

Cornell Survey of Sexual Assault and Related Misconduct: Overview of Survey Results

Office of Institutional Research and Planning

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This report describes the survey methodology and provides an overview of results from the *Cornell Survey of Sexual Assault and Related Misconduct*¹ conducted by Cornell University in spring 2025. The survey instrument and tables showing population estimates of survey responses are provided in separate documents available on Cornell’s SHARE website.

This report includes findings regarding the prevalence of sexual assault and related misconduct, patterns of victimization, and the contexts within which such incidents occur. Information about university policy and procedures, reporting options, and resources is available online at the [Cornell Office of Civil Rights website](#) and Cornell’s [SHARE](#) website.

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¹ “Sexual assault and related misconduct” includes nonconsensual sexual contact (penetration and/or sexual touching), sexual and gender-based harassment, domestic and dating violence, and stalking.

I. Overview of the Survey

As part of Cornell's ongoing efforts to prevent and effectively respond to sexual violence, the university conducted the *Survey of Sexual Assault and Related Misconduct* in spring 2025. The survey aimed to:

- Estimate the prevalence of various forms of nonconsensual sexual contact, harassment, stalking, and domestic/dating violence among Cornell students, and to understand the contexts in which these incidents occur.
- Assess student knowledge of Cornell's resources, policies, and procedures related to sexual assault and related misconduct, as well as the barriers that may prevent students from accessing available support.
- Explore student attitudes and decision-making around bystander intervention in situations involving potential harm to others.

Background

In compliance with New York State Education Law Article 129-B, Cornell is required to conduct a campus sexual violence survey at least once every two years. The university's first effort in this area was its participation in the 2015 *Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct*, conducted in collaboration with a consortium of 27 institutions organized by the Association of American Universities (AAU).

In 2017, Cornell developed its own survey instrument—the *Cornell Survey of Sexual Assault and Related Misconduct*—to better support internal planning and prevention efforts, reduce the burden on student participants, and improve response rates. This Cornell-specific survey has since been administered in spring 2019, 2021, 2023, and most recently in 2025, with only minor revisions over time. Results from previous surveys (2015, 2017, 2019, 2021, and 2023) are available on the SHARE website.

Survey Content

The 2025 survey included eight sections (A–H). All respondents answered questions in six core areas:

- A: Background Information
- B: Knowledge of Cornell Resources and Policies
- C: Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment
- D: Stalking
- F: Nonconsensual Sexual Contact

- H: Perceptions of Cornell Students' Behaviors

Two additional sections were shown conditionally:

- E: Domestic and Dating Violence — shown to respondents who indicated they were or had been in a partnered relationship at Cornell.
- G: Follow-up on Nonconsensual Sexual Contact — shown to respondents who reported experiencing one or more incidents in Section F, focusing on the incident that they felt had the greatest impact.

Survey Administration

Cornell partnered with an independent consultant to program and administer the survey. A stratified random sample of 6,000 students enrolled at the Ithaca, Weill Cornell Medicine, and Cornell Tech campuses during spring 2025 received email invitations. Non-respondents were sent reminders twice weekly until the survey closed.

The survey was open from April 8 to May 12, 2025. Upon closure, all personal identifiers (e.g., Cornell NetIDs) were removed from the dataset to ensure confidentiality.

Response rates and limitations of the data. A total of 926 students participated in the 2025 survey, resulting in an overall response rate of 15%. This represents a notable decline from previous years, with response rates of 36% in 2023 and 38% in 2021. As shown in Table 1, graduate and professional women had the highest participation rate at approximately 19%, while undergraduate students responded at a lower rate of around 13%. Among all gender and student-type groups, undergraduate men had the lowest response rate, with fewer than 10% of those invited completing the survey. [See Table A1 in the Survey Tables document for more information about the characteristics of the Cornell survey population and respondents.]

Table 1. 2025 SARM survey response rates

	All students			By enrollment type					
				Undergraduate			Graduate/Professional		
	Invited	Responded	Response rate	Invited	Responded	Response rate	Invited	Responded	Response rate
By gender identity									
Total	6,000	926	15.4	3,435	439	12.8	2,565	487	19.0
Gender Identity									
Man	2,861	385	13.5	1,602	156	9.7	1,235	229	18.5
Woman	3,139	519	16.5	1,833	272	14.8	1,330	247	18.6
TGQN	--	22	--	--	11	--	--	11	--

Of the 926 total survey responses received, 757 were classified as fully completed. A response was considered complete if the participant answered at least one question from the sections addressing harassment, stalking, or nonconsensual sexual contact (NSC). These 757 full

completions represent approximately 13% of the 6,000 students invited to participate and form the analytic base for estimating rates of NSC.

However, the relatively low percentage of full completions, coupled with response patterns suggesting hesitancy to disclose detailed information about incidents, limits confidence in the accuracy of these estimates. In particular, many respondents declined to answer key questions about their demographic characteristics and the contextual details surrounding incidents of assault or misconduct. *Given these limitations in the 2025 survey data, the estimates of NSC and related harms are best interpreted with greater caution than those from prior administrations of the SARM survey.*

II. Results

Below are findings from the 2025 survey. Figures provide an overview and illustrate comparisons from the previous surveys. Please note that the discussion also includes references to the more detailed tables that accompany this report.

a. Knowledge of Campus Resources, Policies, and Procedures

Awareness of resources. The survey asked about students' awareness² of services and resources offered by Cornell for those affected by sexual assault or related misconduct such as harassment, stalking, or dating/domestic violence.

² Question: "Are you aware of the services or information provided by each of the following." Responses: "Yes I am aware of their services" / "No, I am not aware of their services." Different campus-specific lists of resources were provided to students enrolled at Cornell Ithaca campus, Weill Cornell Medicine, and Cornell Tech.

Figure 1. Percent of Ithaca campus students who are aware of services provided by campus resources by survey year

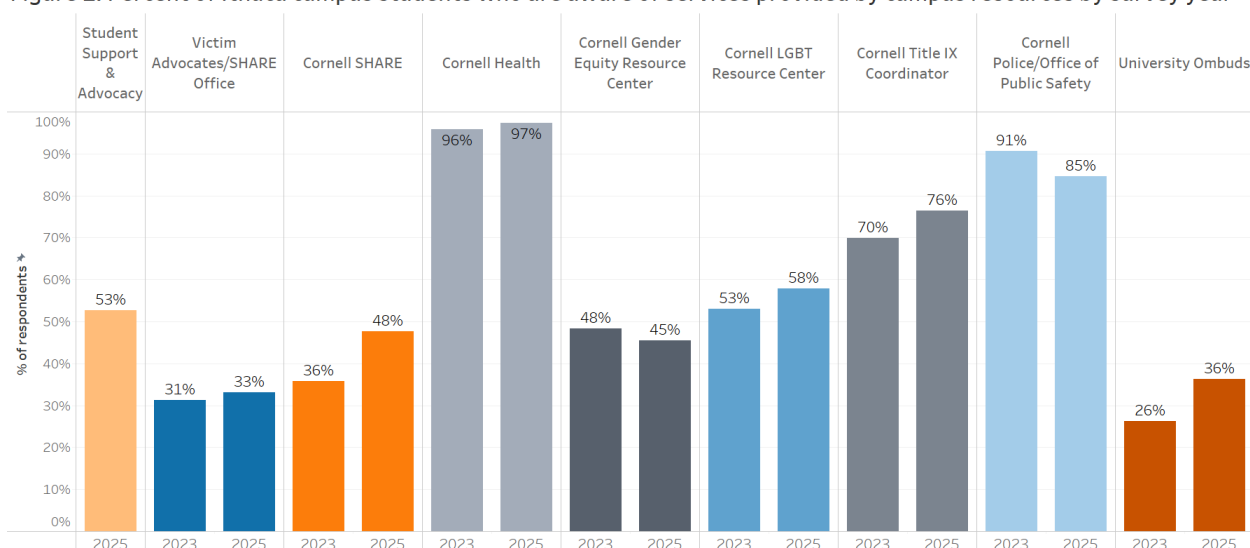


Figure 1 shows responses from Ithaca campus students. Most Ithaca students reported being aware of general services related to student health and safety (e.g., campus health services, and police).

Student awareness of campus services has generally increased between 2023 and 2025. Awareness of services provided by the Title IX Coordinator rose from 70% to 76% among Ithaca campus respondents, the SHARE website rose from 36% to 48% while awareness of the University Ombuds grew from 26% to 36% over the same period. Nearly all services saw increased recognition, with two exceptions: the Cornell Gender Equity Resource Center and the Cornell Police/Office of Public Safety, with both experiencing small declines in student awareness.

Knowledge of campus policies and procedures. Students were asked how knowledgeable³ they are about university definitions of sexual assault and affirmative consent, and about university definitions, policies, and processes concerning sexual assault or related misconduct.

³ Question (sexual assault example): “How knowledgeable are you about what behaviors are included in Cornell’s definition of sexual assault and related misconduct?” Responses: “Not at all” / “A little” / “Moderately” / “Very.”

Figure 2. "How knowledgeable are you about..."

		2021	2023	2025
Cornell's definition of affirmative consent	Not at all	9%	11%	11%
	A little	20%	19%	18%
	Moderately	39%	38%	40%
	Very	31%	32%	31%
The behaviors included in Cornell's definition of sexual assault and related misconduct	Not at all	9%	8%	8%
	A little	27%	25%	23%
	Moderately	47%	46%	48%
	Very	17%	21%	21%
How Cornell's policies differ from local, state, and federal laws?	Not at all	33%	29%	33%
	A little	31%	29%	26%
	Moderately	29%	29%	29%
	Very	8%	13%	12%
Process for filing a formal complaint	Not at all	37%	30%	33%
	A little	31%	31%	33%
	Moderately	24%	27%	22%
	Very	8%	12%	11%
The process that occurs after a formal complaint of sexual assault or related misconduct ..	Not at all	44%	39%	38%
	A little	31%	29%	30%
	Moderately	19%	24%	21%
	Very	6%	9%	10%

Response patterns in the 2025 survey closely mirror those observed in previous years. As shown in Figure 2, just over two-thirds of student respondents reported being "very" or "moderately" knowledgeable about Cornell's definition of affirmative consent (71%) and about the behaviors included in its definition of sexual assault and related misconduct (69%). In contrast, awareness was significantly lower for other aspects of university policy: only 41% felt knowledgeable about how Cornell's policies differ from local, state, and federal laws, 33% understood how to file a formal complaint of sexual assault, and just 31% were familiar with the process that follows a complaint being filed.

Overall, the data indicate that significant work remains in educating students about how to report an assault, what happens after a report is submitted, and the range of possible outcomes that may follow.

b. Prevalence of Related Misconduct

The survey asked students about their own experiences with three forms of related sexual misconduct: sexual and gender-based harassment, stalking, and domestic and dating violence. Students who indicated they had experienced a particular form of misconduct were asked if they had experienced this since entering Cornell, and since the beginning of the Fall 2024 academic year. The three charts that follow in this section (Figures 3, 4 and 5) show the percentages of students who reported having experienced these forms of misconduct at least once "since entering Cornell."

i. Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment

Students were asked if they had experienced any of six specific forms of harassing behavior by someone at Cornell⁴. Students who indicated they had experienced one or more forms of harassing behaviors were then asked two follow-up questions about the impact of those experiences: (1) *You felt that you had to tolerate this behavior or risk jeopardizing your academic standing, employment, or participation in Cornell programs or activities*; and (2) *This behavior was so severe or persistent that it interfered with or affected your participation in Cornell programs or activities*.

Figure 3. Percent of students experiencing sexual or gender-based harassment since entering Cornell

Someone at Cornell made inappropriate or offensive comments about your or someone else's body, appearance, or sexual activities.	Someone at Cornell made sexual remarks or told jokes or stories of a sexual nature that were insulting or offensive to you.	Someone at Cornell said crude or vulgar sexual things to you or tried to get you to talk about sexual matters when you didn't want to.	Someone at Cornell made inappropriate, offensive, or threatening comments about your gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.	Someone at Cornell continued to ask you to go out, get dinner, have drinks, or engage in sexual activities even though you said "No".	Someone at Cornell used social or online media to send offensive sexual remarks, jokes, stories, pictures, or videos to you that you didn't want to see.	Someone at Cornell used social or online media to post offensive sexual remarks, jokes, stories, pictures or videos about you that you didn't want shared.
Yes 35% 2023	Yes 27% 2023	Yes 13% 2023	Yes 13% 2023	Yes 13% 2023	Yes 4% 2023	Yes 2% 2023
Yes 40% 2025	Yes 31% 2025	Yes 18% 2025	Yes 18% 2025	Yes 16% 2025	Yes 5% 2025	Yes 2% 2025

Figure 3a. Percent of respondents who experienced any form of harassment

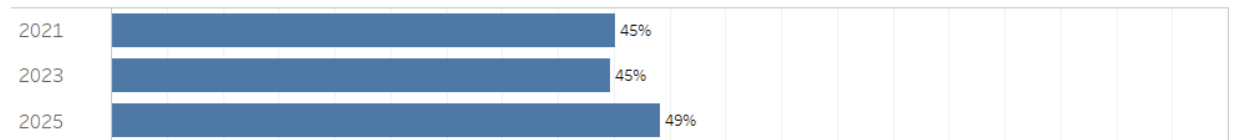
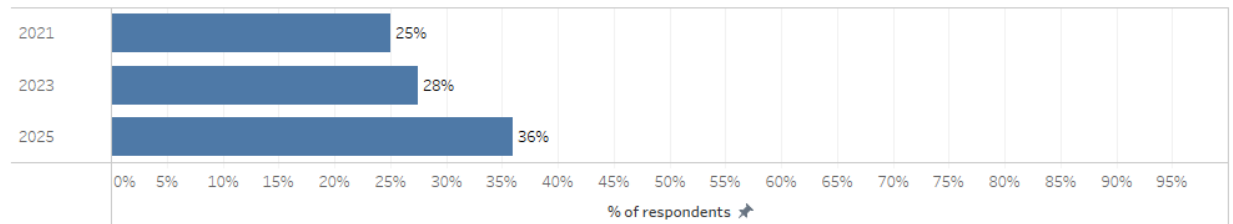


Figure 3b. Percent of respondents who had to tolerate harassing behavior



The 2025 survey results indicate a rise in experiences of sexual and gender-based harassment among respondents. Nearly half (49%) reported encountering one or more specific forms of harassment—an increase from 45% in both the 2023 and 2021 surveys. As shown in Figure 3, the

⁴ Question (insulting or offensive remarks example): “Since you have been a student at Cornell, have you experienced someone at Cornell (including students, faculty and/or staff) behaving in any of the following ways? Someone at Cornell made sexual remarks or told jokes or stories that were insulting or offensive to you.” Responses: “Yes” / “No.”

most frequently reported behaviors included inappropriate comments about one's body, appearance, or sexual behavior (40%), and sexual remarks or offensive jokes or stories (31%).

Figure 3b highlights a growing impact of these behaviors. In 2025, 36% of students who experienced harassment reported either having to tolerate the behavior or that its severity interfered with their participation in Cornell programs. This marks an increase from 28% in 2023 and 25% in 2021. Graduate women were among those respondents most likely to have to tolerate harassment that they experienced. Of those graduate women who experienced harassment, 53% reported having to tolerate it, up from 42% in 2023.

For more details, refer to Table C1 in the accompanying survey results tables. Students who reported harassing behaviors were also asked follow-up questions about their harassers and any subsequent reporting, including contacting any programs or telling others about these experiences [see Tables C3 to C6 in Tables of Survey Results].

ii. Stalking

Students were asked about experiences where *“someone at Cornell behaved in a way that made you afraid for your personal safety or caused you substantial emotional distress.”* Students were asked about three specific forms of stalking behaviors⁵. To meet the university definition of stalking used here, the respondent had to also indicate that the same individual had committed these behaviors, whether singly or in combination, more than once.

⁵ Question (unwanted messages example): “Since you have been a student at Cornell, has someone made unwanted phone calls or sent unwanted messages, pictures or videos to you; or posted unwanted messages, pictures or videos about you on social media or elsewhere online?” Responses: “Yes” / “No.”

Figure 4. Percent of students who experienced stalking since entering Cornell, by survey year

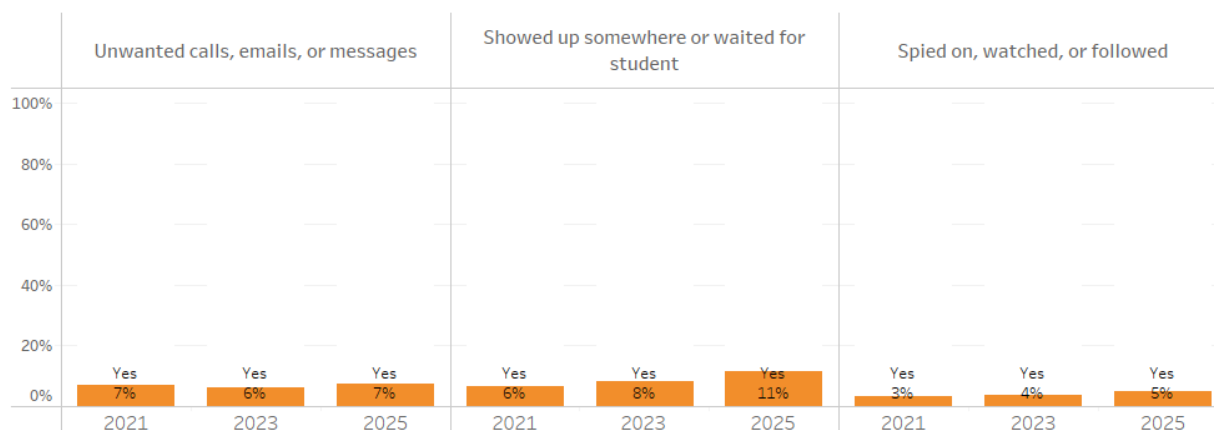
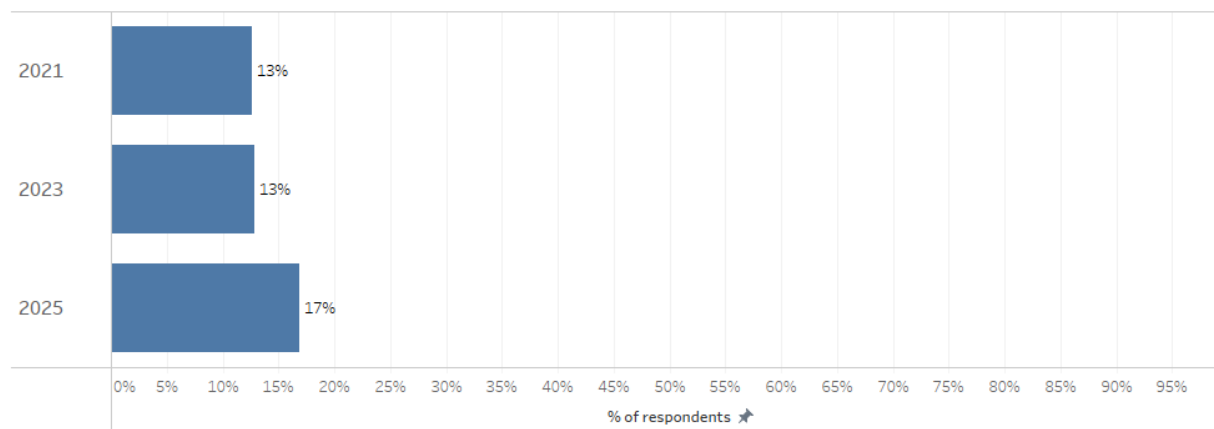


Figure 4a. Percent of students who experienced any form of stalking, by year



In 2025, 17% of survey respondents reported experiencing stalking since entering Cornell—an increase from approximately 13% in previous survey years. The prevalence was notably higher among undergraduate women, with nearly 30% indicating they had been stalked during their time at Cornell.

Students who reported stalking were asked follow-up questions about the individuals involved and any actions they took in response, such as contacting support services or disclosing the experience to others. For detailed findings, see Tables D1 through D6 in the accompanying survey results.

iii. Domestic and Dating Violence

Students who indicated they had been in some type of partnered relationship⁶ while at Cornell were asked if they had experienced any of four forms of violence within these relationships⁷.

Figure 5. Percent of students who experienced various forms of dating or domestic violence since entering Cornell, by survey year

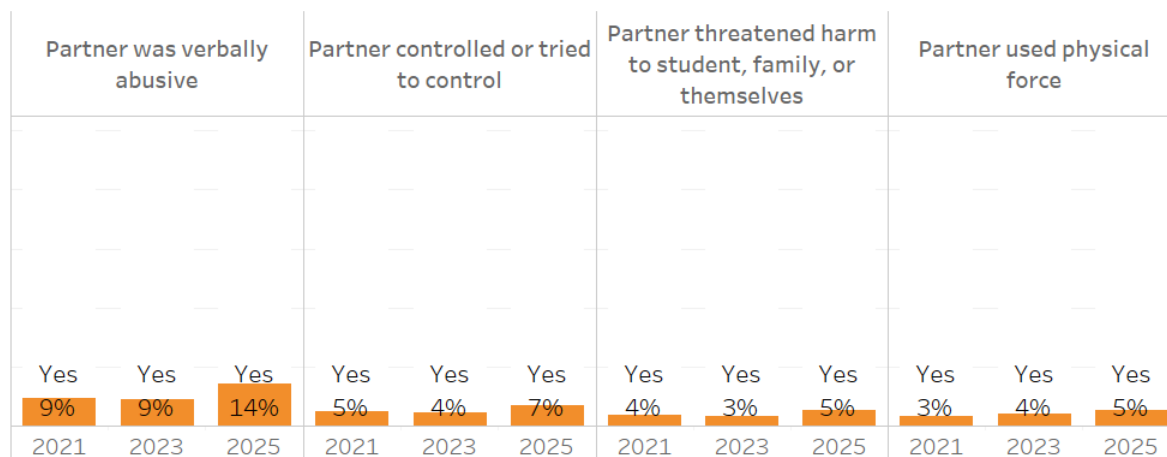
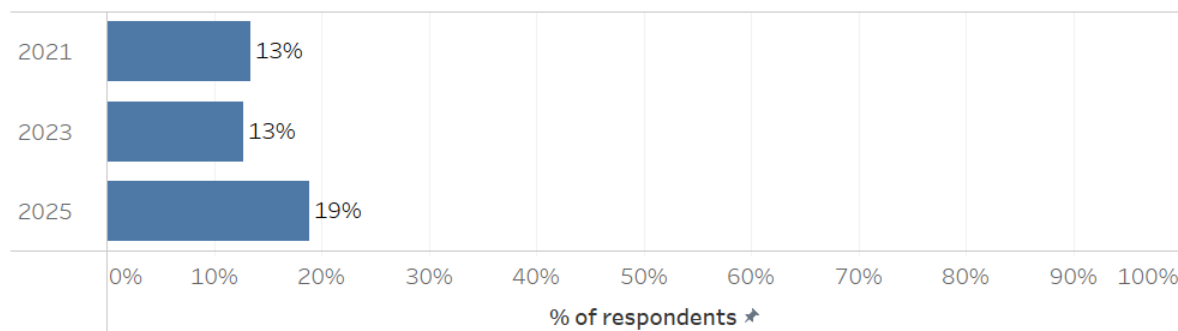


Figure 5a. Percent of students who experienced any form of dating or domestic violence, by year



As shown in Figure 5, among 2025 survey respondents who had been in a partnered relationship, 19% reported that a partner had committed some form of violence against them. Verbal abuse was the most commonly experienced form of relationship violence, with 14% of respondents, overall, saying that a partner had been verbally abusive to them.

The overall prevalence rates of domestic/dating violence (any form and specific forms) have increased relative to the prior two administrations of the survey, 2021 and 2023, when

⁶ The survey asked “Since you have been a student at Cornell, have you been in any of these types of relationships? Mark all that apply: marriage or civil union; domestic partnership or cohabitation; steady or serious relationship; casual relationship involving physical or sexual contact. Students who marked any of these options were shown questions about domestic and dating violence.

⁷ Question: “Since you have been a student at Cornell, has a partner controlled or tried to control you? Examples could be when someone: kept you from going to classes or pursuing your educational goals; did not allow you to see or talk with friends or family; made decisions for you such as where you go what you wear or eat; threatened to ‘out’ you to others.” Responses: “Yes” / “No.”

approximately 13% of students reported experiencing some form of dating or domestic violence during their time at Cornell. Undergraduate women were more likely than other groups to have reported experiencing domestic or dating violence, with 25% reporting this [see Table E1 in Tables of Survey Results for further details].

Undergraduate students reported experiencing domestic and dating violence at approximately twice the rate of their graduate and professional counterparts. Among survey respondents who indicated they had been in a partnered relationship, 24% of undergraduates reported experiencing such violence, compared to just 12% of graduate and professional students. This disparity highlights the importance of targeted support and prevention efforts in this area for undergraduate students.

c. Prevalence of Nonconsensual Sexual Contact

Students were asked about their direct experiences with nonconsensual sexual contact while at Cornell⁸. This contact was defined as including *penetration* (vaginal or anal penetration or oral contact; including attempted acts involving physical force), *kissing and/or sexual touching* (kissing; touching someone's breast, chest, crotch, groin, or buttocks; grabbing, groping or rubbing against the other in a sexual way), *and/or choking or strangulation*.

This is the first administration of the survey where respondents were asked specifically about their experience with unwanted choking or strangulation. The decision to pursue this line of inquiry was informed by the recent experience of Victim Advocates, who report encountering unwanted choking or strangulation as a form of contact reported by students that contacted the Victim Advocacy program in recent years. In addition, current sexual health research highlights the prevalence of choking or strangulation during sex among young adults in the United States⁹, emphasizing the need for deeper understanding of this behavior within the Cornell student population.

The survey asked separately about incidents involving four different tactics: the use or threatened use of *physical force; incapacitation* due to drugs or alcohol; the use of *coercion* (i.e., threats of non-physical harm or promises of rewards); and the *absence of affirmative consent* (i.e., contact that occurred without the student's knowing, voluntary and ongoing agreement). The charts that follow in this section (Figures 6 through 9), compare prevalence rates for nonconsensual sexual contact from 2023 with other recent survey administrations.

⁸ Question: "Since you have been attending Cornell, has someone used physical force or threats of physical force to do either of the following with you: sexual penetration. When one person puts a penis, fingers, or object inside someone else's vagina or anus, or oral contact. When someone's mouth or tongue makes contact with someone else's genitals." Responses: "Yes" / "No."

⁹ Herbenick, D., Fu, T. C., Wright, P., Paul, B., Gradus, R., Bauer, J., & Jones, R. (2020). Diverse sexual behaviors and pornography use: Findings from a nationally representative probability survey of Americans aged 18 to 60 years. *Journal of Sexual Medicine*, 17(4), 623–633. doi:10.1016/j.jsxm.2020.01.013

Nonconsensual sexual contact by physical force or incapacitation. National discussions concerning the prevalence of sexual violence on college campuses often define such violence as including experiences of nonconsensual penetration (including attempted penetration) *and/or* sexual touching that involves physical force *and/or* incapacitation. We have expanded that definition to explicitly list unwanted choking or strangulation as a form of nonconsensual sexual contact. Using this definition, Figure 6, 6a, and 6b below report rates of nonconsensual sexual contact for various groups of students since entering Cornell.

For further detail concerning the prevalence rates of different forms of nonconsensual contact, see Tables F1 to F5 in the Tables of Survey Results.

Figure 6. Percent of students experiencing nonconsensual sexual contact (NSC) involving force or incapacitation since entering Cornell

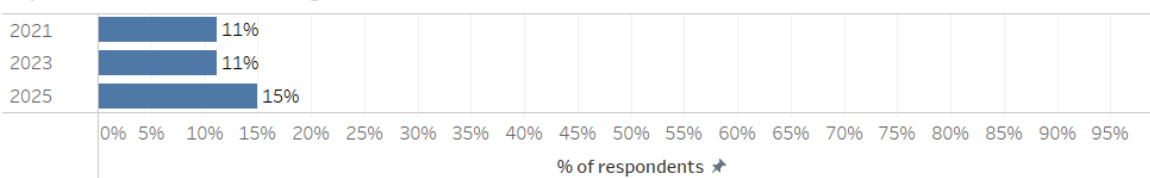


Figure 6a. By type of student

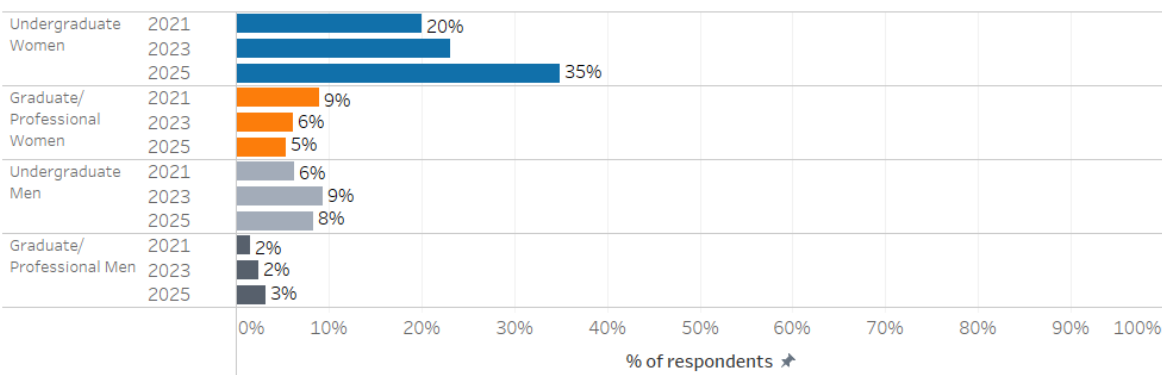
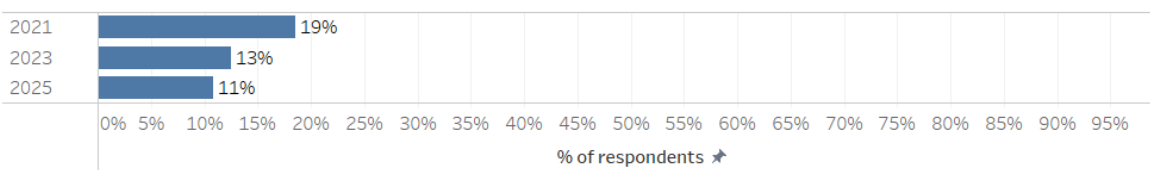


Figure 6b. Among TGQN respondents



Prevalence since entering Cornell. As shown in Figure 6, the prevalence of nonconsensual sexual contact (NSC) involving physical force, threats of force, or incapacitation has increased since the 2021 administration of the SARM survey. While the overall rate of students reporting NSC during their time at Cornell remained steady at approximately 11% in both the 2021 and 2023 surveys, the 2025 survey shows a rise, with about 15% of respondents reporting such experiences.

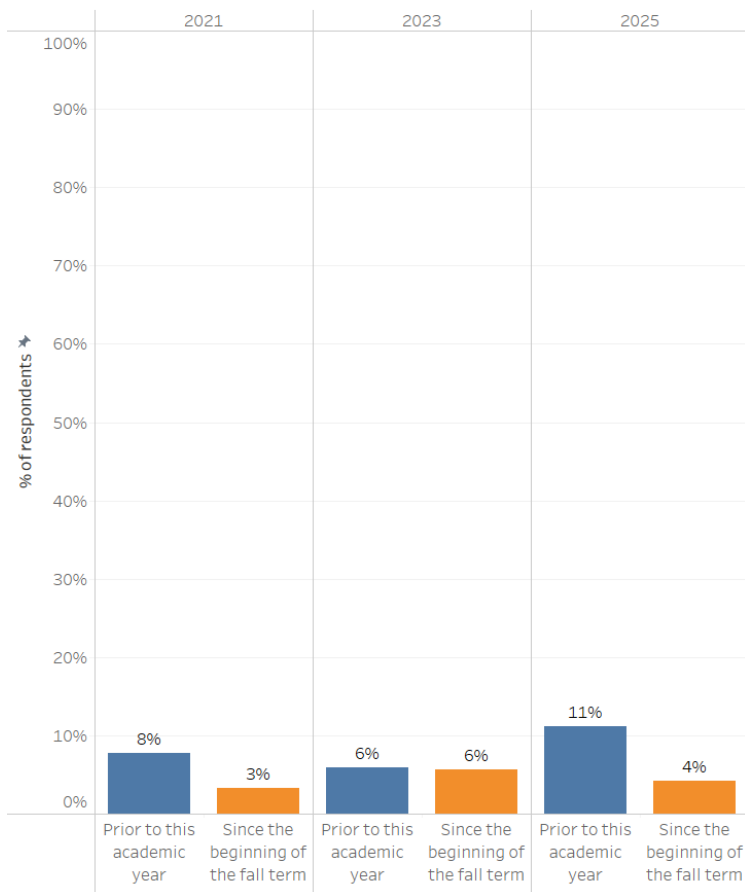
This increase is primarily driven by a rise in reports from undergraduate women, which jumped from 23% in 2023 to 35% in 2025. In contrast, reported rates declined among graduate and professional women (from 6% to 5%) and undergraduate men (from 9% to 8%) over the same period.

The rate of NSC reported by students who identify as transgender, gender non-conforming, questioning, or non-binary (TGQN) has continued to decline—from 19% in 2021 to 11% in 2025. This downward trend happened while the proportion of TGQN-identifying students in the survey sample has increased, rising from 2% in 2021 to 6% in 2025.

Prevalence during current academic year. As shown in Figure 7, the prevalence of nonconsensual sexual contact reported during the 2024–25 academic year remained consistent with current-year rates observed in previous survey administrations. This year, 4% of students reported experiencing nonconsensual sexual contact, a rate that falls between the 2023 prevalence of 6% and the 2021 rate of 3%.

The likelihood of experiencing nonconsensual sexual contact continues to vary by student characteristics, including gender identity and student level (undergraduate vs. graduate/professional). As in prior years, undergraduate women reported the highest rates of nonconsensual sexual contact involving force or incapacitation. Also consistent with findings from previous SARM surveys, Black, Hispanic, and Indigenous-identifying women report disproportionately higher rates of nonconsensual sexual contact [see Tables F1 and F2 in Tables of Survey Results].

Figure 7. Percent of students experiencing nonconsensual sexual contact involving force or incapacitation in current academic year, by survey year



d. Context of Nonconsensual Sexual Contact Incidents

Students who reported experiencing nonconsensual sexual contact—defined to include incidents involving physical force, incapacitation, coercion, and/or absence of affirmative consent—were asked a series of follow-up questions. These questions addressed the characteristics of the perpetrator(s), the involvement of alcohol or other drugs, the location of the incident, and whether the student disclosed the experience to others or contacted support programs.

To guide responses, students were instructed:

“While all such experiences are of great concern, if you have had more than one experience of nonconsensual or unwanted sexual contact since being at Cornell, please answer the following questions about the experience that has impacted or affected you the most.”

It is important to note that the experiences described in this section may or may not have occurred during the 2024–25 academic year. The following paragraphs are selected results

based on students' most impactful experiences. For more details see Tables G1 to G8 in Tables of Survey Results.

Type of nonconsensual contact. Forty percent of reported incidents involved nonconsensual penetration or oral contact, while 86% included sexual touching. For the first time, the survey specifically asked about choking or strangulation, which was present in 14% of cases. Given that this is the first year we have asked specifically about choking as a form of nonconsensual contact, it is difficult to place this figure into context. In repeating this measure on future iterations of the SARM survey, our campus will be in a better position to understand the role that this particular form of unwanted sexual contact plays in the overall picture of assault on campus. Looking beyond the type of contact, 69% of experiences involved the absence of affirmative consent as a tactic. Additionally, 32% of incidents involved victim incapacitation, 23% included the use or threat of physical force, and 7% involved coercion¹⁰. These levels are consistent with those observed in previous administrations of the SARM survey.

Characteristics of perpetrators. Women who experienced nonconsensual sexual contact almost universally identified the perpetrator(s) as male. In contrast, 82% of undergraduate men reported that the perpetrator(s) were female. Most students (82%) indicated that the offender was a Cornell student. Graduate and professional students were more likely than undergraduates to report that the offender was not affiliated with Cornell—for example, 32% of graduate/professional women did so, compared to 14% of undergraduate women. When asked about their relationship to the offender, most students said the individual was someone they knew at least casually: 23% had just met the person, 14% identified the offender as a friend, 22% as an acquaintance, and 25% as a current intimate partner. Only 10% reported that the offender was someone that they did not know or recognize, a figure consistent with prevalence rates found in previous surveys.

Involvement of alcohol or other drugs. Alcohol was involved in the majority of reported incidents. In 62% of cases, the perpetrator had consumed alcohol prior to the incident, and in 55% of incidents, the victim had done so. Use of other recreational drugs was less common, with perpetrators using them in 13% of incidents and victims in 7%. In 50% of cases, respondents reported being conscious but incapacitated by alcohol or drugs during all or part of the incident. Additionally, 19% said they were passed out or unconscious for some or all the time.

Location of incident. Among undergraduate women, the most commonly reported locations for nonconsensual sexual contact were residence halls (29%), fraternity chapter houses or annexes (20%), off-campus houses or apartments unofficially affiliated with student clubs or

¹⁰ The survey defines coercion as someone “threatening non-physical harm or promising rewards.” Examples provided in the survey include: “threatening to spread rumors or post damaging information about you online,” “threatening to give you bad grades, cause trouble for you at work or withhold a recommendation for a job or further education,” and “threatening to share damaging information about you with your family.”

organizations (11%), and other off-campus residences (23%). In contrast, graduate and professional women most often identified an off-campus house, apartment, or private residence as the location of the incident (37%), with the second most reported location being an off-campus house or apartment, unofficially affiliated with some other type of student club, team or organization (25%).

Students who reported that the incident of nonconsensual sexual contact occurred in a residence hall were asked a follow-up question about the specific residential community. Sixty eight percent of undergraduate women indicated that the assault took place in a North Campus residence hall, 28% reported West Campus, and four percent identified Collegetown/South Campus. Given that North Campus houses the largest number of students during the academic year, nearly all first and most second-year students, it is not surprising that it accounts for the majority of residence hall-related incidents. However, it is important to note that just 34% of students who reported experiencing an NSC during their Cornell career chose to disclose the area of campus where the incident took place.

Contacted a program or resource or talked to others. Approximately 23% of students said they had contacted a Cornell- or community-based resource to talk about this nonconsensual sexual contact experience, which represents a sizable increase from the 2023 survey when about 11% of students reported contacting a resource. The most common reasons for *not* contacting a program were that the student “did not think it was serious enough to contact a program” (43%), “wanted to forget it happened” (40%), “had other things I needed to focus on” (40%); and “did not think talking about it would make me feel better” (40%).

Although most students did not reach out to a formal program, nearly all spoke to *someone* about their experience. About 13% student respondents reported that they didn’t tell anyone about the incident. Among those who experienced nonconsensual sexual contact during their time at Cornell, the most common confidants were friends, family members, and spouses or romantic partners. The central role of friends in these conversations highlights the significance of the university’s upstream, public health approach to sexual violence prevention, whereby it cultivates a student body that is informed, empathetic, and engaged with this issue.

e. Perceptions of Students’ Responses to Sexual Violence

The final section of the survey asked students about their own beliefs and their perceptions of other Cornell students’ beliefs about intervening in situations involving sexual or relationship violence [see Table H1 in Survey Tables report].

Students overwhelmingly agree on the importance of speaking up when they witness inappropriate sexual comments, jokes, or gestures directed at others—fewer than 4% disagreed with this statement. Similarly, there is strong consensus around the importance of intervening when someone is behaving in a controlling or abusive manner toward a dating or sexual partner, with 97% of respondents indicating that they “agreed” or “strongly agreed.”

When it comes to intervening as action, women are both more likely to have experienced a situation that called for intervention and to have intervened “usually” or “always” under those circumstances. For example, 51% of undergraduate women and 18% of graduate women “usually” or “always” intervened in some way to help a friend avoid an unwanted, uncomfortable, or risky social interaction; this compares to 36% of undergraduate men, and 11% of graduate or professional men, who say that they “usually” or “always” intervened under those circumstances¹¹.

III. Summary and Next Steps

This summary must begin acknowledging that the response rate to SARM 2025 was notably lower than previous survey administrations, and many respondents who completed the survey opted not to disclose key contextual information. This includes demographic details and contextual insights that have historically been essential for understanding which groups are most affected by sexual assault and related misconduct, as well as the circumstances under which these incidents occur.

While the previous two administrations achieved response rates of 36% (2023) and 38% (2021), this year’s rate dropped sharply to just 15%, indicating a substantial decline in student engagement. One consequence of this reduced participation is a loss of statistical power, which limits our ability to accurately estimate prevalence rates, especially within smaller subgroups of Cornell’s student population.

Although this decline is disappointing, it mirrors response patterns observed in the concurrently administered Cornell Undergraduate Experience (CUE) survey. This parallel suggests that the drop in engagement may be more attributable to the survey’s modality than to its subject matter. Despite its limitations, the 2025 data show an increase in the proportion of respondents reporting that they experienced nonconsensual sexual contact (NSC) during their time at Cornell. The rise in prevalence observed for 2025 is driven almost entirely by an increase among undergraduate women. In contrast, prevalence rates among other groups—including graduate and professional women, undergraduate men, and graduate and professional men—remained largely unchanged.

Sexual violence at Cornell is most often perpetrated by other students, typically by someone known to the victim. Among undergraduate students in particular, these incidents frequently occur in campus-related settings—such as residence halls, fraternity chapter houses, or off-

¹¹ Graduate students were significantly more likely than undergraduates to report that they had not encountered situations during their Cornell career where they believed intervention was necessary. Specifically, 81% of graduate student respondents indicated they had not experienced such circumstances, compared to only 46% of undergraduate respondents.

campus residences affiliated with student teams or organizations. Students who experience nonconsensual sexual contact often report significant psychological, social, and academic impacts. Encouragingly, Cornell students demonstrate strong awareness of the resources and services offered by the Cornell Office of Civil Rights, and their familiarity with other support options related to sexual violence has continued to grow compared to levels observed in the 2023 survey. Nevertheless, despite this awareness, only a small proportion of students who experience sexual violence choose to engage with these formal resources. Most do, however, confide in someone—most often a friend—about their experience.

As a response to the persistent levels of sexual violence and related misconduct that have been reported on campus, the President and Provost of Cornell launched a “Presidential Task Force on Campus Sexual Assault” during the spring 2025 semester. The task force charge calls for “developing and recommending a holistic framework for addressing and preventing sexual assaults on campus.” The work of the Task Force has continued into the fall 2025 semester, with the expectation that the group will produce a report before the end of the year. That report will include “identify promising strategies that Cornell can implement to address and prevent sexual assaults on campus...Recommendations should take a holistic public health approach, spanning individuals and communities, encompassing academic, social and residential life and focused on prevention and the social context in which sexual assaults occur.”¹²

Beyond the work of the Task Force, those on the front lines of this work have continued to develop and administer novel strategies aimed at campus violence prevention, particularly for undergraduate students. Examples of these efforts include:

- Continuing development on the syllabus and learning outcomes for a *Learning Where You Live* “Sexual Citizenship” class.
- Implementing a pilot of the *Enhanced Assess, Acknowledge, Act (EAAA)* Sexual Assault Resistance Program specifically targeted towards women in sororities at Cornell.
- The Skorton Center received a grant from the President’s Council of Cornell Women (PCCW) to support facilitator training expenses associated with the EAAA pilot.
- Training facilitators and developing a curriculum for a yet-to-be named “Men’s Program” pilot to train men in fraternities at Cornell in violence prevention and bystander intervention strategies.
- Planning for the expansion of Victim Advocacy services at Cornell during the 2025-26 academic year in partnership with the Vice President of Student & Campus Life.

This report and its accompanying tables offer a broad overview of the 2025 survey results. Cornell’s Office of Institutional Research and Planning (IRP) anticipates conducting further analysis to deepen understanding of the data. Findings from this analysis will be shared with key campus stakeholders, including the Coalition on Sexual Violence Prevention (CSVP) and

¹² <https://provost.cornell.edu/initiatives/task-force-sa/#:~:text=In%202023%2C%2023%25%20of%20undergraduate,preventing%20sexual%20assaults%20on%20campus>

the Task Force on Campus Sexual Assault. In collaboration with the Task Force, the Skorton Center for Health Initiatives, the Cornell Office of Civil Rights, and IRP will examine specific aspects of the data to inform both current and future prevention strategies.