

Report on Research Compliance Volume 16, Number 11. November 01, 2019

RRC E-Alerts: October 17, 2019

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AAU Survey on Sexual Assault, Misconduct Shows 'Cause for Hope, Continued Concern'

A new survey completed by more than 180,000 students at 33 institutions conducted on behalf of the Association of American Universities “will help...colleges and universities in their ongoing efforts to address the critical problem of sexual assault and other sexual misconduct,” AAU said when it released the report on Oct. 15. Although the survey updates one from 2015, not all of the results are comparable for a number of reasons; for example, more institutions are included in the new report. “The results provide cause for both hope and continued concern,” said AAU President Mary Sue Coleman. “They reveal that, while students know more about university-sponsored resources for victims of sexual assault and misconduct, they still aren’t using these resources often enough. The results also show that rates of sexual assault and misconduct, measured by self-reports from students, have increased slightly since 2015, and that some groups of students—including women, non-cisgender students, and others—continue to be victimized at disproportionately high rates.”

The report provides aggregate data, which some participating universities supplemented by posting their results publicly. For 21 schools that were part of the first survey, “the rate of nonconsensual sexual contact by physical force or inability to consent increased from 2015 to 2019 by 3.0 percentage points (to 26.4 percent) for undergraduate women, 2.4 percentage points for graduate and professional women (to 10.8 percent), and 1.4 percentage points for undergraduate men (to 6.9 percent).” At the same time, the survey found “significant increases from 2015 to 2019 in student reports of their knowledge about school definitions and procedures related to sexual assault and other sexual misconduct. The largest change was for knowledge of the definition, where there were increases of 11.5 percentage points for undergraduate women and 12.4 percentage points for undergraduate men,” according to the report. The University of Southern California (USC) and Harvard University are among those that disclosed specific survey results; some institutions also discussed findings with the media, including *The Washington Post*.

[Link to survey](#)

[Link to USC data](#)

[Link to Harvard data](#)

[Link to Washington Post article](#)

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