

# **Sexual Misconduct Climate Survey Results**

In July 2014, at the request of President Robert Brown, a committee chaired by Peter Fiedler, vice president for administrative services, and Kenneth Elmore, dean of students, was formed to develop a climate survey on sexual misconduct. The goal of the survey was to better understand issues relating to sexual violence at Boston University.

The survey was launched on March 19, 2015, to 27,086 undergraduate and graduate students and remained open for responses throughout April. The overall response rate for the survey was 22%. The response rate was higher for females than for males, and higher for undergraduates than for graduate students.

## Response Rates, by gender and class

	Number of Respondents	Response Rate
Overall	5,875	22%
Gender		
Female	4,012	25%
Male	1,783	16%
Class		
Undergraduate	4,058	26%
Graduate	1,796	22%
CELOP	16	4%
Non-BU Study Abroad	5	3%

Females and undergraduates were over-represented compared to the overall BU population. For undergraduate students, class years were similarly represented. For graduate students, master's students were somewhat over-represented.

# Comparison of survey respondents to all BU students

	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents	Percent of all BU Students			
Gender						
Female	4,012	68%	59%			
Male	1,783	30%	41%			
Trans	15	<1%	Unavailable			
Genderqueer	47	1%	Unavailable			
Other	18	<1%	Unavailable			
Class						
Undergraduate	4,058	69%	64%			
Graduate	1,796	31%	34%			
CELOP	16	<1%	<1%			
Non-BU Study Abroad	5	<1%	<1%			
Of Undergraduate	s, Class Year					
First Year	999	25%	26%			
Sophomore	1,051	26%	26%			
Junior	1,014	25%	25%			
Senior	960	24%	23%			
Of Graduate Students, Degree Program						
Master	960	54%	41%			
Doctorate	697	39%	50%			
Other	120	7%	9%			
Total	5,875	100%	22%			

This summary report is organized by the following themes:

- 1. Student Perceptions
  - a. Campus Climate at Boston University
  - b. How Boston University Responds to Reports of Sexual Misconduct
- 2. Experience with Sexual Assault at BU
  - a. Incidence
  - b. Reporting
  - c. Intimate Partner Violence
- 3. Student Actions and Views
  - a. Bystander Behaviors
  - b. Student Initiatives
  - c. Sexual Assault Beliefs

Throughout this report, results were summarized by gender, by class, and by whether or not the respondent was a victim of an assault. Due to the limited responses in certain categories, the following groups have been combined:

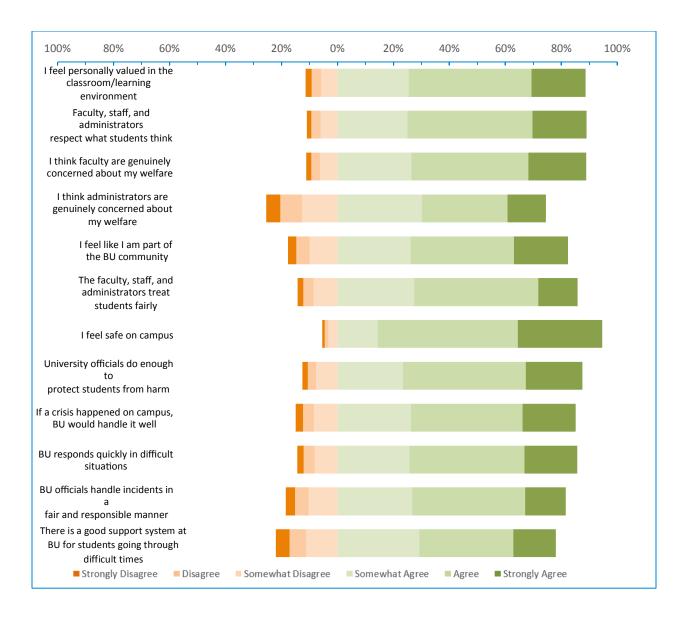
- Students who identify outside the male/female genders (Transgender, Genderqueer, and Other) were combined into a group referred to as "students with non-binary gender identity" in this report (shortened to "non-binary" in the figures).
- Students in CELOP and non-BU Study Abroad students were combined with undergraduate students.

## 1. Student Perceptions

#### a. Boston University Campus Climate

Students were asked a series of questions regarding their perceptions of the general climate and environment at BU. As shown on the graph that follows,

- 94% of respondents reported that they feel safe on campus.
- 74% responded that BU administrators are genuinely concerned with their welfare.
- Nearly 90% agreed that faculty are genuinely concerned.
- 22% of respondents reported that they do not believe that there is a good support system at BU for students going through difficult times.



## The campus climate questions were also examined by class and gender:

- Responses to survey questions from students with non-binary genders, undergraduates, and students who had experienced a sexual assault consistently indicated that those respondents do not feel as supported or protected by the administration, faculty, and staff. These populations reported a lower percentage in agreement to each of the statements.
- Female respondents reported less agreement with "feeling safe on campus" than male respondents. Otherwise, females and males had similar views of the BU campus climate.

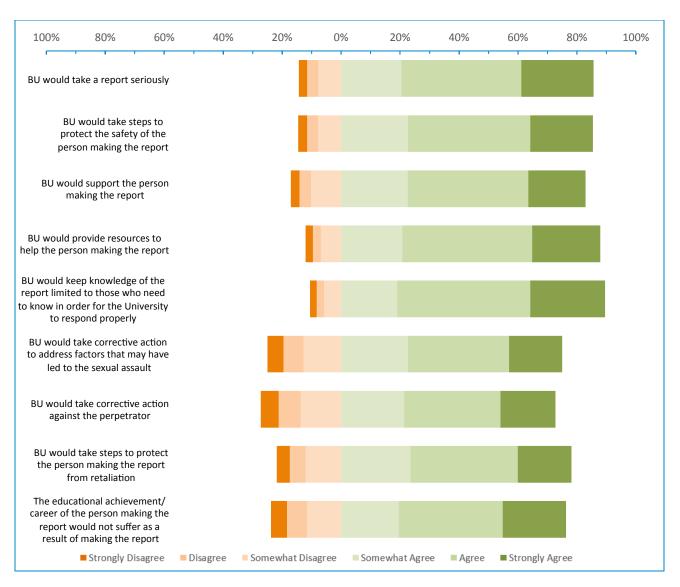
Survey Question	Percent In Agreement*						
	Gender Class		ss	Experienced an Assault			
	Male	Female	Non- Binary	Undergrad	Graduate	Yes	No
I feel personally valued in the classroom/learning environment	87%	89%	81%	87%	93%	82%	90%
Faculty, staff, and administrators respect what students think	88%	90%	74%	87%	93%	82%	91%
I think faculty are genuinely concerned about my welfare	89%	89%	84%	87%	92%	82%	91%
I think administrators are genuinely concerned about my welfare	74%	75%	49%	70%	84%	62%	77%
I feel like I am part of the BU community	80%	83%	70%	84%	78%	81%	83%
The faculty, staff, and administrators treat students fairly	86%	86%	65%	83%	91%	76%	88%
I feel safe on campus	97%	94%	80%	94%	95%	88%	96%
University officials (administrators, BUPD, public safety officers) do enough to protect students from harm	91%	87%	57%	86%	91%	75%	90%
If a crisis happened on campus, BU would handle it well	88%	85%	58%	82%	91%	73%	88%
BU responds quickly in difficult situations	89%	85%	67%	83%	92%	74%	88%
BU officials handle incidents in a fair and responsible manner	82%	82%	53%	78%	90%	68%	85%
There is a good support system at BU for students going through difficult times	82%	77%	49%	76%	82%	66%	81%

<sup>\* &</sup>quot;In Agreement" signifies the percentage of respondents who responded Somewhat Agree, Agree, or Strongly Agree.

## **b.** Boston University Response

Students were asked their opinions concerning how BU would handle a report of sexual violence or assault on campus.

- Nearly 90% of respondents believed that BU would keep knowledge of the event limited to those who need to know in order for BU to respond properly.
- Almost 27% of respondents did not believe that BU would take corrective action against the perpetrator. In addition, 25% did not believe that BU would take corrective action to address factors that may have led to the sexual assault.



Examining the student perceptions of BU's response by specific populations yielded the following observations:

- Undergraduate respondents had less confidence in BU's handling of reports of sexual violence or assault than graduate students.
- Respondents who have experienced sexual violence had less confidence in BU's handling of reports of sexual violence than students who have not.
- Female respondents had less confidence than male respondents in how a reporting student would be protected from retaliation and additional dangers.
- Female respondents had less confidence than male respondents that the report would be taken seriously and that corrective action would be taken against the perpetrator.
- Respondents with non-binary gender identity had less confidence than female or male respondents that a reporting student would be protected from retaliation, or that the

report would be taken seriously and that corrective action would be taken against the perpetrator.

Survey Question	Percent In Agreement*						
	Gender Class		ss	Experienc Assau			
	Male	Female	Non- Binary	Undergrad	Graduate	Yes	No
BU would take a report seriously	89%	85%	59%	84%	90%	74%	89%
BU would take steps to protect the safety of the person making the report	90%	84%	62%	84%	88%	72%	89%
BU would support the person making the report	88%	81%	57%	82%	87%	70%	86%
BU would provide resources to help the person making the report	90%	88%	71%	87%	91%	80%	90%
BU would keep knowledge of the report limited to those who need to know in order for the University to respond properly	90%	90%	69%	89%	91%	81%	92%
BU would take corrective action to address factors that may have led to the sexual assault	82%	73%	47%	73%	80%	59%	79%
BU would take corrective action against the perpetrator	83%	69%	43%	71%	78%	54%	78%
BU would take steps to protect the person making the report from retaliation	85%	76%	57%	77%	82%	61%	82%
The educational achievement/career of the person making the report would not suffer as a result of making the report	82%	74%	51%	75%	79%	61%	80%

<sup>\* &</sup>quot;In Agreement" signifies the percentage of respondents who responded Somewhat Agree, Agree, or Strongly Agree.

# 2. Sexual Assault Experiences

## a. Incidence

Students were asked about specific cases of unwanted sexual contact, including:

- Unwanted touching (kissing, touching of private parts, grabbing, fondling, rubbing up against you in a sexual way, even if it is over your clothes)
- Oral penetration (someone's mouth or tongue making contact with your genitals, or your mouth or tongue making contact with someone else's genitals)
- Vaginal penetration (someone's penis being put in your vagina)
- Anal penetration (someone's penis being put in your anus)
- Penetration with a finger or object (someone putting their finger or an object like a bottle or candle into your vagina or anus)

Students were asked if they experienced unwanted sexual contact, either attempted or completed, by someone threatening them or using physical force. The following table reports the incidence among respondents of such unwanted sexual experiences by gender.

Survey Question	Total Percent Yes	Percent of Males	Percent of Females	Percent of Non-Binary
Since you've been a BU student, has anyone had sexual contact with you by using physical force or threatening to physically harm you?	6.5%	1.7%	8.6%	7.6%
Since you've been a BU student, has anyone attempted but not succeeded in having sexual contact with you by using or threatening to use physical force against you?	8.0%	2.0%	10.4%	10.8%

Students were also asked questions about experiences with unwanted sexual contact while they were unable to provide consent or stop what was happening due to being passed out, drugged, incapacitated as a result of alcohol or drugs, blacked out, or asleep.

Survey Question	Total	Percent	Percent of	Percent of
	Percent Yes	of Males	Females	Non-Binary
Has someone had sexual contact with you when you were unable to provide consent or stop what was happening because you were passed out, drugged, incapacitated as a result of alcohol or drugs, blacked out, or asleep? This question asks about incidents that you are certain happened.	8.0%	3.5%	9.8%	16.1%

Do you believe that someone has had sexual contact with you (as referred to above)? This question asks about events you think (but are not certain) happened.	6.7%	3.9%	7.8%	13.1%
Has anyone attempted but not succeeded in having sexual contact with you (as referred to above)? This question asks about incidents that you are certain happened.	8.6%	3.1%	10.0%	4.8%

A total of 18% of respondents experienced at least one of these forms of sexual assault (note that respondents could answer "Yes" to more than one question regarding unwanted sexual experiences). The percent of respondents who experienced any sexual assault, by gender and class, is as follows:

One in six BU respondents (18%)
reported sexual assault
victimization while a BU student—
a figure that is consistent with
reports from other campuses and
national estimates.

	All	Females	Males	Non- Binary
Undergraduate	23%	28%	10%	27%
Graduates	7%	9%	3%	24%
Total	18%	23%	7%	26%

- Approximately 23% of female respondents, 7% of male respondents, and 26% respondents with non-binary gender identity reported victimization while a student.
- Graduate student respondents were less likely to report victimization while a BU student as compared to undergraduate respondents (7% vs. 23%).
- The incidence among international student respondents was lower (10%).
- Looking at incidence rates by race, the percentages of sexual assault among respondents who identify as Black, Hispanic, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and White were roughly equivalent (19%, 21%, 17%, and 19% respectively).
- The incidence among Asian respondents was lower than the other groups (12%).

By Race/Ethnicity, All Respondents	
Hispanic or Latino	21%
American Indian or Alaska Native	26%
Asian	12%
Black or African American	19%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	17%
White	19%

#### Additional Incidence Details:

- Respondents who identified themselves as bisexual, lesbian, gay, asexual, or pansexual
  were more likely to report any experience of sexual assault victimization than
  heterosexual respondents (24% compared to 17%)—which is also consistent with
  nationally representative data on lifetime sexual assault victimization from the NISVS.
- Regarding sexual assault on campus, 91% of respondents who have been assaulted
  while a student at BU reported that the perpetrator was male. However, of those
  respondents who reported an assault while a student at BU, 1% of female victims and
  7% of male victims reported that females had perpetrated sexual assault against them.
- In most cases, the person knew the assailant (17% reported the person was a stranger) and in 44% of cases it was someone the person had just met, which is consistent with findings from other surveys.
- The majority of incidents involved alcohol (of the respondents that experienced sexual assault, 78% reported that they had been drinking at the time of the assault and 86% reported that their assailant(s) had been drinking at the time of the assault), which is consistent with other surveys.
- When the assailant was known to the respondent, in 67% of cases it was another BU student.
- Most respondents who experienced sexual assault report that it occurred off campus (11% at another college or university and 52% at another off-campus location), but some reported that it occurred at a University location (residence hall 31%, other oncampus location 6%, or a Study Abroad location 4%).

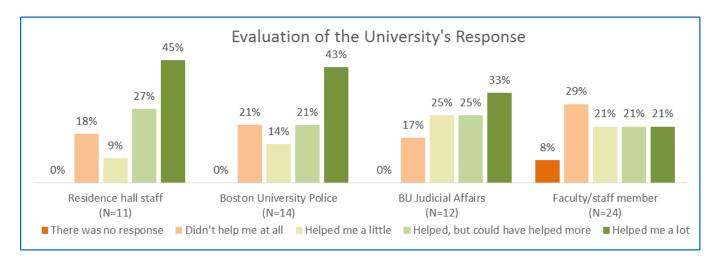
#### b. Reporting of Sexual Assaults

Respondents who answered "yes" to any of the sexual assault experience questions were asked whether they had shared the incident with a confidential resource (a friend, family member, or other person who is not a mandatory reporter). Eighty-four percent responded that they had shared their experience with at least one confidential resource, while the remaining 16% did not tell anyone about the incident.

Who have you shared the incident with (Mark all that apply)?	Number	Percent
Friend	539	73%
Roommate	275	37%
Significant other	152	20%
Parent, stepparent, or guardian	96	13%
Therapist/counselor	74	10%
Sibling or stepsibling	60	8%

Campus sexual assault resource (SARP)	47	6%
Doctor/nurse/health care provider	43	6%
Other relative/family member	24	3%
Other: (various responses)	17	2%
Clergy or religious advisor	7	1%

Respondents who answered "yes" to any of the sexual assault experience questions were also asked whether they reported the incident to people or offices at the University that are not confidential resources. Sixty-five respondents (6%) reported an incident of sexual assault, potential sexual assault, or attempted sexual assault to any of those people/offices listed in the survey. Given the small number of respondents who reported these incidents, data describing the reporting experience should be interpreted with care.



- Of those reports to non-confidential resources, the largest number of reports (24) were made to faculty and staff members. 63% of respondents who reported to faculty or staff members responded that the faculty/staff response to their report helped to some extent.
- Residence Life staff received the highest response satisfaction rating, with 81% of respondents who said they reported to Residence Life responded that the Residence Life response helped.
- Of the 14 respondents who reported to the BU Police, 78% believed that the BUPD response was helpful.
- 83% of the 12 respondents who reported the incident to Judicial Affairs felt that their response was helpful.
- Of the students who responded to the survey, only 4 reported incidents to the Title IX Coordinator or a Deputy Title IX Coordinator.

#### c. Intimate Partner Violence

Students were asked whether there had been any violent incidents in their relationship and dating experiences. 11% of respondents responded "yes" to at least one of the following questions:

Has a casual, steady, or serious dating, sexual, or intimate partner done the following to you, since you have been a student at BU?	
Scratched, slapped, kicked, pushed, or grabbed you	7%
Tried to choke you, threw something at you that hit you, hit you with a fist, or beat you up	2%
Assaulted you with a knife or gun	0.1%
Made you do sexual things that you did not want to do	6%

The percent reporting any relationship violence by gender and class are as follows:

	All	Females	Males	Non-Binary
Undergraduate	13%	14%	10%	16%
Graduates	7%	6%	7%	20%
Overall	11%	9%	9%	17%

Additional relationship violence data included:

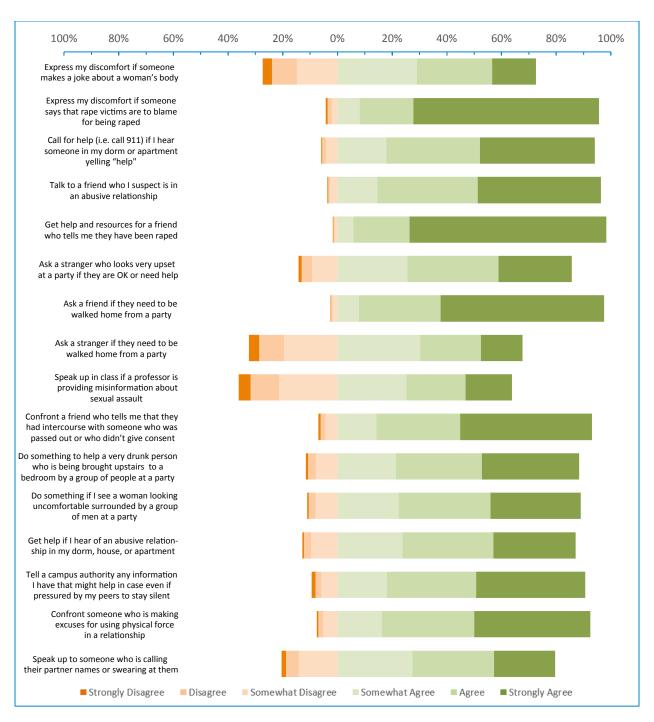
- 5% of respondents who reported partner violence contacted a hotline or sought services after the incident.
- 55% reported that their partner was a BU student.

## 3. Student Actions and Views

## a. Bystander Behaviors

Students were asked to assess the likelihood of a personal response as a bystander to a number of scenarios. These questions were designed to provide a more in-depth understanding of students' beliefs and responses when faced with challenging situations involving sexual indecency and assault.

In general, respondents reported a willingness to respond and take action to support others who may be victimized by sexual misconduct. In general, respondents were more likely to be responsive to extreme situations or those involving friends, and less likely to be responsive to socially ambiguous situations or those involving strangers.



As the above graph shows, respondents were least likely to:

- Speak up in class when presented with misinformation about sexual assault by a professor (35% reported they are unlikely to take action).
- Ask a stranger if they needed to be walked home from a party (32% reported they are unlikely to take action).
- Express discomfort to jokes made about a woman's body (27% reported they are unlikely to take action).

Examining the same data by class and gender, the results showed that:

Graduate student respondents were more likely to speak to misinformation in class (68% compared to 62% of undergraduate respondents), while undergraduate respondents were more likely to ask a stranger if they needed to be walked home (73%) than graduate student respondents (56%).

Male respondents were less likely to intervene than female respondents in the scenarios. In particular, male respondents reported that they would be less likely to express discomfort to jokes about a woman's body (55%) than female respondents (79%) and less likely to speak up to misinformation presented in class (60% of male respondents compared to 65% of female respondents).

Survey Question	Percent Likelihood*								
	Gender			Class		Experienced an Assault			
	Male	Female	Non- Binary	Undergrad	Graduate	Yes	No		
Express my discomfort if someone makes a joke about a woman's body	58%	79%	83%	72%	74%	75%	72%		
Express my discomfort if someone says that rape victims are to blame for being raped	92%	97%	97%	96%	96%	96%	96%		
Call for help (i.e. call 911) if I hear someone in my dorm or apartment yelling "help"	92%	95%	84%	94%	95%	94%	94%		
Talk to a friend who I suspect is in an abusive relationship	94%	97%	93%	97%	95%	98%	96%		
Get help and resources for a friend who tells me they have been raped	98%	99%	97%	98%	98%	97%	99%		
Ask a stranger who looks very upset at a party if they are OK or need help	79%	88%	91%	88%	82%	90%	85%		
Ask a friend if they need to be walked home from a party	96%	98%	98%	98%	96%	98%	97%		
Ask a stranger if they need to be walked home from a party	64%	69%	76%	73%	56%	75%	66%		
Speak up in class if a professor is providing misinformation about sexual assault	60%	65%	78%	62%	68%	64%	64%		

Confront a friend who tells me that they had intercourse with someone who was passed out or who didn't give consent	91%	94%	93%	93%	92%	92%	93%
Do something to help a very drunk person who is being brought upstairs to a bedroom by a group of people at a party	84%	91%	81%	89%	87%	91%	88%
Do something if I see a woman looking uncomfortable surrounded by a group of men at a party	84%	91%	95%	90%	87%	90%	89%
Get help if I hear of an abusive relationship in my dorm, house, or apartment	84%	89%	90%	88%	86%	85%	88%
Tell a campus authority (RA, professor, administrator) any information I have that might help in a sexual assault case even if pressured by my peers to stay silent	90%	91%	79%	90%	93%	85%	92%
Confront someone who is making excuses for using physical force in a relationship	93%	92%	91%	93%	91%	94%	92%
Speak up to someone who is calling their partner names or swearing at them	78%	80%	79%	81%	77%	80%	80%

<sup>\* &</sup>quot;Likelihood" signifies the percentage of respondents who responded Somewhat Likely, Likely, or Very Likely.

#### b. Student Initiative

Students were asked a series of questions designed to measure their perception of where the responsibility lies for preventing sexual assault on campus. In general, respondents indicated a sense of personal responsibility in learning about and taking action against sexual assault. Ninety-three percent of all respondents disagreed that doing something about sexual assault is solely the responsibility of the Sexual Assault Response & Prevention Center (SARP).

The majority of respondents indicated the belief that they can learn more and do something about sexual violence. Overall, 79% of respondents agreed that they could do something, while 70% agreed that they sometimes think they should learn more about sexual violence. While there was little difference between undergraduate and graduate respondents on these questions, female respondents and respondents with non-binary gender identity were more likely to indicate personal initiative than male respondents. Overall, responses to these questions indicated a potential receptivity to additional programming on sexual assault prevention.

Survey Question		Percent In Disagreement*						
		Gender		Cla	ss	Experie: Assa		
	Male	Female	Non-Binary	Undergrad	Graduate	Yes	No	
I don't think there is much I can do about sexual violence on campus	55%	60%	66%	59%	58%	57%	59%	

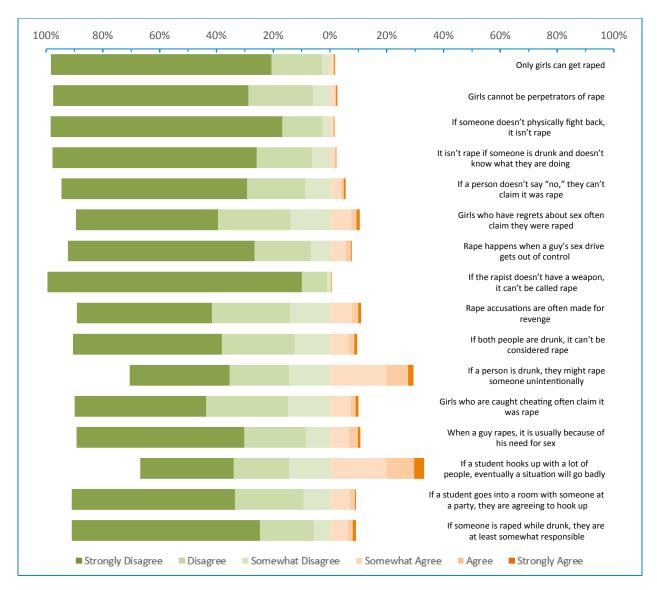
There isn't much need for me to think about sexual violence on campus	67%	85%	86%	81%	76%	89%	78%
Doing something about sexual violence is solely the job of the crisis center/SARP	91%	95%	97%	93%	95%	95%	94%
I have not yet done anything to learn more about sexual violence	61%	71%	91%	69%	68%	79%	67%
			Perce	nt In Agreemen	t*		
Sometimes I think I should learn more about sexual violence	60%	75%	66%	73%	64%	72%	70%
learn more about sexual	74%	75% 80%	66% 79%	73% 78%	64% 79%	72% 80%	70% 78%

<sup>\* &</sup>quot;In Disagreement" signifies respondents who responded Somewhat Disagree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree.
"In Agreement" signifies respondents who responded Somewhat Agree, Agree, or Strongly Agree.

#### c. Sexual Assault Beliefs

Students were presented with a series of myths or fictions about sexual assault and were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement. The majority of respondents indicated disagreement with most of the statements presented. The two statements that had the lowest levels of disagreement were:

- If a student hooks up with a lot of people, eventually the situation will go badly (33% of all respondents agreed).
- If a person is drunk, they might rape someone unintentionally (30% of all respondents agreed).



While there was little difference between undergraduate and graduate respondents, male respondents were more likely than female respondents or respondents with non-binary gender identity to indicate agreement with the myth statements. In particular, male respondents were more likely to indicate beliefs that reflect a lack of understanding about what constitutes consent, as indicated by the following:

- 10% agreed that the absence of saying "no" implies consent.
- 14% agreed that if someone is raped while drunk they are at least partly responsible.
- 15% agreed that going into a room with someone at a party is an agreement to hook up.
- 18% agreed both that females caught cheating and who have regrets about sex will say they were raped.

## Other noteworthy results included:

- 39% of male respondents agreed that if a person is drunk, they might rape someone unintentionally, as compared to 25% of female respondents and 28% of respondents with non-binary gender identity.
- 44% of male respondents agreed that if a student hooks up with a lot of people, eventually a situation will go badly. Conversely, 29% of female respondents and 21% of respondents with non-binary gender identity agreed with this statement.

Survey Question	Percent In Disagreement*									
	Gender Non-			Cla	ss	Experienced an Assault				
	Male	Female	Non- Binary	Undergrad	Graduate	Yes	No			
If someone is raped while drunk, they are at least somewhat responsible	86%	93%	89%	90%	92%	93%	90%			
If a student goes into a room with someone at a party, they are agreeing to hook up	85%	93%	96%	90%	92%	93%	90%			
If a student hooks up with a lot of people, eventually a situation will go badly	56%	71%	79%	66%	69%	71%	66%			
When a guy rapes, it is usually because of his need for sex	84%	91%	93%	87%	93%	90%	89%			
Girls who are caught cheating often claim it was rape	82%	93%	95%	88%	93%	90%	90%			
If a person is drunk, they might rape someone unintentionally	61%	75%	72%	69%	74%	69%	71%			
If both people are drunk, it can't be considered rape	83%	93%	93%	89%	94%	92%	90%			
Rape accusations are often made for revenge	79%	93%	89%	88%	92%	91%	89%			
If the rapist doesn't have a weapon, it can't be called rape	99%	100%	98%	100%	99%	100%	99%			
Rape happens when a guy's sex drive gets out of control	88%	94%	93%	92%	93%	95%	92%			
Girls who have regrets about sex often claim they were raped	82%	92%	89%	88%	92%	89%	90%			
If a person doesn't say "no," they can't claim it was rape	90%	96%	91%	94%	95%	96%	94%			
It isn't rape if someone is drunk and doesn't know what they are doing	96%	99%	96%	98%	98%	98%	98%			
If someone doesn't physically fight back, it isn't rape	97%	99%	96%	98%	99%	98%	98%			
Girls cannot be perpetrators of rape	95%	98%	96%	98%	97%	98%	97%			
Only girls can get raped	96%	99%	98%	98%	98%	99%	98%			

<sup>\*&</sup>quot;In Disagreement" signifies the percentage of respondents who responded Somewhat Disagree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree.

## 4. Closing Remarks

In response to a charge from President Brown, we conducted this survey to understand the extent and effects of sexual misconduct and interpersonal violence in the Boston University community.

We thank the 22% of our full-time undergraduate and graduate students who gave their time to complete the survey—they helped to give this community a baseline for future measures of prevention and helped to inform our overall efforts and strategies for sexual assault reporting, response, education, and prevention.

We know that like so many of the nation's colleges and universities, these survey results show that we, too, face a serious problem. Sadly, these survey results suggest that the problem of sexual assault in our community is comparable to that of other universities. We hoped for better. And yet, while we are neither a leader nor the worst in the nation with regard to our programs, services, and educated culture in regards to sexual assault and sexual misconduct, we know this community is committed to effective and continuous improvement.

Finally, we charge Boston University's faculty, staff, and, especially, students with several tasks:

- Explore ways to rigorously engage the factor of alcohol use in relation to sexual assault and sexual misconduct. Such conversations require thoughtfulness, honesty, and courage to discuss facts without implying that individuals, or their circumstances and choices, are responsible for actual assaults or misconduct.
- Create ways to inspire students to be actively engaged in coming to terms with sexual assault and sexual misconduct in commonplace and frequent discussions and interactions. We ask student communities to take the lead, with guidance from faculty experts and SARP, on these issues.
- Conduct another survey of our students on sexual misconduct during the second semester of the 2015/2016 academic year.

We hope this survey has provided momentum for learning, improved campus efforts, and further discussion.