

Report on the Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

March 2022

Brigham Young University is a faith-based academic institution committed to “the balanced development of the total person”—intellectually, physically, socially, spiritually, and emotionally—in an environment “sustained by those moral virtues which characterize the life and teachings of the Son of God” (BYU Mission Statement). Sexual assault and dating/domestic violence violate fundamental principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which principles are integral to BYU’s educational environment. Furthermore, the university’s primary concern is the safety and well-being of its students and the overall well-being of the campus community. Therefore, BYU’s commitment to the elimination of sexual assault and dating/domestic violence on campus is mandated by the precepts of our faith, is consistent with our institutional purpose, and is essential to protecting our students.

In the spring of 2016, the university administration formed the Advisory Council on Campus Response to Sexual Assault to study the handling of sexual assault reporting and investigation at BYU and to recommend improvements. After reviewing the available information, the Advisory Council recognized the need to survey students to gather information about the campus climate with regard to sexual assault. Such surveys have been conducted by many universities and are recommended by advocacy groups, experts, and government agencies. The first online survey was conducted in Spring 2017. The survey was repeated in Spring 2021.

The BYU survey was designed to assess the following key topics:

- ♦ incidents of sexual misconduct;
- ♦ student attitudes toward the Title IX Office;
- ♦ student perceptions of the campus climate;
- ♦ student participation in training regarding sexual assault, student awareness of resources for responding to sexual assault, and willingness of students to act to prevent or resolve incidents of sexual assault; and
- ♦ suggestions for making BYU safer.

It should be noted that the campus climate in 2021 was unique in a number of ways. For example, in the 12 months prior to the survey administration (i.e., since Spring 2020), the university utilized remote instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While some students stayed on or near campus, the majority

went home. During subsequent semesters (i.e., fall 2020 and winter 2021), the university implemented a hybrid model of instruction. Again, not all students were on campus. Additionally, typical on-campus activities and study abroad experiences were limited or canceled. All of these contributed not only to a non-traditional campus environment but also to each student having a unique campus experience. In addition, in August 2020, the university adjusted its policy and procedures in compliance with changes to the federal Title IX regulations governing universities' responses to campus sexual assaults. These changes may have influenced survey respondents' perceptions about the Title IX Office and its handling of sexual assault reports.

With this context in mind, this report represents responses from students who completed the survey in Spring 2021. Email invitations were sent to 32,141 BYU students; 14,839 (46%) started the survey and 13,451 completed the survey, for a response rate of 42%. Demographic data revealed the survey participants to be very similar to the broader BYU population in terms of gender, ethnicity, year in school, and other measures. Key demographics include the following:

- ♦ Average age: 22.1 years old
- ♦ Gender: 45% male, 54% female, and 0.7% transgender or other¹
- ♦ Relationship status: 61% single, 7% single but engaged, 28% married, 0.3% divorced, and 3% separated/widowed/other
- ♦ Sexual orientation: 92% straight, 5% bisexual, 2% gay/lesbian, 1% other sexual minority²
- ♦ Ethnicity: 83% White, 7% Hispanic/Latino, 4% two or more races, 2% Asian, 1% race and ethnicity undisclosed, 0.4% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 0.2% Black or African American, and 0.2% American Indian or Alaska Native

Key Findings

This report provides an overview of key findings of BYU's campus climate survey.

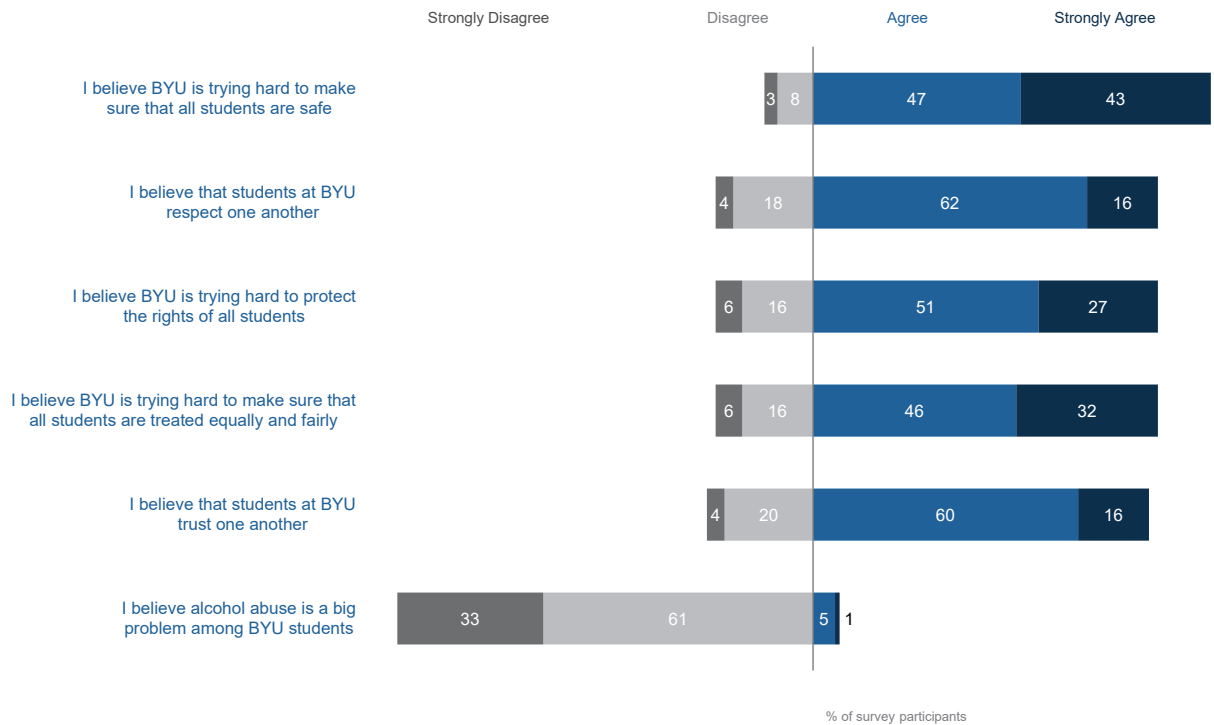
Campus Climate

1. Overall, survey participants feel good about the general campus climate. They reported feeling safe, respected, and trusted among fellow students; valued at BYU; and a part of the BYU community. They believe BYU is trying hard to make sure students are safe, treated equally and fairly, and their rights are protected. They do not see alcohol abuse as a problem at BYU (see Figure 1).

¹ Students selecting "other" could self-identify with a text description of their gender identity.

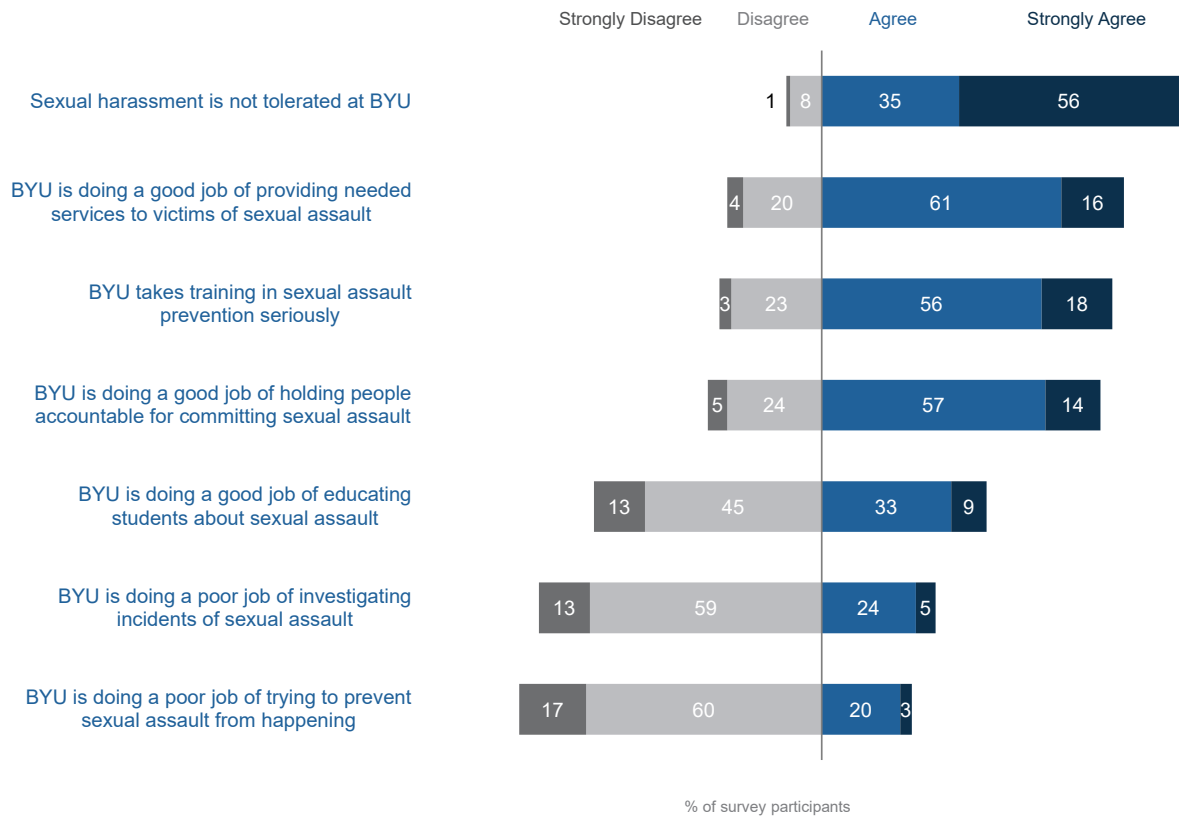
² Participants were asked, "Which of the following best represents how you think of yourself?" with these options: straight, that is, not gay or lesbian; gay or lesbian; bisexual; other (with the option to specify using a text description).

Figure 1. Student perceptions of the BYU climate



- When responding to questions with a specific focus on campus sexual assault prevention efforts, the majority of survey participants were still positive (see Figure 2). Nearly all respondents (91%) agreed that sexual harassment is not tolerated at BYU. Most respondents also agreed that BYU is doing a good job of providing needed services to sexual assault victims, training in sexual assault prevention at BYU is taken seriously, and BYU is doing a good job of holding people accountable for committing sexual assault. In addition, most respondents *disagreed* that BYU is doing a poor job of investigating sexual assault incidents or preventing sexual assault from happening. Continuing to educate students about sexual assault could enhance the overall positive perception of BYU’s sexual assault and harassment prevention efforts.

Figure 2. Student perceptions of sexual assault and harassment prevention efforts



3. Most survey participants thought that if they were sexually assaulted, their case would be taken seriously (78%), they would be treated with dignity and respect (82%), and their privacy would be protected (86%).
4. Greater concerns about various aspects of the campus climate regarding sexual assault were expressed by three subgroups of survey participants: females feel less safe than males (see Figure 3); victims of unwanted sexual contact have more concerns about the climate than non-victims (see Figure 4); LGBQ+ students have more concerns about the climate than straight students (see Figure 5).

Figure 3. Differences between **female** and **male** student perceptions of safety on BYU campus

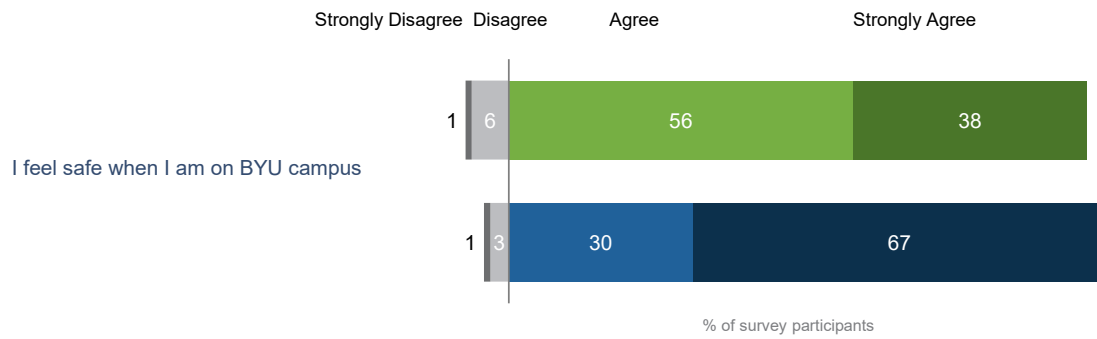


Figure 4. Attitudes of **students who have experienced unwanted sexual contact** during the past 12 months and of **those who have not experienced unwanted sexual contact** toward their experiences on BYU campus

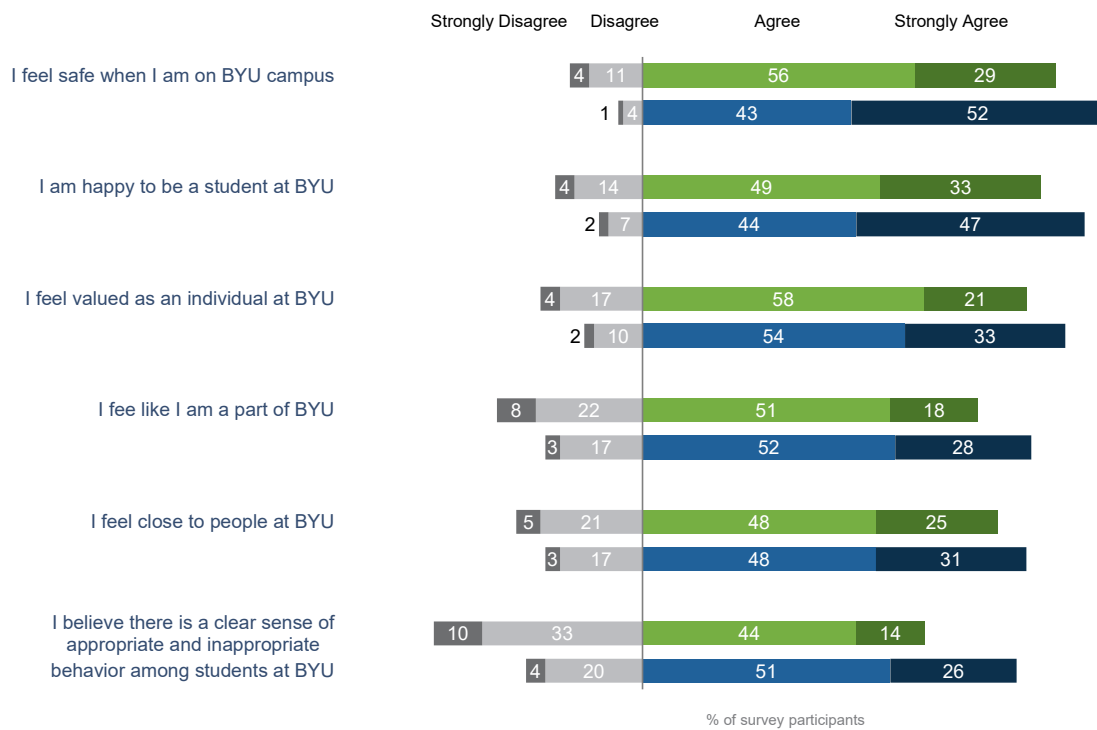
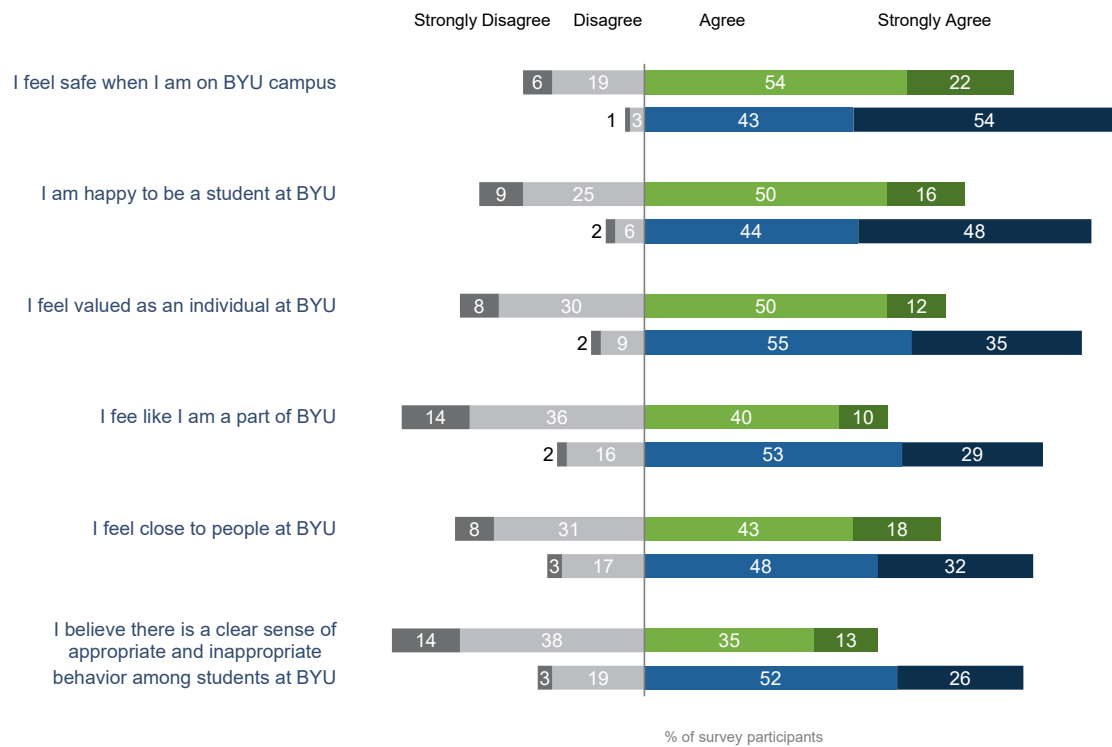


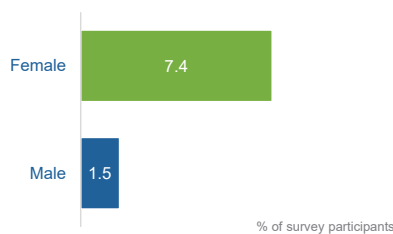
Figure 5. Attitudes of **LGBQ+** and **straight** students toward their experiences on BYU campus



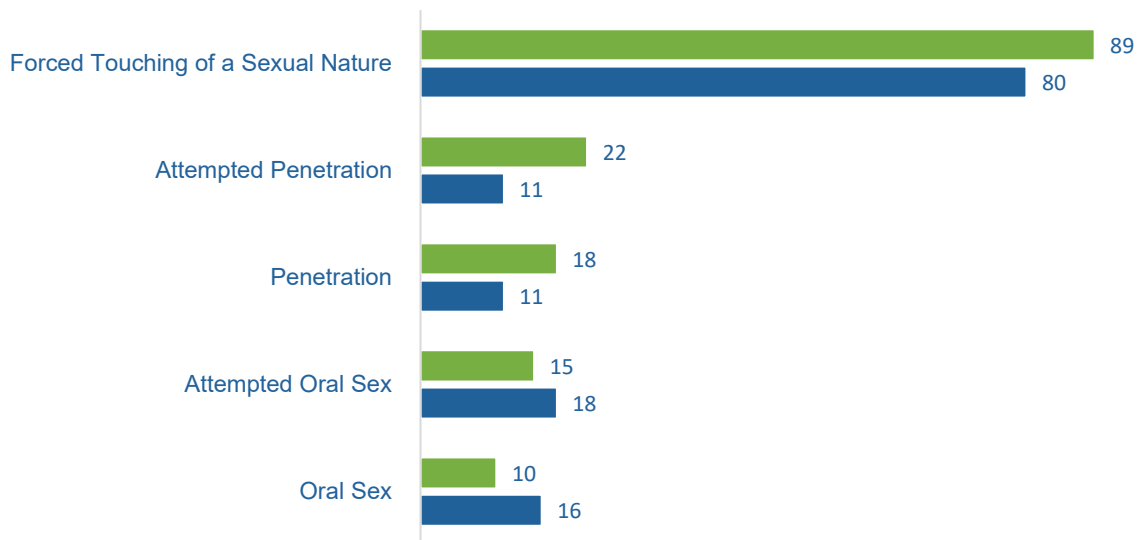
Sexual Misconduct

1. Of the students completing the survey, 633 (4.7%) experienced some form of unwanted sexual contact while enrolled at and attending BYU during the 12 months prior to the survey. More women (538; 7.4%) than men (95; 1.5%) experienced unwanted sexual contact (see Figure 6). A higher percentage of students who identified as LGBQ+ (109; 17%) experienced unwanted sexual contact when compared with straight students.

Figure 6. Percent of **female** and **male** survey participants who experienced unwanted sexual contact in the past 12 months while enrolled at and attending BYU



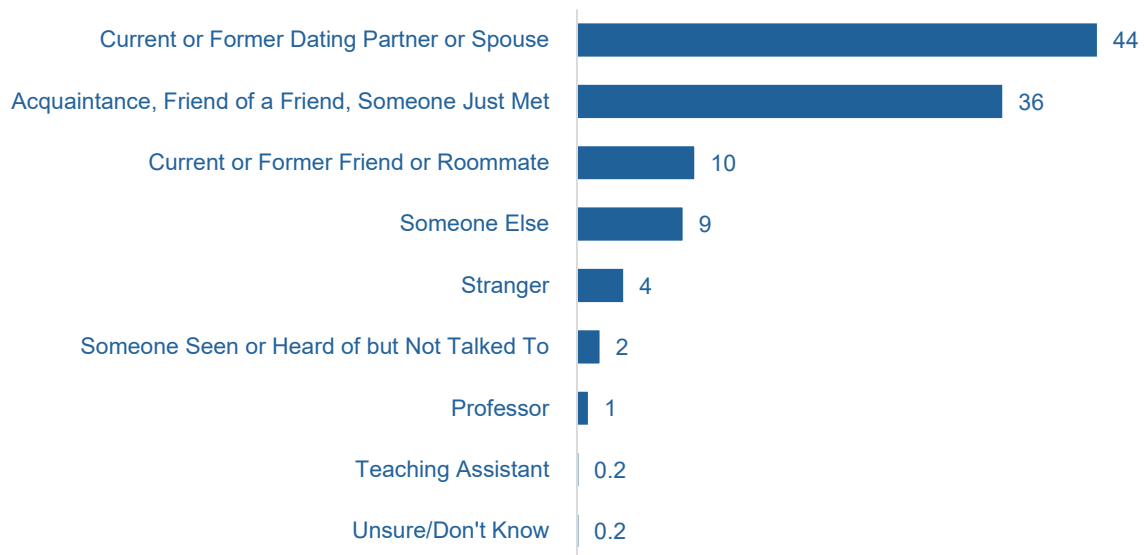
2. Students who reported unwanted sexual contact were asked to provide additional information about the incident. Each student could provide information for up to two incidents; 633 students provided information about 899 incidents of unwanted sexual contact that occurred during the 12 months prior to the survey while they were enrolled at and attending BYU.
3. The most frequent type of unwanted sexual contact reported in the survey involved forced touching of a sexual nature (forced kissing, fondling, touching of private parts, grabbing, or rubbing up against you in a sexual way even if it is over your clothes). (See Figure 7.)



*899 incidents were reported by 633 (4.7%) survey participants; incidents occurred in the past 12 months while the survey participant was enrolled at and attending BYU; more than one type of contact could be reported for each incident.

- Incidents of unwanted sexual contact were most frequently perpetrated by someone the victim knows (see Figure 8; current or former dating partner [44% of incidents], acquaintance [25%], current or former friend [12%]), by men (90%), and by someone affiliated with BYU (45%).

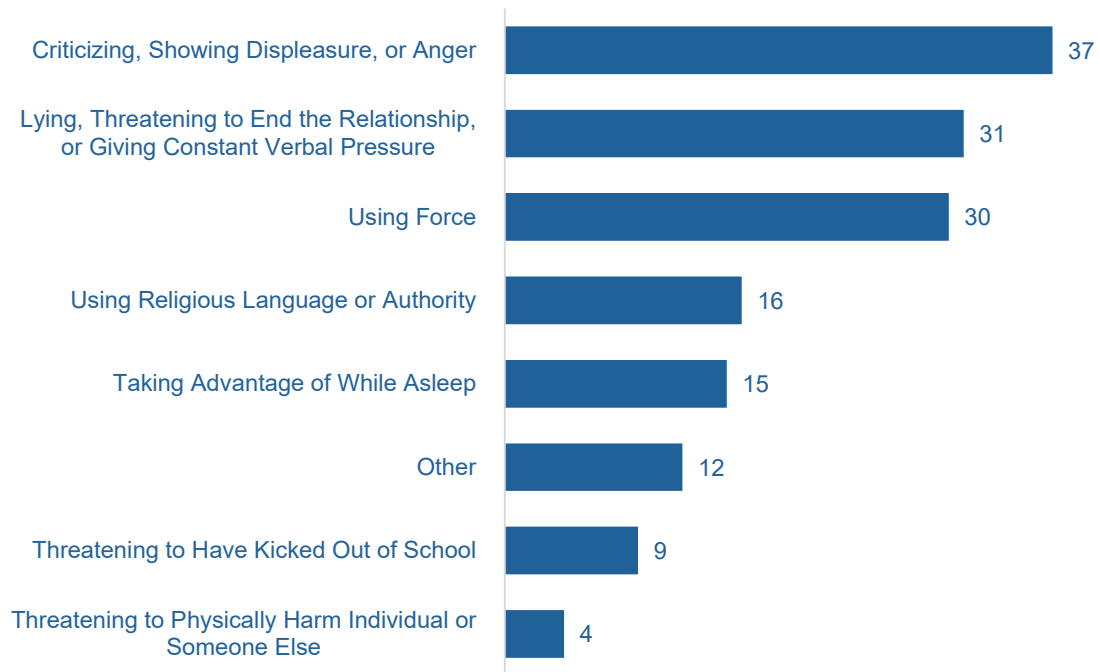
Figure 8. Percent of incidents of unwanted sexual contact in which the following types of perpetrators were reported*



*Incidents occurred in the past 12 months while the survey participant was enrolled at and attending BYU

5. The methods of coercion used by perpetrators most frequently were showing criticism, displeasure, or anger (37% of incidents); lying, or threatening to end the relationship, or giving constant verbal pressure (31%); and using force (30%). (See Figure 9.)

Figure 9. Percent of incidents of unwanted sexual contact in which the following types of coercion were used*

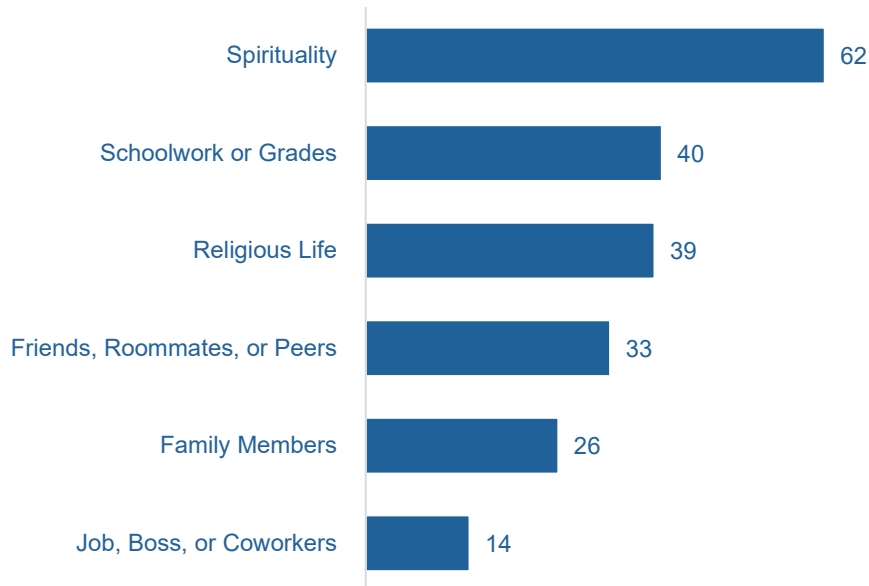


*Incidents occurred in the past 12 months while the survey participant was enrolled at and attending BYU; more than one type of coercion could be reported for each incident.

6. Alcohol and drug use was rarely evident in incidents of unwanted sexual contact reported in the survey. Victims reported that the perpetrators had been using drugs or alcohol prior to 16% of the incidents and that they (the victim) had been using drugs or alcohol prior to 4% of the incidents.
7. Most incidents occurred at an off-campus location (in Provo [35% of incidents]; in BYU-contracted housing [32%]; or in a different city [17%]). The survey results reveal that the number of incidents of unwanted sexual contact occurring on campus (12%) is higher than the numbers reported in the annual Jeanne Clery Act report.³ The BYU Clery Act report may underestimate rates of certain sex offenses (e.g., rape, fondling) on or adjacent to campus, likely due to underreporting.
8. Unwanted sexual contact negatively impacted many students spiritually (62% of incidents), academically (40%), in religious life (39%), and interpersonally (33%). (See Figure 10.)

³ The Clery Act is a federal statute requiring universities to keep and disclose information about crime on and near their campuses. BYU's 2021 report is available online at <https://police.byu.edu/2021-asr-provo>

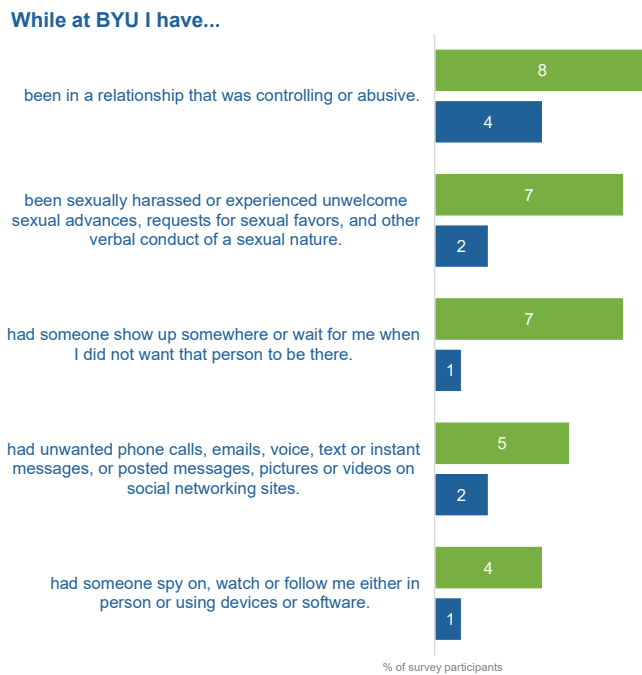
Figure 10. Percent of incidents of unwanted sexual contact after which the individuals reporting the incidents experienced problems in the following areas*



*Incidents occurred in the past 12 months while the survey participant was enrolled at and attending BYU; more than one problem area could be selected for each incident.

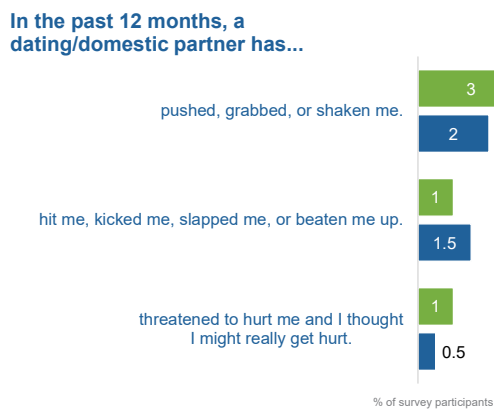
9. Many survey participants have experienced or witnessed sexist remarks or jokes about women (76%), derogatory remarks about LGBTQ+ people (74%), inappropriate comments about their or someone else's body or appearance (72%), or sexist remarks or jokes about men (57%).
10. Over one-quarter of survey participants have experienced or witnessed crude or gross sexual talk (31%), had someone repeatedly ask them on dates after they said no (27%), or had someone tell them about their sexual experiences when they did not want to hear them (25%).
11. Fifteen percent of survey participants have received offensive sexual emails, text messages, pictures, or videos that they did not want to see, and about 10% reported that someone tried to bribe them to engage in a romantic or sexual relationship.
12. Between 4% and 8% of survey participants experienced various stalking-related behaviors (see Figure 11).

Figure 11. Percent of **female** and **male** survey participants who have experienced the following while at BYU



13. Less than 4% of survey participants reported being victims of dating or domestic violence (see Figure 12).

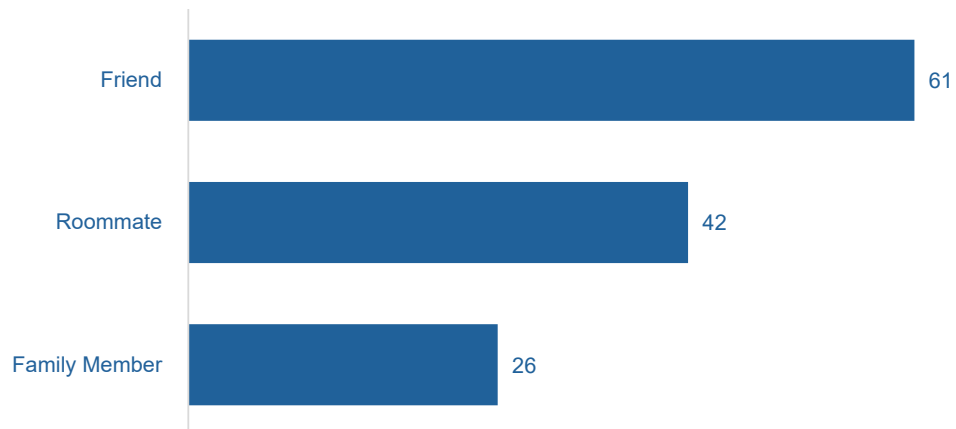
Figure 12. Percent of **female** and **male** survey participants who experienced specific types of dating/domestic violence in the past 12 months



14. An additional 79 students experienced unwanted sexual contact during the previous 12 months while not enrolled at and attending BYU, and many students experience unwanted sexual contact prior to enrolling at BYU. These students may want or need access to support services upon their arrival at or return to BYU.

Reporting

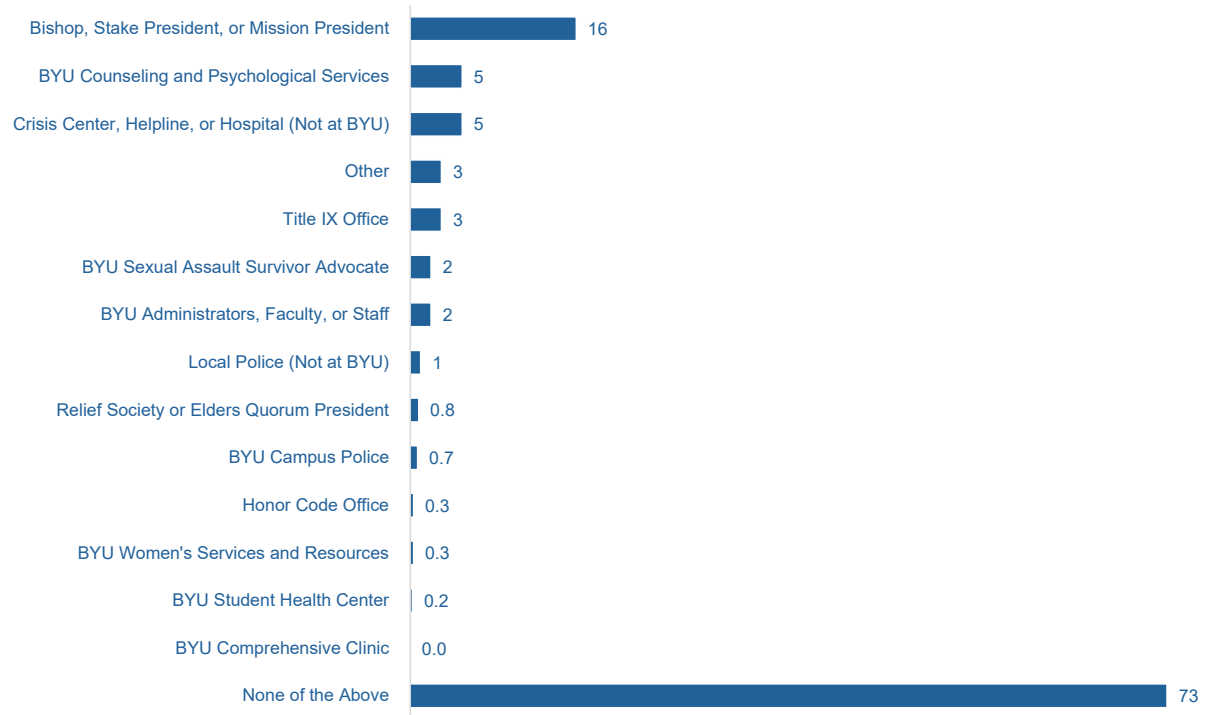
1. Individuals who experienced unwanted sexual contact and chose to disclose it were most likely to tell friends, roommates, or family (in that order) about their experience (see Figure 13).



*Incidents occurred in the past 12 months while the survey participant was enrolled at and attending BYU; more than one source of assistance could be selected for each incident.

2. The survey's findings regarding rates of reporting unwanted sexual contact match findings in the research literature. Most students who experience sexual assault do not report the assault to any formal source (Carretta et al., 2015; Fisher et al., 2003; Orchowski et al., 2009; Sabina & Ho, 2014; Spencer et al., 2017; Wilson & Miller, 2016). The majority of incidents of unwanted sexual contact in this study (73%) were reported to no formal organization (see Figure 14), and 24% of the incidents of unwanted sexual contact were reported to none of the formal or informal sources of support listed in the survey.

Figure 14. Percent of incidents of unwanted sexual contact that were reported to the following formal sources of assistance*



*Incidents occurred in the past 12 months while the survey participant was enrolled at and attending BYU; more than one source of assistance could be selected for each incident.

3. While most incidents of unwanted sexual contact were not reported to any formal source of support, individuals who experienced unwanted sexual contact reported most frequently to ecclesiastical leaders (16% of incidents). (See Figure 14.)
4. Very few incidents of unwanted sexual contact (3%) were reported to the Title IX Office (see Figure 14).
5. Survey participants were asked why they did not report to each of the formal sources of support listed in the survey. While there was some variance between sources, the reasons for not reporting (averaged across all sources) were as follows: students did not think the incident was serious enough (31% of incidents), they did not want or need help or they did not want the organization to take any action (24%), other reasons (11%), they were worried about Honor Code discipline or their ecclesiastical endorsement being questioned (9%), they were worried that they would be blamed for what happened (9%), they had concerns about confidentiality (7%), or they were worried about possible retaliation (3%).

Title IX Investigations

1. For students who had *ever* participated in a Title IX investigation (235; 2% of survey participants), the investigations most frequently concerned sexual harassment (49% of reported incidents), sexual assault (48%), stalking (13%), and partner violence/abuse (10%).⁴

⁴ Survey questions related to survey participants' perceptions of the Title IX Office were not limited to experiences in the past 12 months. Survey participants could report on any experience in the past.

2. More than three-fourths of the complainants (those who report they have been subjected to sexual misconduct) and witnesses in an investigation reported that the Title IX Office respected their privacy (83% of complainants, 78% of witnesses/other), was sensitive to their emotions (81% of complainants, 65% of witnesses/other), took the case seriously (83% of complainants, 72% of witnesses/ other), and was fair, impartial, and unbiased (80% of complainants, 60% of witnesses/other).
3. Title IX investigation respondents (those accused of sexual misconduct; $n = 22$) were more critical of the Title IX Office than complainants ($n = 113$), witnesses ($n = 70$), or others ($n = 29$). Respondents reported that the Title IX Office respected their privacy (77%), was sensitive to their emotions (59%), and took the case seriously (69%). Only 50% of respondents reported that the Title IX Office was fair and impartial. These lower percentages may be somewhat expected since someone who is accused of sexual misconduct might be unhappy with the organization investigating them.
4. Some participants in investigations reported lacking information about the investigation process (28% of complainants, 36% of respondents, and 40% of witnesses/other).
5. Some Title IX investigation participants reported concerns about the investigation process. For example, of complainants, 39% were dissatisfied with the outcome of the case, 12% disagreed with the statement that the investigator valued what they had to say, and 19% disagreed with the statement that the investigator treated the case with the gravity and severity that they felt was appropriate.

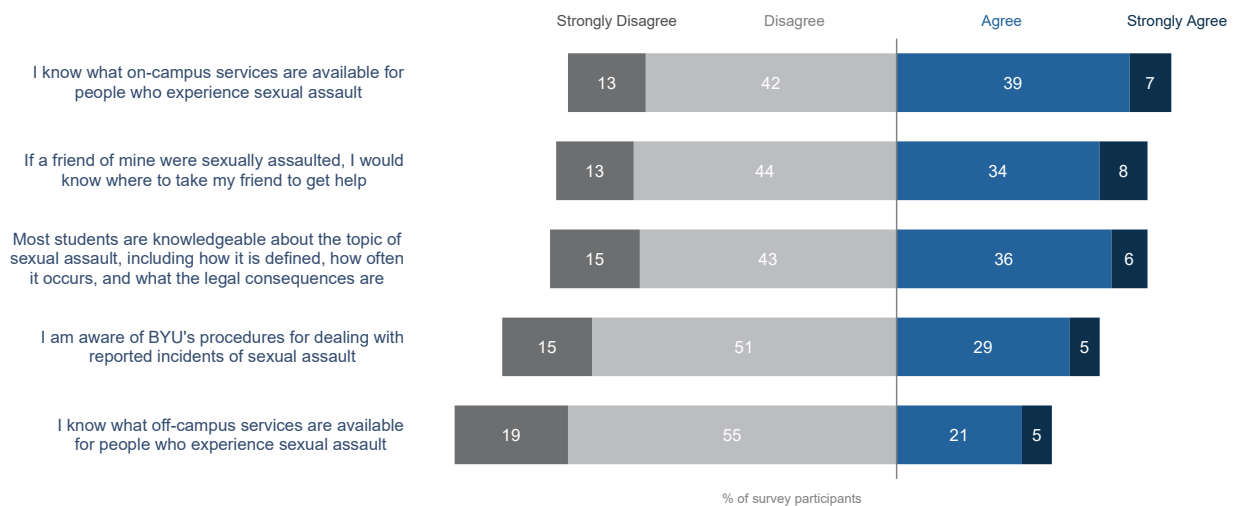
Education and Training

1. Fifty-eight percent of survey participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that BYU is doing a good job of educating students about sexual assault. Relatively few survey participants reported receiving training at BYU regarding any aspect of sexual assault or sexual assault prevention. Half (50%) reported receiving some training on BYU's policy on sexual assault, and fewer reported receiving training regarding the reporting process, the legal definition of assault, services for individuals who are assaulted, the definition of and methods for obtaining and giving consent, or bystander intervention strategies (see Figure 15).

Figure 15. Percent of survey participants who report receiving education or training on preventing sexual assault



2. Of the survey participants, 24% did not know the function of the Title IX Office, 42% indicated that they know where to take a friend for help, and 34% were familiar with BYU's procedures for responding to reported incidents of sexual assault. A majority of survey participants were unaware of or unfamiliar with on-campus (55%) and off-campus (74%) resources for someone who is assaulted (see Figure 16).



3. The survey included one open-ended question asking students, “Do you have any suggestions on how we could make BYU a safer place for everyone?” Over 5,600 survey participants (5,617; 42%) provided a wide range of responses. The most frequent theme was the need for additional education and training about sexual assaults.

Comparison of 2017 and 2021 Survey Results

1. Consideration of relevant contextual differences between the 2017 and 2021 survey administrations is advised due to the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic and remote or hybrid learning during the majority of the 2020 school year. Additionally, more females participated in the 2021 administration of the campus climate survey (54%) than in 2017 (48%).
2. In general, similar results were reported for both survey administrations relative to general campus climate and statements about sexual assault.
3. The proportion of students who reported experiencing various types of sexual harassment increased in 2021. The largest increases were from survey participants who reported hearing inappropriate comments about someone’s body, appearance, or attractiveness (57% in 2017 and 72% in 2021). Similarly, 63% of survey participants in 2017 and 76% of survey participants in 2021 reported hearing sexist remarks or jokes about women.
4. More students in 2021 reported receiving training on topics related to sexual assault, such as how to report sexual assault (26% in 2017 and 40% in 2021) and services available for survivors of sexual assault (23% in 2017 and 36% in 2021). In addition, more respondents indicated they had received training BYU’s policy on sexual assault (39% in 2017 and 50% in 2021) and the definition of consent (22% in 2017 and 34% in 2021).
5. More students in 2021 (54%) than in 2017 (38%) reported being likely to report to the BYU Title IX Office if they had been a victim of sexual assault. However, relatively unchanged between survey administrations is confusion about the role of the Honor Code Office in sexual assault investigations. For example, beliefs persist that during sexual assault investigations, BYU would investigate compliance with the Honor Code. Additionally, nearly half of respondents in both 2017 and 2021 thought that BYU would not enable them to continue their education without questioning their ecclesiastical endorsement or worthiness.

Recommendations

The findings presented in this report highlight areas where intervention and prevention efforts may improve the likelihood that all BYU students can benefit from full and equal access to the educational process. Below are a few recommendations based on key findings.

1. **Continue Conversations about Healthy Attitudes and Beliefs Regarding Gender and Sexuality.** The BYU community has benefitted from formal trainings, lectures, and other events such as a campus devotional about sexual assault. The campus could continue to benefit from additional efforts with educational campaigns and targeted interventions to promote safety and healthy attitudes about gender relations and to reduce gender-based violence and harassment. Continued educational campaigns are needed to address such topics as sexual harassment, gender and power dynamics, victim-blaming, rape myths, consent, and healthy relationships, and the divine nature of sexuality as understood in the doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
2. **Encourage Formal Victim Support.** Most respondents (73%) did not report incidents of unwanted sexual assault to any formal source of assistance. The primary reasons for not reporting to a formal source were beliefs that the incident was not serious enough to report or that they did not want or need help. Encouraging victims of sexual assault to reach out to formal sources of support, regardless of the perceived severity of an incident, could help victims receive additional access to quality resources in coping with related challenges.
3. **Increase Awareness of Processes and Encourage the Reporting of Sexual Misconduct.** Students need to be informed about BYU reporting structures and policies (including the university's amnesty statement and the separation of the Title IX Office from the Honor Code Office) to continue to reduce fear-based barriers to reporting. Students may also have fewer concerns about reporting sexual misconduct if they were aware of the sexual assault survivor advocate's services and the services, referrals, and accommodations that the Title IX Office can provide.
4. **Increase Campus Awareness of the Available Resources for Victims.** To help those who experience unwanted sexual contact gain access to the support they need, the campus community needs greater awareness of the available confidential resources, including sexual assault survivor advocacy services, Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), the director of Women's Services and Resources, and off-campus agencies. In addition, students and faculty alike could benefit from increased awareness regarding how the Title IX Office can support and assist victims.
5. **Form an Education and Training Committee for Sexual Misconduct Issues.** Implementation of the Advisory Council recommendations have made, and continue to make, a helpful shift toward providing more of the education and training needed on campus. This shift is also helping to develop a campus culture of sexual misconduct prevention where all students, staff, and faculty feel some responsibility for maintaining safety and facilitating educational opportunities for all students. Online training, like that started by the Title IX Office, can certainly play a role, and other strategies informed by the growing literature about sexual assault prevention can continue to help educate students about sexual misconduct.
6. **Provide Training about Relevant Policies and Procedures.** The BYU Sexual Harassment Policy requires training on the Policy for all personnel. Likewise, students could benefit from explicit training and easy access to information about campus policies, procedures, and the offices that provide assistance regarding sexual assault.

7. **Provide Education and Instruction on Healthy Dating and Marital Relationships.** Compared to the Campus Climate Survey Validation Study (U.S. Department of Justice, 2016), incidents of unwanted sexual contact occurring while the victim was enrolled at or attending BYU are more frequently perpetrated by a current or former dating partner or spouse. This suggests the need for interventions focused specifically on consent as a process, respect for agency within healthy dating and marital partnerships, warning signs for abuse and controlling behaviors, and setting and respecting boundaries once relationships end.
8. **Increase awareness about Recognizing, Preventing, and Responding to Sexual Misconduct.** Education and other interventions to increase awareness about various aspects of sexual misconduct could help to improve the campus climate and to prevent sexual assault.
9. **Provide Education for Students on Supporting Victims.** Since students who experience unwanted sexual contact are most likely to tell a friend or roommate, education and instruction for students regarding what to do if they learn of an incident is essential. Programs have been developed to assist in this regard. Those responsible for providing this material can identify strategies that best fit BYU students.
10. **Share Survey Information with Ecclesiastical Authorities.** Ecclesiastical leaders were the formal source of assistance that received the most reports of incidents of unwanted sexual contact, and victims face a variety of spiritual and ecclesiastical challenges as a result of sexual assault. It may be helpful for the university to share survey results with its sponsoring institution to inform ecclesiastical leader training.
11. **Repeat the Campus Climate Survey.** Periodically repeating the campus climate survey will provide an opportunity to assess progress and will help further advance university efforts to eliminate sexual assault.

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