

2009 University of Missouri Campus Climate Study

The 2009 campus climate survey was used to provide comparative data for earlier campus climate research from 2001 through 2005. Unlike the previous series of studies, the focus was solely on students. All undergraduate, graduate and professional students were notified and invited to participate via mass e-mail, MU Info and campus promotions. A self-selection of 3,522 or 12 percent of the student population responded.

Executive Summary

Survey Sample

The 2009 campus climate survey focused solely on students. All students were invited to participate and 12 percent self-selected for a total of 3,522 respondents. Participants were predominantly undergraduate (77.4 percent), female (66.5 percent), White/European American (80.4 percent), Heterosexual (90.1 percent), and without disabilities (92.1 percent).

The 2009 sample was generally similar to the [2001 Phase I sample](#). Specifically, the proportions of female/male and undergraduates/graduate-professionals students were similar. However, there were slightly lower proportion of students of color and substantially higher proportions of students with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer (LGBQ) students.

Experiences of Harassment

In ratings on the General Campus Climate scale (GCC), students' overall average scores suggested more positive experiences of climate.

In 2009, 15.7 percent of students indicated that they had experienced harassment. However, there were significant differences among demographic groups. In 2001, 17.7 percent of students indicated that they experienced conduct that has interfered unreasonably with their ability to work or learn on campus (harassment).

57.1 of transgender, 34.8 percent of LGBQ, 26.4 percent of People of Color, 18.9 percent of agnostic/atheist, 25.9 percent of Religious Minorities, 29.3 percent of people with Disabilities, 22.4 percent of Non-US Citizens, 19.2 percent of 1st Generation, and 20.1 percent of Political Liberals reported experiences of harassment on campus. The reports occurred at a rate higher than statistically predicted as due to chance.

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The majority of harassment involved derogatory remarks (84.9 percent) and written comments (19.2 percent). Additional verbal harassment included micro-aggressions (4.9 percent), unsolicited e-mails (4.5 percent), graffiti (4.5 percent), unwanted sexual advances (2.7 percent), and anonymous phone calls (2.4 percent). Physical harassment included threats of physical violence (9.3 percent), actual physical assault/injury (4.5 percent), and unwanted physical contact (1.3 percent). Finally, harassment was reported in police behavior (1.1 percent), unfair grading (0.9 percent), stalking behavior (0.7 percent), and other areas (4.5 percent). Percentages sum to more than 100 percent because respondents could select more than one type.

Experiences of harassment were primarily due to gender (43.7 percent) or race/ethnicity (29 percent). Harassment was also reported due to sexual orientation (14.9 percent), age (20.9 percent), and religion (22.1 percent). 55 percent of those reporting religious harassment were Christian; 22 percent of BEHJM; 18 percent of agnostic/atheist.

24.9 percent of respondents reported harassment due to political orientation. Of students reporting political orientation harassment, 47 percent were far left or liberal, 20 percent middle of the road, and 32 percent far right or conservative.

Men reported significantly higher percentages of harassment on the basis of race/ethnicity (37.6 percent versus 24.9 percent), sexual orientation (21.5 percent versus 10.7 percent), religious beliefs (28.7 percent versus 18.9 percent), political orientation (32.6 percent versus 20.8 percent), and veteran status (2.8 percent versus 0.5 percent).

Women reported significantly higher percentages of harassment on the basis of gender/gender identity (56.6 percent versus 16.6 percent) and age (22.7 percent versus 17.7 percent).

Embracing Diversity

Diversity-Related Courses

The modal number of diversity courses taken was zero. That is, 1,292 students (38.3 percent) reported never having taken a diversity course at MU. 1438 respondents (42.6 percent) reported having taken between 1 to 3 diversity courses at MU.

The comparison between the number of diversity courses taken by Students of Color ($M = 2.16$) and White students ($M = 2.08$) was not significant. In examining gender differences, women ($M = 2.25$) took significantly more courses addressing diversity than men ($M = 1.80$). However the effect size for this difference was small (Cohen's $d = .13$, $r = .07$).

Students reported learning more about others/other cultures and themselves/own culture as they took more diversity classes. The degree of learning increased with the number of classes taken as the slopes of both regression lines were significantly different from zero.

A More Welcoming Campus

85 percent of respondents believed the campus became “a little” to “a great deal” more welcoming over a 2-year period. 7.5 percent of respondents endorsed that the campus became “somewhat” or “a great deal” less welcoming over the same 2-year period.

There were group differences in the extent to which students believed the campus became more or less welcoming to members of diverse groups. Politically liberal and moderate students and Students of color were slightly more likely to believe the campus had become *less* welcoming. Conservative students, Christians, and religious minority group members were slightly more likely to believe it had become more welcoming.

Intellectual Diversity and Political Affiliation

There were no meaningful statistical differences between politically liberal, conservative, and moderate respondents on the degree to which they were satisfied with “intellectual diversity” at MU. Moderate and conservative students were more satisfied than liberal students with the overall campus climate for diversity, accounting for a modest 7 percent of the variance.

Social Interactions with Similiar and Different Groups

Underrepresented minority (URM) students were far more likely to report “meaningful social interactions” with African Americans/Blacks than White students, (57 percent versus 32 percent, respectively). Moreover, URM students were far more likely to endorse the recommendation that the University should actively recruit more African Americans/Blacks (75 percent versus 39 percent), Native American Indian/Pacific Islanders (81 percent versus 51 percent), and Hispanic/Latino(a)s (80 percent versus 46 percent).

When asked about ease in locating or identifying others on campus with similar race/ethnicity, students of color reported greater difficulty than White students. White students were far more likely than URM students to indicate that it was “extremely easy” to locate or identify others on campus like themselves with respect to race/ethnicity, 81.8 percent versus 37.6 percent respectively. This finding was statistically significant.

Similarly, LGBTQ students reported greater difficulty than heterosexual students locating or identifying others on campus with similar sexual orientation. This finding was statistically significant.

Importance of Diversity

Over 86 percent of respondents thought it was important for diversity to be embraced by campus administration, faculty, staff, student leaders, and students in general. However, a smaller number of respondents believed that diversity was actually embraced with numbers ranging from 72 percent for students in general to 84 percent for faculty.

White students were much more likely than URM students to endorse the idea that diversity as a whole was embraced “a great deal” by students in general (22 percent to 11 percent), student leadership (36 percent versus 19 percent), faculty from whom they have taken classes (43 percent versus 25 percent), staff encountered on a day-to-day basis (33 percent versus 22 percent), and campus administration (39 percent versus 21 percent).

When asked about ease in locating or identifying others on campus with similar Spiritual/Religious belief system, Religious Minorities (Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim) reported more difficulty than Christians or Agnostics/Atheists. Moreover, Agnostics/Atheists reported greater difficulty than Christians. Both findings were statistically significant.

Satisfaction with Numerical Diversity

When asked about numerical diversity on campus, students of color were less satisfied than white students with the number of students, faculty, and staff. Moreover, students of color were less satisfied with the overall climate than white students.

When asked about satisfaction with the overall campus climate related to diversity, the most satisfied groups included White, Christian, Political Conservatives, Political Moderates, Veterans, Men, and Women. The least satisfied groups were Transgender, LGBTQ, People of color, Religious minorities, People with disabilities, Political liberals, Agnostics/Atheists, and non-native English speakers.

Satisfaction with Overall Campus Climate

Experiences of harassment (17.8 percent), embracing diversity (14.5 percent), and satisfaction with numerical diversity (34.8 percent) each accounted for significant variance in predicting student “satisfaction with overall climate” with the full model accounting for 66.9 percent of the variance in student ratings.

Despite clear influences related to personal experiences of harassment and the general climate, we found that the degree to which “students in general” and “administrators” were perceived to embrace diversity were important. Moreover, the central predictor of ratings of overall climate were based on “satisfaction with numerical diversity” for students, faculty and staff, which partially mediated the variance accounted for by personal experiences of harassment.