

# 2021 Title IX Campus Climate Survey Summary Report

*Report created by:*

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## **Introduction**

Lasell University incorporates an innovative methodology to its Title IX Climate survey process, reflecting our unique student centered, student driven approach to our sexual and domestic violence prevention and education work. Since 2017, Lasell enlisted students from Professor Karin Raye's CJ335 Sexual Violence class working in partnership with Institutional Research to edit, revise and add to the ARC Sexual Misconduct survey. This collaboration allowed Lasell students, under the careful guidance of Institutional Research, to incorporate and reflect Lasell based norms, trends and language into Survey questions, creating a survey written by Lasell students specifically for Lasell students. The survey was administered for the first time in the 2017 Spring semester in collaboration with Professor Karin Raye's Sexual Violence Advocacy class. The 2020 CJ 335 class revised and had planned to administer the survey again in the 2020 Spring semester but had to postpone the launching date for about a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2021 survey removed the perpetrator components and changed the wording on several items, as suggested by the students from Sexual Violence Advocacy class, however, most of the survey remained unchanged. In 2021, Lasell University, in partnership with the CJ335 Sexual Violence and the Title IX office, administered the Lasell University Title IX Campus Climate Survey (from February 22 to March 12).

The 2021 survey achieved a 46% response rate as a result of the marketing efforts from Professor Karin Raye's Sexual Violence Advocacy class and other offices across the campus. The final sample consisted of 635 responses (with 210 partial responses) out of 1,395 enrolled students in the spring semester of 2021. The overall margin of error on the survey was about +/- 3%. With this response rate, the student population is better represented than 2017, in which the survey received a 27% response. However, comparing results obtained from 2017 and 2021 requires caution due to potential differences in the two samples such as a change to the survey's amount of response bias, as well as a shift in overall demographics from 2017 to 2021, and differences in experiences potentially due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Research Question**

There are several primary goals of the 2021 survey. Specifically, the survey aims to document student experiences with respect to sexual misconduct, understand the association between sexual misconduct experiences and students' well-being, reflect on existing institutional efforts on sexual misconduct issues and help to identify opportunities to engage students in sharing resources. In addition, comparing 2017 and 2021 results provides insights on institutional trends related to sexual misconduct incidences and informs educational practices on these issues.

In this report, survey data is analyzed to answer the following three research questions.

1. With respect to sexual misconduct experiences, to what extent do students experience sexual misconduct (SM) incidents and how do these experiences associate with their well-being?
2. With respect to educational resources and activities, to what extent do students know about resources related to sexual misconduct and how does knowledge associate with their understanding of consent (CS) and behavior of bystander intervention (BI)?
3. With respect to longitudinal comparison, are there any differences between the results obtained in 2017 and 2021?

## Results

### Sexual Misconduct Experiences

Within the survey and this report, the term *sexual misconduct* encompasses the following behaviors:

- Sexual Harassment (by peers and by faculty/staff)
- Stalking
- Dating Violence
- Sexual Violence

Each type of behavior was surveyed separately and students reported frequency experiencing various formats of each type of sexual misconduct behaviors as victims. Their experiences were then followed up with questions regarding location, identity of people involved, and reporting experiences. In the following analysis, data will be presented on students' sexual misconduct experience and survivors' reporting experiences.

Among all respondents, 62% of them reported experiencing sexual misconduct since enrolling at Lasell University through sexual harassment, stalking, dating violence and/or sexual violence.

**Sexual harassment** by peers was the most common form of sexual misconduct that students reported experiencing. Sexual harassment refers to “verbal/nonverbal behaviors that convey insulting, hostile, and degrading attitudes based on gender/sex, unwanted sexual attention, or sexual coercion” (Fitzgerald et al., 1999). About 48% of students reported experiencing sexual harassment by peers and 27% reported experiencing sexual harassment from faculty/staff. In both cases, about 75% of the incidents happened on campus and in 80% of the cases the perpetrator was a male.

**Stalking** is another form of sexual misconduct student reported experiencing. Stalking refers to “a pattern of repeated and unwanted attention, harassment, contact, or any other course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear” according to the Department of Justice. Approximately 29% of students experienced stalking with the most common stalking experience being online or through social media, which may be of increased importance during the pandemic as more courses and student activities were online than previous years. In addition, 73% of incidents happened on campus, and in about 80% of the cases the perpetrator was a Lasell student.

**Dating Violence** is the second most common form of sexual misconduct that students reported experiencing. Dating violence refers to “controlling, abusive, and aggressive behavior in a romantic relationship. It can include verbal, emotional, physical, sexual abuse or a combination” (The National Center for Victims of Crime, 2017). Approximately 30% of Lasell students reported experiencing dating violence. The top two most common forms of dating violence that students reported experiencing were emotional—jealousy (22%) and sole-decision making on part of one partner (15%). A majority of the incidents happened off-campus (55%) and involved non-Lasell students (56%).

**Sexual Violence**, the fourth area of sexual misconduct consisted of five specific behaviors in the 2017 survey. Due to low number of incidents reported in the 2017 survey, the aspects were reduced to three: sexual contact, attempted rape and rape. Overall, 18% of respondents reported being a survivor of sexual violence.

**Sexual Contact** refers to “fondling, kissing, or rubbing up against the private areas such as (lips, breast/chest, crotch or butt) or removed clothing without consent but did not attempt sexual penetration” (ARC3, 2015). Of the 411 students who answered this portion of the survey, 17% reported experiencing sexual contact. **Attempted Rape** refers to “attempting to have sex with a person through threats of physical harm, physical force, OR taking advantage when a person is intoxicated, however, sexual penetration did not occur” (ARC3, 2015). Of the students who answered, 13% of students reported experiencing attempted rape. **Rape** refers to “completed sexual penetration using threats of physical harm, physical force, OR taking advantage when the person is intoxicated” (ARC3, 2015). Approximately 9% of students reported being survivors of rape (this statistic within +/- 3% margin of error is comparable to the national average for undergraduate students reported by RAINN at 11.2%.)

Among all reported incidents of sexual violence, 57% reported that the event occurred on campus and 52% reported that the event occurred with a Lasell student.

When examining students’ experiences, it is important to understand if some students are at a higher risk of being victims – analysis in Figure 1 showed that across all demographic attributes, class year and LGBTQ+ consistently associated with a higher frequency of being a victim, when holding all other variables constant. In addition, females are more likely to experience stalking and dating violence after controlling for other variables.

	Sexual Harassment by Faculty/Staff	Sexual Harassment by Student	Stalking Experience	Dating Violence Experience	Sexual Violence Experience	All Sexual Misconduct
Being Female			△	△		△
Being Minority						
Being LGBTQ+		▲	△	▲	△	▲
Class Year (1-4)	△	▲	△	△	△	▲

Key:

- ▲ Positive relationship significant at  $p \leq .001$
- △ Positive relationship significant at  $p \leq .05$
- No significant relationship
- ▼ Negative relationship significant at  $p \leq .05$
- ▼ Negative relationship significant at  $p \leq .001$

*Figure 1. Association between Sexual Misconduct Experiences and Demographic Background*

### Effects of Sexual Misconduct on Academic, Physical Health, Mental Health, and Alcohol Use

In this section, we will examine how experiences of sexual misconduct associate with students’ academic experiences, mental health, physical health, and perception of campus climate. Each of the four outcomes was measured by self-reported survey questions. Physical health was measured by one item and the other outcomes were each measured by multiple items with an average score calculated.

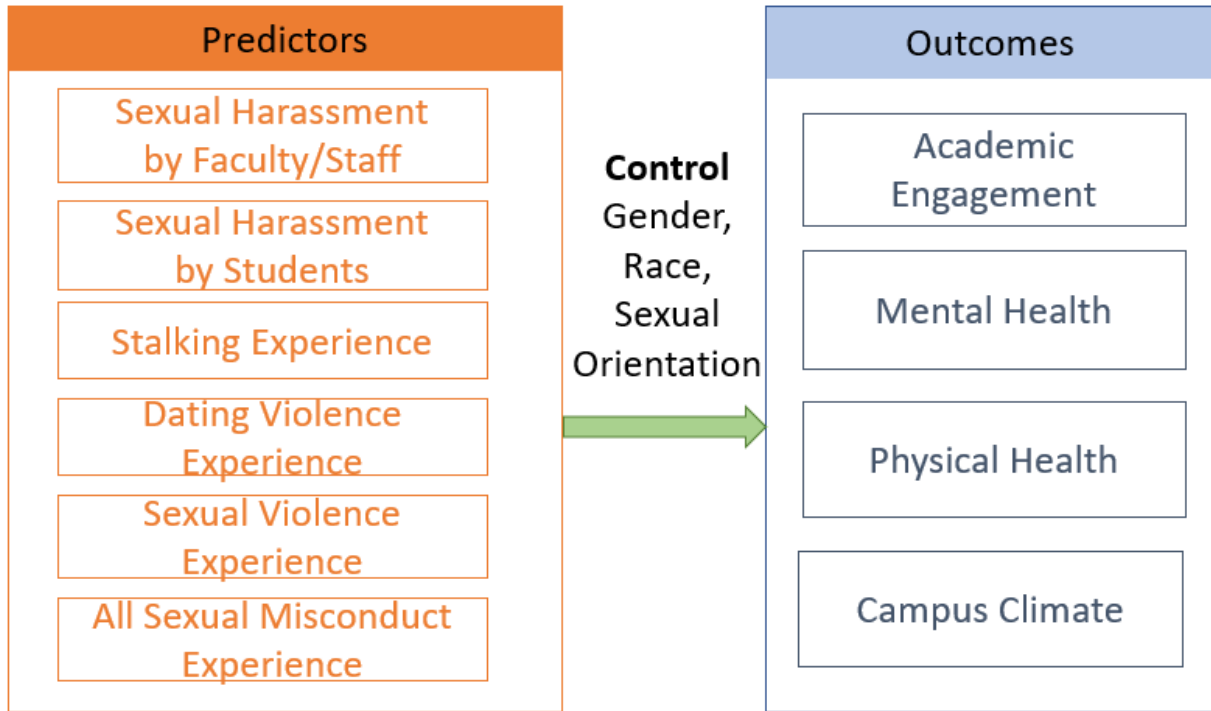


Figure 2. Analysis Framework on the Association between Sexual Misconduct Experiences and Outcomes

Figure 2 shows the analysis performed: frequencies of each type of experiences and students' demographic information served as predictors for each outcome. The goal is to find out among all sexual misconduct experiences, which have the most predictive power on each outcome, and if any

	Academic Engagement	Mental Health	Physical Health	Campus Climate
Sexual Harassment by Faculty/Staff	-	-	-	▼
Sexual Harassment by Student	▼	▼	▼	-
Stalking Experience	-	-	-	-
Dating Violence Experience	-	-	-	▼
Sexual Violence Experience	-	-	-	-
Being Female	-	-	▼	-
Being Minority	▼	▼	▼	-
Being LGBTQ+	▼	▼	▼	-

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Figure 3. Association between Sexual Misconduct Experiences and Outcomes

demographic variables also serve as a predictor to the outcomes controlling for sexual misconduct experiences. Significant predictors are reported with arrows in Figure 3.

Results in Figure 3 showed that across all kinds of sexual misconduct experiences, **sexual harassment** by students consistently and negatively predicts students' well-being measures whereas the other experiences predicted only one or no outcomes. Additionally, racially minoritized and LGBTQ+ students were related with lower level of academic, mental and physical outcomes above and beyond sexual misconduct experiences. In another set of analysis, each type of sexual misconduct experience was entered as the single predictor along with the demographic measures to predict each outcome measures. Results were consistent that racially minoritized and LGBTQ+ identity, in several cases, are more predictive of well-being than sexual misconduct experiences.

Interestingly, the outcome "campus climate" was only predicted by **sexual harassment** by faculty/staff and **dating violence**, but not any other predictors. This different pattern could be due to how campus climate, as an outcome, differ from the rest. All other outcomes are regarding the student: academic engagement, mental and physical health are all student-centered measures that involves students' feelings, emotions and judgements about themselves. On the other hand, campus climate is more of an external outcome that captures students' perception (not actual experience) on how Lasell would handle experiences (e.g. "Lasell University would maintain the privacy of the person making the report"). Thus, it is not surprising that events related to "faculty/staff", someone who represent the university, become the most powerful predictor of campus climate.

Students' experiences were also associated with alcohol use. Students who experienced **sexual violence** were over 2 times more likely to be drinking alcohol or using drugs during the incident than those who experienced **dating violence**. Perpetrators of **sexual violence** were also 2 times more likely to be using alcohol or drugs than perpetrators of **dating violence**. In addition, alcohol use increased in 20% of dating violence and sexual violence survivors.

In terms of reporting experiences, 43% (n=112) of the survivors talked to someone about their incidents. Among those 112 students, 82% talked to close friends, followed by roommates (53%), romantic partners (28%), and parents/legal guardians (22%). Only 13% percent reached out to on-campus counselors and Lasell faculty/staff. Rarely students would report the incidents to campus police (4%), residential life staff (4%), or the Office of Student Affairs (2%). Among those who reported the incidents to Lasell offices/staff, one third of the survivors found the offices were useful in helping them, one third of them indicted that the offices were not useful, and the last third were neutral.

### **Resources and Knowledge**

In this survey, students' knowledge was measured by the following scales. For knowledge on information and attendance, students indicated "yes" if they received certain information or participated in certain activities. For knowledge on report and awareness of resources, students indicated their level of awareness on a Likert scale.

- Knowledge on information specific to sexual misconduct
- Knowledge on reporting and getting help regarding sexual misconduct incidents
- Awareness on resources and offices (on and off campus) related to sexual misconduct

- Participation (passive and interactive) on events/programs about sexual misconduct issues

For **knowledge on information specific to sexual misconduct**, students were asked to indicate if they have received information since coming to Lasell on five items. Among them, the most well-received information is “Title IX protections against sexual misconduct” (57%). For the remaining four items, about half of the respondents indicated that they received the information at some point regarding how to act, report, prevent, and get help when a sexual misconduct incident happens.

For **knowledge on reporting and getting help**, students were asked to report their level of agreement on four statements. As shown in Figure 4, the majority of students are knowledgeable with respect to reporting sexual misconduct incidents but many of them do not know how to report or where to get help.

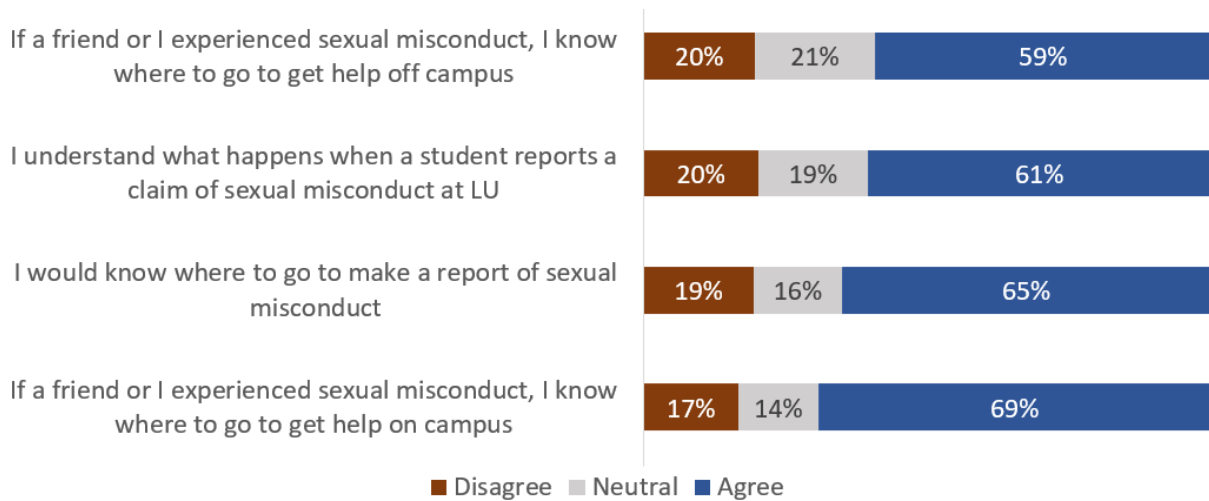


Figure 4. Knowledge on reporting and getting help regarding sexual misconduct incidents

When assessing students' **awareness of resources and offices**, a list of offices and services was provided and students are asked to indicate their level of awareness on them. According to Figure 5,

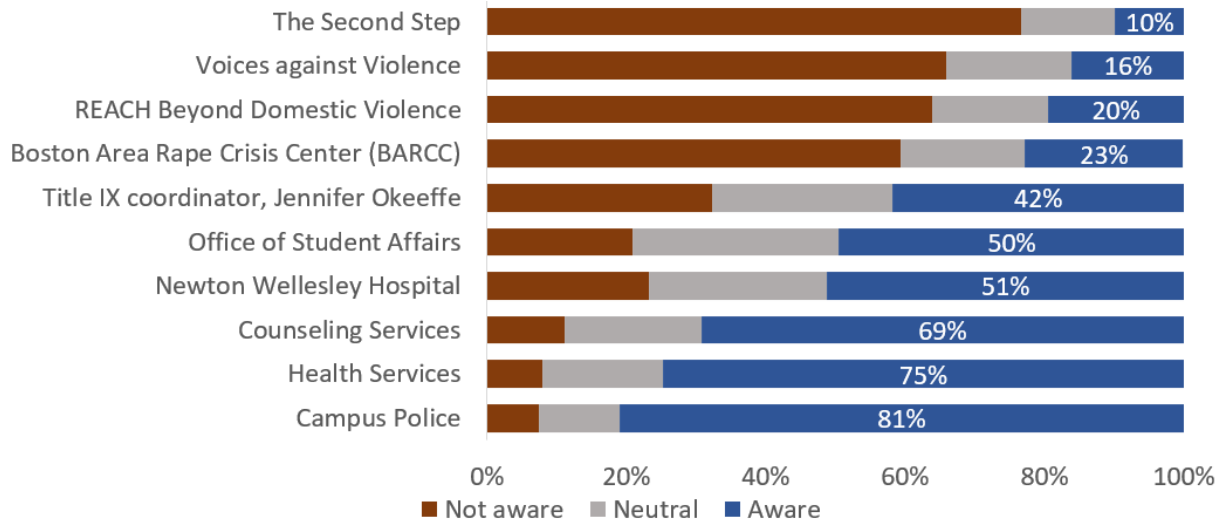


Figure 5. Awareness on Resources and Offices Related to Sexual Misconduct Issues

campus police, health services and counseling services are the most well-known offices with more than 70% of the respondent reported being aware of them, although respondents may know and work with them on issues other than sexual misconduct. As expected, some off-campus resources specific to sexual misconduct are least known.

The last area to assess is students' **participation in events/programs** related to sexual misconduct. Figures 6 and 7 shows percentage of students who participated in each event – events are categorized as passive or interactive. For instance, seeing a poster is categorized as “passive” whereas attending an event is regarded as “interactive” because the latter requires more agency and initiative to be part of the event. Across all listed events, half of the students indicated that they have seen posters regarding sexual misconduct at Lasell or discussed sexual misconduct issues with their friends. On the other hand, few of them took classes, attended events or volunteer at organizations that are related to sexual misconduct, which are all interactive events.

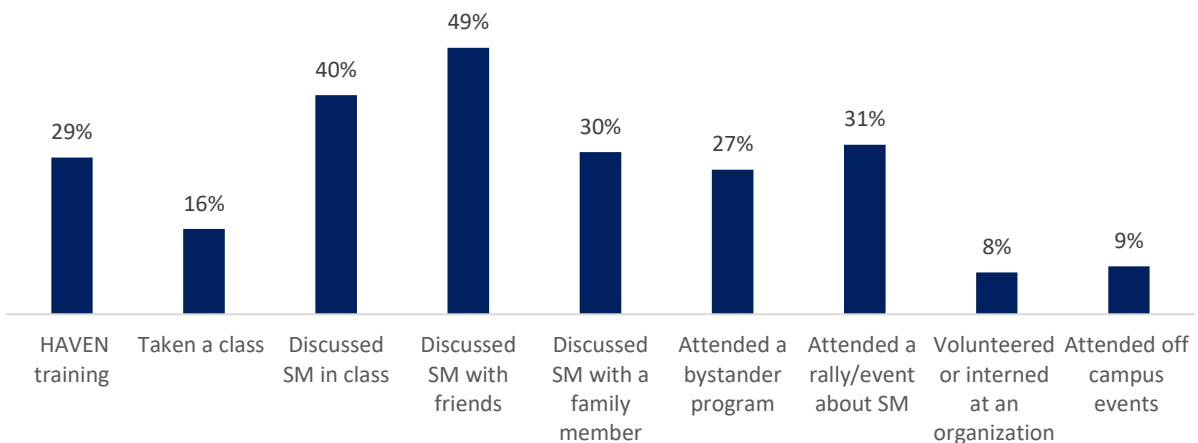


Figure 6. Attendance on **interactive** events/programs



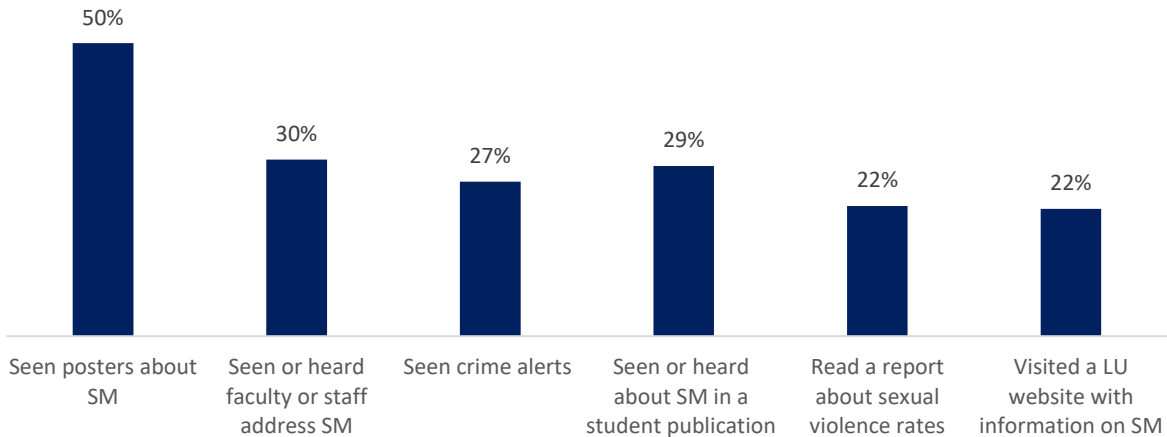


Figure 7. Attendance on *passive* events/programs

### Resources and Understanding of Consent and Bystander Behavior

To examine the association between students’ knowledge of resources and their understanding of consent as well as actual bystander behaviors, analyses were conducted as shown in Figure 8. All aspects of knowledge of resources and participation in activities were entered into the model as predictors, and peer norms, informational support, together with some demographic information were entered into the model as controls. The goal of such analysis is to find out if resources and knowledge provided by the institution would be predictive of students’ outcomes, when controlling the effects of peers and demographic background.

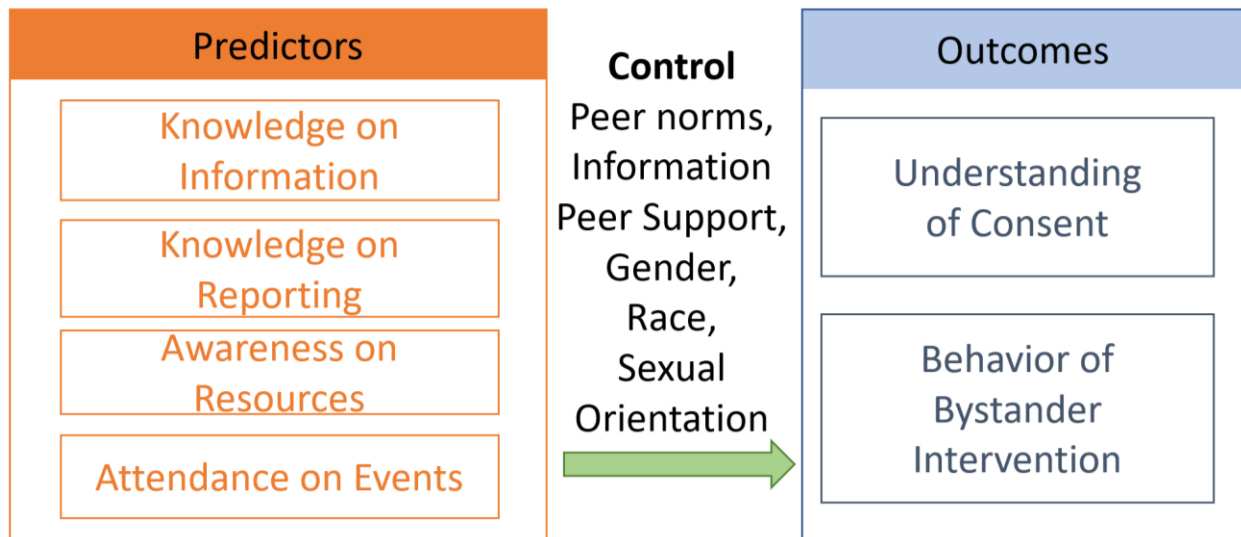


Figure 8. Analysis Framework on the Association between Knowledge on resources and outcomes

Students’ **understanding of consent** were measured using several statements (e.g. “Consent must be given at each step in a sexual activity”). Students used a Likert-scale to report their level of agreement to each statement then their consent score was calculated.

According to Figure 9, none of the predictors came out as significant when controlling for all other variables. However, peer norms and support both significantly associate students' understanding of consent. **Peer norms** examined how students perceived their friends would approve of certain behaviors related to sexual misconduct (e.g. liberal peer norms: "my friends would approve of having many sexual partners"; negative peer norms: "my friends would approve of insulting or swearing at sexual or romantic partners."). **Information Peer Support** asked students to report messages peers have communicated to them regarding treatment of romantic/sexual partners. One example item is that "my friends tell me that someone you are dating should have sex with you when you want". These results suggest that for college students, norms and information received from peers play such an important role in their views that institutional level information and resources do not seem to be competitive enough. When receiving conflicting information from peers and older adults such as university employees, students may tend to adopt the opinions provided by their peers. With these results in mind, it is reasonable to expect that institutional level resources and proper views will reach students through their peers.

	Consent
<b>Knowledge on Report</b>	-
<b>Knowledge on Information</b>	-
<b>Awareness on Resources</b>	-
<b>Attendance on Events - Passive</b>	-
<b>Attendance on Events - Interactive</b>	-
<b>Negative Peer Norms</b>	▼
<b>Liberal Peer Norms</b>	▲
<b>Informational Peer Support</b>	▼
<b>Being Female</b>	▲
<b>Being Minority</b>	-
<b>Being LGBTQ+</b>	-

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Figure 9. The association between Knowledge on resources and consent

To examine students' *behaviors as a bystander*, eight behaviors were listed and students reported the frequency of each. Across all list behaviors, the most frequent types of intervention were “spoke up against sexist comments” (72%) and “asked someone who looked very upset at a party if they are okay or need help” (71%). Across all students, 83% reported that they intervened at least once with one of the eight intervening behaviors.

Unlike students' understanding of consent, students' reported frequency of bystander behavior was predicted by their awareness of resources as well as their attendance on interactive events/programs. Peers and demographic background, however, did not play as important of a role, as shown in Figure 10. It is possible that receiving information on sexual misconduct issues and involving in interactive activities increase bystander behaviors. It is also possible that students who intervene when their friends are in danger are more likely to pay attention to potential resources and seek out opportunities to be involved in educational events related to sexual misconduct issues. Thus, associative results should be interpreted with caution as they do not guarantee causation. However, the university still needs to continue the current effort in providing learning opportunities and training materials to realize students' initiative and equip them with appropriate skills to execute intervening behaviors as a bystander.

	<b>Bystander Intervention</b>
<b>Knowledge on Report</b>	-
<b>Knowledge on Information</b>	-
<b>Awareness on Resources</b>	▲
<b>Attendance on Events - Passive</b>	-
<b>Attendance on Events - Interactive</b>	▲
<b>Negative Peer Norms</b>	-
<b>Liberal Peer Norms</b>	△
<b>Informational Peer Support</b>	-
<b>Being Female</b>	-
<b>Being Minority</b>	-
<b>Being LGBTQ+</b>	-

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Figure 10. The association between Knowledge on resources and bystander intervention

Within the area of campus resources, the 2021 survey included several questions on trauma-informed pedagogy that were not part of the 2017 survey. Across all survey respondents, about 43% confirmed that their professors educate, inform, or engage in conversation about trauma related issues. Students were asked to report if any particular strategies had been employed by their professors and if such strategies were needed in teaching. Figure 11 below indicated the “demand and supply” of each strategy that potentially could be helpful. For “provide on-campus resources for support”, 56% of students indicated that the strategy should be helpful but was not used and another 20% indicated that the strategy would be helpful and was also used. In a similar manner, the biggest gap, highlighted by the highest percentage of the lighter blue bar is found in areas such as “provides off-campus resources for support”, “offers or suggests self-care”, and “content/trigger warnings”. Although some course content does not relate to trauma directly, it is highly possible students are survivors of some formats of trauma and it is important to have faculty members prepared to work with students who are survivors.

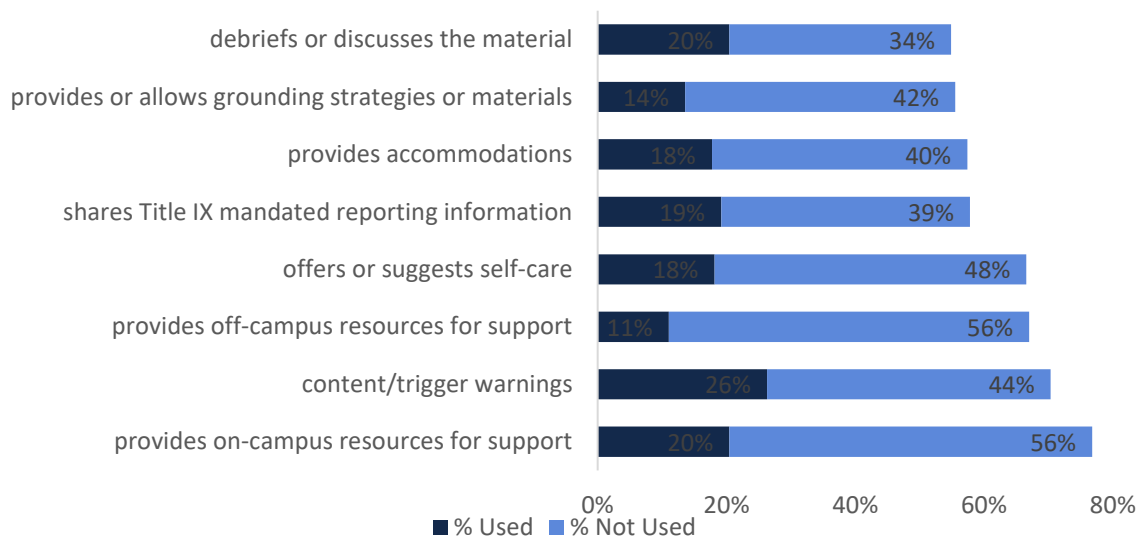


Figure 11. Trauma-informed pedagogy strategy need and usage (cumulative % indicates need)

### Longitudinal Comparison

One important mission of the 2021 survey is to compare the obtained data with the 2017 results, so that trends can be identified and best practices can be suggested. As a result, these following aspects become the key interest of comparison: incidents of sexual-misconduct experiences, knowledge of resources and participation in activities, and frequency of bystander intervention.

Before comparing 2017 and 2021 data, it is crucial to first compare the samples of the two years and establish whether these groups of students were comparable to each other. Analyses reveal several key differences between them. First, the response rate is significantly higher in 2021 (27% vs. 46%). Due to the length and sensitivity of this survey, it is reasonable to suggest that students with a particular

interest about sexual misconduct issues or friends of survivors of sexual misconduct incidents are more likely to complete this survey. This is otherwise known as self-selection bias and due to the lower response rate, may have a bigger impact on results in the 2017 survey. In the 2021 survey, we obtained data from almost half of the undergraduate student body, making the results more generalizable, but less comparable to the 2017 results. Because of the higher response rate and less perceived self-selection bias, we would expect lower frequency of sexual misconduct incidents, as well as a lower level of knowledge on a variety of resources and information. Besides overall response rate, there is a higher percentage of racially minoritized students (19% vs. 27%) and self-identified LGBTQ+ students (13% vs. 22%) in the 2021 sample, which relates to the change in demographics in the institution's population in that time. According to previous results, racially minoritized and LGBTQ+ students consistently associated with lower academic engagement, mental and physical health. More importantly, LGBTQ+ students are more likely to be survivors of various formats of sexual misconduct incidents. Thus, a more diverse yet representative sample calls for caution when interpreting comparative results and thinking about the best practices.

With all differences in mind, we compared the frequency of sexual-misconduct incidents. As expected, 76% of survey respondents reported being a survivor of any form of sexual misconduct in 2017 compared to 64% in 2021. Across all formats of sexual misconduct, percentages of survivors are lower in 2021, sexual harassment by other students (64% vs. 48%), dating violence (47% vs. 30%) and sexual violence (30% vs. 18%) show significant differences. These differences could be due to multiple factors – one is the self-selection bias, and the other could be limited contact and communication with other people because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In terms of students' knowledge of resources, a higher percentage of students are knowledgeable on how to report an incident (38% vs. 47%), Title IX Protections (50% vs 57%), and the student code of conduct (47% vs. and 60%) in 2021. These are good signs suggesting that students are more educated on Title IX-related issues, especially given the fact that the results were obtained from a more representative sample. Another aspect compared was students' attendance in interactive events or programs. Analysis show that there was no change on all activities except that percentage of students who received "HAVEN training" dropped from 57% to 29% - after talking to students, one potential explanation would be that the training changed its name and students who participated in the training under the new name did not relate their experience to HAVEN. These results acknowledge the effects of the campus-wide efforts in providing information related to sexual misconduct issues and highlighting the necessity of coming up with alternative approach to get students involved actively in educational programs and activities.

The last area for longitudinal comparison is students' bystander intervention. Overall, equal percentages of students intervened at least once (86% vs. 83%) when friends were in danger. When looking at each of the eight behaviors separately, a significant decrease is shown in seven out of eight behaviors. It is possible that students in the 2021 survey sample intervened, but not as frequently as they did in 2017. Similar to the interpretation of the decrease observed in frequency of sexual misconduct incidents, these differences might be caused by self-selection bias, limited opportunities to intervene as a bystander due to the pandemic, or some true differences in frequency of students' bystander behavior.

## Summary and Highlights of Results

Results from the 2021 survey suggest that the prevalence of sexual misconduct at Lasell is comparable to other universities. According to the Association of American Universities (AAU), 42% of respondents (undergraduate and graduate students) experienced sexual harassment in a 2019 survey, which was the most common form of sexual misconduct at Lasell (48%), too.

Besides frequency of experiences, results also indicate that being female, upper classman and LGBTQ+ is associated with a higher frequency of sexual misconduct incidents above and beyond other attributes. Demographic background, together with students' experience of sexual misconduct experiences, especially sexual harassment by peers, is associated with students' academic engagement, mental and physical health. As a result, programs that target specific populations may be more effective than generic educational programs, given that Lasell University hosts a higher percentage of females than males and a substantial number of LGBTQ+ students.

The survey also documented students' knowledge of resources and participation in various programs related to sexual misconduct issues. During orientation, all students received pamphlets and information around sexual misconduct resources. However, many survey respondents reported that these pieces of information were not retained for future reference. This suggests that when presenting information to students, quality is more important than quantity: receiving printed pamphlets full of text may not promote students to understand, retain and use any of the information that is meant to be helpful. Thus, Lasell needs to explore other methods to circulate information about available resources and promote participation in interactive programs related to sexual misconduct issues. In addition, results point out the huge influence of peers for college students: for understanding of consent, the predictive power of knowledge of resources and participation in activities is insignificant when peer norms and supports are included. However, it does not mean that these educational resources and activities are not helpful. Instead, they cultivate a campus culture that may shift students' opinions about sexual misconduct issues such as consent and norms, which in turn will influence how students behave when they are in danger themselves or they see someone else is in danger.

The 2021 results, when compared to data obtained in 2017, have revealed several main differences. One of them is that sample profile varied and thus the comparison needs to be interpreted with caution. The other key difference is a lower percentage of students reporting experiencing sexual misconduct incidents, accompanied by a lower frequency of reported bystander behavior.

## Action Steps

Lasell University actively uses its Campus Climate Survey results to improve its response to sexual misconduct by creating campaigns and prevention programming designed to address identified service and education gaps/needs revealed through trends and data reflected in the survey. Transparency and a proactive response is crucial in creating trust and safety in sexual and domestic violence intervention, prevention and education work. This year, because of the new sequencing of the survey, Professor Karin Raye's Sexual Violence class was able to isolate specific topics that they felt warranted an expedited review by Chen Shen and Eric Lanthier in Institutional Research. The class then used the data results to formulate a targeted campaign that addressed knowledge gaps around Consent and available on and off campuses resources. The students developed a dynamic University-wide poster campaign focused on consent and the acronym FRIES (freely given, reversible, informed, enthusiastic,

specific) to teach the definition of consent. The posters feature students and catch phrased “FRIES” designs as well as resource sheets to normalize and educate the Lasell community and address the identified information gaps. The students targeted men’s, women’s and gender-neutral bathrooms to hang more than 500 posters as a way for students to safely view and absorb the information. The students also created a social media campaign and presented their posters during symposium to broaden their reach, particularly to our online students.

Throughout the 2021-2022 academic year, Professor Raye’s Advanced DV/SV students, CJ303 Domestic Violence class and Lasell’s Title IX interns will continue to examine and respond to the results of the survey by designing an action plan comprised of targeted trainings, educational opportunities, social media efforts and prevention campaigns that address identified issues or gaps in our services and education efforts. Lasell University optimizes the impact of the survey through this work- not only do the surveys capture and reflect Lasell’s current climate around sexual violence, domestic violence, stalking, sexual harassment and more, but the surveys also guide and influence our prevention and education programming for the ensuing years.