

2023 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

Rutgers University

Academic and Workplace Behaviors and Environment Survey: A University-Wide Survey of the Incidence of Sexual Harassment, Sexual Misconduct, and Workplace Incivility Among Faculty and Staff

Relevant Rubric Area: Evaluation

1. Measuring the prevalence of sexual harassment
2. Evaluating policies and procedures
3. Leveraging the strengths of distinct stakeholder groups and creating partnerships between them

Description of Work:

Since 2014, researchers from the [Center for Research on Ending Violence](#) at the Rutgers School of Social Work have administered campus climate surveys to students across all four Rutgers campuses at regular intervals, with more than 22,000 student responses collected. The surveys assess experiences and perceptions of sexual violence, dating violence, sexual harassment, and other forms of identity-based discrimination. Results from the surveys have been used to develop tailored action plans on each campus to enhance the response to and prevention of campus sexual and dating violence and harassment among students.

To further advance efforts to prevent and effectively respond to harassment, the Office of the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs (EVPAA) sponsored the first ever university-wide faculty and staff survey to assess the climate related to harassment. The resulting *Academic and Workplace Behaviors and Environment Survey* (AWBES), led by Dr. Sarah McMahon, Dr. Julia Cusano, and their research team at REV and in partnership with the Office of the EVPAA and the Office of Institutional Research, was administered from November 3, 2022, through December 15, 2022 to Rutgers University faculty (tenured, tenure-track, and non-tenure-track), staff, postdoctoral associates (postdocs), teaching assistants (TAs), and graduate assistants (GAs). (Undergraduate students and graduate students who were not employed as teaching assistants or graduate assistants at the time of the survey were not included, in order not to disrupt the regular cadence of campus-based climate surveys conducted among Rutgers students since 2014.)

This university-wide survey effort was undertaken in response to the recommendations of the 2019 [Rutgers University Committee on Sexual Harassment Prevention and Culture](#)

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[Change Report](#), produced by a committee chaired by Dr. Barbara A. Lee, former Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Dr. Karen R. Stubaus, Vice President for Academic Affairs.

The AWBES contained six sections: 1) Demographics; 2) experiences of workplace incivility; 3) experiences of sexual harassment, reporting, and impact; 4) bystander behaviors; 5) perceptions of the university leadership's response to sexual harassment; and 6) awareness of and self-efficacy with the university's sexual harassment policy and resources.

The survey tool was based on the validated Administrator-Researcher Campus Climate Collaborative (ARC3) Campus Climate Survey Instrument, consistent with the recommendations of the [2018 National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine report on Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine](#). The survey was further developed through an extensive design process involving the identification of validated items or scales from existing climate surveys, making necessary adaptations to reflect Rutgers' campuses, and developing new items where needed.

In alignment with principles of collaboration, inclusivity, and transparency, and in order for the survey to have the greatest possible acceptance and efficacy, the final instrument was also the result of a months-long inclusive and iterative review process involving dozens of individuals and offices at Rutgers, including faculty experts in the field; academic administrators; Title IX officers on the Rutgers campuses; University Human Resources; the Office of Employment Equity; the Office of General Counsel; the Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement; University Communications and Marketing; and Institutional Research. Comments and reactions to specific components of the draft survey instrument were logged and resulting modifications of the survey instrument carefully recorded. This process resulted in better survey design as well as greater acceptance of the survey by important Rutgers constituency groups.

In preparation for the administration of the AWBES, and to involve as broad a swath of university constituencies in the work as possible, a tiered organizational structure of faculty and staff consisting of an over-arching "University Steering Committee" plus four smaller, more localized "Campus Working Groups" was constituted. These groups assisted with developing and implementing outreach measures to promote the survey to employees and will guide future action planning based on survey results. Both the University Steering Committee and the Campus Working Groups are comprised of key partners from multiple departments across all Rutgers campuses.

As noted above, the survey was in the field from November 3 through December 15, 2022. The final response rate of 20% is below what had been hoped for and expected. Some factors that may have contributed to that rate include:

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Survey Branding, Survey Confusion, and Survey Fatigue: For a variety of reasons, including those related to the naming of other upcoming surveys and the creation of a new office at the university, the harassment survey's official university title was finally determined and approved only days before the survey launch. In the end, the survey was bundled with others taking place at Rutgers around the same time under the slogan, "Your Voice, Our Rutgers", and assigned the title "Academic and Workplace Behaviors and Environment Survey". There was much discussion about what to call the survey, and the implications of the name on potential participation bias. The real nature and purpose of the survey may thereby have been obfuscated. In addition, timing of the survey may well have been an issue, encompassing as it did the Thanksgiving holiday, the end of the semester with all that that entails, and the concurrent fielding of other major surveys to the same university constituency groups. Despite several formal and informal communication pushes during survey administration to encourage greater response, the final response rate was lower than we would have liked in the end. The final response rate (20%) was in line with other institutional surveys administered at Rutgers during the year and seems reflective of other declines in online survey response rates. To address this issue, the team analyzed the representativeness of the sample and used weighted data.

Confidentiality and Retaliation Concerns: Confidentiality is always a concern in survey administration, but it seemed particularly salient for this survey. This was the first time that Rutgers had surveyed employees regarding their experiences with sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, and workplace incivility; all previous climate surveys had been conducted among student populations. Survey communications stressed the confidential nature of the survey, emphasizing that members of the research team would not be able to identify a survey participant regardless of the platform they had used to take the survey (i.e., computer, tablet, mobile phone, or paper). However, the real concern was more likely that a participant's supervisor would be able to identify them and link them to their responses. This was since participants were required to enter their Rutgers "NetID" in order to access the survey if taking it on an electronic device. The NetID is a unique Rutgers identifier tied to Human Resources, Payroll, Benefits, and other Rutgers employee systems. NetIDs were used for the survey only to ensure that no one employee completed more than one survey, to link select demographic information to participants' responses, and to enter participants into a raffle for one of various incentives. The dataset linked to NetIDs was destroyed after the Office of Institutional Research compiled the data, and the researchers received a de-identified dataset. This was built into the informed consent and communications plan. Nevertheless, some staff, and even some tenured members of the faculty, expressed the concern that "the university", and therefore their supervisors, would know how they had responded. This too may have had an impact on response rates.

Attempts to Include Non-Native Speakers of English and Employees without Access to Computers: As previously noted, this was the first sexual harassment survey to be offered to all employees at Rutgers, many of whom are non-native speakers of English and/or do not

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routinely use computers at their work. To capture as many of those voices as possible, the survey was translated into Spanish and Portuguese, the two top non-English languages spoken and read by Rutgers employees. (However, due to timing issues, the translated versions were available in hard copy only.) In addition, “pop-up stations” were created on each campus, physical spaces where employees could complete the survey in paper form (available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese), and submit it via a secure, monitored lock box. Pop-up locations were selected and publicized by local Working Group members. It was hoped that these measures would provide comfortable opportunities for non-native speakers of English, and those without access to computers at work, to participate in the survey. However, at the end of the day all those participating in the survey had completed it online, and in English. There is not data to determine whether these populations were underrepresented in the data, or, whether taking it in person is not appealing or convenient. All participants could take the survey on their personal devices as well. Due to timing, the translated versions were not available online but in the future, this is a recommendation.

Current and future work will be focused on continuing analysis of the data; issues of data access and ownership; development of reports to university and campus leadership, University Steering Committee and Campus Working Groups, and other constituencies; aligning with other university survey initiatives and results; and development and implementation of achievable Action Plans at the university and campus levels.

Website for further information (if applicable):

<https://socialwork.rutgers.edu/centers/center-research-ending-violence>

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