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HARVARD



PEGGY NEWELL

DEPUTY PROVOST
HARVARD UNIVERSITY OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

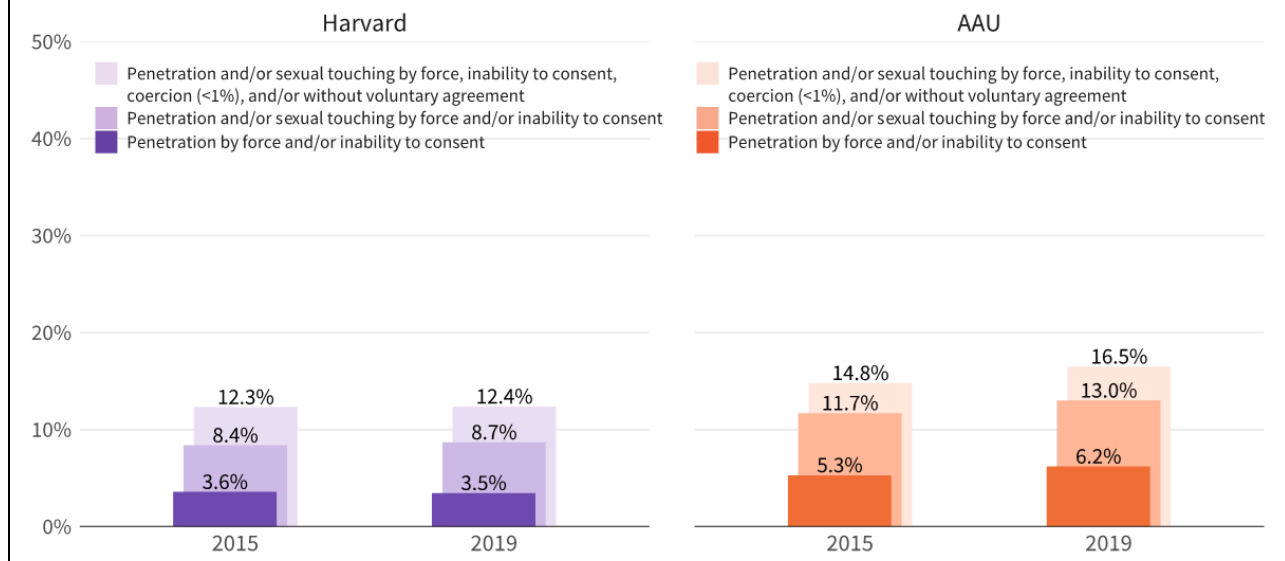
Dear President Bacow,

As co-chairs of the Steering Committee for the recent Harvard 2019 AAU Student Survey on Sexual Assault & Misconduct, we are writing to you to summarize the survey's results and to make recommendations for further action. First, we would like to express our thanks to the many members of the Harvard community who were involved in this effort.

Collaborating with 32 other AAU institutions on developing the survey instrument, administering the survey across 12 Schools at Harvard, promoting participation, analyzing and interpreting results, working with all of the Schools and their constituencies, and organizing a Town Hall meeting to present and discuss the survey results have involved the tireless efforts of many people, from the Title IX Office, to the Steering Committee, to Harvard Public Affairs & Communications, to the Institutional Research Office, to individual Schools, staff, students, and faculty. This was a community-wide effort and we are grateful to everyone who contributed. Most importantly, thank you to all of the students at Harvard and across the AAU who responded to the survey, sharing their time and, for many, details of their personal experiences of sexual assault and harassment.

When the inaugural AAU survey was conducted four years ago, Harvard had only recently implemented its University-wide Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment Policy, hired its first University-wide Title IX Officer, and created the Office for Dispute Resolution to investigate formal complaints. We knew that we had a lot of work ahead of us, and the Harvard 2015 AAU survey results confirmed this. Since then, considerable resources have been dedicated both within Central Administration and at the Schools to address this issue. While there are reasons to be optimistic that our efforts are having an impact, the results of the Harvard 2019 AAU survey suggest that there is still much work to be done. The prevalence of nonconsensual sexual contact at Harvard appears from this survey to be unchanged since 2015. Across AAU participating institutions, prevalence has risen slightly. (see Table 1).

Table 1 - Students Who Reported Experiencing Nonconsensual Sexual Contact Since Entering School



Undergraduates reported higher rates of nonconsensual sexual contact than graduate or professional students. Students identifying as women, as gender minorities, and as mixed race also reported higher rates of nonconsensual sexual contact.

The majority of penetration and sexual touching involving physical force or inability to consent, for both undergraduate and graduate students, is student to student (see Table 2). Roughly three-quarters of these incidents involve alcohol (see Table 3). The most frequently cited location is on-campus housing (see Tables 4 & 5).

Table 2 - Reported Offender Association with Harvard for Incidents of Penetration and/or Sexual Touching Involving Physical Force and/or Inability to Consent

How (is the person/are the persons) who did this to you associated with Harvard? (Mark all that apply)

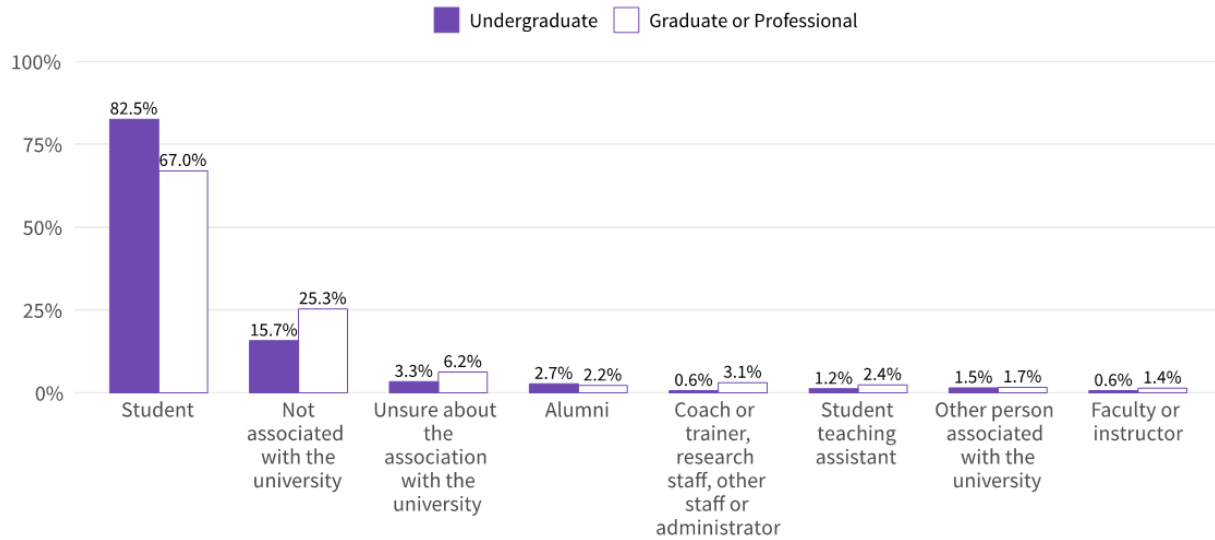


Table 3 - Reported Alcohol Use for Incidents of Penetration and/or Sexual Touching with Physical Force and/or Inability to Consent

Alcohol use

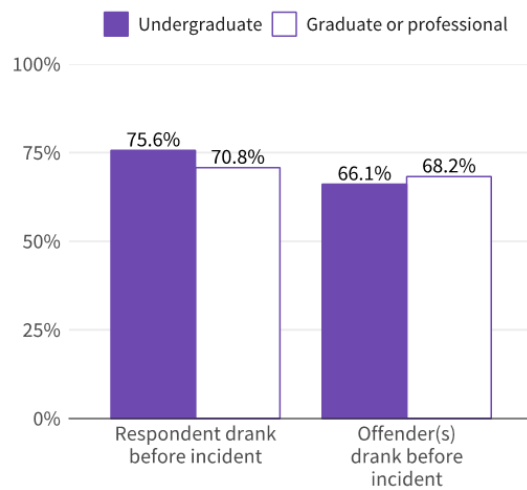


Table 4 - Reported Incident and Leadup Locations for Incidents of Penetration or Sexual Touching by Physical Force and/or Inability to Consent, Undergraduate

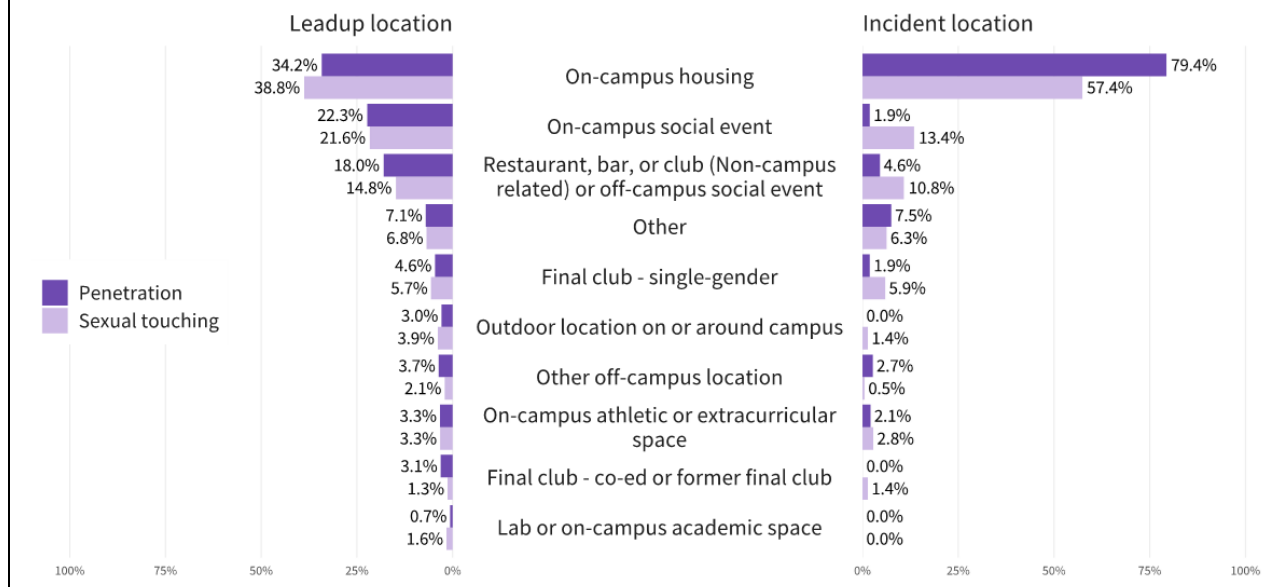
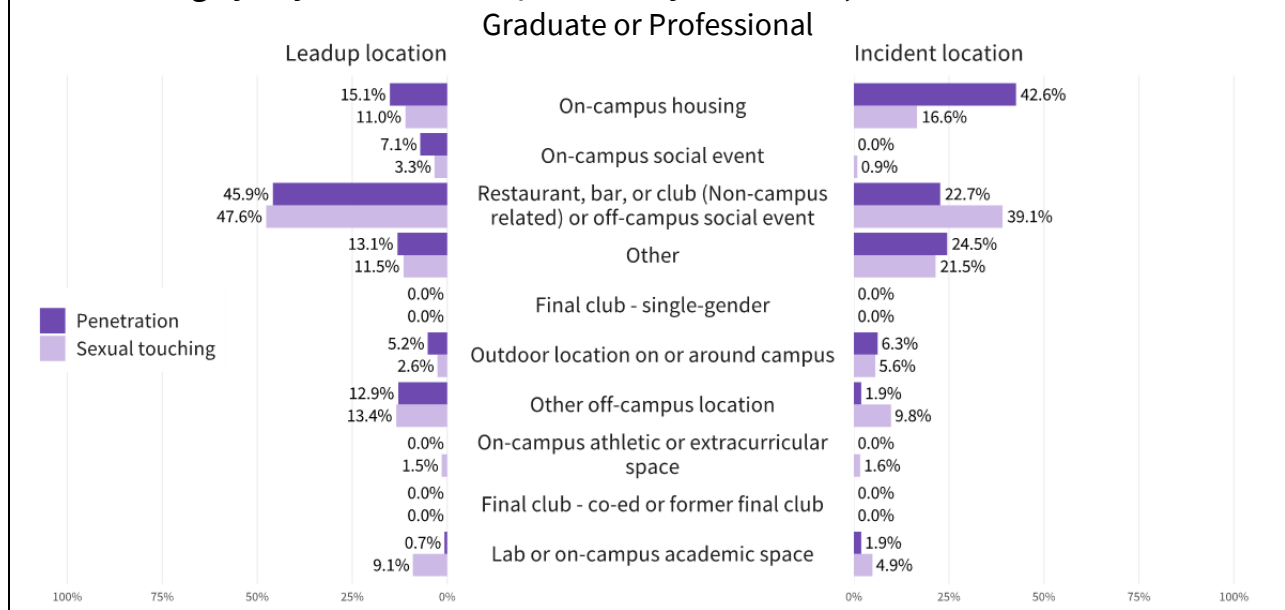
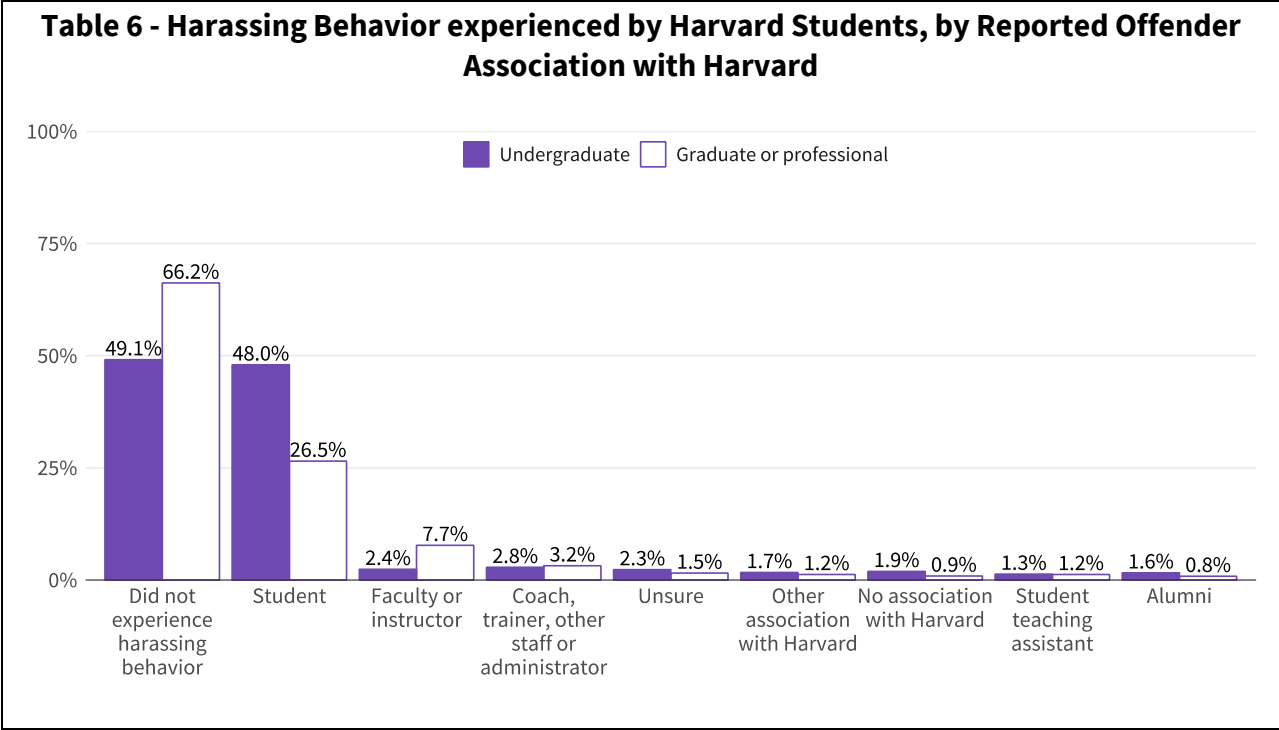


Table 5 - Reported Incident and Leadup Locations for Incidents of Penetration or Sexual Touching by Physical Force and/or Inability to Consent, Graduate or Professional



In the area of harassment, due to changes to the AAU survey, we are unable to make a valid comparison between data gathered in 2015 and 2019. The most recent data, however, shows that gender-based harassment remains a significant concern at Harvard and across

the AAU. Undergraduate women and students identifying as gender minorities experience the highest rates of harassment, with 32.2% and 43.7%, respectively, experiencing harassment that limited, interfered, or created a hostile environment. As with nonconsensual sexual contact, the majority of sexual harassment experienced by our students is carried out by other students. While both undergraduate and graduate students most frequently cited other students as the individuals engaging in the harassment, 7.7% of graduate students experienced harassment involving faculty or instructors engaging in harassing behavior (see Table 6).



Knowledge of support services and belief in the fairness of University processes for investigating reports of nonconsensual sexual contact and sexual harassment have both risen since 2015, but less than half our students feel very or extremely knowledgeable about support services on campus and less than half of our students believe that the outcome of University processes related to reports of sexual misconduct will be fair.

In spite of heightened attention to nonconsensual sexual contact and sexual harassment in society, in the media, and at Harvard, only a minority of students experiencing nonconsensual sexual contact or sexual harassment access any of the resources available on campus. For incidents involving penetration with force or inability to consent, the most commonly cited reason for not accessing any campus support services is that the incident “wasn’t serious enough.” If students who experience sexual assault are getting the message that it’s not serious, clearly, we need to do better as an institution and as a community.

The steady and high rate of nonconsensual sexual contact experienced by Harvard students calls for a cultural change across our community. This can only come about through shared

efforts by students, the administration, faculty, and staff. Mutual respect is a foundation for safety and thriving at Harvard. Research shows that sexual assault and sexual harassment harm not only the individuals involved, but also witnesses, friendships, workgroups, and organizations. A climate of tolerance, suggested by perceptions that complaints won't be taken seriously, is a strong predictor of sexual harassment and assault. We can and must work together to reduce the prevalence of sexual assault and gender-based harassment within our community.

We need to address students' reluctance to access support services on campus, including peer support, and work together to create a trusted support system for students who have experienced sexual assault. Roughly 65% of Harvard students believe that complaints will be taken seriously. We must examine and adapt our practices to ensure students trust that the University takes every complaint of nonconsensual sexual contact and sexual harassment seriously. Students and the University need to work together to make it clear that sexual assault is both serious and unacceptable. Simultaneously, we need to respect students' agency and preference for seeking support from family and friends, and acknowledge the effectiveness of this approach.

Many students have shared that while they are interested in seeking support, they are concerned about revealing their identity to administrators. In response to feedback from students, just last week, the University launched an online anonymous disclosure tool for incidents of sexual and gender-based harassment. This tool allows community members to communicate with the University Title IX Office without revealing their identity unless and until they are ready. The online anonymous disclosure tool was built in collaboration and partnership with many students, staff, and faculty, and we are grateful for their support and dedication to this effort. We are hopeful that this is one small step to building much needed trust within our community.

Research tells us that diverse and inclusive leadership is critical in reducing sexual assault and harassment. Harvard has made recent progress, with six women serving as School deans, including four women of color. The University needs to continue to increase gender and racial diversity and inclusion among faculty and campus leaders.

Research also tells us that bystander training – done well, widely, and consistently – can help reduce prevalence of sexual assault and harassment. Calling out sexual misconduct when it's observed can reduce the likelihood of escalation in that specific incident and affect the culture more broadly by sending the message that sexual misconduct is not accepted by peers. Harvard has recently begun implementing bystander intervention training. Survey results confirmed the need for this training, finding that most Harvard students who have observed situations involving sexual harassment or the potential for sexual assault report taking some action, though seldom direct action. We need to improve and increase willingness and capacity on the part of students, staff and faculty to interrupt and intervene when inappropriate behavior occurs. Every person in our community can be an agent for social change. We — faculty, staff, and students — are accountable for our bystander roles.

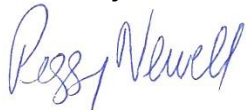
Training and other efforts need to be widespread. But it's also critical that efforts are tailored to the audience and that we listen and learn from students at increased risk, including students who identify as women, gender minorities, and mixed race.

Survey results indicate that alcohol use by both parties is often involved in sexual assault. Approximately 75% of all incidents of nonconsensual sexual contact involve alcohol. This is roughly the same proportion found in study after study conducted in universities and workplaces. We must acknowledge and confront the co-occurrence of alcohol and sexual assault on our campus.

Title IX, and the ways it's been interpreted by the courts and administrative guidelines, assumes targets of sexual assault and harassment will report incidents. This expectation of reporting is not supported by past evidence or the results of the survey at Harvard or across the 33 participating institutions. Formal policies and mechanisms for responding to reports of sexual assault and harassment are absolutely necessary, and the administration must take steps to increase student trust in the University's support services and investigations. But legal compliance, formal policies and procedures, and student trust in University procedures are far from sufficient means for reducing the prevalence of sexual assault and harassment in our community. Meaningful reductions rely on cultural and behavioral change among all the members of the community, to increase prevention, support, and accountability. We need to work together to prevent sexual assault and harassment, support community members who experience sexual assault and harassment, and ensure accountability when incidents are reported – all together, as a community.

Thank you for your support of this survey and for your support of the programs that have been implemented to address the concerns raised in the results. The commitment of our students and University leadership is essential to our ability to work as a community to make Harvard an inclusive environment where everyone can do their best work, free of sexual assault and gender-based harassment.

Sincerely,



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