during their time at Vanderbilt.

Harassing behaviors can be perpetrated by many different people. Students were the most frequent perpetrators, but faculty and staff were also named. Close to 30% of the graduate / professional students who had experienced harassing behavior had experienced it from a faculty member or instructor.

4. STUDENT RESPONSES

4.1 CONTACTING A PROGRAM OR RESOURCE

Contacting a resource or program is not the same as “formally reporting” an incident, and data about formal reporting rates cannot be identified from the AAU survey.

Students were mostly likely to contact a program or resource in relation to the incident if it involved penetration, with 35% of women and 22% of men saying that they had done so. This rate increased significantly for women if the incident involved physical force, with 52.4% of women saying they had contacted a program or resource with respect to such incidents. Rates of contacting a program or resource related to incidents of sexual touching or harassing behavior are lower, below 20%.

Across all types of incident, 15.8% of students contacted at least one formal resource. The most common resource to reach out to was the University Counseling Center, followed by Project Safe.

4.2 TELLING OTHERS

Friends (over 80%) are the most frequent people students tell. The next most frequent groups are family members, therapists or counselors, and sexual or romantic partners. Fewer than 20% of students tell no one else, with men slightly less likely than women to tell someone.

4.3 COMPARISONS TO 2015

The EAB survey suggested that in 2015 30% of students told no one about an incident. In 2015, only 1% formally reported an incident.

5. BYSTANDER BEHAVIOR

5.1 WITNESSING INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

At times, students reported witnessing inappropriate behaviors. The rates of witnessing varied by behavior, from 28% of students who said they had witnessed inappropriate sexual comments to 8% saying they had witnessed ongoing behaviors that could be considered sexual harassment. 20% said they had witnessed a situation that could have led to sexual assault. TGQN students and undergraduate women were the most likely to witness such behaviors.

5.2 BYSTANDER ACTION

In the large majority of cases where students witnessed inappropriate behaviors, they took some kind of bystander action. In cases that could have led to a sexual assault, 77% of students took some type of action.

5.3 COMPARISON TO 2015

In 2015, approximately 14% of students reported observing a situation they believe was or could have led to a sexual assault.

In 2015, 87% said they felt comfortable intervening as a bystander to help prevent sexual assault.

6. STUDENT PERCEPTIONS

6.1 PERCEPTIONS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AND MISCONDUCT ON CAMPUS

Approximately 1/3 of Vanderbilt students see sexual assault and misconduct as “very” or “extremely” problematic on campus. This is higher than the rates of concern for the AAU survey institutions as whole. Fewer than 10% of students see it as not a problem at all, with male graduate / professional students being more likely to see it as not a problem than female, undergraduate, or TGQN students.

However, only 6% of Vanderbilt students believe that they are “very” or “extremely” likely to experience sexual assault or misconduct in the future, which is comparable to the overall AAU survey institutions results. Undergraduate women and TGQN students perceive the highest levels of risk. 51% of Vanderbilt students perceive that they have no likelihood of experiencing sexual assault or misconduct in the future. Again, undergraduate women and TGQN students are much less likely to report “no” likelihood than other groups.

6.2 CONFIDENCE IN CAMPUS OFFICIALS’ RESPONSE TO REPORTS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AND MISCONDUCT

The majority of Vanderbilt students have strong confidence that a report will be taken seriously by campus officials, with 72.7% “very” or “extremely” confident. Only 1.8% of Vanderbilt students have no confidence that a report will be taken seriously.

Only 3.7% of Vanderbilt students have no confidence of a fair investigation. TGQN students have less confidence of either being taken seriously or of fairness than other students.

6.3 COMPARISON TO 2015

In 2015, 73% of students believed that “sexual violence is a problem at my school”. In 2019, the rates who believe it is at least somewhat problematic are higher.

In 2015, 83% of students responding to the EAB survey said that “the school/administrators would take the report seriously”.

7. STUDENT KNOWLEDGE OF RESOURCES

7.1 TRAINING

96% of Vanderbilt students report having received training on sexual assault and other misconduct upon arrival to campus as a student. (Such training is mandatory for all students at Vanderbilt.) This compares to 80.5% of students across all institutions surveyed by AAU.

7.2 KNOWLEDGE OF REPORTING

93% of Vanderbilt students report having some knowledge about how to report sexual assault or misconduct. The level of knowledge varies between “a little” and “extremely”, with almost 80% saying they know very well or somewhat well how to report an incident. Graduate / professional students have less knowledge than undergraduates or TGQN.

7.3 RESOURCE AWARENESS

Vanderbilt students are also generally aware of different resources available to them. The highest awareness is for the Center for Student Wellbeing and the Student Health Center, but there is also very high awareness for the University Counseling Center, Project Safe, and the Vanderbilt University Police Department as resources in situations of sexual assault and misconduct.

7.4 COMPARISONS TO 2015

In 2015, 56% of students indicated that they had received training, but only 34% were clear regarding the school’s formal procedures for investigating an incident (EAB). In the 2015 EverFi survey, 64% indicated that they knew “where to go to get help regarding sexual assault at my school.”