

Salem State University

2024 Sexual Misconduct Campus Climate Survey

Introduction

The Sexual Misconduct Campus Climate Survey is required by state law per the Massachusetts Campus Sexual Assault Law which went into effect in 2021, specifically M.G.L. c. 6 §168D. This section of the statute requires that all public and private institutions of higher education administer a sexual misconduct campus climate survey at least once every four (4) years, with the first survey completion required by August 1, 2025. Per the statute, survey results must be published on the university website within 120 days of completion of analysis.¹

The purpose of the survey is to better understand the scope of sexual misconduct on college campuses, including here at Salem State, and to inform our prevention and response efforts. As this campus climate survey is a new state requirement, it was conducted independently from any prior campus climate assessments.

Survey Administration and Recruitment Approach

An anonymous, online survey was created using model questions provided by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE) formulated in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Task Force Report on Sexual Misconduct Surveys.² The survey was administered to all undergraduate and graduate students via an email sent by Associate Vice President and Dean of Students Shawn Newton. The email included a link to complete the survey, which was hosted in Qualtrics utilizing a customizable Qualtrics Survey Format (QSF) file provided by the DHE. The QSF contained preferred model questions as referenced above and approved for use by the DHE Commissioner's Report in May 2022. Based on the personal nature of the questions contained in the model questions, Salem State's Institutional Review Board (IRB) recommended a review of the survey material, administration, and recruitment approach. An expedited review IRB application was submitted, which they approved with minimal requested revisions prior to distribution of the survey.

The survey ran from Tuesday, November 12, 2024, until Wednesday, December 11, 2024. To promote student participation, emails were sent to all students, key departments on campus shared a customized flyer with a QR code, including student life, residence life, athletics, first year experience, and the student government association (SGA) and it was shared on various digital displays on campus. Many offices opted to share the flyer on their social media pages and forwarded the flyer via email to students within their respective areas. Associate Vice

¹ [General Law - Part I, Title II, Chapter 6, Section 168D](#)

² [Task Force on Sexual Misconduct Surveys Final Report and Recommendations.pdf](#)

President Shawn Newton sent a follow up email reminder to all students to participate in the survey in the final week.

Additionally, we promoted an incentive to win one of twenty (20) \$50 ClipperCash prizes for those who completed the survey. To enter to win, participants who completed the survey were provided with an option to click on a separate survey link to certify completion of the climate survey and entered their email address. We reminded participants that their responses to the Sexual Misconduct Campus Climate Survey remained anonymous and that any information provided would not be tied to their individual responses. Following the conclusion of the survey, we randomly awarded twenty (20) \$50 ClipperCash cards to those who chose to complete the incentive survey and enter their email addresses.

Demographics and Responses

The response rate for this survey was extremely low, with only 2.5% of students completing the survey. Given this response rate, the resulting data is much too low to be statistically representative of the Salem State campus.

The tables below display the self-identifying characteristics of the survey respondents relative to the total student population.

Table 1

Year	Percentage of Survey Completers
First year undergraduate	24.85%
Second year undergraduate	23.08%
Third year undergraduate	18.34%
Fourth year undergraduate	18.34%
Graduate student	12.43%
Other	2.96%

Table 2

Gender Identity	Percentage of Survey Completers	Percentage of Total Student Population-Fall 2024
Man	20.71%	33.53%
Woman	59.76%	66.47%
Other	19.53%	NA

Table 3

Ethnicity	Percentage of Survey Completers	Percentage of Total Student Population-Fall 2024
White	63.64%	54.62%
Hispanic	7.39%	23.13%
Black	5.11%	7.79%
Asian American	2.84%	3.24%
One or more race	12.50%	3.39%
Unknown	3.98%	3.80%
Native American	0.57%	0.08%
International student	3.98%	3.95%

Table 4

Sexual Orientation	Count	Percentage
Heterosexual/straight	64	37.87%
Bisexual	48	28.40%
Queer	22	13.02%
A sexual orientation not listed	13	7.69%
Lesbian	9	5.33%
Asexual	6	3.55%
Gay	5	2.96%
Unknown	2	1.18%

Campus Culture

In this section of the survey, students were asked about how Salem State might respond when receiving a report of sexual misconduct.³

Table 5

After receiving a report of sexual misconduct, Salem State would:	Count	Percentage of Likely/Very Likely
Maintain the privacy of the person making the report.	120	71.9%
Do its best to honor the request of the person about how to go forward with the case.	103	61.7%
Take steps to protect the safety of the person making the report.	113	68.1%
Take the report seriously.	115	68.9%
Support the person making the report.	114	68.3%
Act to address factors that may have led to the sexual misconduct.	100	59.9%
Handle the report fairly.	112	67.1%
Provide accommodations to support the person (e.g., academic, housing, safety).	94	56.3%
Would label the person making the report a troublemaker. <i>(reverse-coded: this is negative if high)</i>	34	20.4%
Would have a hard time supporting the person who made the report. <i>(reverse-coded)</i>	35	21.0%
Punish the person who made the report. <i>(reverse-coded)</i>	27	16.3%

³ Sexual misconduct is defined in the survey as “physical contact or non-physical conduct of a sexual nature in the absence of clear, knowing, and voluntary consent, as well as gender-based and/or sexual orientation-based violence, even if not sexual in nature.”

Respondents were able to select from the following answer options: Very Unlikely, Unlikely, Neutral, Likely, or Very Likely. Table 5 represents those who only responded with Likely or Very Likely.

Personal Experiences with Sexual Misconduct on Campus

Students were asked about whether they had experienced certain forms of sexual misconduct while enrolled at Salem State. If so, the survey asked this population of students to specify who the alleged perpetrator of the misconduct was and whether the incident occurred on campus or not.⁴

Table 6

Type of Misconduct	Percentage Yes
Sexually Harassed	39.05%
Stalking	34.9%
Sexual Violence	13.0%
Dating Violence	11.2%
Other Gender-Based or Sexual Orientation-Based Violence	6.5%

Misconduct by an employee

Table 7

Type of incident	Yes Count	Percentage Yes
Treated you differently because of your sex (mistreated, slighted, or ignored you)?	33	19.5%
Displayed, used, or distributed sexist or suggestive materials (e.g., pictures, stories, pornography)?	13	7.7%
Made offensive sexist remarks (e.g., suggesting your sex is unsuited for certain work)?	25	14.8%
Put you down or was condescending to you because of your sex?	19	11.2%
Repeatedly told sexual stories or jokes that were offensive?	9	5.3%
Made unwelcome attempts to draw you into a discussion of sexual matters?	8	4.7%

⁴ Respondents were able to select from the following answer options: Never, Once or Twice, Sometimes, Often, and Many Times, including the option to select 1, 2, or 3+ times. Respondents were counted in the “Yes” percentage for Tables 6 and 7 if they reported experiencing the sexual misconduct listed at least once.

Made offensive remarks about your appearance, body, or sexual activities?	4	2.4%
Made gestures or used sexual body language that embarrassed or offended you?	6	3.6%
Made unwanted attempts to establish a romantic sexual relationship despite discouragement?	6	3.6%
Continued to ask you out even after you said 'No'?	5	3.0%
Touched you in a way that made you feel uncomfortable?	10	5.9%
Made unwanted attempts to stroke, fondle, or kiss you?	4	2.4%
Made you feel bribed with a reward or special treatment to engage in sexual behavior?	5	3.0%
Made you feel threatened with retaliation for not being sexually cooperative (e.g., mentioning an upcoming review)?	3	1.8%
Treated you badly for refusing to have sex?	2	1.2%
Implied better treatment if you were sexually cooperative?	4	2.4%

Who Was the Perpetrator?

Status	Count	Percentage
Faculty member	21	42.0%
Other	17	34.0%
Staff member	8	16.0%

Did It Happen on Campus?

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes	35	76.1%
No	11	23.9%
Total	46	100%

How the student responded	Percentage
I ignored the person and did nothing.	54.90%
I avoided the person as much as possible.	29.41%
I told the person to stop.	17.65%
I treated it like a joke.	15.69%
I asked someone for advice and/or support.	11.76%
I reported the person.	5.88%

Misconduct by a student

Table 8

Type of Incident	Yes Count	Percentage Yes
Treated you differently because of your sex.	53	31.4%
Displayed/used/distributed sexist or suggestive materials.	24	14.2%
Made offensive sexist remarks.	42	24.9%
Put you down or was condescending to you because of your sex.	35	20.7%
Repeatedly told offensive sexual stories or jokes.	29	17.2%
Made unwelcome attempts to draw you into a discussion of sexual matters.	31	18.3%
Used sexual body language that embarrassed or offended you.	19	11.2%
Made unwanted attempts at romantic/sexual relationship despite your discouragement.	27	16.0%
Continued to ask you out despite your saying 'no'.	15	8.9%
Sent/post unwelcome sexual content via text/email/social media.	23	13.6%
Spread unwelcome sexual rumors online or by text.	15	8.9%
Targeted you with homophobic/transphobic content via electronic means.	14	8.3%

Who Was the Perpetrator?

Undergraduate Student at SSU

Response	Count	Percentage
s	57	77.0%
No	8	10.8%
Do not know	13	17.6%
Total	74	100%

Graduate Student at SSU

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes	11	14.9%
No	53	71.6%
Do not know	12	16.2%
Total	76	100%

How the student responded	Percentage
I ignored the person and did nothing.	51.85%
I avoided the person as much as possible.	49.38%
I told the person to stop.	24.69%
I treated it like a joke.	19.75%
I asked someone for advice and/or support.	14.81%
I reported the person.	12.35%

Bystander Intervention

Students were asked whether and how often they chose to intervene when observing certain situations of concern at Salem State.⁵

Table 9

Students were asked when the following situations arose at Salem State, how often did they intervene?	Count	Percentage Yes
Walked a friend home who had too much to drink or was high.	52	33.8%
Talked to friends of a drunk/high person to ensure they were not left behind.	47	30.9%
Spoke up against sexist jokes.	89	58.6%
Distracted someone trying to isolate a drunk/high person sexually.	15	9.9%
Asked someone at a party if they were okay or needed help.	64	41.6%
Intervened with a friend being physically abusive.	30	19.6%
Intervened with a friend being verbally abusive.	47	30.7%

Other Instances of Misconduct Not Reported

Students were asked about whether they chose to report sexual misconduct they experienced while enrolled at Salem State.⁶ Among those students who chose not to report, this population of students was asked to select the reasons why they did not contact supportive services.

Table 10

Has someone engaged in sexual misconduct towards you while you have been enrolled at Salem State University that you did <u>not</u> report?	Count	Percentage
No	143	84.62%
Yes	26	15.38%

⁵ Respondents were able to select from the following answer options: Never had this experience, Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Most of the Time, and Always. Respondents were counted in the “Yes” percentage for Table 9 if they answered Rarely, Sometimes, Most of the Time, or Always.

⁶ This question did not specify whether the sexual misconduct was perpetrated by any individual affiliated with the institution, but whether anyone had engaged in sexual misconduct with the respondent while enrolled at Salem State and whether the respondent chose to report or not.

Table 11

Reasons for not contacting support services (among the 26 who said "Yes" to the previous question)	Count	Percentage Yes (n=26)
I could handle it myself.	12	46.15%
I did not think it was serious enough to contact anyone.	8	30.77%
I did not think these resources would give me the help I needed.	7	26.92%
I did not think anyone would believe me.	7	26.92%
I feared it would not be kept confidential.	7	26.92%
I did not know where to go or who to tell.	7	26.92%
I feared retaliation.	6	23.08%
It would be too emotionally difficult.	5	19.23%
I felt ashamed.	5	19.23%
I felt embarrassed.	5	19.23%
Other.	4	15.38%
I feared negative academic consequences.	3	11.54%
I did not want the person to get into trouble.	3	11.54%
I feared professional consequences.	3	11.54%
I feared social consequences.	3	11.54%
Incident occurred while school was not in session.	2	7.69%

Resources

Students were asked about their knowledge and comfortability with seeking both on and off campus resources for reporting sexual misconduct.⁷

Table 12

Statements regarding on and off campus resources related to sexual misconduct	Agree Count	Percentage Agree/Strongly Agree
I can initiate a formal complaint process at Salem State.	119	70.8%
I can speak confidently to someone on campus and know who/where they are.	100	59.5%
I know where to get help on campus if a friend or I experienced sexual misconduct.	99	58.6%
I know where to get help off-campus if a friend or I experienced sexual misconduct.	93	55.0%
I would know where to go off-campus (in the community) to make a report.	93	55.0%
I understand the options students have for reporting at Salem State.	71	42.3%
I would know where to go to make a report of sexual misconduct.	83	49.4%

⁷ Respondents were able to select from the following answer options: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree. Table 12 represents those who only responded with Agree or Strongly Agree.

Table 13

On-campus resources related to sexual misconduct that students are aware of ⁸	Aware Count	Percentage Aware
Confidential PEAR Advocate	51	30.2%
Community Standards (Student Conduct)	40	23.8%
Title IX Coordinator	53	31.7%
Student Wellness CARE Team	59	34.9%
Counseling & Health Services	115	68.0%
Office of Human Resources & Equal Opportunity	56	33.1%

Information and Education

Students were asked about what informational material they had ever received about addressing sexual misconduct and whether they had participated in certain activities to address sexual misconduct since being enrolled at Salem State. ⁹

Table 14

Received information from someone at Salem State about:	Count	Percentage
Student code of conduct or honor code.	85	50.30%
Where to go to get help if someone you know experiences sexual misconduct.	75	44.38%
How to report an incident of sexual misconduct.	73	43.20%
How to help prevent sexual misconduct.	72	42.60%
Title IX protections against sexual misconduct.	71	42.01%
The definitions of types of sexual misconduct.	66	40.83%

⁸ Respondents were able to select from the following answer options: Not at All Aware, Slightly Aware, Somewhat Aware, Very Aware, or Extremely Aware. Table 13 represents those who responded with Very Aware or Extremely Aware.

⁹ Table 14 and Table 15 percentages represent those respondents who responded that they received information or participated in the described activity at least once.

Table 15

Done the following since coming to Salem State:	Count	Percentage
Discussed the topic of sexual misconduct with friends.	101	59.76%
Seen posters about sexual misconduct (e.g., raising awareness, preventing rape...).	83	49.11%
Discussed sexual misconduct with a family member.	58	34.32%
Discussed sexual misconduct/rape in class.	48	28.40%
Seen or heard campus administrators or staff address sexual misconduct.	45	26.63%
Seen or heard about sexual misconduct in a student publication or media outlet.	38	22.49%
Visited a Salem State University website with information on sexual misconduct.	38	22.49%
Seen crime alerts about sexual misconduct.	37	21.89%
Read a report about sexual violence rates at Salem State.	34	20.12%
Attended an event/program about what you can do as a bystander.	20	11.83%
Volunteered or interned at an organization that addresses sexual misconduct.	9	5.33%
Taken a class to learn more about sexual misconduct.	9	5.33%
Attended a rally or other campus event about sexual misconduct or assault.	6	3.55%