

2025 Sexual Assault Climate Survey Analysis – PSC

Completed May 2025

The Sexual Assault Climate Survey was open for the entire month of April 2025, also known as Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month which was a part of the reasoning for the timing of the survey and was open to all Paul Smith's College students. Weekly reminders were sent to students, and one initial notice was sent to Faculty/Staff at the beginning of the month to increase campus awareness of the survey. Some faculty members had their students complete the survey during their class time which is attributed to the high completion rate of the survey.

This survey and analysis intend to maintain compliance with New York Education Law 129B which requires every college campus to conduct said Climate Survey and to publish the results on their website. This analysis will be found on our Title IX page. No personal identifiable information will be shared, and all individual responses are kept anonymous and confidential.

Acknowledgement

This survey was created by the Director of Compliance and Title IX Coordinator, Isabella Lambert, following a draft instrument provided by the Bureau of Justice Statistics and the Justice Department's Office on Violence Against Women and shared by the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016).

General Demographics

In total, 100 students completed the survey – with the exception of 2 students who were under the age of 18 and therefore not eligible to complete the survey. Ages ranged from 18-25+ years old, with the vast majority of respondents being 19-21 years old. 35% of respondents were juniors, followed by 26% and 24% of sophmores and seniors respectively, and lastly 11% and 2% of first year and graduate students respectively. The remaining 2% are made up of the under 18-year-old respondents. Lastly, 51% of respondents were male, 43% female, and 4% non-binary or other identified gender. This is a unique number of male respondents for this type of survey that normally sees a larger proportion of female-identifying individuals at other colleges. Part of the reasoning for this can be attributed to the wording from the Director of Compliance and Title IX Coordinator's communications to the student body which emphasized that individuals who have never experiences sexual assault were still highly encouraged to complete the survey.

Students who Experienced Sexual Violence since August of 2024:

In total, since the beginning of the current academic year starting in August of 2024 there have been six incidents of unwelcome sexual contact. Five of these incidents were unwelcome touching of a sexual nature (forced kissing, touching of genitalia, grabbing, fondling), and one incident was unwelcome sexual intercourse. Five of these incidents occurred on Paul Smith's College Campus, and one of them occurred off-campus, but in the nearby area (Saranac Lake, etc.). It was reported that four of the individuals who completed these acts were Paul Smith's College students, and two of them were not in any way related to the college. When looking at the relationship between the complainant (victim) and respondent (suspect), it was more likely that both parties were either friends or acquaintances, or a current or prior friend or roommate. One of the incidents was between current or ex partners. This fact will be emphasized more during student training going forward to help increase awareness and ideally prevent sexual violence by an acquaintance or friend.

It was also noted that for one of the six incidents, the accused individual was female, showing that one's gender or gender identity does not dictate if they will perpetrate or be a victim of sexual violence. For 50% of the incidents the victim reported having consumed alcohol or drugs prior to the incident, where-as only 20% of the time did the accused individual consume alcohol or drugs prior to the incident. This will lead to greater emphasis during student trainings on the interplay between alcohol and drugs and sexual violence and how students can better prevent harm to themselves or others while partaking in recreational drugs or alcohol.

None of the six victims decided to notify campus officials for a variety of reasons, but a majority did not do so as they felt that what they experienced was not serious enough to report, they did not want any action taken, and they felt they did not need assistance. Due to the neuroplasticity of the brain after experiencing trauma, such as sexual violence, it is normal for victims to not act in a way one might assume – which can include not reporting the incident to authorities. A feeling of guilt or shame is common after such incidents and shows in our findings as one student reported not wanting to notify campus officials for a fear that someone may feel that they themselves were at least party to blame for the incident.

Continuing, that same student did not report that a fear of being blamed for the incident was a concern in determining if they wanted to make a report to local law enforcement. This leads to the justification that, for at least this one person on our campus, they felt local law enforcement would be more neutral and/or supportive of them than our administrators/faculty/staff at Paul Smith's College. Even though this was only one person's experience, it still speaks to a perceived negative culture on campus that should be addressed as a community to ensure all victims feel as comfortable as possible and not judged when making a report/complaint of sexual violence. This also shows up later in the survey where two individuals reported wanted to change their housing situation on campus after the incident but still chose not to contact the appropriate authorities on campus to make such a change. No students reported wanting to make a change in their academic

schedule, drop any classes, or transfer out of Paul Smith's College as a result of their experience of sexual violence.

We can foresee that with the addition of the new Title IX Coordinator, Isabella Lambert, beginning in the Fall of 2024, that the campus climate and perceptions of said climate will slowly shift to a more positive view. This is in part due to the physical presence of the Title IX Coordinator on campus once again, as for the past few years an outside consulting firm served in the role of Title IX Coordinator virtually, which students expressed did not feel as personable or helpful to them.

After the incident, 50% of students reported having troubles with their friends, roommates, or peers such as getting into more arguments, not feeling as if they could trust them, or not feeling as close to friends or peers. One person also reported having trouble at work with coworkers after the incident. None of the students reported a dip in their grades or schoolwork or issues with their family after the incident. These results speak to the possibility that victims struggle with relationships with people that they need to physically interact with in their day-to-day lives after being a victim of sexual violence. As college students, family members tend to not be seen in person as often as peers or coworkers, due to physical distance limitations when a student is away at college which could be attributed to the lack of family conflict. Another reason for this difference that cannot be understated is that a large proportion of victims reported being assaulted by a friend or acquaintance which would reasonably lead to conflict with said accused individual or within the larger friend group itself. It can be assumed that a split of a friend group over an allegation of sexual assault could be common and lead to arguments or conflict. To allow for healthier interactions on campus, student training will now include a segment on how to react when a friend says they have been assaulted.

College Cultural Analysis – All Student Respondents

Even if they themselves had not experienced sexual violence, all students who completed the survey were asked to answer Likert scale questions about their perceptions

of the climate and culture at Paul Smith's College in relation to sexual violence. The results from this section will assist the college in determining where there is need for development and improvement in our demeanor, policies, and procedures across campus.

In general, 79.6% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they feel valued as an individual at Paul Smith's College. 84.7% and 80.6% of students feel close to people, and happy to be a student at Paul Smith's College respectively. With the largest positive response for any question in this segment, 88.7% of students feel safe at Paul Smith's College. This provides a general overview of the overall climate of the campus which shows that a majority of students feel valued, connected, and safe at Paul Smith's College. This does not undermine the fact that there is still work to be done to make the college even safer, and that there are still changes that need to be made in our sexual violence response. However, it does paint a positive picture for the overall energy on campus.

Results show that students began to split over their impression of other key areas, including a split of 41.8% of students who feel that alcohol abuse is a major issue on campus, versus the 58.2% who disagree. Interestingly, there was a nearly 50/50 split in student's perceptions of whether or not, generally, students respect or trust one another at Paul Smith's College. This differs from the results showing the perception that the college is believed to actively try to make sure all students are treated equally and fairly, are kept safe, and is doing a good job of protecting the rights of all students. Drawing conclusions from this data, it can be interpreted that students feel confident in the climate of the college administration itself, but less so with their peers. This can be in part because of the students' perception split in the sense of appropriate and inappropriate behavior among students at Paul Smith's College in which 65.3% of students believe there are clear perceptions, and 34.7% believe that there are not. This speaks to the fact that students may feel that their peers are often breaking rules or otherwise not behaving in a respectful manner following community norms that are being clearly communicated by the college.

Addressing the issue of interpersonal relationships between students is a larger undertaking that will require input from all areas across campus including the

administration, faculty, staff, and students. The recent development of an inter-departmental comprehensive cultural analysis and strategic plan may assist in building the foundation necessary to address these perceptions on campus.

Students were asked about how specific groups on campus are perceived to care about the well-being, protection, and fairness of treatment of students; the results of these three separate questions were averaged to create a clearer image of the student's perceptions. The three groups tested were Faculty, Campus Safety, and the President/Deans/Leadership/Staff of the college. Faculty scored highest out of all three groups in regard to students having the most positive perceptions of their intentions relating to student well-being, safety, and fair treatment with a total of 86.0% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing. This was followed by the President/Deans/Leadership/Staff group which received a score of 83.2% positive responses. Lastly, the Campus Safety perceptions received a score of 64.3% positive responses.

The difference between Faculty/Leadership/Staff and the Campus Safety Department can have any number of reasons that were not elaborated upon within this specific survey. Of course, one reason could be the fact that the Campus Safety Department fulfills their role on campus as the authority on safety policies, rules, and behaviors – thus having a higher expectation from the student body. Students felt most strongly that there is room for improvement when it comes to protecting the students from harm by the Campus Safety department. Faculty/Leadership/Staff have less of a direct role to play in terms of enforcement of policies and maintenance of safety on campus which may lead to lower expectations from the student body and therefore a more positive response proportion. As a reminder, 88.7% of student respondents feel safe at Paul Smith's College – leading to the determination that actual safety is not as much a perceived issue, but rather the role of the Campus Safety Department in maintaining said safety.

Another interpretation for this difference could be that students simply feel dissatisfied with the Campus Safety Department's role in maintaining fairness, well-being,

and safety on campus. A reason for this may be the turnover that is common within the Campus Safety Department and therefore a loss of institutional knowledge of policies, procedures and positive student perceptions. With the addition of new Campus Safety personnel in the past few months, it may be reasonable to expect a more positive response in the future to this question once the new personnel have a chance to enact change, build new policies and procedures, and build community with our students.

Student Knowledge of Campus Supports

Students were asked how much they agree or disagree with the actions and supports currently in place at Paul Smith's College. Overall, 33.7% of students strongly agreed, and 49% agreed that sexual harassment is not tolerated at Paul Smith's College. One step further, 15.3% strongly agreed and 64.3% agreed that the college is doing a good job of providing needed serviced to victims of sexual assault. This data paints a picture of overall student recognition that sexual violence is taken seriously, which received 74.5% positive reviews, and is not an acceptable norm for our culture. The data goes on to show that only 63.2% of respondents feel that the college is doing a good job of holding people accountable for committing sexual assault. This is an interesting impression as our earlier results show that no individual who experienced assault who self-reported for this survey chose to initiate the formal complaint procedure that is laid out in Title IX and NYS Law 129B. One reason for this could be the lack of public accountability as Title IX and NYS Law 129B do not allow the Title IX Coordinator to offer updates or information to the community after a finding of responsibility or non-responsibility for a policy violation. The Title IX Coordinator is a confidential recourse when it comes to student records and therefore is not able to provide updates to the campus on investigations or findings, which can lead to a feeling of discontent or that nothing is being done on the surface. Another reason for this impression could be the recent switch from an outside consultant to an in-house Title IX Coordinator. Previously, students have anecdotally expressed discontent with the way Title

IX cases were handled under the consulting firm, which may be part of the reasoning for this lower rating.

When asked about training that they received, on average 77.7% of students responded that they had received training on: the definition of sexual assault and consent, how to report an assault, our policy on sexual assault, the services available to victims, bystander intervention, and the GreenDot training program. The lowest completion rate was for the GreenDot training which is interesting as all first-year students complete the training in their FYS class their first semester on campus. As this was two or three years ago for the majority of student respondents for the survey, it is reasonable to assume that they may have forgotten this day in their FYS classes or not recognized the GreenDot name. The most positive response rate was for students knowing the definition of consent, which received 86.7% positive responses.

Students were asked for their interpretation of reporting mechanisms on campus. With the most positive response for this section, 85.7% of students stated that they would know where to take a friend to get help if they were sexually assaulted. 78.6% of respondents felt that students who are accused of perpetrating a sexual assault on campus are treated fairly. However, only 62.3% of students felt that perpetrators of sexual assault are punished appropriately on campus after a finding of responsibility. There could be a few reasons for this, one of which could be the possibility of a student not receiving a fair sanction after a finding of responsibility in the eyes of the general student body. Future surveys will include more questions about why students feel this way and what specific reasons have led to this consensus on campus.

A slight misunderstanding of the supports that are in place for students may be shown in the response to a section of the survey in which students were asked if they believed that the college would enable them to continue their education without having to interact with the person who assaulted them. 35.7% of students disagreed with the idea that the college would facilitate this support. Paul Smith's College administers Mutual No Contact Orders out of the Title IX Office in which students listed on the order are not

allowed to communicate in any way with one another. This is the most common Supportive Measure that students request and receive after making a complaint of Sexual Misconduct and remain in effect in perpetuity until at least one student on the order graduates, or unless both parties wish for the order to be rescinded. Added emphasis and education for students on Supportive Measures will be included in future trainings to help mitigate this consensus on campus.

Students were asked who they would be most likely to contact after being sexually assaulted and their responses showed a very positive response rate for contacting the Title IX Coordinator directly for support. 43.9% of students strongly agreed, and 36.7% agreed that they would contact the Title IX Coordinator if they were ever assaulted. This is an important metric as it shows that students know who to contact for help but also understand why it is important to contact the Title IX Coordinator as they are the only authority on campus who can issue the majority of supportive measures. The next most common positive response was local law enforcement, followed by a crisis helpline, Faculty/Staff/Administrators, and finally Campus Safety. Campus Safety received the lowest score with 22.4% of students strongly disagreeing, and 36.7% disagreeing that they would ever contact Campus Safety after being sexually assaulted. This is not of major concern as the Campus Safety Department's role is very limited under Title IX and NYS Law 129B in which they are obligated to simply inform the Title IX Coordinator when they receive a report of a sexual assault or sexual misconduct. This lower score could simply be the student body's understanding that the Title IX Coordinator is the best option for them after experiencing sexual violence, and that the Department of Campus Safety is more limited in the support they are able to offer under the law. Of course, Campus Safety remains the authority on campus for any immediate safety concerns and students are still highly encouraged to contact them if they feel unsafe.

Student Interpersonal Dynamics and Culture

Students were asked a series of questions about their interpersonal dynamics within the student body to better gauge the culture they currently have around sexual misconduct and sex discrimination. The results showed a nearly 50/50 split of student opinion when asked if they believed that it is common at Paul Smith's for students to call people who are LGBTQ+ a negative name, with a slight skew towards strongly agreeing that it is common. There was also a nearly 50/50 split of students who believed that it is common for students to make jokes about sexual assault. This speaks to the fact that some students may be in different social circles on campus in which these social norms are more common or less common. Going one step further, when asked if it is common for students to stand up to other students who make inappropriate sexual comments or jokes, 60.1% of students said it was not common. This likely is part of the reason why there is a 50/50 split in inappropriate LGBTQ+ remarks on campus, as already discussed, when the students feel generally do not respect or trust one another. This disconnect may be due to differences of political opinion, worldview, shared experiences, and morals which is common with college students – or may be part of a larger issue that will require deeper and more detailed analysis from across campus.

However, 73.4% of respondents shared that they would be likely to stop someone from having unwelcome sexual contact with someone if they saw it. Therefore, the idea of perceived severity could be part of the reasoning why student do not stand up to people who use their words but rather try to physically assault someone. Of course, verbal sexual harassment or domestic violence is also severe under the eyes of Title IX and NYS Law 129B and is not handled differently under our college procedures than sexual assault.

Actions Taken and Future Change

The purpose of this biannual survey and report is to ensure that Paul Smith's College is always evolving and growing to better support our students and prevent sexual violence on our campus. Paul Smith's College takes every complaint of sex-based discrimination

seriously and will continue to investigate any and all allegations while maintaining the rights of all involved individuals.

As a way to combat the consensus that education can be improved across campus around Title IX and sexual misconduct, the Director of Compliance and Title IX Coordinator has launched a new educational program titled, “90 Seconds with Title IX”. This program hosts a bi-weekly, virtual, scenario-based question that is posed to all faculty/staff and students to improve the general knowledge base on campus but also aims to increase community member confidence in using their Title IX knowledge. Scenarios are what we experience and are an applied version of the knowledge gained during annual training and therefore are considered the most helpful tool in increasing awareness across campus. The first “90 Seconds with Title IX” received 30 responses and are expected to increase as more individuals learn of the benefits of the program.

The Campus Safety Department has hired a largely new team of members, and it is assumed that they will have success in building back trust with our students and increasing their amount of positive community engagement across campus. The next survey conducted in this manner will include more detailed questions about the Campus Safety Department’s role in decreasing the prevalence of sexual assault on campus, and that data will be used to enact change where necessary.

Student trainings are being updated to include more clear sections on peer/acquaintance/friends being more likely to commit a sexual assault against another peer/acquaintance/friend using the data found in this survey. Increased support will also be included around how to react when a friend informs them that they have been assaulted. Even though a lot of students expressed willingness to tell their friend to seek help, there were still some concerning results showing, at times, a generally not trauma-informed response to victims of assault. This negative reaction can severely limit a student’s confidence in asking for help for themselves and is therefore a barrier to decreasing the prevalence of assault on our campus.

Reviewing Paul Smith's College's support mechanisms, policies, and procedures as related to sexual assault, sexual misconduct, and sex-based discrimination is an ever-evolving process that is constantly underway. If students have specific concerns, questions, or recommendations for change they are highly encouraged to seek out the Director of Compliance and Title IX Coordinator, Isabella Lambert, at lamberie@paulsmiths.edu.

References

U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2016, January) *Draft*

Instrument for Measuring Campus Climate Related to Sexual Assault.

[https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/RevisedInstrumentModules_1_21_16_c
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