



The Campus Climate Survey Validation Study (CCSVS) Project Summary September 2015

The U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), with funding from the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), is working with RTI International to design and conduct the Campus Climate Survey Validation Study (CCSVS). The purpose of the study is to develop and test a survey instrument and methodology for efficiently collecting valid school-level data on campus climate and sexual violence. The CCSVS began with design and development of the survey in July 2014. The survey was administered during the Spring 2015 semester and anticipated completion of analysis is the end of 2015.

Developing the CCSVS Instrument

The CCSVS began with an in-depth review of the model survey included in the Not Alone Toolkit released by the White House Task Force to Protect Students From Sexual Assault (<https://www.notalone.gov/assets/ovw-climate-survey.pdf>). BJS and RTI also conducted a review of other climate surveys and measures of victimization and campus culture used in prior campus sexual assault work. In addition, they held a series of listening sessions with academic experts in campus sexual assault research, Federal partners, and school administrators to obtain feedback on survey content and data collection methodology. Based on these reviews and meetings, BJS and RTI modified the toolkit instrument to adhere to best practices in survey research, reduce respondent burden, and allow for incident-level estimates of rape and sexual assault. The resulting instrument used in the CCSVS Pilot Test was then reviewed by representatives from several Federal agencies, revised, and programmed for web-based administration.

Cognitive Testing of CCSVS Instrument

In January and February 2015, RTI cognitively tested the preliminary CCSVS instrument with male and female college students, including survivors of sexual assault. Two approaches to cognitive testing were employed: 1) crowdsourcing and 2) in-person. Crowdsourcing, which entailed administration of key sections of the instrument to 240 college students pre-registered with an online opinion hub to complete short web surveys for nominal compensation, allowed the study team to efficiently identify as many obvious problems with the survey instrument as possible. In-person cognitive testing, which entailed in-depth personal interviews covering the entire draft instrument with 36 male and female college students in three cities, generated a more nuanced understanding of how a smaller number of respondents—including survivors of sexual assault—conceptualized and answered each question. The cognitive testing process helped to identify issues with question framing and ordering, and a number of revisions were made to the instrument based on the knowledge gained during the cognitive testing process.

Pilot Data Collection

From January to early March 2015, BJS and RTI recruited nine schools to participate in the CCSVS Pilot Test. The participating schools represented varying sizes, regions of the country, public vs. private status, and 2- vs. 4-year status.

RTI fielded the CCSVS Pilot Test from March through May 2015. The sample of undergraduate men and women from each school was designed to yield school-specific estimates of campus climate and sexual violence. Sampled students were recruited via e-mail to participate in the 15-minute, confidential survey and were provided a monetary incentive for their participation. Upon completion, participants were directed to national, local, and school-specific resources related to sexual violence. Surveys were completed by over 23,000 undergraduate students.

Analysis, Reporting, and Recommendations

The CCSVS Pilot Test data are currently being analyzed to generate overall and school-specific measures of campus climate and prevalence estimates of sexual harassment, sexual assault victimization, and intimate partner violence. The final report will include recommendations related to the survey instrument and data collection methodology.

All inquiries related to the CCSVS should be directed to: Michael Planty, PhD, Chief, Victimization Statistics, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office 202-514-9746, Michael.Planty@usdoj.gov