

2025 Sexual Misconduct Climate Survey Results

Introduction

From February 27, 2025, through March 17, 2025, New England Law | Boston conducted its first Sexual Misconduct and Campus Climate Survey in compliance with Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2021 Campus Sexual Assault Law (chapter 337 of the Acts of 2020). New England Law is a stand-alone graduate school providing JD and LLM degrees to a diverse student population of approximately 1100 students. Current students range in age from their mid-twenties to their mid-fifties with a majority (70%) identifying as female.

New England Law offers full-time and part-time day, evening, and flexible JD law programs spanning from 3-6 years for program completion. Classes are in a single building in downtown Boston; clinical and some administrative offices are located nearby in a separate building. New England Law has no dormitories or residences. Some students participate in off-campus clinics and internships, and many evening students work off campus in addition to attending law school.

New England Law | Boston's Survey

New England Law used model questions provided by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education ("MDHE") for its survey. All New England Law students were encouraged to take the survey, including individuals who had not personally experienced sexual misconduct. The survey was voluntary and anonymous. Due to the sensitive nature of the questions asked, respondents were able to skip questions they did not want to answer, and many questions were only displayed to respondents who gave a particular answer to a previous question. Consequently, not all questions in the survey received the same number of responses.

Of the 1,087 students enrolled at New England Law | Boston when this survey was administered, 154 students completed the survey, for an overall response rate of 14.17%. Survey respondent demographics were as follows (some students preferred not to answer these questions): 59% Female, 36% Male, 2% Nonbinary; 78% White, 10% Asian, 5% each Middle Eastern/North African, Another Race, and Black or African American; 70% Heterosexual/Straight, 15% Bisexual, 8% Gay/Lesbian; and 73% student responders identified as 1st Generation. Finally, 39% were 20-24 years old, 32% were 25-29, 21% were 30-39 and 6% were 40-49 years old.

Despite only a small portion of the total student body completing the survey, the results will still assist New England Law in better understanding students' experiences related to sexual misconduct including sexual violence, dating violence, domestic violence, gender-based violence, violence based on sexual orientation or gender expression, sexual assault, sexual harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and stalking. Further, the survey also provided New England Law with important data regarding students' awareness of the school's resources and policies regarding sexual misconduct. This information will allow New England Law to meet its students' needs and continue to provide a safe school environment where all students can learn and thrive.

Key Findings Summary

Prevalence of Sexual Misconduct Experienced by Students

This part of the survey questioned students about incidents since they have been enrolled at New England Law in the following categories:

- sexual violence victimization;
- non-sexual violence based on gender, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation;
- stalking; and
- sexual harassment by faculty/staff or by other students.

Students taking the survey were instructed to check all categories that applied, and a single incident could implicate multiple categories. For the category of sexual violence victimization, broadly defined as not consenting to a range of touching experiences, 149 of 154 student responders (97%) reported no incidents. For the category of non-sexual violence based on gender and sexual orientation, broadly defined as serious threats, destruction of property or physical violence, 143 of 154 student responders (93%) reported no incidents. Because student responders reported more incidents pertaining to stalking and sexual harassment, these categories are analyzed in more detail below.

Stalking was the category with the most reported incidents of sexual misconduct. In the survey, stalking was defined as being followed or watched including with a technological device, having someone unwanted show up or approach them, having someone leave unwanted messages or make rude comments online, or spreading rumors online. Of the 154 respondents, 38 reported experiencing stalking incidents. Forty-two percent of the incidents categorized as stalking involved New England Law students, and the rest did not. Twenty-nine percent of the stalking incidents occurred on campus. Seventy-four percent of the stalking incidents were conducted by men, 13% by women and 10% were reportedly conducted by more than one person. Forty-two percent of the incidents were conducted by acquaintances, 36% by strangers and 25% by former romantic partners (note: this is more than 100% because respondents could pick multiple responses for the same question). Forty-seven percent of responding students believed their gender played a role in a stalking incident.

The category of sexual harassment had the next largest number of incidents experienced by responding students. Out of 154 total respondents, 137 answered questions pertaining to incidents of sexual harassment involving other students. Some students reported experiencing sexual harassment. Specifically, 24 students reported that they believed they had been treated differently because of their sex and/or they had experienced offensive/sexist remarks, and 23 students felt condescended to and/or put down because of their sex (note: these numbers could include the same students experiencing more than one category of harassment). Of the students who reported experiencing harassment, 41% treated the incident like a joke, and 59% either did not react to the behavior or avoided the person who engaged in the behavior. Seventy-one percent of reporting students believed their gender played a role in the incident.

In addition to the incidents of reported sexual harassment by other students, 19 students reported incidents of sexual harassment by faculty or staff. In this regard, the most common form of sexual harassment was the use of sexually offensive language, gestures or pictures by faculty or staff; 13 students reported experiencing this. Of the students reporting incidents of sexual harassment by faculty or staff, 77% of these incidents involved faculty members and 23% involved staff. Most students reported they did not outwardly react in these situations, with 1 student reported as saying “stop” and/or reporting the person or asking for support/advice. Of the students reporting any experience of sexual harassment by faculty or staff, 71% believed their gender played a role in these incidents.

Awareness of New England Law Resources and Policies

This part of the survey assessed students' awareness of resources, policies, education, and training, as well as perceptions of how the institution would handle reports of sexual misconduct and the experiences of students who had reported instances of sexual misconduct.

Eighty-nine percent (102) of students reported receiving information from New England Law about Title IX protections and 82% (93) reported receiving New England Law policies. Students reported receiving the following information: 46% (52) definitions of sexual misconduct, 48% (55) information on how to report an incident of sexual misconduct, and 48% (55) information on where to go and get help. Seventy-nine percent of students (95 respondents) reported having discussed sexual misconduct/rape in class (note that Criminal Law, a required course at New England Law, discusses sexual assault). Seventy-two percent of students (87) reported having seen posters about sexual misconduct since enrolling in New England Law. Sixty-three percent of respondents (76) reported discussing sexual misconduct with friends, and 40% of respondents (48) discussed this with family members. Thirty-six percent of student responders (43) heard or saw campus administrators or staff address sexual misconduct. Twenty students reported volunteering or participating in a bystander course.

Overall, students anticipated that New England Law would respond to incidents of sexual misconduct appropriately. There were 135 students who responded to these speculative questions. 60% of students believed it was likely/very likely that New England Law would take a report seriously and maintain the privacy of the reporting student, 15% believed this was unlikely/very unlikely, and the rest of the responses were neutral. Fifty-four percent believed it was likely/very likely that New England Law would handle the report fairly, 13% thought this was unlikely or very unlikely, and the rest of the responses were neutral. Further, 56-59% thought it was very unlikely/unlikely that New England Law would label the reporting student a troublemaker or would punish the reporting student with 16% and 17% respectively speculating this was likely/very likely, and the rest were neutral. Forty-nine percent of student responders reported it was likely/very likely that New England Law would provide accommodations to the reporting student with another 31% neutral and 21% student responders speculating this would be unlikely/very unlikely. Finally, 47% of 133 student respondents checked it was likely/very likely that New England Law would act concerning factors that may have led to sexual misconduct with 35% neutral and 18% reporting it was unlikely/very unlikely.

Students who reported experiencing instances of sexual misconduct in earlier questions were asked 29 questions about New England Law's response to those incidents. For the most part, students reported that the school's responses were appropriate. New England Law reportedly did not create an environment where reporting students felt discriminated against or treated differently because of their sexual orientation, race, or gender identity/expression; in each of these question areas, 81%-93% of students' responses were positive. Further, New England Law did not deny incidents/experiences, punish or make the reporting student feel outcast in any way; responses were 75-87% positive to these questions. Additionally, 72% of 18 students said it was not difficult to report an incident/experience, 67% of 18 students stated New England Law created an environment where the incident or experience was recognized as a problem, and 65% of 23 students responded that New England Law did not create an environment where the incident/experience seemed common or normal.

Fifty-nine percent of 22 students responded they were actively supported with formal or informal resources, 63% of 11 students felt they were allowed to have a say in how the report was handled, 62% of 13 responding students felt they were treated as an important member of the community and 54% of 13 students responding said their need for supports and accommodations were met. Some less positive responses were in the following areas: 63% of 19 students responded that New England Law did not apologize for what happened, 52% of 19 students responded that New England Law did not create an environment where the incident was safe to discuss, and 67% of 9 students felt New England Law responded inadequately to the incident/experience reported.

Incident Reporting

When asked if they had told anyone about an incident of sexual misconduct they experienced, 9% of respondents (12) said that they had told someone, 24% of students (32) said they had not told anyone, and the remainder of respondents (67%, or 89 students) said that the question did not apply to them. Of the 12 students who told someone, 92% (11) reported the incident to a friend, 50% (6) reported to a family member or parent, 42% (5) reported to a therapist and/or intimate partner, 33% (4) reported to New England Law faculty or staff, 25% (3) reported to the Office of Student Services, 17% (2) reported to a healthcare professional, and 8% reported to a roommate, religious leader, local police or campus security (1 student in each category). No students reported to an off-campus rape crisis or victim support resource.

Fourteen percent of student respondents (19) said they had experienced sexual misconduct while enrolled at New England Law (though not necessarily involving another New England Law student or taking place on campus) that they did not report. For those 19 students, the following reasons were most common: 58% reported they did not think it was serious enough to contact someone and/or that they could handle it themselves, 40% reported the incident starting as a consensual one, 30% stated that others said it wasn't serious enough and/or they were too busy, 37% reported concern over confidentiality, 26% felt they would not be believed or there would be social/professional impact or they did not know who to tell, and 21% feared retaliation.

Bystander Intervention

Of 72 student responders, 40% of students always or most of the time walk a friend home who is drunk or high, while 33% reported they never do this. Of 81 students, 47% always (and many sometimes/usually) talk to a friend of a person who is drunk or high to make sure they will not leave the person behind. Of 40 responding students, 57% never try to distract someone trying to take advantage of a drunk or high person, while 30% reported they always do this. Of 68 students, 65% have always, most of the time, or a few times inquired about helping someone at a party who looks upset.

Sixty percent of 35 responders said they never intervened with a friend who was being physically abusive, and 43% of 47 responding students never intervened with a friend who was being verbally abusive. Finally, an equal number of 79 responding students reported always and never speaking up against sexist jokes.

Conclusions and Next Steps

Of a student population of approximately 1100 students, 154 students voluntarily completed New England Law's 2025 survey. The vast majority of student responders reported not experiencing any incidents of sexual misconduct since enrolling in law school. The most frequently reported type of sexual misconduct experienced was stalking-related incidents, many of which took place online, and most of which did not involve other New England Law students. Sexual harassment in the form of offensive or sexist statements was the other area with more reported sexual misconduct incidents. Many of the students reporting any incidents of sexual misconduct felt their gender played a role, particularly in relation to sexist and offensive comments.

The vast majority of the 154 student responders felt they had knowledge of and access to resources should an incident of sexual misconduct arise. Further, most student responders had the perception that New England Law would or did respond in a confidential, supportive and serious way to a reported incident. Of the much-smaller number of students who reported an incident, the majority felt that New England Law did not discriminate or treat them differently based on race, sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. These students found it easy to make a report, and most felt the report was taken seriously and that the school did not create an environment that normalized misconduct. Nevertheless, it is important for New England Law to continue to expand the support provided to students who report misconduct and to promote the on and off campus resources available to New England Law students.

It would be beneficial for students to receive additional training, particularly in the areas of online stalking and bystander intervention. Additionally, training and more information surrounding sexually offensive and sexist comments and behavior would be useful, as well as supportive responses to reports of these types of comments and behavior, to ensure that all students feel safe and supported. Finally, on the next Climate Survey, New England Law will consider adding a question to ascertain the year of law school the student responder is in (i.e. first, second, etc.) to see if any patterns may exist over the time students are enrolled. New England Law will also continue to consider additional incentives to increase the number of students who respond to its survey, in order to obtain additional data and a clearer picture of student experiences.