

## Executive Summary

# Wake Forest University's Campus Climate Survey

## Background

In September of 2021, Wake Forest University (WFU) President Susan R. Wentz announced that WFU would conduct the school's first campus climate survey on sexual misconduct. WFU selected NORC at the University of Chicago (NORC), an objective, nonpartisan research organization with over a decade of experience in conducting campus climate studies, to conduct this project. Work began in Winter 2022 with key stakeholder meetings to discuss study goals and survey design.

The results of this inaugural Wake Forest University Campus Climate Survey will provide critical insights into the prevalence of sexual misconduct at WFU and the effectiveness of current prevention education and training, student outreach and awareness-raising efforts, Title IX policies and procedures, and survivor support services. As a member of NASPA's Culture of Respect CORE Collective, WFU is already working to identify strategies to improve sexual misconduct policies, procedures, prevention training, and outreach. This self-study can be used in coordination with the campus climate survey results that follow to continue to inform existing and new efforts toward WFU's goal of ending campus sexual misconduct and violence.

## Methods

**Survey.** The 2019 Association of American Universities (AAU) Campus Climate Survey served as the basis for the Wake Forest University Campus Climate Survey. NORC worked closely with WFU to adapt or develop additional items to measure climate topics of interest specific to WFU using a variety of instruments, including the Rutgers Campus Climate Survey (McMahon, 2018), Bureau of Justice Statistics Campus Climate Survey validation study (Krebs et al., 2016), and the ARC3 Campus Climate Survey (Swartout et al., 2019).

**Student sample.** A total of 7,357 WFU undergraduate, graduate, and professional students were invited to participate in the online survey, and 2,713 students provided complete survey responses (for an overall response rate of 38%).<sup>1</sup> Data collection began in March and concluded in April 2022. Statistical weighting was employed for WFU's survey data to correct for non-response. The focused findings in this summary (and in the more comprehensive *Wake Forest University Campus Climate Survey Report* and supplemental data tables) include

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<sup>1</sup> The *Wake Forest University Campus Climate Survey Report* explains criteria used to determine partial and complete survey responses and provides detailed information about response rates by academic level. The *Institutional Respondent Profile Report* provides detailed information about demographic characteristics for the total student sample.

weighted data for the total sample as well as for women and men in the sample, including any disaggregated data by race and ethnicity for these respondents.<sup>2</sup> The findings also include unweighted data for the trans women or men, genderfluid, genderqueer, questioning or unsure, agender, or non-binary (TGQN) respondents.<sup>3</sup>

## Key Findings

The *Wake Forest University Campus Climate Survey Report* includes comprehensive methodology and findings sections. This Executive Summary presents key findings from the report's three main sections, placing these in conversation with broader campus sexual misconduct findings, when possible (i.e., the 2019 AAU Campus Climate Study, which was a multi-institution study of sexual misconduct on college campuses, as well as other related research findings).

### Section 1: Reported Prevalence of Sexual Misconduct

These findings relate to the prevalence rates for experiencing sexual misconduct (i.e., sexual harassment, stalking, intimate partner violence, and non-consensual or unwanted sexual contact) at least once since becoming a student at WFU.

**Table 1. Reported Prevalence of at Least One Experience of Sexual Misconduct Across Total Sample, Gender, and Academic Level**

	Total Sample <sup>b</sup>	Undergraduate <sup>b</sup>		Graduate/Professional <sup>b</sup>		TGQN <sup>c</sup>
		Women	Men	Women	Men	
<b>Any incident</b>	55.4%	75.6%	57.3%	32.4%	15.9%	65.9%
<b>Sexual harassment</b>	49.2%	69.9%***	50.1%	24.8%†††	11.8%	65.9%
<b>Stalking</b>	18.8%	26.5%***	19.2%	9.3%††	4.7%	25.0%
<b>Non-consensual or unwanted sexual contact</b>	16.3%	29.3%***	10.4%	7.3%†††	1.9%	27.3%
<b>Intimate partner violence <sup>a</sup></b>	10.0%	13.7%**	10.2%	7.2%†††	2.3%	22.2%

*Note.* TGQN = trans woman or man, genderfluid, genderqueer, questioning or unsure, agender, or non-binary respondents.

<sup>a</sup> Reported prevalence of intimate partner violence determined based on respondents who reported prior relationships ( $n = 1,673$ ); <sup>b</sup> Reflects weighted percentages; <sup>c</sup> Reflects unweighted percentages

\*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$  (comparison across gender among undergraduates), ††† $p < .001$ , †† $p < .01$  (comparison across gender among graduate/professional students)

<sup>2</sup> The survey asked students to identify their background among 20 response options that combined racial and ethnic categories with a list of related nationalities--e.g., Asian: South Asian (for example, Afghan, Bangladeshi, Indian, Nepalese, Pakistani, Sri Lankan). For analyses, categories were collapsed to the higher-order racial and ethnic categories. Respondents who selected Hispanic/Latinx were coded only into this category, regardless of any additional race specified. Respondents who selected multiple categories across Asian, Black, Native American/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or White were categorized as multiracial. The remaining respondents identified as a single race (non-Hispanic/Latinx).

<sup>3</sup> The *Wake Forest University Campus Climate Survey Report* offers detailed information about the statistical weighting process and considerations for the TGQN student sample.

WFU students reported levels of sexual harassment, stalking, non-consensual or unwanted sexual contact, and intimate partner violence that reflect the same ranges observed in the AAU Campus Climate Study (Cantor et al., 2019).<sup>4</sup> Consistent with previous research (e.g., Moylan et al., 2018; Cantor et al., 2019), WFU's undergraduate women and graduate/professional women were significantly more likely to report having experienced all four types of sexual misconduct compared to their undergraduate and graduate/professional men student peers, respectively.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 2. Reported Prevalence of at Least One Experience of Sexual Misconduct Across Race, Ethnicity, and Gender**

	Asian Only		Black Only		White Only		Hispanic/Latinx Only		Multiracial	
	Women <sup>b</sup>	Men <sup>b</sup>	Women <sup>b</sup>	Men <sup>b</sup>	Women <sup>b</sup>	Men <sup>b</sup>	Women <sup>b</sup>	Men <sup>b</sup>	Women <sup>b</sup>	Men <sup>b</sup>
<b>Any incident</b>	38.2%	29.3%	55.2%	33.3%	68.5%	49.4%	57.6%	50.9%	74.8%	51.5%
<b>Sexual harassment</b>	32.0%	24.1%	49.3%	33.3%	61.9%	42.2%	54.1%	45.4%	66.4%	39.7%
<b>Stalking</b>	15.6%	11.1%	17.0%	6.0%	22.9%	16.7%	20.8%	16.0%	26.9%	14.7%
<b>Non-consensual or unwanted sexual contact</b>	6.3%	4.9%	15.8%	0.0%	27.0%	9.1%	19.4%	7.8%	29.4%	11.8%
<b>Intimate partner violence<sup>a</sup></b>	6.0%	5.2%	14.5%	0.0%	11.2%	8.1%	14.9%	12.7%	16.9%	17.9%

<sup>a</sup> Reported prevalence of intimate partner violence determined by respondents who reported prior relationships ( $n = 1,673$ );

<sup>b</sup> Reflects weighted percentages

In the WFU sample, multiracial women reported the highest rates of experiencing sexual harassment, stalking, and non-consensual or unwanted sexual contact at least once. Multiracial women and men, Hispanic/Latinx women and men, and Black women were more likely to report experiencing intimate partner violence. Black men reported no experiences of non-consensual or unwanted sexual contact or intimate partner violence.

## Section 2: Sexual Misconduct Characteristics and Resource Utilization

If respondents indicated they had experienced any type of sexual misconduct, the survey included a number of items that asked them to provide details about various aspects of their experiences. These detailed findings relate to each of the four types of sexual misconduct (i.e., sexual harassment, stalking, intimate partner violence, and non-consensual or unwanted sexual contact) and explain the prevalence of each sexual misconduct behavior (by type), perpetrators, impact on survivors, and post-incident resource seeking.

<sup>4</sup> While 19% of the WFU sample reported experiencing stalking at least once since beginning their studies, the AAU Campus Climate Study found a 6% prevalence rate. The AAU Campus Climate Study defined stalking differently than the WFU survey; this type of sexual misconduct was more stringently defined as including two or more incidents.

<sup>5</sup> Given the relatively smaller size of the TGQN student sample, we did not include these students in significance testing to examine cross-group differences. Previous research (e.g., Moylan et al., 2018) indicates that TGQN students also experience significantly higher victimization rates compared to men.

**Sexual harassment.** Nearly half (49%) of the WFU sample reported experiencing sexual harassment at least once since enrolling from a student or someone employed by or otherwise associated with WFU. Comparatively, 42% of the AAU Campus Climate Study student sample reported experiencing at least one type of sexually harassing behavior since beginning their studies.

- The two most common types of sexual harassment experienced by WFU students were inappropriate comments made about their or someone else's body, appearance, or sexual activities (82% of those who had experienced sexual harassment) and insulting or offensive sexual remarks, sexual jokes, or stories (69%). This was also the case in the AAU Campus Climate Study.
- The overwhelming majority of respondents reported that the perpetrator(s) of the sexual harassment behavior they experienced was a WFU student (93%).
- About a third (37%) of the WFU sample indicated that their experiences created an intimidating, hostile, or offensive social, academic, or work environment. Fewer respondents reported that their experiences interfered with their academic or professional performance (14%) or limited their ability to participate in an academic program (6%).

**Stalking.** Nineteen percent (19%) of the sample reported experiencing stalking at least once since beginning their studies at WFU. In the AAU Campus Climate Study, stalking was more stringently defined as including two or more incidents; that study found a 6% prevalence rate.

- Over half of all respondents who experienced any type of stalking since beginning their studies at WFU reported experiencing unwanted phone calls, emails, voice, text, or instant messages (57%) and someone showing up somewhere uninvited or waiting when the respondent did not want that person to be there (53%).
- Nearly three-fourths (71%) of respondents who experienced stalking indicated that this occurred on a WFU campus location.
- An overwhelming majority of respondents reported that the perpetrator(s) of a stalking behavior was a WFU student (81%). The perpetrator's relationship to the survivors was most commonly a known or recognized person, but not a friend (31%), a friend (29%), or someone they previously had been involved or intimate with (20%).
- Almost half (44%) of respondents reported that experiencing stalking caused them substantial emotional distress. A third (33%) of respondents indicated that these experiences made them fear for their own safety or the safety of others.

**Intimate partner violence.** If respondents indicated on the survey that they had been in a partnered relationship at least part of the time since beginning their studies at WFU (63% of the total WFU sample), they were asked about any experiences with intimate partner violence. Of this group of students who had been in a partnered relationship, 10% reported experiencing intimate partner violence at least once since beginning their studies at WFU, which corresponds to the rate reported in the AAU Campus Climate Study.

- TGQN students reported experiencing intimate partner violence at over twice the rate (22%) of the total WFU sample.

- Over half of respondents who experienced any type of intimate partner violence reported that a partner controlled or tried to control them (59%) and that a partner threatened to physically harm them or a loved one (53%). Nearly a third (31%) of these respondents reported that a partner used physical force against them.
- Twelve percent (12%) of these respondents reported that they sustained physical injuries as a result of their experiences.

**Non-consensual or unwanted sexual contact.** Sixteen percent (16%) of the sample reported experiencing non-consensual or unwanted sexual contact since becoming a student at WFU.<sup>6</sup> The survey asked respondents about any experiences of non-consensual or unwanted contact that occurred because of the following tactics: 1) lack of active, ongoing voluntary agreement, 2) incapacitation due to alcohol and/or drugs, 3) force or threat of physical force, and 4) verbal coercion. Sexual activity without active, ongoing voluntary agreement was the most commonly reported experience (71% of all students who experienced non-consensual or unwanted sexual contact behaviors), followed by unwanted sexual contact while unable to consent or stop what was happening, due to alcohol or drugs, being passed out, or asleep (60%).

**Role of alcohol and drugs.** Over half of the time, alcohol was used by the perpetrator and/or survivor prior to the experience, while drug use prior to the experience was much less common. The majority of non-consensual or unwanted sexual contact due to incapacitation was the result of voluntary alcohol consumption, rather than due to survivors being drugged or given alcohol without their knowledge or consent (Lawyer et al, 2010). This is consistent with the broader research literature and does not mean that the survivor was not encouraged, pressured, or coerced to drink to a point of intoxication or incapacitation.

**Perpetrator characteristics.** Among WFU students, non-consensual or unwanted sexual contact most often occurred in a residence hall, other residential housing, or in another non-residential building. These findings are comparable to those in the AAU Campus Climate Study (2019) and consistent with the broader research literature, which finds sexual assault most often occurs at the home of the victim or perpetrator. The perpetrator characteristics reported by WFU students were also consistent with the broader research. For instance, perpetrators were most often men (Black et al., 2011), and incapacitation tactics were most likely to be perpetrated by someone the individual knew but was not friends with, followed by someone they were involved or intimate with at the time (Wegner et al., 2014). Among the WFU sample, perpetrators of non-consensual or unwanted sexual contact were most often WFU students.

**Impact on survivors.** A majority of survivors (88%–100% across the different tactics) reported that non-consensual or unwanted sexual contact negatively impacted their physical or emotional health in some way. The most common impacts were feeling

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<sup>6</sup> The 2019 AAU Campus Climate Study reported the prevalence of non-consensual or unwanted sexual contact among its sample in terms of the following tactics: 1) physical force or inability to consent (13% of all students since enrolling); 2) lack of voluntary agreement (3%-16% of students); and 3) coercion (between 0.3%-2% of students).

helplessness or hopelessness, withdrawal from interactions with friends, avoiding or trying to avoid the person, and loss of interest in daily activities. Rates of experiencing negative outcomes did, however, differ as a function of the type of tactic used. For instance, experiences involving physical force were associated with greater negative academic and professional outcomes, compared to experiences due to the use of incapacitation tactics, verbal coercion, or a lack of active and ongoing voluntary agreement. Difficulty concentrating on course projects, assignment, or exams and decreased attendance were the most common negative academic and professional outcomes reported by survivors across all types of non-consensual or unwanted sexual contact.

**Survivor resource seeking.** In terms of survivor resource seeking after experiences of sexual misconduct, the AAU Campus Climate Study found that survivors of stalking (26%), intimate partner violence (19%), and sexual harassment (12%) contacted a campus resource after the incident. Comparatively, the rates of contacting campus resources among WFU students after these three types of experiences ranged between 11%–17%. Table 3 includes information about students' use of WFU resources after experiencing non-consensual or unwanted sexual contact (between 12%–39% of these students used at least one WFU resource). In the AAU Campus Climate Study, survivors of sexual misconduct were most likely to contact counseling services, campus health centers, the Title IX office, and campus victim services office, which was also the case at WFU.

**Table 3. WFU Institutional Resources Contacted After Non-consensual or Unwanted Sexual Contact**

Have you ever contacted any of the following about this experience?				
Institutional Resource	Threats or Use of Physical Force	Incapacitation from Alcohol or Drugs	Lack of Active, Ongoing Voluntary Agreement	Use of Verbal Coercion
	% That Contacted Resource <sup>a, b</sup>			
Safe Office	16.0%	16.1%	7.5%	13.4%
University Counseling Center	13.3%	14.5%	4.6%	25.8%
Student Health Services	4.3%	3.3%	1.1%	-
Title IX Coordinator	4.0%	13.5%	2.3%	-
University Police	-	3.7%	0.7%	-
Women's Center	-	2.0%	0.8%	-
Compliance Hotline	-	0.5%	-	-
Office of the Chaplain	-	0.4%	-	-
<b>None of the Above</b>	<b>78.3%</b>	<b>77.5%</b>	<b>88.2%</b>	<b>60.8%</b>

*Note.* When no responses were observed, we indicate this by -.

<sup>a</sup> Reflects weighted percentages of all respondents who replied to this item; <sup>b</sup> Respondents could select multiple responses, so total percentages can exceed 100%

**Barriers to reporting experiences of sexual misconduct.** Overall, the top reasons WFU respondents provided for not contacting a campus program or resource were: 1) they were not injured or hurt and 2) they perceived these experiences to be common occurrences. The barriers reported by WFU students were somewhat different than those reported in the AAU Campus Climate Study. Responses suggest WFU students may be receiving or internalizing messages from WFU (or elsewhere) that have helped them to overcome barriers typically reported by other student populations (e.g., alcohol was involved, the event started

consensually, their body showed involuntary arousal). Most resources were perceived as at least somewhat helpful, if not very helpful, by survivors who utilized them.<sup>7</sup>

### Section 3: Prevention Training, Knowledge of Campus Resources, and Perceptions of Wake Forest University Campus Climate

These findings relate to perceptions of WFU students' sexual misconduct prevention training experiences, their knowledge of WFU's resources related to sexual misconduct, and their perceptions of the institutional perspective and response to sexual misconduct on campus. Additional findings from respondents who indicated they had experienced any type of sexual misconduct are also included as they relate to their perceptions on whether WFU supported them in a variety of ways after their experiences.

**Sexual misconduct prevention training.** Table 4 includes the proportion of students who reported completing training modules or information sessions about sexual misconduct or sexual assault as an incoming student or since arriving at WFU. Overall, respondents reported that the trainings they received covered: 1) the definition of and how to initiate consent (88%); 2) where to seek help after experiences of sexual assault or misconduct (85%); 3) how WFU defines sexual assault and misconduct (84%); and 4) how to prevent sexual assault or misconduct (83%).

**Table 4. Reported Prevalence of Prevention Training by Academic Level and Gender**

Attendance	Total Sample (%) <sup>a</sup>	Women		Men		TGQN (%) <sup>b</sup>
		Undergrad	Grad/Prof	Undergrad	Grad/Prof	
		(%) <sup>a</sup>	(%) <sup>a</sup>	(%) <sup>a</sup>	(%) <sup>a</sup>	
Began Attending WFU in 2021–2022	73.6%	80.6%	60.3%	82.6%	70.6%	78.6%
Began Attending WFU Before 2021	76.2%	83.9%	58.2%	76.9%	57.1%	93.1%

<sup>a</sup> Reflects weighted percentages; <sup>b</sup> Reflects unweighted percentages

**Awareness of WFU resources, policies, and procedures.** In general, respondents report high levels of awareness of campus resources. In the total sample, most respondents reported being aware of the University Counseling Center (79%), University Police (79%), Student Health Services (74%), the Title IX Coordinator (65%), and the Safe Office (60%). Results suggest that graduate/professional students at WFU are less knowledgeable than undergraduates when it comes to campus resources, policies, and procedures around sexual misconduct. This is not uncommon, as most colleges and universities focus their training and outreach efforts on undergraduates (Korman et al., 2017; McMahon et al., 2018). However, graduate/professional students are at unique risk for victimization (Sutton et al., 2021). Hispanic/Latina and Black women also report less knowledge about campus resources, policies, and procedures around sexual misconduct. Targeted and culturally sensitive student outreach may be needed to raise further awareness among diverse student groups.

<sup>7</sup> The median usefulness ratings from those who utilized various WFU resources are included in the *Wake Forest University Campus Climate Survey Report*.



**Perceptions of WFU's response to sexual misconduct.** On average, respondents reported positive perceptions of the WFU campus climate. However, respondents from student groups that report higher prevalence rates of sexual misconduct report more negative perceptions of the WFU campus climate.

- When comparing groups by gender and academic level, both undergraduate and graduate/professional men reported a more positive perception of WFU campus climate compared to women of their same academic levels.
- Compared to both men and women, TGQN respondents reported more negative perceptions of WFU's campus climate across all six climate items.
- Multiracial women reported significantly more negative perceptions of the WFU campus climate than men.
- Hispanic/Latina and multiracial women were less likely than men and women from other backgrounds to perceive WFU campus officials would take a report of sexual misconduct seriously.

## Summary and Suggested Next Steps

Undergraduate women and TGQN students at WFU report the highest prevalence rates across all four types of sexual misconduct. The most common experiences of sexual misconduct among these groups of respondents were sexual harassment (66-70%) and non-consensual or unwanted sexual contact (27-29%). Multiracial and White women reported the highest prevalence rates of sexual harassment, stalking, and non-consensual or unwanted sexual contact. The most common experiences for sexual harassment involved making inappropriate comments about someone's body, appearance, or sexual activities, and the most common non-consensual or unwanted sexual experiences involved a lack of ongoing, voluntary agreement. These findings suggest students would benefit from additional trainings on consent and working to combat rape culture.

Findings highlight that most sexual misconduct is occurring between WFU students in on- or off-campus residential locations. The AAU Campus Climate Survey (2019) found similar patterns across other universities. Research shows that sexual assault most often occurs at the home of the victim or perpetrator (Abbey et al., 2001; Adams-Curtis & Forbes, 2004). Having on- and off-campus residential housing staff, and students living in the residence halls, complete additional trainings around how to prevent sexual assault and support survivor of sexual assault would be broadly beneficial.

Across all respondents who experienced sexual harassment, a third (37%) indicated that their experiences created an intimidating, hostile, or offensive social, academic, or work environment. Across all respondents who experienced non-consensual or unwanted sexual contact, almost all reported at least one negative physical or emotional outcome, most commonly aligning with depressive symptoms and avoidance of the perpetrator. When students reported an incident, they are most likely to report to the University Counseling Center and the Safe Office, and they reported that those experiences are overall useful. To continue to encourage students to utilize campus resources, WFU may consider expanding upon their outreach and awareness-raising efforts across campus, using messaging and



delivery techniques proven to be effective. In addition to raising awareness around available campus resources, WFU may consider also working to raise student awareness about sexual misconduct policies and procedures as well as how to report an incident.

## Conclusion

Sexual misconduct on college campuses is a major public health concern, and WFU is committed to addressing this issue on their campus. WFU already offers a range of prevention education and training for incoming and continuing students (e.g., the Vector Solutions prevention training program, Step Up! bystander intervention training). Additionally, WFU students are actively involved in efforts to address sexual misconduct on campus (e.g., the Sexual Assault Prevention, Support and Accountability (SAPSA) committee). In an effort to continue to improve upon these efforts and others, WFU held listening sessions with students, staff, and faculty over the past year, in coordination with the Division of Campus Life. These discussions have informed the continual improvement of WFU's efforts, and so will the results from this campus climate survey.

The next critical step is to share these findings with the WFU campus community. Doing so will raise awareness about sexual misconduct on campus, the availability of resources, and help clarify policies and procedures around reporting sexual misconduct. WFU plans to provide forums for discussion that will provide the opportunity for the campus community to ask questions and express concerns. Campus leadership will use these as an opportunity to listen and learn, gaining invaluable insights into additional next steps toward improving prevention education and training, outreach, policies and procedures, and survivor resources. Together, the WFU campus community can support survivors and prevent sexual misconduct in the future, ensuring all WFU students, staff, and faculty have a safe campus where they can thrive.

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