

# Student Voices on Sexual Violence Survey Results

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Council of Ontario Universities





## Student Voices on Sexual Violence Survey Results

Every Ontario university is committed to providing a safe, supportive and respectful environment in which to live, learn and work.

Ontario's universities recently received reports from the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, which outline results from the 2018 Student Voices on Sexual Violence Survey.

We thank the more than 160,000 postsecondary students who participated in this important survey.

We can use this valuable information to continue to improve our initiatives, policies and research in our ongoing efforts to prevent and respond to sexual violence. These results serve as an important stepping stone toward making our students feel as safe, secure and supported as possible.

Sexual violence is a pervasive, societal problem. According to Statistics Canada's 2018 [Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces \(SSPPS\)](#), more than 11 million Canadians have been physically or sexually assaulted since the age of 15 with just over one million (four per cent) having been victimized in the past 12 months.

We recognize this issue extends to university campuses as well. Twenty-three per cent of university students responding to the survey report a non-consensual sexual experience. This prevalence rate is similar to the rates reported in the 2018 [Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces \(SSPPS\)](#). The 2019 [Association of American Universities \(AAU\) Campus Climate Survey](#) also provides relevant sexual violence data, particularly with respect to results for women and other vulnerable groups.

In addition, 63.2 per cent of university student respondents report experiencing sexual harassment one or more times, while 23.7 per cent of survey respondents reported experiencing stalking one or more times.

Understanding and addressing sexual violence experienced by our students is a priority for Ontario's universities and we remain committed to creating safe learning and working environments free from sexual violence.

The survey findings, in line with broader societal trends seen nationally and in the U.S., show certain groups of students are particularly vulnerable to experiencing sexual violence. Prevalence rates of sexual assault, sexual harassment and stalking for women, gender diverse and bisexual students are higher than overall university sector rates as a whole. Student survey participants also experienced different rates of sexual violence based on their racial or ethnic identity.

When it comes to disclosing an incident of sexual assault, stalking and/or sexual harassment, just over 46 per cent of university student respondents indicated they did so. For those who told someone, 97.8 per cent reported telling a friend, family member, or roommate, and 9.4 per cent told an institutional representative.

According to the survey results, “not thinking it was serious enough” was the most commonly cited reason (50.7 per cent) for not telling university staff. These results are consistent with the 2019 AAU Campus Climate Survey results.

Students were also asked about the location where the unwanted experiences occurred. Overall, 79.8 per cent of sexual assault occurred off-campus in a setting not affiliated with their university, 20.3 per cent occurred on-campus, 12.4 per cent occurred online or through social media and 7.6 per cent occurred off-campus at a university-sponsored activity.

As part of ongoing efforts to ensure students have access to support, Ontario’s universities have policies and processes in place, offer a [wide range of support services](#), and encourage any student who has been affected by sexual violence to seek help from these if they need to.

When seeking supports, survey respondents who indicated they had told university staff, were then asked to rate how helpful the university sexual violence center staff was. Nearly 60 per cent said they found staff to be helpful.

But it is not just about responding to incidents of sexual violence. Our universities also remain committed to prevention, educating students about healthy relationships and anti-violence measures. We have established awareness, education and prevention initiatives, including bystander training and the creation of sexual violence prevention and response offices, to name a few.

In particular, ensuring students are informed about consent is a priority at our institutions. It is encouraging to see the majority of student respondents indicated a firm understanding of consent, and their opinions, attitudes and beliefs were consistent with the definition of consent. Universities have integrated consent training into campus orientation weeks – a key time to reach students about these important issues.

While these survey results show that student respondents have a strong awareness and understanding of sexual violence, there is a need for ongoing education to strengthen prevention and intervention efforts already underway.

The majority of student respondents indicated that they saw university messaging about sexual violence primarily through social media or in a course syllabi (60.5 per cent). Yet, only 22.4 per cent indicated they knew where to access support on campus.

Universities recognize that we have a role to play in using our considerable strengths in research, teaching, student service and community connections to address this issue. But reducing sexual violence requires an integrated approach, with partnerships across educational institutions, student associations, government agencies, community organizations and service providers.

Our institutions have outlined an integrated approach to addressing the issue of sexual violence. In a [10-Point Plan](#), universities are working to further strengthen their on-campus support and prevention programs, and indicate how universities and government can work together to reduce incidents of sexual violence and to support students.

More efforts, funding and resources are required to help prevent and combat sexual violence. Ontario’s universities remain committed to working with government, our partners in the sector and the community to ensure that our campuses are safe environments where students have access to the high-quality supports they need.

For a more thorough summary of the results, [click here](#) and to review the full reports from the Ministry containing all of the survey responses, click here: [Demographics Breakdown Report \(University\)](#) and [Institution All Question Report \(Universities\)](#). We thank the provincial government for developing the survey and the students whose participation has provided a very helpful view of the experiences of students across the province.



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