

SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY
Campus Sexual Violence Survey Results
Study Report
Spring 2016



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BACKGROUND

Sexual assault is a significant challenge for colleges and universities nationwide, affecting the health, mental health, and academic success of students. Many schools are working to address sexual assault, but lack assessment tools to understand the scope or nature of the problem. Schools and Universities are looking to climate surveys to fill this gap in knowledge, and conducting regular climate surveys is a best-practice response to campus sexual assault.

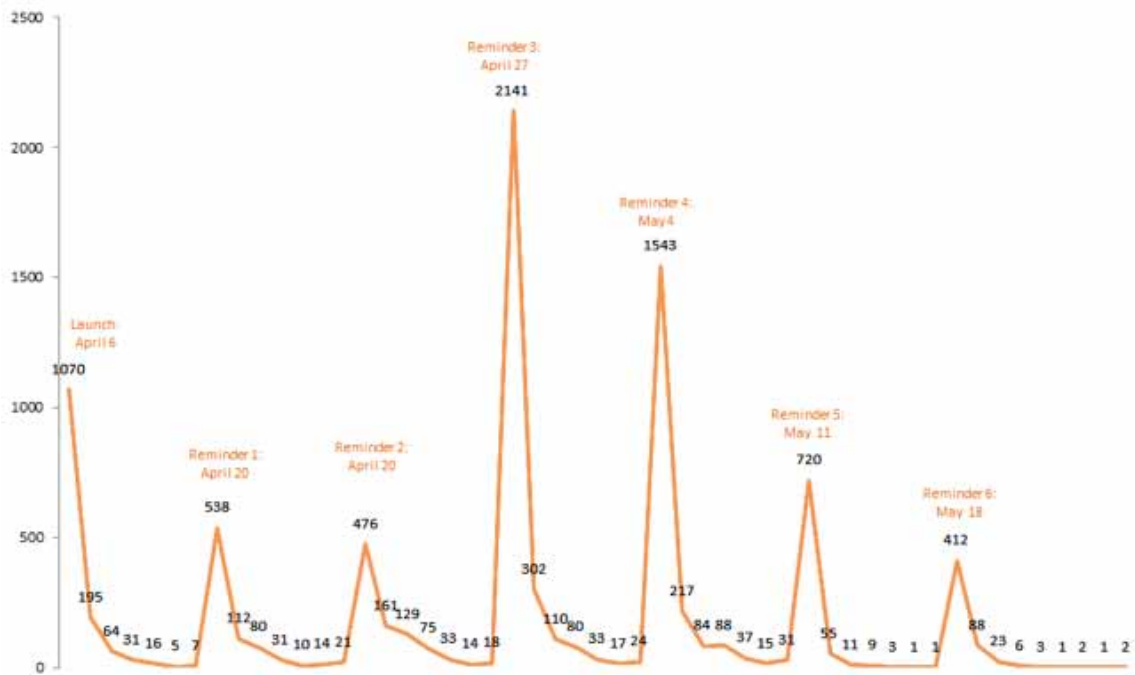
We know from decades of research that victims rarely report sexual assault to law enforcement. Many victims do not even access formal services, like crisis centers. Thus, official statistics underrepresent the extent of the problem on any one campus. Further, campus response, intervention, and prevention efforts will be more successful if they are tailored to the needs of each campus community. Understanding other climate issues, such as students' knowledge about reporting policies and resources for victims, their attitudes about prevention, and their perceptions about how their community is addressing the problem of sexual violence, are critical pieces of information for improving campus responses. Schools may see additional benefits from conducting climate surveys. For example, when campuses address sexual violence, victims may feel more comfortable coming forward and reported rates of assault might increase. This may enable campus or local law enforcement to deal with serial perpetrators, or help victims heal from the trauma they have experienced, enabling them to stay in school and feel confident in the school's handling of the assault.

Decades of research have shown that official statistics severely underestimate the number of sexual assaults on any given university campus ("Climate Surveys: Useful Tools," 2014). Universities will be better equipped to provide sexual assault prevention and intervention services if they gain specific knowledge and understanding about the climate of sexual assault on their campuses. The White House has recommended that all colleges perform a campus climate survey regarding students' views on sexual assault ("Climate Surveys: Useful Tools," 2014). The purpose of the current study is to follow this recommendation by administering an anonymous comprehensive sexual assault survey to all students attending San Diego State University. Following recommendations from the The White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault (2014) we have created an anonymous survey which includes questions about sexual assault/violence on or near campus, attitudes about sexually related violence, inclination to intervene/help in response to sexual violence, and awareness of sexual violence related services and policies. All students were contacted via their university provided email and given a link to the anonymous survey (created using Qualtrics). They had the option to complete the survey online in a private place/computer, or opt out of the study. The survey was administered by a third party (SDSU Social Science Research Laboratory) and the SSRL was responsible for removing (and destroying) all identifying information from the data set before returning it to the lead university administrator and university team, and prior to analysis (conducted by the university team). The survey included information about where to seek counseling services for any students who were distressed by the survey.

RESPONSE RATE

The overall survey was crafted after the national toolkit for sexual assault measurement on college campuses (<https://www.notalone.gov/assets/ovw-climate-survey.pdf>). A social and traditional media campaign were implemented by student groups and the university administration, including a message from the university President encouraging participation. The survey was emailed to 30,469 students, and the URL was advertised widely through a variety of other traditional means (e.g., posters, announcements). A total of 9,161 students responded to the survey, which represents a response rate of 30% out of an estimated population of 30,469. This response rate is higher than the SSRL's usual 10% to 12% response rate achieved in prior surveys of the institution's students.

Fig. 1 Response rate by date



SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVALENCE

According to SDSU's annual Campus Safety and Security report in 2014 there were twenty-four sexual offenses, eight Dating Violence, two Domestic Violence and zero Stalking crimes reported. The data from the current study provide a stark contrast. In the current survey Participants were asked about their experienced sexual violence. It should be noted that as many as 15% of SDSU students may have been sexually assaulted during their time at SDSU, with over 40% of such assaults occurring within 5 miles of campus. If this many sexual assaults are occurring, but the campus police are formally notified of none of them, then a problem exists in the culture of the campus.

Throughout this document two types of prevalence measures are reported: Self-Defined Sexual Assault is the more basic of the two in that students were asked simply "Since coming to SDSU have experienced any form of sexual assault." This measure requires that student reflect on their experience and make a determination that an experience from their past is considered by themselves to be sexual assault. The second measure is labeled Any Sexual Assault and is a variable that is created by assessing the answers to all of the questions in the Sexual Experiences Scale of the survey and determining if a student answered in the affirmative to any of the behaviorally specific descriptions of acts (unwanted sexual experiences) under any circumstances. This measure avoids the confusion, lack of knowledge, or bias over definitions of sexual assault and provides a behaviorally based indicator of prevalence. We believe that by providing statistics on both measures we are allowing for a more complete picture of sexual assault prevalence. Statistics for the campus from the climate survey are presented in the following pages.

It is important to note, both for awareness and in order to provide context that rates of sexual assault can vary widely across US university campuses and can range from as low as 10% of the student population to as high as 30%. This range is likely due to many factors including the operational definition used to survey students, the sampling methodology, as well as the prevalence rate itself.



Sexual Assault Type	Prevalence
Have you ever been raped? (lifetime)	8.3% (n=534)
Since becoming a student at SDSU, have you been a victim of any sexual assault? (self-defined)	6.5% (n =416)
Any type of Sexual Assault (defined by the following seven behaviors)	15.7% (n= 1435)
1. Someone fondled, kissed, or rubbed up against the private areas of my body (lips, breast/chest, crotch, or butt) or removed some of my clothes without my consent (but did not attempt sexual penetration)	12.8% (n=1177)
2. Someone had oral sex with me or made me have oral sex with them without my consent	4.9% (n=452)
3. A man put his penis into my vagina, or someone inserted fingers or objects without my consent	4.0% (n=370)
4. A man put his penis into my butt, or someone inserted fingers or objects without my consent	1.5% (n=140)
5. Even though it did not happen, someone tried to have oral sex with me, or make me have oral sex with them without my consent	3.4% (n=307)
6. Even though it did not happen, a man TRIED to put his penis into my vagina, or someone tried to stick in fingers or objects without my consent	3.0% (n=273)
7. Even though it did not happen, a man TRIED to put his penis into my butt, or someone tried to stick in objects or fingers without my consent	1.2% (n=109)