



Survey Results: 2014 Community Attitudes on Sexual Assault

In Spring 2014, President Reif charged Chancellor Barnhart with exploring and understanding how sexual assault affects the MIT community. Chancellor Barnhart gathered information through a variety of formats, including a survey administered to all MIT graduate and undergraduate students. The purpose of the survey was to understand students' perceptions and opinions about different types of social behavior, and their experiences with sexual assault and sexual misconduct. The survey instrument was developed by a team of MIT community members who adapted questions from several studies on related topics conducted at other universities. This document is a summary of the most pertinent results corresponding to questions asked in the survey; it is intended to be an *initial* summary of survey results. Throughout the upcoming academic year we will work with the community to use the survey data to answer additional important questions. New findings will be posted to web.mit.edu/surveys/health/, where the full text of the survey questions and other related information can also be found.

The survey was sent to all enrolled MIT students, yielding a total response rate of 35%, with the following response rates by gender and enrollment status:

Response Rate	Invited	Responding	% Responding
Female undergraduate students	2,001	914	46%
Male undergraduate students	2,399	846	35%
Female graduate students	2,032	748	37%
Male graduate students	4,399	1,336	30%
Total	10,831	3,844	35%

Breakouts in this document are generally provided by gender (male, female) and student type (undergraduate, graduate). Breakouts for students who identified as transgender or other genders are provided only once in this document to protect the privacy of the small sample size.

The document is organized into the following sections:

1. Student Attitudes and Views
2. Sexual Misconduct
3. Bystander Actions & Institute Resources

TRIGGER WARNING: Some of the questions asked in this survey used explicit language, including anatomical names of body parts and specific behaviors to ask about sexual situations. This survey also asked about sexual assault and other forms of sexual violence that might be upsetting. The results might remind you of experiences that you, or a friend or family member, have gone through. If you would like to talk to someone immediately about questions or concerns relating to sexual assault or intimate partner violence, please visit or contact one of the following 24-hour resources:

- MIT Violence Prevention and Response (VPR): mit.edu/wecanhelpr, 617-253-2300 (24-hour hotline)
- Boston Area Rape Crisis Center (BARCC): www.barcc.org, 800-841-8371
- MIT Medical/Mental Health: medweb.mit.edu, 617-253-4481

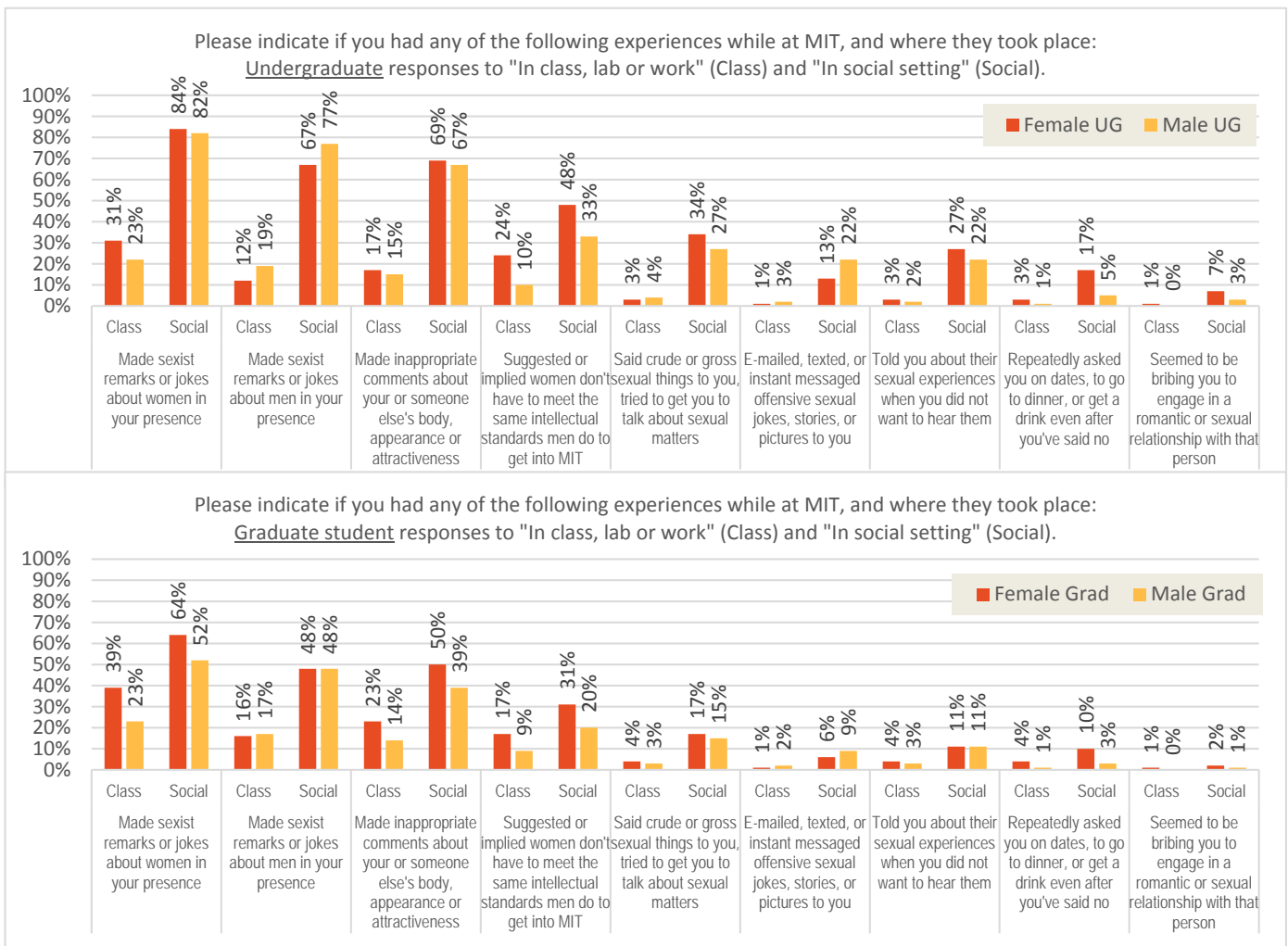
1. Student Attitudes and Views

Participants were asked a series of questions about MIT culture, including their own opinions and their perceptions of other community members' attitudes and views.

- More than 8 out of 10 (78% of female respondents and 85% of male respondents) agree or strongly agree that MIT students respect each other's personal space.
- More than 9 out of 10 respondents (91% of female respondents and 89% of male respondents) agree or strongly agree that their friends would watch out for them at a party or social event if it seemed like something bad might happen.
- More than 9 out of 10 respondents (91% of female respondents and 94% of male respondents) agree or strongly agree that most MIT students would respect someone who did something to prevent a sexual assault.

Experiences at MIT

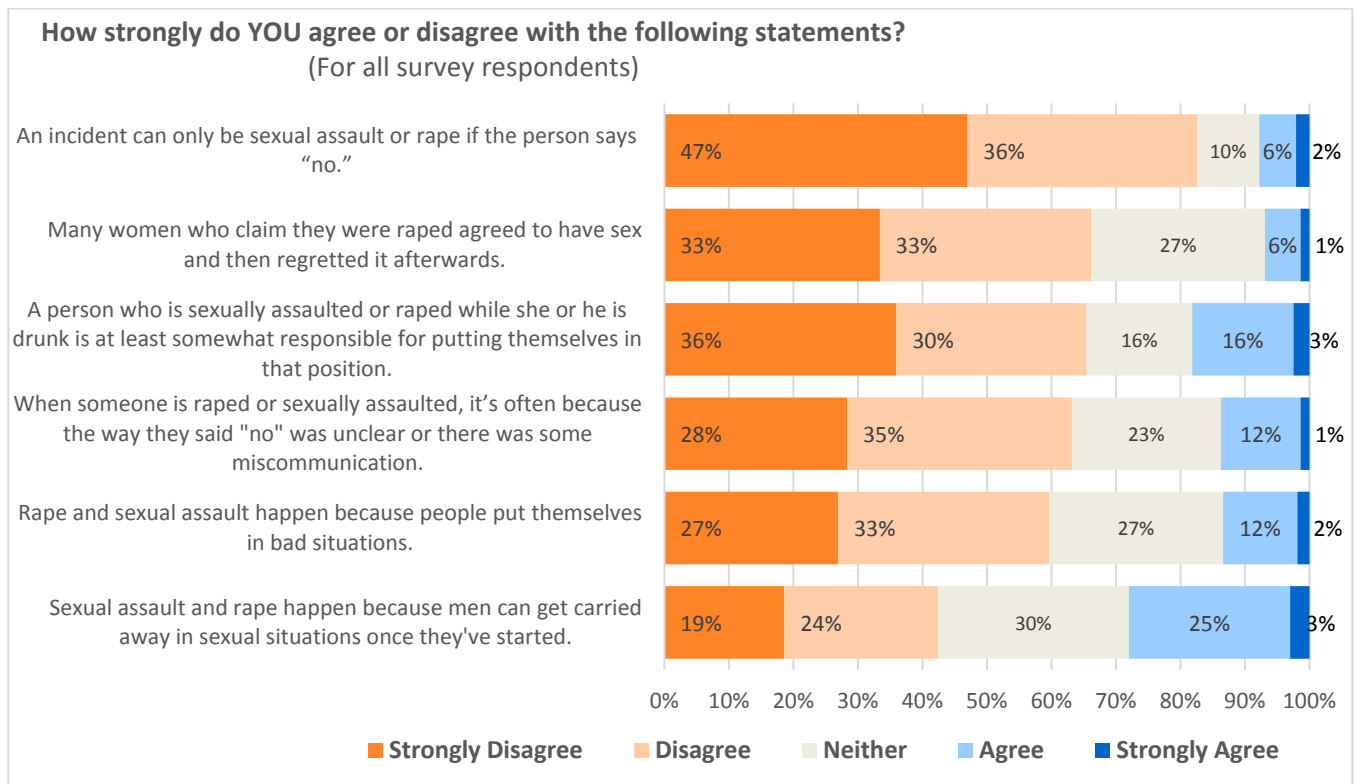
Participants were asked if they had experienced any of the following while at MIT in class, lab or work, social settings or elsewhere at MIT. Undergraduate respondents more often indicated having these experiences than graduate students, and all respondents indicated experiencing these most often in social settings at MIT.



Attitudes at MIT

Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with a set of statements about rape and sexual assault.

- Virtually all respondents (98% of female respondents, 96% of male respondents) agree or strongly agree that it is important to get consent before sexual activity.
- Three-fourths of respondents (73% of female respondents, 76% of male respondents) agree or strongly agree that they feel confident in their ability to judge if a person is too intoxicated to consent.
- More than half of respondents (53% of female respondents, 53% of male respondents) agree or strongly agree that “Rape and sexual assault can happen unintentionally, especially if alcohol is involved.” For the same question, 67% of undergraduates and 41% of graduate students agree or strongly agree.



- 20% of female undergraduate respondents and 25% of male undergraduate respondents agree or strongly agree with the statement “When someone is raped or sexually assaulted, it’s often because the way they said ‘no’ was unclear or there was some miscommunication.”
- 15% of female undergraduate respondents and 25% of male undergraduate respondents agree or strongly agree that “A person who is sexually assaulted or raped while she or he is drunk is at least somewhat responsible for putting themselves in that position.”
- 31% of female undergraduate respondents and 35% of male undergraduate respondents agree or strongly agree that sexual assault and rape happen because men can get carried away in sexual situations once they’ve started.

2. Sexual Misconduct

The survey asked respondents two sets of questions regarding unwanted sexual experiences since coming to MIT. The first asked if they had been sexually harassed, raped or sexually assaulted (referred to below as “labeled experiences”), and the second set of questions asked if they had experienced a variety of specific unwanted sexual behaviors, including attempted and completed. In total, 539 respondents indicated having experienced some form of unwanted sexual behavior including 284 undergraduate female respondents, 94 undergraduate male respondents, 102 graduate female respondents, 49 graduate male respondents, and 10 transgender or other-gendered respondents. (Further breakouts for students who identified as transgender or other genders are not included in this document to protect the privacy of the small sample size.)

Labeled Experiences

Participants were asked about a series of “labeled” unwanted sexual experiences. These questions included commonly used terms, and did not define these terms (except for “sexual harassment” which included a hover text explanation), allowing respondents to apply their own interpretations. Overall, 8% indicated being either sexually harassed, sexually assaulted, and/or raped.

Table 2.1 Respondents indicating that they experienced each of the following while at MIT:	Female Undergrad		Male Undergrad		Female Grad Student		Male Grad Student	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Been stalked, followed, or received repeated unwanted messages, texts, emails, etc. from someone that made him or her uncomfortable	14%	109	2%	16	9%	58	3%	27
Been in a relationship that was controlling or abusive (physically, sexually, psychologically, emotionally, or financially)	8%	67	4%	28	4%	26	2%	24
Been sexually harassed (Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal conduct of a sexual nature...or if conduct creates a hostile environment)	15%	122	4%	25	7%	47	2%	22
Been sexually assaulted	10%	81	2%	13	3%	19	1%	6
Been raped	5%	38	1%	5	1%	5	0%	2

Each labeled experience was asked as a separate question; respondents could indicate experiencing more than one of these.

Sexual Assault

For this section, participants were asked about a series of specific unwanted sexual behaviors that they may have experienced while at MIT. Respondents could indicate that they had experienced multiple unwanted behaviors, even if they occurred in a single incident.

In Table 2.2, we summarize the unwanted sexual behaviors experienced at MIT by respondents who indicated that one or more of these experiences involved the use of force or a weapon (5%), threat of physical harm (1%), or incapacitation (being taken advantage of while too drunk, high, asleep or out of it – 44%). Out of 3,232 male and female respondents answering the behavioral questions, 6.5% (208 respondents) indicated one or more unwanted sexual behaviors involving force, physical threat, or incapacitation.

Table 2.2 Experience of unwanted sexual behaviors while at MIT, involving use of force, physical threat, or incapacitation:	Female Undergrad		Male Undergrad		Female Grad Student		Male Grad Student	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Total respondents experiencing one or more of the following:*	17%	133	5%	32	5%	30	1%	13
Sexual touching or kissing	15%	121	4%	28	4%	28	1%	13
Attempted oral sex	6%	49	2%	13	2%	12	0%	5
Oral sex	3%	28	1%	8	1%	6	0%	1
Attempted sexual penetration	7%	60	1%	6	1%	9	0%	2
Sexual penetration	6%	46	0%	1	1%	8	0%	0

* Each sexual behavior was asked as a separate question; respondents could indicate experiencing more than one of these. This table does not include respondents who indicated a labeled experience, but who did not indicate a specific unwanted sexual behavior.

Sexual Misconduct

In this section we report the incidence of sexual misconduct, measured here as the number of respondents who experienced sexual assault, sexual harassment, or other unwanted sexual behaviors while at MIT. Respondents could indicate more than one of these, even if they occurred in a single incident.

Table 2.3 Total number of respondents experiencing sexual harassment, rape, sexual assault, and other unwanted sexual behaviors while at MIT:	Female Undergrad		Male Undergrad		Female Grad Student		Male Grad Student	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Total respondents experiencing one or more of the following:*	35%	284	14%	94	16%	102	5%	49
Been sexually harassed (Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal conduct of a sexual nature...or if conduct creates a hostile environment) from Table 2.1	15%	122	4%	25	7%	47	2%	22
Been sexually assaulted or raped, combined from Table 2.1	11%	91	2%	14	3%	19	1%	6
Sexual Assault: Experience of unwanted sexual behaviors while at MIT, involving use of force, physical threat, or incapacitation from Table 2.2	17%	133	5%	32	5%	30	1%	13
Unwanted Sexual Behavior—sexual touching or kissing, oral sex or sexual penetration (attempted or completed)—not involving force, physical threat, or incapacitation and did not indicate they had been sexually assaulted or raped (by labels in Table 2.1)	12%	100	6%	44	7%	44	2%	25

Engaging in Unwanted Sexual Behavior

When survey participants were asked about their behavior towards others, 1.9% of the respondents said they had acted in a way that would be considered unwanted sexual behavior, and another 2.2% indicated they were unsure if they had behaved in this way. More than one in five undergraduate respondents indicated knowing a perpetrator.

Reporting

Close to two-thirds (63%) of respondents who indicated they had an unwanted sexual experience at MIT told someone else about the incident(s), but fewer than 5% reported the experience(s) to someone in an official capacity.

- Respondents who told someone about their experiences were most likely to tell a friend (90%), family (19%), or a medical professional (13%).
- For the 5% of respondents who did report the experience to someone in an official capacity, the MIT resource most often contacted was Violence Prevention and Response (VPR).
- 90% of the respondents who told someone or reported an unwanted sexual experience received at least one response that made them feel supported.
- Respondents who indicated they had experienced an unwanted sexual behavior were asked if any thoughts or concerns crossed their mind when deciding whether or not to share their experience. Of those responding:
 - 72% did not think the incident(s) was serious enough to officially report
 - 55% indicated it was not clear harm was intended
 - 47% did not want any action to be taken (i.e. arrests, legal action, disciplinary action)
 - 44% felt that they were at least partly at fault or it wasn't totally the other person's fault

Specific Incident: Locations, Perpetrators and Impacts

Respondents were asked follow-up questions about a specific incident of unwanted sexual behavior at MIT. Because respondents may have experienced more than one incident of unwanted sexual behavior, survey takers were instructed to respond to this section about the single experience at MIT “that has impacted or affected you the most.”

Specific incidents of unwanted sexual experiences while at MIT were reported for undergraduates as occurring primarily on campus— in residential buildings or in other MIT-affiliated housing such as fraternities, sororities, or independent living groups, with more than 80% of female and male undergraduate respondents who experienced an unwanted sexual behavior indicating that the incident(s) took place on the MIT campus. Close to half of the graduate student respondents (47%) indicated that the incident(s) took place off campus.

Most (72%) respondents indicated that another MIT student was responsible for the unwanted sexual behavior. Almost all female respondents (98%) who reported an unwanted sexual behavior indicated the perpetrators were males. The male respondents who reported an unwanted sexual behavior indicated the perpetrators were either males (35%) or females (67%). Of those who indicated experiencing an unwanted sexual behavior, 9% had no prior relationship with the perpetrator and did not know or were unsure if the person was affiliated with MIT. 40% of female and male undergraduate respondents indicated the perpetrator was a friend.

Survey participants were asked about the impact of their experience with unwanted sexual behavior. Questions ranged from symptoms of post-traumatic stress to disruptions in eating, sleeping and taking care of oneself, including substance abuse, suicidal ideation, and negative effects on academic work. Of the respondents who indicated an unwanted sexual experience at MIT, the most common impacts included being unable to work or complete assignments (35%), being unable to eat (30%), loss of interest in intimacy or sex (36%), and grades dropping (29%)

3. Community Behaviors & Use of Institute Resources

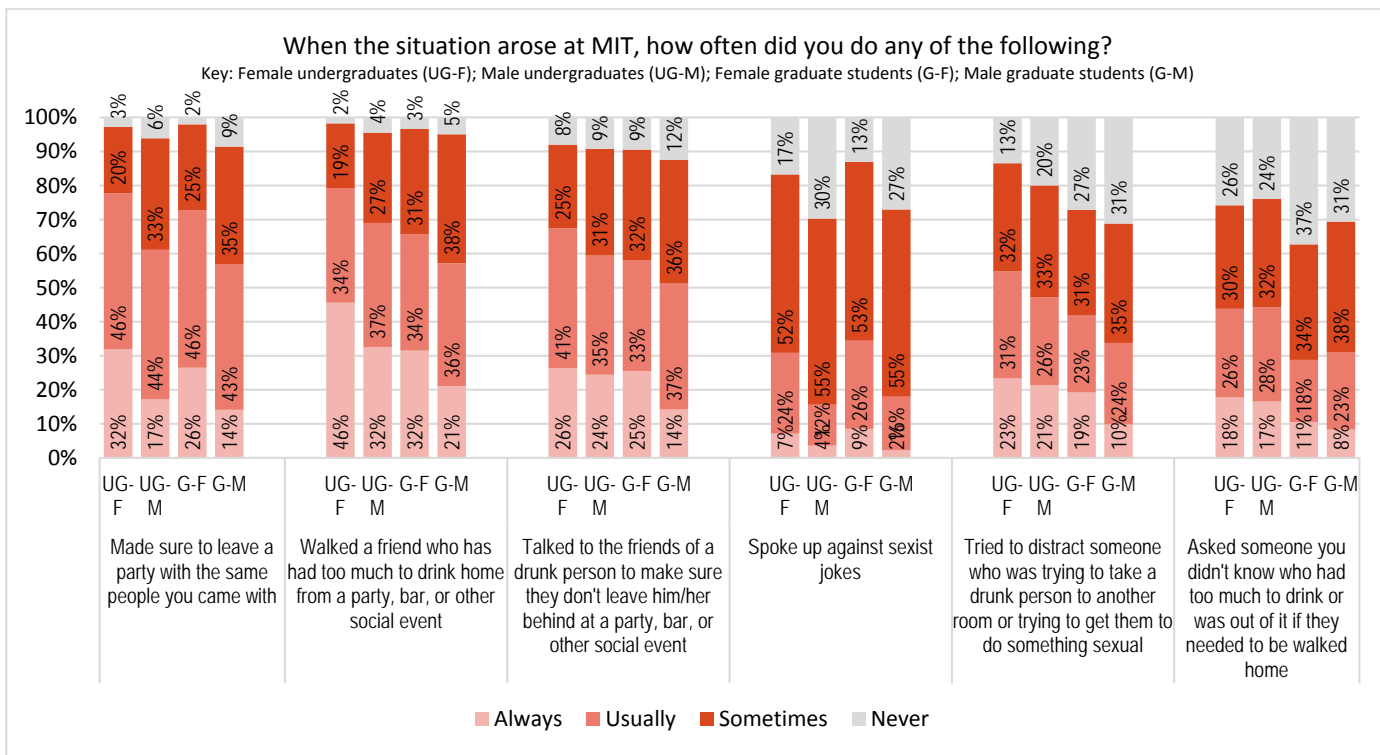
Bystander Actions

Virtually all (97%) respondents agree they would respect someone who did something to prevent sexual assault.

Over half (56%) of the respondents who knew a perpetrator did not confront the person about their behaviors or take any action. Of those who indicated they took action, 38% said they spoke to the person about their behavior, and 4% reported it to an MIT employee or the police.

Respondents indicated a variety of reasons for not taking any action including not knowing the person well enough, not having enough proof to act, someone else having already reported it, the victim not wanting action taken, and/or not wanting anyone else to know about what had happened.

82% of respondents reported taking at least one protective action “always or usually”, including making sure to leave a party with the same people they come with, or offering to walk an intoxicated friend home. 70% of undergraduate respondents “always or usually” make sure to leave a party with the same people they came with, while 50% of females and 59% of males do not usually try to distract someone who is trying to take a drunk person to do something sexual.



Excludes “No, situation has not arisen”.

Institute and Local Resources

Students were asked if they would use a variety of Institute resources if they were sexually assaulted in the future. The top resources that respondents indicated they would use were MIT Medical (84% of respondents), MIT Mental Health (76% of respondents), and MIT Police (72% of respondents).

Percentage of respondents indicating they would use each resource if assaulted in the future:	Female Undergrad	Male Undergrad	Female Grad Student	Male Grad Student
Confidential Resources				
Violence Prevention Response (VPR)	57%	39%	37%	25%
MIT Mental Health	77%	71%	84%	73%
MIT Medical	80%	78%	94%	86%
MIT Chaplains	8%	11%	9%	12%
The Ombuds Office	5%	7%	19%	16%
Local Rape Crisis Center	30%	24%	39%	32%
Private Resources				
Title IX Coordinator	14%	9%	10%	7%
Residential Life Staff (Housemasters, GRTs, Ads, RAs, FSILG staff)	46%	48%	17%	19%
Student Support Services (S3)	74%	71%	n/a	n/a
Office of Dean of Graduate Education (ODGE)	n/a	n/a	27%	21%
Reducing and Easing Friction and Stress (REFS)	n/a	n/a	13%	13%
Resources for Filing a Formal Complaint				
MIT Police	58%	66%	82%	82%
Local Police	27%	34%	62%	66%
Office of Student Citizenship	4%	8%	4%	5%

Potential Response Bias and Comparing Results

Response bias is expected in virtually any voluntary survey, particularly one focused on a narrow topic. While we invited all enrolled graduate and undergraduate students to take this survey, and more than one-third responded, it is not possible to know if students self-selected in or out of the survey in a way that would bias our results. For example, it is difficult to determine whether students who have experienced sexual assault were more or less likely to respond to the survey. This does not make the findings from the survey any less accurate; it simply means that the rates based on those who responded to the survey cannot be extrapolated to the MIT student population as a whole, and cannot be validly compared to results from other surveys.

Additional Information

For more information about the survey, please visit web.mit.edu/surveys/health.

MIT's policies on preventing and addressing sexual misconduct are available on titleix.mit.edu.

If you have ideas now about how MIT can reduce the incidence of unwanted sexual behavior on campus and improve the support the Institute offers when it does occur, please contact stop-assault@mit.edu.