

Cultivating Learning and Safe Environments (CLASE) Study *(Pronounced “class”)*

Frequently Asked Questions About the Web-Based Survey of Prevalence and Perceptions

Why did The University of Texas System launch this study?

UT System Chancellor William H. McRaven, initiated the study to more fully understand the prevalence of sexual assault, harassment and misconduct on UT campuses, and to have data to inform policy and programming decisions.

Who conducted the study?

Researchers from the Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault (IDVSA) at UT Austin’s School of Social Work conducted the study. Noël Busch-Armendariz, Ph.D., UT Austin’s Associate Vice President for Research, University Presidential Professor, and Director of IDVSA is the Principal Investigator. Dr. Busch-Armendariz is a nationally-renowned expert on issues of interpersonal violence, sexual assault, refugees, victims of human trafficking and international social work.

How much did the study cost?

The UT System Board of Regents approved \$1.7 million to fund the study over four years.

How does the survey fit into the CLASE study?

The four-year CLASE project consists of three parts:

1. A web-based survey – **the focus of this FAQ.**
2. An in-depth empirical analysis of perceptions, programs, and practices in with all UT system institutions across four years.
3. A four-year cohort study of students at UT Austin. This report represents only the web-based survey findings of prevalence and perceptions. Data collection is ongoing for parts two and three; final reports will be produced once additional UT System institutions have participated.

How were students invited to participate? Which students participated?

The study population sample consisted of students 18 years of age or older, currently matriculating. At larger institutions, a random sample was selected of all currently enrolled, eligible students. The sample size was based on criteria that ensured adequate power to accurately assess the prevalence of intimate and interpersonal violence and to accommodate three survey versions. At smaller institutions, including all health institutions, a census-style sample method was used to ensure participant safety and a representative number of participants. Eligible students were invited to participate. Students voluntary and anonymously participated and the survey was structured to protect their confidentiality. Each institutions’ report includes relevant individual methodological details.

How many students responded to the web-based survey of prevalence and perceptions?

28,270 students participated in the study.

What was the response rate?

Across all institutions, the survey achieved a 26 percent response rate (invited participants who started the survey) and 14 percent completion rate at academic institutions (invited participants who completed the survey and were retained in the final sample used for analysis) and 13 percent completion rate at health institutions.

How do researchers know the students who responded are representative of the entire student population?

The survey data for each institution were weighted to reflect the population distribution in terms of gender, ethnicity and classification in school. The primary adjustment weighted the data for gender representation. As in most surveys, female participation was higher than male participation.

How will the UT System and UT institutions use the information from the study?

The study includes recommendations for a plan of action, based on the results of the survey and a collaborative process with institutional stakeholder groups. Individual institutions developed both immediate actions and future steps informed by their institution-specific data. Each institution's plans of action are designed to complement existing campus programs.

Why present the data for each academic institution?

Because of high enrollment at the academic institutions, their data is reported in both an aggregate report in addition to individual academic reports.

Why was the health institution data reported in aggregate?

Of the 28,270 students who participated in the survey, 26,417 were enrolled in academic institutions and 1,853 were enrolled at health institutions. The data for health institutions is reported in aggregate in order to ensure results are scientifically valid.

Are UT campuses safe?

Students overwhelmingly reported feeling safe on UT campuses. For example, 76 percent of victims and 80 percent of non-victims reported feeling safe on their academic campuses and 89 percent of victims and 92 percent of non-victims reported feeling safe on their health campuses. It is also important to note that most cases of physical violence (88 percent) and of unwanted sexual contact (84 percent) occurred off campus. The ultimate goal of UT institutions is student safety and well-being, whether on or off campus. This study addresses the entire spectrum of sexual assault and misconduct and will inform decisions to work to confront and eliminate these issues.

How do UT findings compare with other institutions of higher education?

The prevalence rates of sexual harassment, stalking, dating/domestic abuse and violence, and unwanted sexual contact at UT System institutions are comparable to rates at other institutions of higher education nationwide. Although there are several methodological differences that exist in

these studies, readers are cautioned when making some direct comparisons of the prevalence rates. Main differences include:

1. Variability in population demographics among the institutions.
2. Estimations of prevalence are calculated differently (the CLASE project uses a Title IX framework (See Appendix B).
3. Dating/domestic violence is measured differently across studies.
4. Findings for faculty/staff sexual harassment and unwanted sexual touching, attempted rape, and rape are presented differently.

Please refer to CLASE reports - Appendix A “*Prevalence Estimates at Institutions of Higher Education*” for detailed information about findings from other relevant and comparable studies.

Were the institutions involved in planning and implementation of the CLASE project?

Yes. The CLASE project was implemented with the support of an Institutional Stakeholder Group at each of the 13 institutions that are involved in the CLASE project. (UT Health Northeast in Tyler did not have enough students to ensure student anonymity.) Presidents at each institution appointed an Institutional Stakeholder Group chair(s). The research team collaborated with the chair(s) to select other members of the Stakeholder Group. The stakeholder group members had the opportunity to provide input and discuss findings.

Is the CLASE survey based on empirical knowledge?

The CLASE survey was developed after a thorough review of existing surveys of campus prevalence and perceptions of sexual harassment, stalking, dating/domestic abuse and violence, and unwanted sexual contact including literature reviews, participation at national meetings about this topic, and analysis of these tools.¹ The survey measures were selected because of their established reliability and validity and for meeting criteria for content coverage, balance of content, length, cost, and protection of human subjects.

Does the CLASE survey cover issues under Title IX?

Yes. The survey is comprehensive because it queries students in five broad areas of victimization experiences: faculty/staff-perpetrated sexual harassment, student-perpetrated sexual harassment, stalking, dating/domestic abuse and violence, and unwanted sexual contact.

How was prevalence defined?

Criminal justice experts were engaged to define the victimization survey questions that met Title IX and/or Texas Penal Code violations. Prevalence was defined by the proportion of students enrolled in the UT System that have experienced sexual harassment, stalking, dating/domestic abuse and violence, and unwanted sexual contact victimization since enrollment. Sexual harassment, stalking, dating/domestic abuse and violence, and unwanted sexual contact are all violations protected under Title IX.

How was the survey administered?

CLASE was administered as a web-based survey using the software Qualtrics.

¹ Wood, L., Sulley, C., Follingstad, D., Kammer-Kerwick, M., & Busch-Armendariz, N. (2016). Climate surveys: An inventory of understanding sexual assault and other crimes of interpersonal violence at institutions of higher education. *Violence Against Women*. doi: 10.1177/1077801216657897

When was the survey administered?

The survey was put into the field during November and December 2015 and the schedule was modified to meet the needs of some institutions.

Are the results just describing students that responded to the survey?

No. The findings are representative of the population of students. The methodology ensures that the estimates provide for statistical confidence and adequate anonymity of study participants.

What are the limitations associated with the survey methodology?

There are several study limitations. Voluntary surveys may have the potential to reflect response bias because some participants may have answered survey questions either inaccurately or untruthfully due to a misunderstanding or to be socially desirable. In addition, some may assume that students with the experience of victimization are more drawn to this type of study. Three strategies were used to minimize an overestimation of victimization. First, the study was not advertised as a study about victimization. Second, weighting strategies were used so that the findings were reflective of the student population by gender, race/ethnicity, and school classification at the institution. Third, margins of error were calculated to reflect relative confidence in the findings.