

New survey tool on sexual harassment, assault now available

September 25 2015, by Diane Swanbrow

The University of Michigan Institute for Social Research has partnered with SoundRocket, an Ann Arbor-based social science research firm, to provide the nation's college campuses with a scientifically designed survey on student sexual assault and harassment.

The National Campus Climate Survey is based on a [survey](#) of [sexual misconduct](#) that was successfully tested at U-M in January.

"We employed best practices in social research to design this important new tool," said U-M researcher William Axinn, who led the design team for the study.

Axinn, who is the principal investigator for the NCCS, is a U-M professor of survey research, population studies, sociology and public policy. He also serves as deputy director of the U.S. National Survey of Family Growth, a federal survey that gathers information on family life, marriage and divorce, pregnancy, infertility, use of contraceptives, and men's and women's health, including forced intercourse.

"Sexual assault is a major social problem in the U.S.," Axinn said. "It is alarmingly widespread."

About 25 percent of American women have been forced to have intercourse by the time they reach their 40s, according to the U.S. National Survey of Family Growth

"We are committed to providing a scientific tool to measure this problem and position colleges to address it in ways that are based on evidence," Axinn said. "We have partnered with private industry to ensure this tool is quickly and widely available at an affordable cost. We also believe that using a third party organization to conduct the study adds a layer of security, ensuring respondent confidentiality around this sensitive topic."

According to Axinn and SoundRocket founder Scott Crawford, the NCCS design achieves the following core objectives:

- **Representativeness:** The methodology ensures that the data are representative of the full diversity of students on campus and maximizes the response rate.
- **Designed for policies and programs:** The measures included in the survey are designed to provide the information needed to improve the success of campus policies and programs related to sexual misconduct.
- **Baseline for change over time:** The measures are designed to provide clear, precise indication of change over time, allowing accurate assessment of the success and failure of ongoing work to create change.
- **Benchmarking:** The study is designed in a way that will allow researchers not only to quantify the problem on campus, but also to compare it to national data for the same age group.

"Most importantly, these data will provide a crucial catalyst for student discussions," Axinn said. "They allow students to see for themselves the full extent of this problem within their communities and empower students to create new ways of thinking about solutions."

"Because American universities train the next generation of social leaders in every field, positively affecting these young people is one of

the most important ways we have to create true, widespread, long-lasting change throughout the entire population."

Although the new venture covers the same general topic as the survey on campus sexual misconduct released earlier this week by the Association of American Universities, it is not related to that survey.

The NCCS is available to any college or university seeking data on this topic. The NCCS features measurement of prevalence in the prior 12-month period, which is especially helpful for measuring the effectiveness of new policies or programs designed to address sexual misconduct. Institutions can add other measures to the NCCS, such as experiences "since enrollment" to compare to other studies like the AAU survey, or experiences "ever in your lifetime" to compare to nationally representative surveys of the whole population, such as the National Survey of Family Growth.

More information: NCCS survey results:
[publicaffairs.vpcomm.umich.edu ... e-survey-results.pdf](http://publicaffairs.vpcomm.umich.edu...e-survey-results.pdf)

Provided by University of Michigan

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