

2014 Amherst College Survey on Sexual Respect and Sexual Misconduct

Executive Summary

1. INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2014, Amherst College's Offices of Sexual Respect Education, Title IX, and Institutional Research collaborated to develop the College's first Survey on Sexual Respect and Sexual Misconduct (the "Survey"). The goal of the Survey was to capture, as a benchmark, Amherst students' experiences with all types sexual misconduct, their attitudes about issues of sexual respect, and their willingness to engage in community behaviors. To develop the Survey, we consulted peer institutions, reviewed national surveys, and sought feedback from students, faculty, and staff.

This document is a summary of the Survey findings and is meant to highlight some notable baseline data.

A complete set of Survey data, categorized by students who identified their gender as female and male, can be found on corresponding pages.

Content Warning: This document contains information about sexual misconduct that may be upsetting to some readers. Please practice self-care and consider contacting the following *confidential* resources for support:

- Amherst College Counseling Center | 413-542-2354 (24/7)
- Amherst College Office of Religious Life | 413-542-8149
- Center for Women & Community Rape Crisis Hotline | 413-545-0800 (24/7)
- Safe Passage Intimate Partner Violence Hotline | 413- 586-5066 (24/7)

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2. PROJECT DETAILS

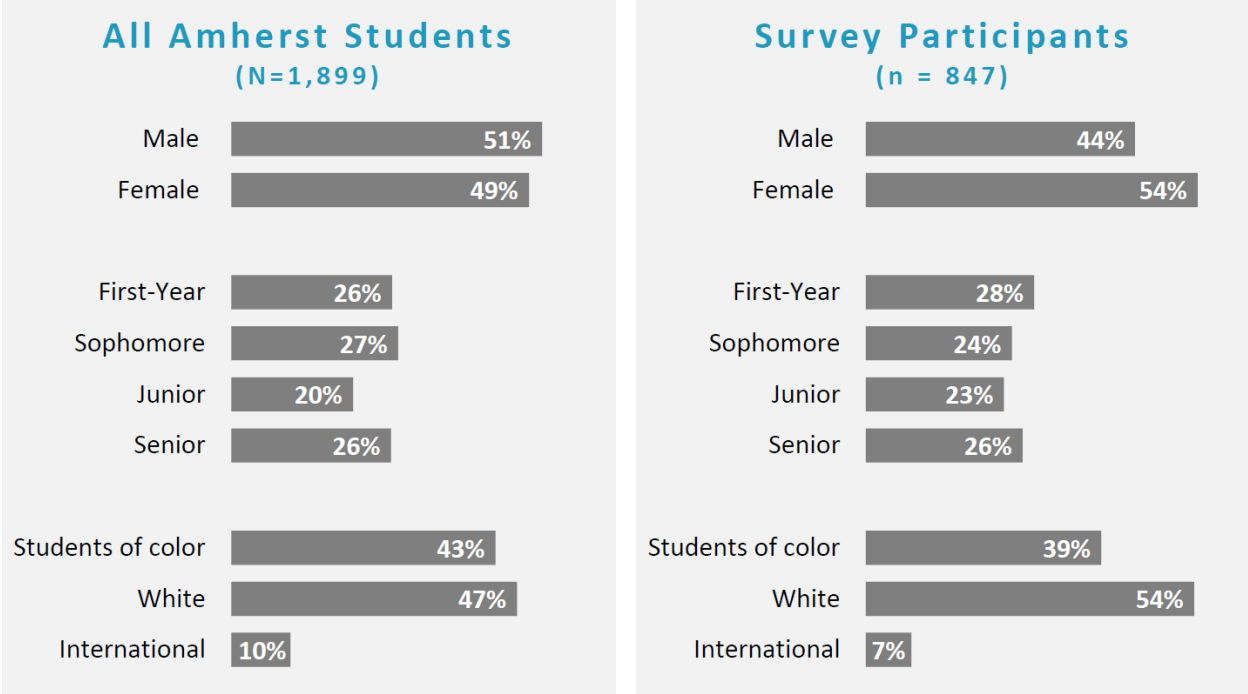
2a. Survey Construction

The Survey was designed to gauge the experiences, attitudes and behaviors of students at Amherst College. Student survey participants (“participants”) were asked to respond to questions in five categories: demographics; personal experiences; personal views and perceptions of the Amherst community; sexual misconduct processes; and community behavior. We anticipate that the Survey will be repeated in similar form each fall.

2b. Survey Participation

All currently enrolled students, including those studying abroad, were invited to participate in the survey that was open for 23 days in late fall 2014. The response rate was 45%. While participants were demographically representative of Amherst’s student body, we are unable to know whether students who have experienced sexual misconduct were more or less likely to have participated in the survey.

This chart compares the demographic profile of survey participants to all Amherst students:



2c. Anonymity

In order to maintain the anonymity promised to Survey participants, disaggregated results are only publicly available for groups that are sufficiently sizable so as to ensure that individual responses cannot be identified. For example, participants who identified as transgender or who self-defined their sexual orientation; e.g.: “pansexual,” are not included in the publicly available data due to the small number of participants who so identified.

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3. FINDINGS

3a. Student Experiences

In this section, the survey provided descriptions of behaviors that are prohibited by Amherst’s Sexual Misconduct Policy and asked participants if they or a friend had experienced those behaviors during their time at Amherst¹. Behaviors were described rather than labeled as a way to increase response accuracy and participation.

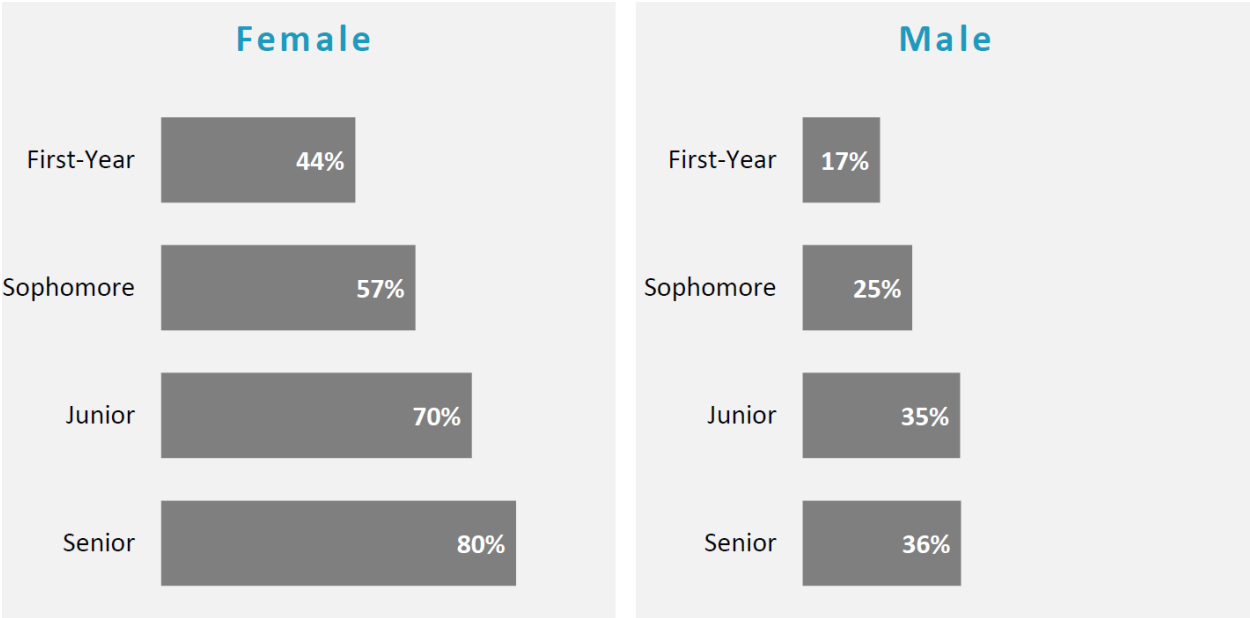
This chart provides the behavior descriptions used in the Survey instrument (“Described Behaviors”) along with the corresponding category label that was attached to the Described Behavior for purposes of this summary:

Described Behaviors	Category Label
Had someone make suggestive comments or propositions, or used sexual innuendo, in a way that felt unwelcome.	Harassment
Had someone comment on your appearance as you were walking on or around campus in a way that felt unwelcome.	
Had someone penetrate your vagina, anus, or mouth with a body part or object without your consent.	Rape
Have been in a relationship that had repeated instances where a partner was emotionally manipulative, used put-downs, or tried to control your behaviors.	Relationship Violence
Have been in a relationship that had components that were physically or sexually abusive.	
Had someone follow you, repeatedly show up in places where you were, or used technology to track your location in a way that made you uncomfortable or frightened.	Stalking
Had someone send repeated, unwanted messages, letters, gifts, emails, texts etc. in a way that made you uncomfortable or frightened.	
Have been fondled, kissed, or rubbed in private areas of your body or had clothing removed without your consent.	Touching
Had someone take pictures or videos of you engaging in sexual behaviors or of private areas of your body without your consent and/or knowledge.	Video-recording

¹ These questions did not contain any geographic limitation regarding where the reported behavior took place.

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This chart shows the percentage of self-identified female and male participants, by class-year, who reported experiencing at least one of the nine Described Behaviors:

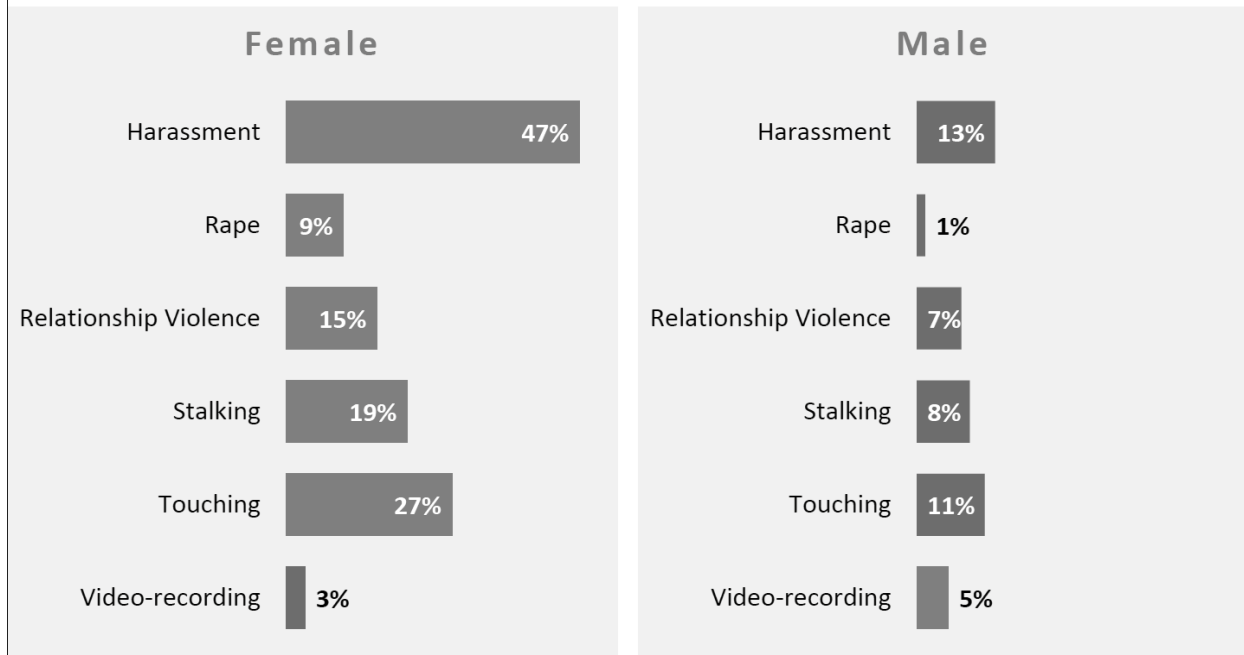


The following charts show the percentage of students who indicated they have experienced a Described Behavior during their time at Amherst by: Gender Identity; Class Year; Race/Ethnicity; and Sexual Identity.

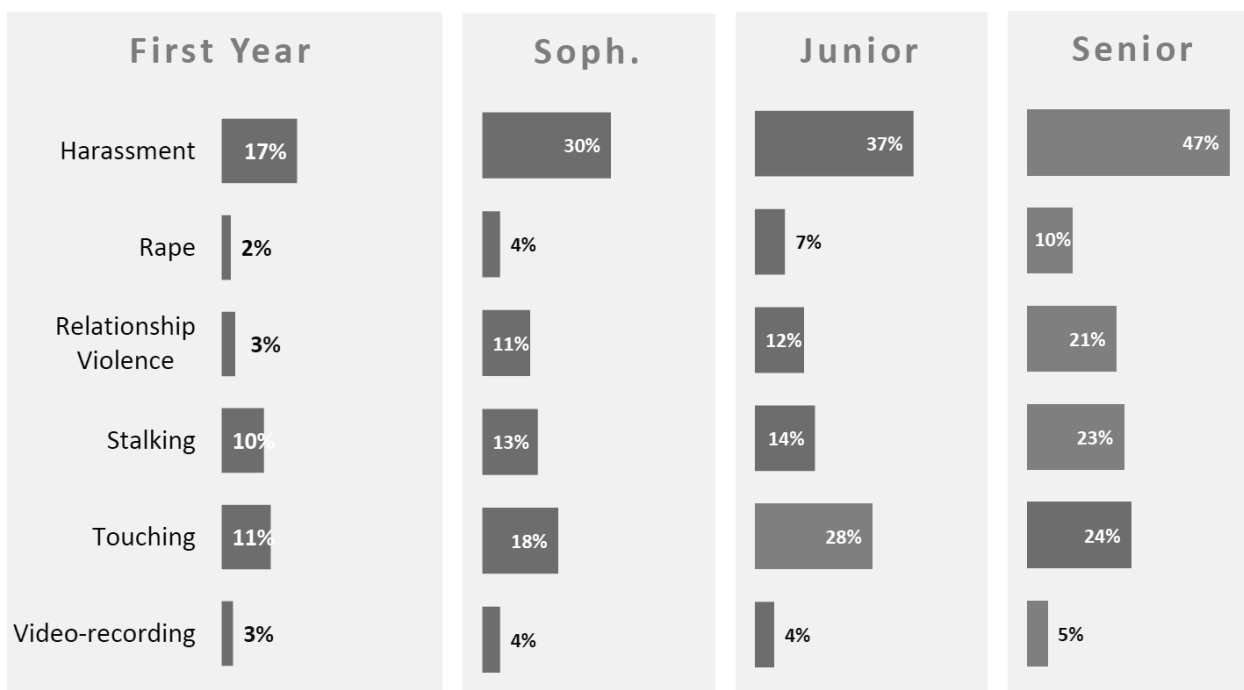
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During your time at Amherst College, have any of the following happened to you?

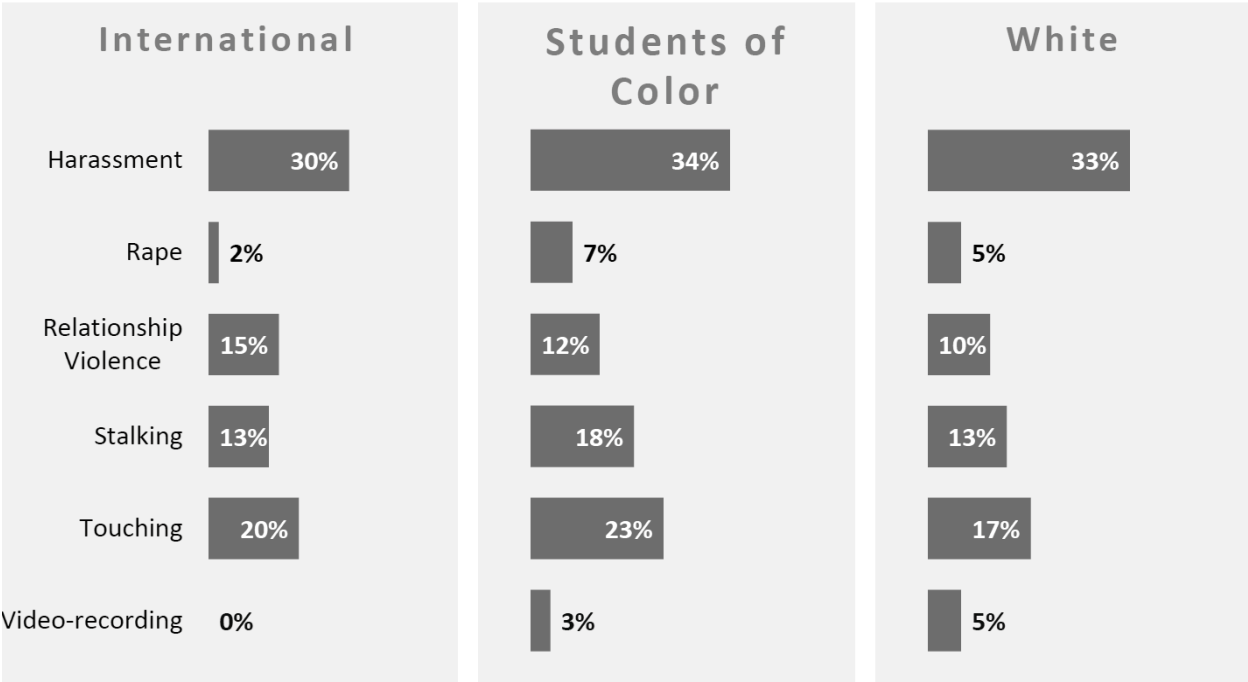
Experiences by Gender Identity



Experiences by Class Year

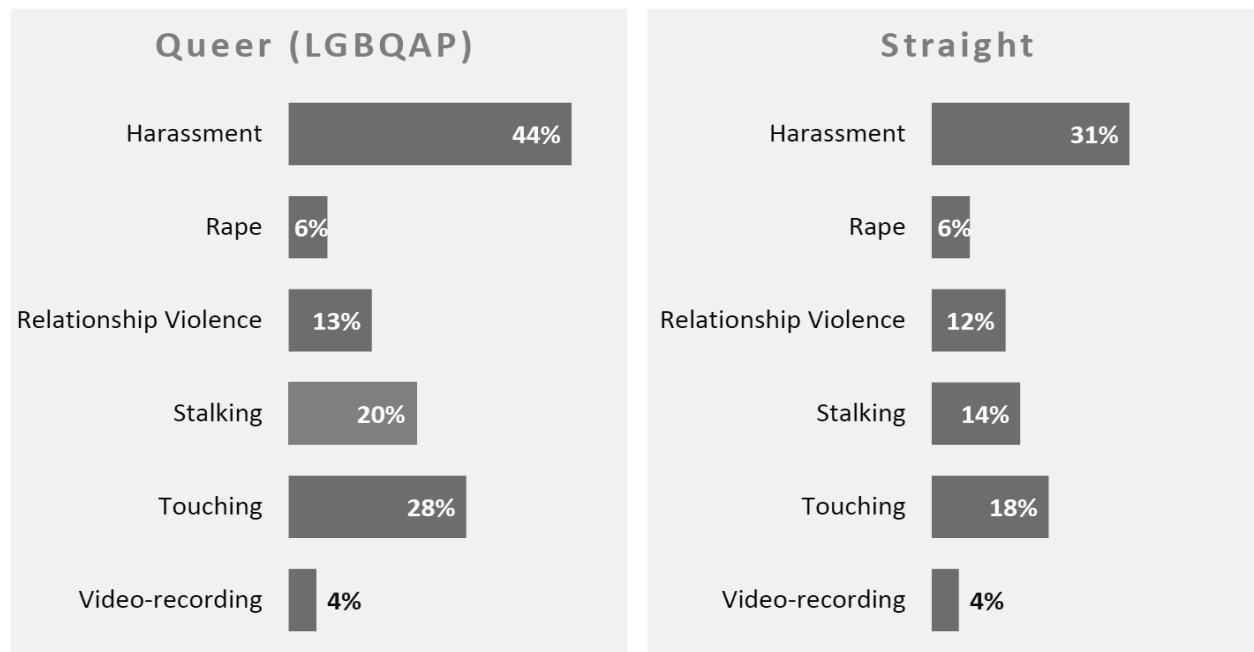


Experience by Race/Ethnicity



* **Students of Color** includes domestic participants who identified their race/ethnicity as American Indian, Asian, Black, Hispanic, Native Hawaiian, or Multi-racial

Experience by Sexual Identity



* **Queer includes:** Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Queer, Asexual, Pansexual

3b. Participants' Views

In this section, participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a set of statements. Participants were also asked whether they thought the majority of men and the majority of women at Amherst agreed with the same statements.

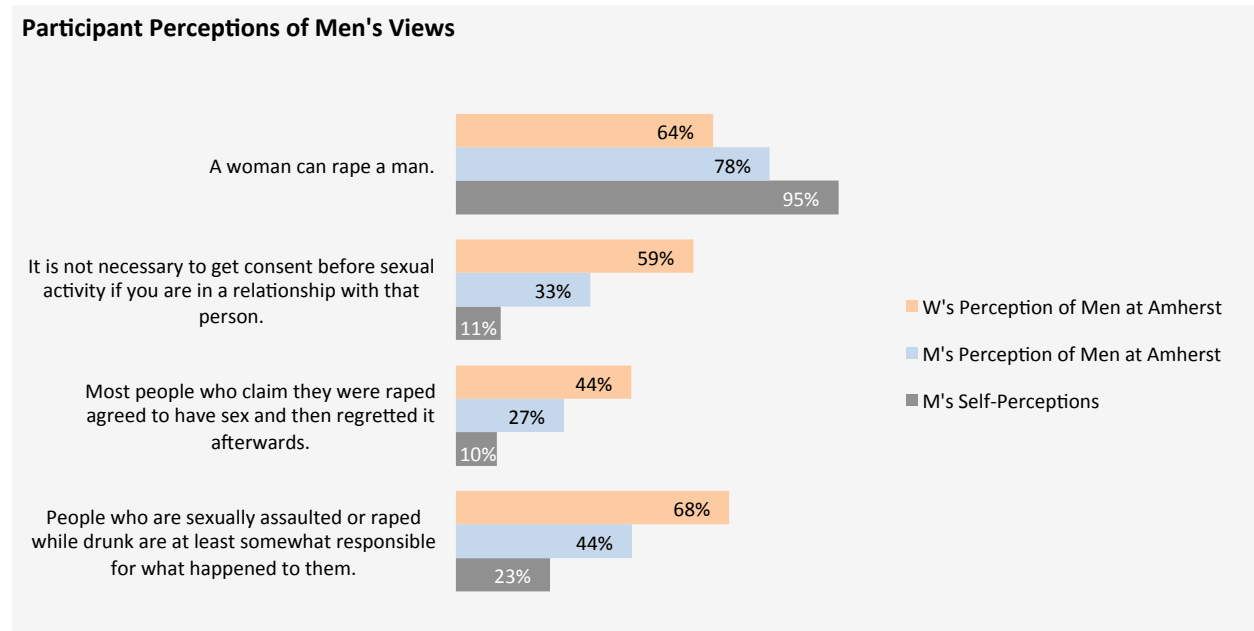
- More than 8 out of 10 (85%) participants feel confident in their ability to judge if someone is too intoxicated to give consent.
- More than 9 out of 10 (92%) participants believe it is necessary to get consent if you are in a relationship with someone.
- More than 8 out of 10 (89%) participants believe that commenting on someone's body or appearance on the street is not a compliment.
- More than 9 out of 10 (95%) of participants disagree with the statement that people who claim they were raped agreed to have sex and then regretted it afterwards.
- 23% of men and 9% of women (15% of participants) believe that people who are sexually assaulted or raped while drunk are at least somewhat responsible for what happened to them.
- More than 7 out of 10 (75%) of participants believe that rape can happen unintentionally, especially if alcohol is involved.
- 22% of men and 16% of women (18% of participants) think that rape and sexual assault happen only when sex continues after a partner says "no."

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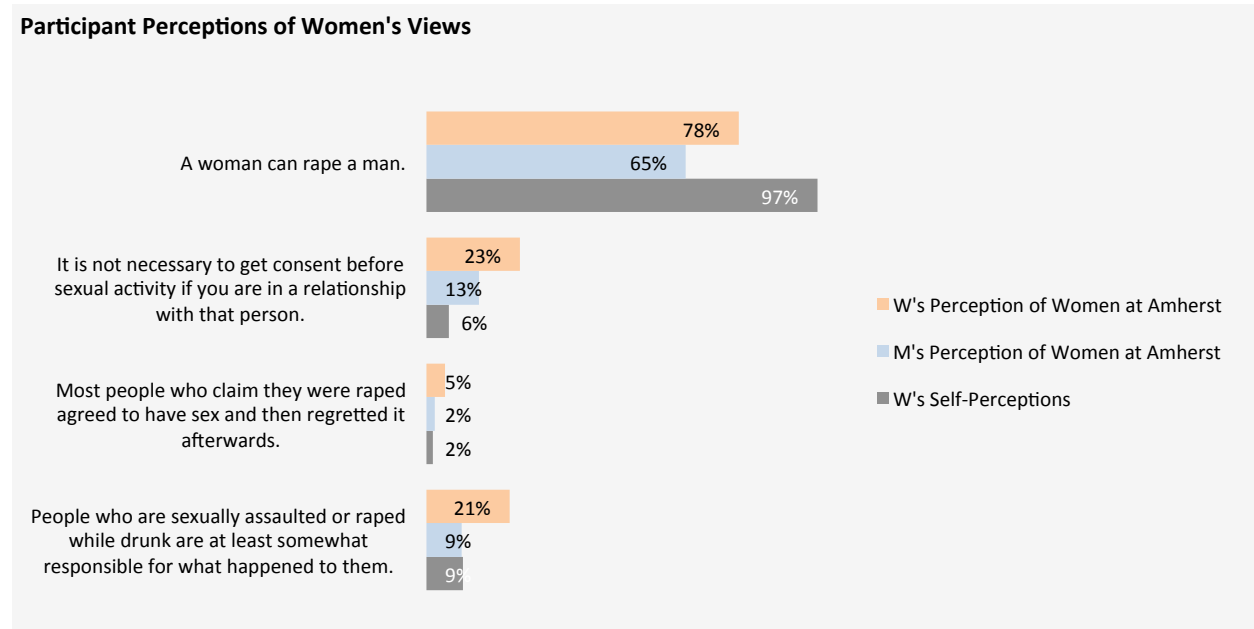
Personally Held Views v. Perceptions of the Views Held By Men and Women at Amherst:

There are significant differences between participants' personally held views (agreement or disagreement with particular statements) and participants' perception of whether their peers agree or disagree with the same statements.

The charts below highlight these differences:



HOW TO READ: 64% of female participants (W) and 78% of male participants perceive that most men at Amherst hold the personal belief that a woman can rape a man, whereas 95% of male participants reported that they hold the belief that a woman can rape a man.

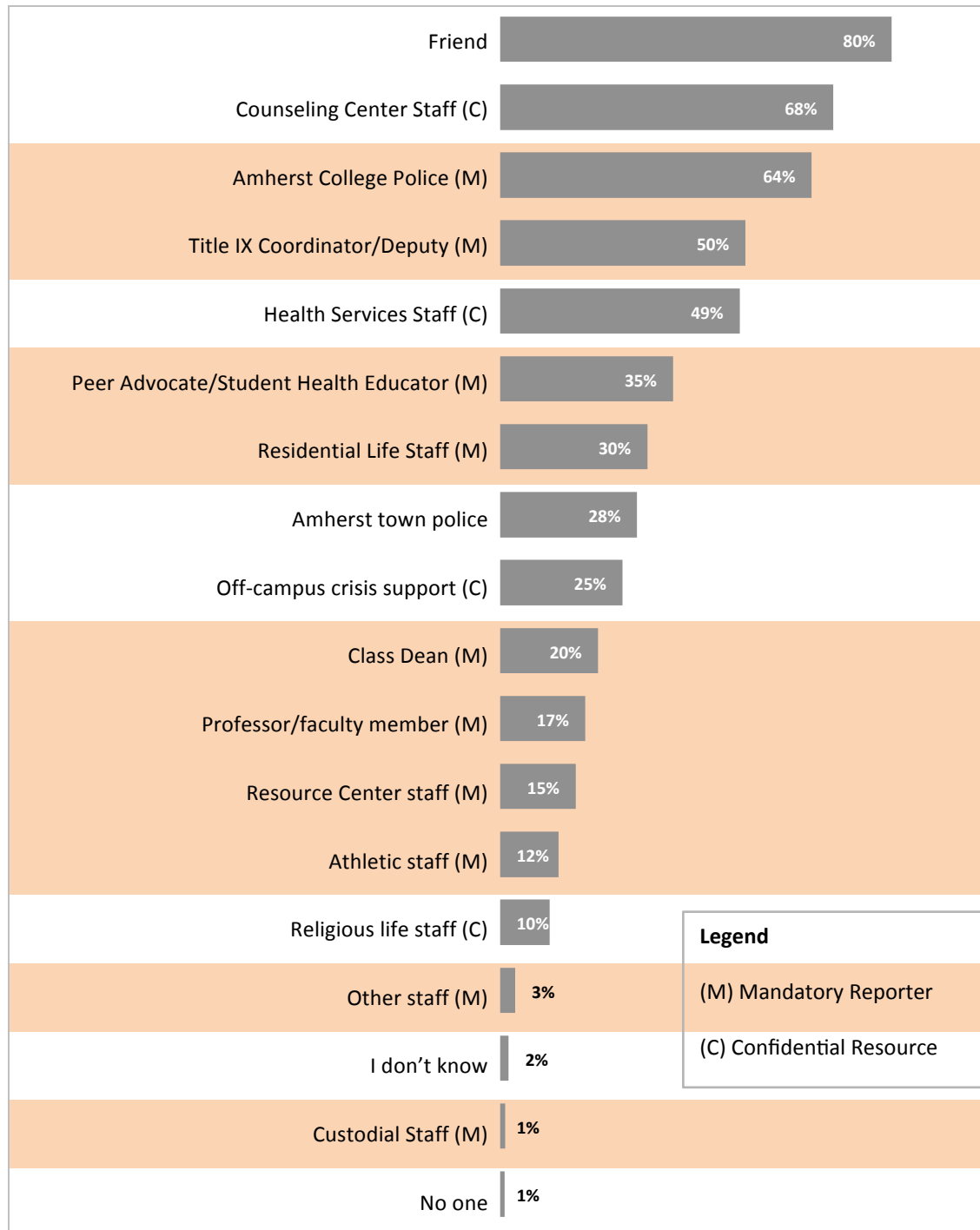


HOW TO READ: 78% of female participants (W) and 65% of male participants (M) perceive that most women at Amherst hold the personal belief that a woman can rape a man, whereas 97% of female participants reported that they hold the belief that a woman can rape a man.

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3c. Reporting Misconduct and the Sexual Misconduct Process

In this section, participants were asked to indicate whom they would consider telling if they or a friend were sexually assaulted. This chart shows participants' responses. Confidential resources are marked (C) and employees who have been designated as mandatory reporters of information about sexual misconduct are marked (M) and highlighted.



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The statements below show participants' views on the reporting process.

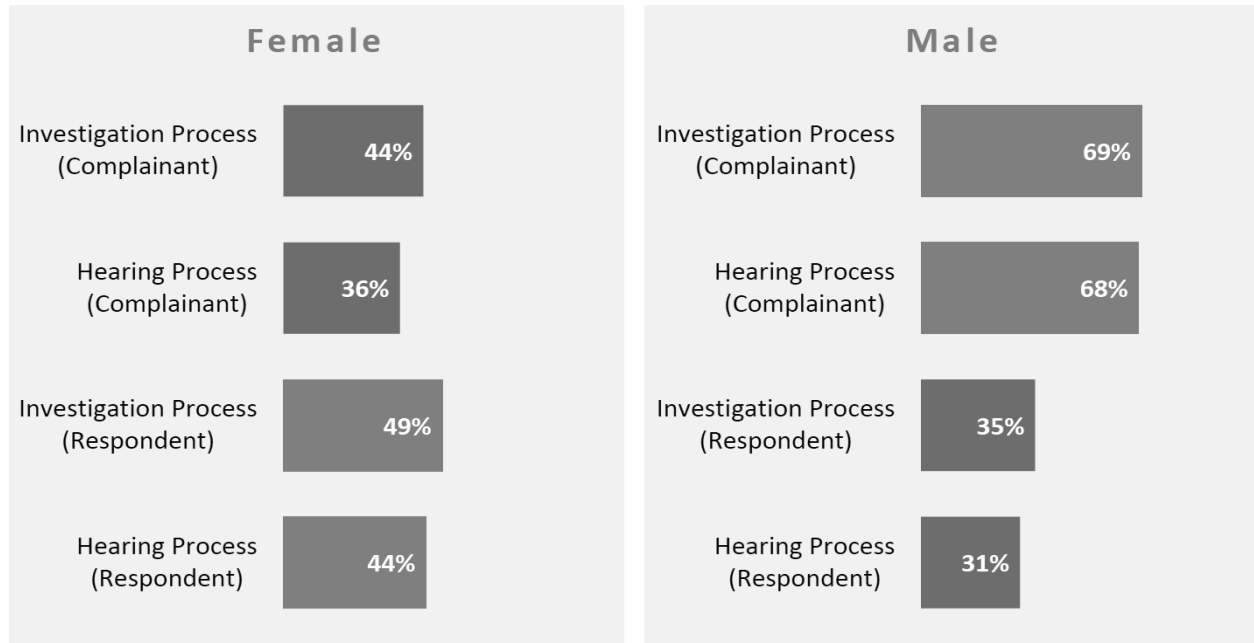
- Of participants who provided details of specific personal experiences of sexual misconduct, the majority disclosed to a friend to the exclusion of others on campus.
- More than 6 out of 10 (64%) participants agree that a person who reports sexual misconduct will experience social exclusion.
- More than 7 out of 10 (71%) participants agree that a person who reports sexual misconduct will experience retaliation, not including social exclusion

3d. Participants' Perceptions of Fairness in Amherst's Procedures for Addressing Sexual Misconduct Complaints

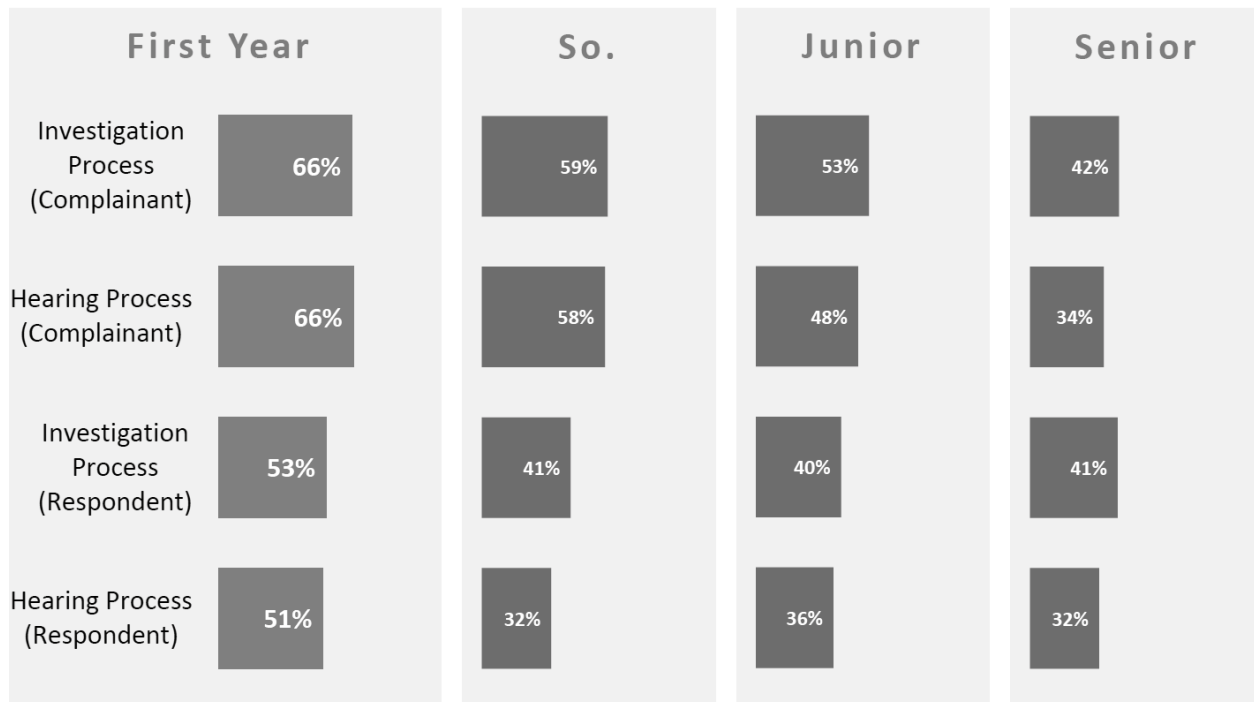
In this section, participants were asked to rate, based on their own experiences as well as what they have heard around campus about the process, whether they agreed or disagreed that certain aspects of the sexual misconduct process are fair.

For purposes of this document, the words "Complainant" and "Respondent" are used as shorthand for the broader descriptive language used in the Survey instrument. The Survey instrument asked participants to mark how strongly they agree or disagree with statements related to the fairness of the process for the "person who allegedly experienced the sexual misconduct" and the "person who allegedly committed the sexual misconduct."

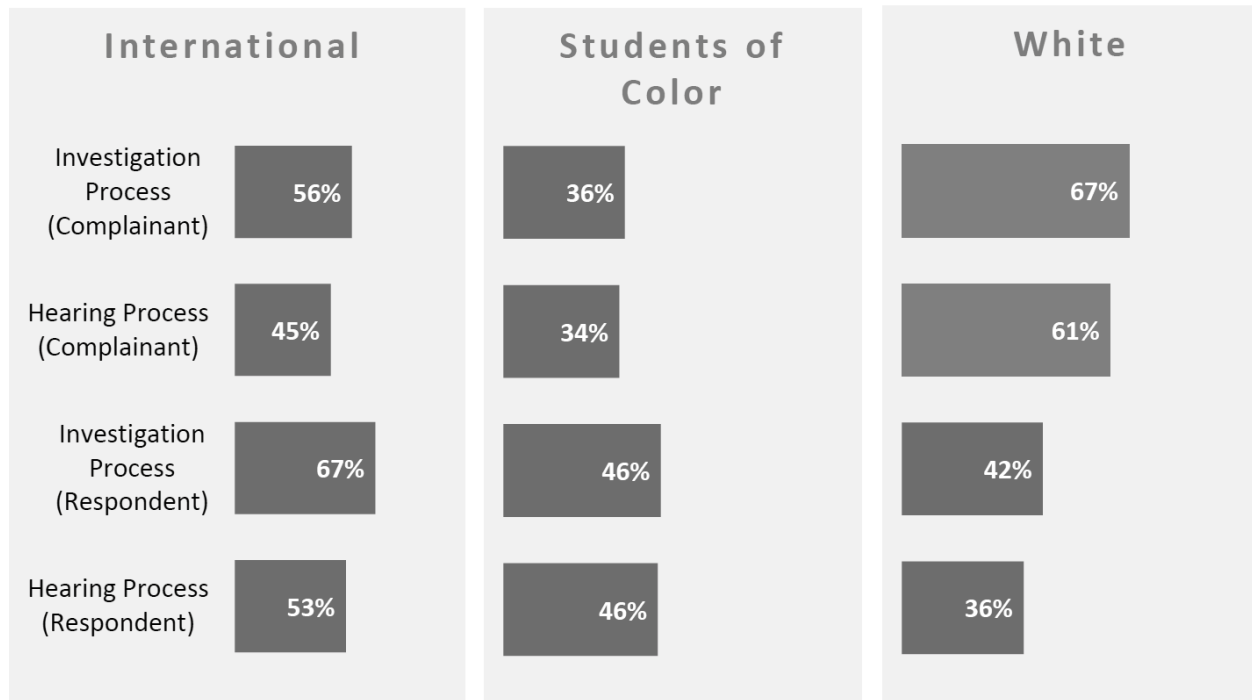
Perceptions of Fairness by Gender Identity



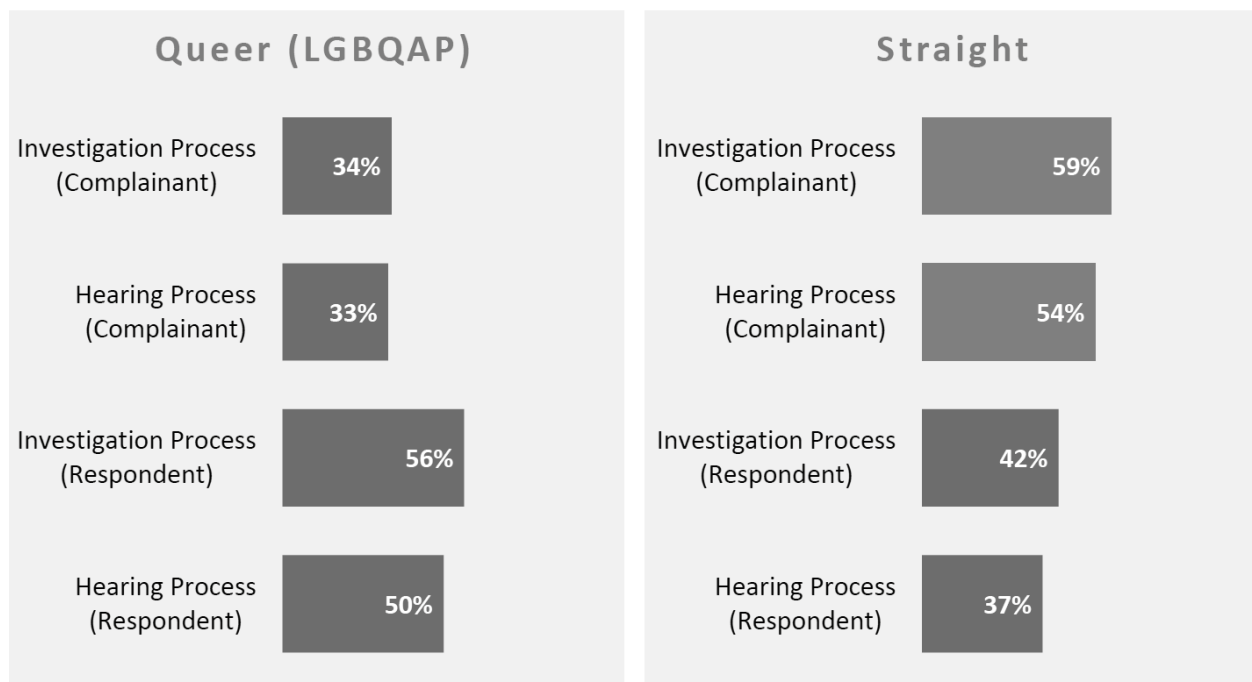
Perceptions of Fairness by Class Year



Perceptions of Fairness by Race/Ethnicity



Perceptions of Fairness by Sexual Identity



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3e. Community Behaviors

In this section, participants were asked questions to identify their willingness to engage in community behaviors.

- Many participants reported regularly engaging in behaviors to prevent or disrupt sexually violent or potentially sexually violent incidents.
- More than 9 out of 10 (99%) participants would respect someone who did something to prevent a sexual assault.
- More than 6 out of 10 (65%) participants (always or usually) checked-in with someone who they were concerned was in a relationship that was physically or emotionally unsafe.
- More than 5 out of 10 (55%) participants checked-in with someone whom they were concerned was being emotionally or physically abusive with their partner.
- More than 6 out 10 (68%) participants always or usually intervened when seeing someone trying to take advantage of a drunk person.
- 34% of men and 73% of women (58% of participants) always or usually thought about how they would stay safe before going out.
- 34% of men and 57% of women (47% of participants) spoke-up against sexist jokes or comments.

4. CONCLUSION

The Survey has provided a rich pool of data and establishes a baseline that will allow us to track student experiences, attitudes, and behaviors over time. Survey data will be used to inform: sexual respect programming; the future development of policies and procedures to address sexual misconduct; and campus-wide education about sexual respect and Title IX.

The Survey data also raises important questions that require careful consideration. Towards that end, we will be conducting in-depth data analysis and conducting campus-wide focus groups.

Further, the Survey has identified clear areas where more work is needed. For example, the belief that the sexual misconduct investigation and hearing processes are unfair for both parties to a complaint is troubling. Survey comments suggest that many misunderstand and/or lack a general understanding about our process. The newly formed Title IX Review Committee will be examining this issue in more detail as the Committee develops strategies to solicit more in-depth feedback for students who engage with the Title IX process.

In April of 2015, we presented the Survey results at two open meetings. In the fall of 2015, we will again present Survey data at open meetings and will also conduct focus groups to better understand certain results. Campus groups may request a presentation on Survey data by contacting Title IX Coordinator Laurie Frankl at lfrankl@amherst.edu.

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Additional Information

Survey data is available on Amherst's Sexual Respect and Title IX website:
www.amherst.edu/go/titleix

If you would like to provide suggestions for improving sexual respect education at Amherst please contact Amanda Collings Vann, Sexual Respect Educator, at avann@amherst.edu

Questions or comments about the Survey on Sexual Respect and Sexual Misconduct may be directed to:

Amanda Collings Vann, Sexual Respect Educator. avann@amherst.edu

Laurie Frankl, Title IX Coordinator. lfrankl@amherst.edu