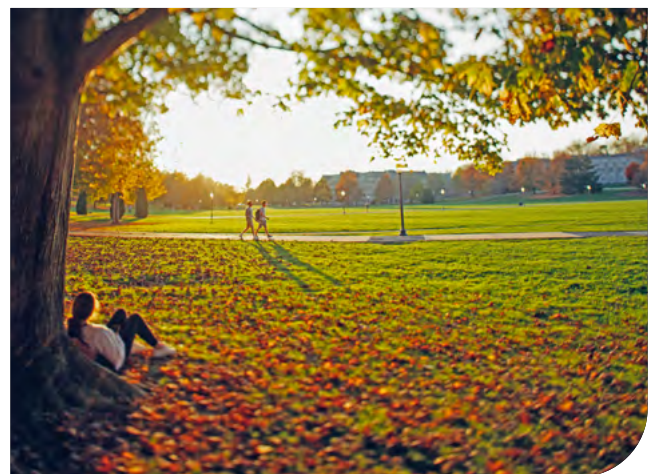




2021-2022 Title IX Annual Report

Report on Sexual Harassment and Violence at Virginia Tech



EQUITY & ACCESSIBILITY
VIRGINIA TECH

From the Title IX Coordinator

Dear Community,

The [Office for Equity and Accessibility](#) produces the [Title IX report](#) annually to provide data and context for reports of sexual harassment and violence involving Virginia Tech students.

By sharing this information transparently, we hope to provide insight into the experience of students in our community and the myriad ways that sexual harassment and violence impacts our university. This report also outlines how the university responds to reports through helpful support measures to individuals and investigations of formal complaints.

Virginia Tech is committed to building a safe environment for all. To that end, this report contains information about trends from the last academic year and the university's ongoing efforts to create a culture that protects against sexual harassment and violence.

Though sometimes difficult to read, it is important to acknowledge and regard the information included in this report with seriousness and care. Understanding our current climate is essential to the success of our efforts to create a safe and inclusive learning environment.

In sharing this report, we seek not only to increase awareness but to ensure continued partnership and accountability. The [SAFE at VT](#) website provides resources and ways to get involved in this important work.

Together, we have the power to transform our community.

Take good care,

Katie Polidoro

Title IX Coordinator
Office for Equity and Accessibility



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Reporting Sexual Harassment and Violence

The decision to report sexual harassment and violence is deeply personal. Survivors often are selective about trusting others with their reports. When individuals share their experiences with most employees – with the exception of confidential resources on campus – those employees are required by university [Policy 1026](#) to report to the Title IX coordinator. The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that those who experience harassment and violence can easily access support measures, resources, and reliable information about their options to file formal complaints.

Each person has their own unique set of needs and desired outcomes, and deserves the autonomy to make their own choices about reporting, seeking help, and filing formal complaints. To every extent possible, Virginia Tech respects those decisions.

Reports, 2021-2022

In the previous academic year, the Title IX team in the Office for Equity and Accessibility responded to 435 new reports of sexual harassment or violence, marking a significant 46 percent increase from the 298 reports in 2020-2021. Of this number, more reports occurred during the fall semester, specifically during the months of September and October.

While the number of students who chose to report directly to the Title IX coordinator increased, the majority of reports were from third parties – university employees that students approached with their stories and who, in keeping with [Policy 1026](#), shared that information with the Title IX coordinator. Most often, these responsible employee reports came from individuals working in residence halls. These employees include student leaders who were approached by fellow students for support and guidance; academic faculty and advisors who were approached when students' experiences interfered with their studies; and Virginia Tech Police Department officers who received reports of crimes such as sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking.

In particular, the increase in reports of sexual assault is cause for concern. The Title IX team received 168 reports involving alleged sexual violence, a 55 percent increase from the 108 reports in the 2020-2021 academic year. Of those reports, 92 were received during the fall semester, with higher reporting rates between September and October.

2021-2022

435 new reports

46% increase in reports

168 reports of alleged sexual violence

55% increase in reports

To increase understanding of how sexual assault occurs in our community, staff tracked when incidents were reported to have occurred. Twenty-five students indicated that their experience of violence occurred either prior to attending Virginia Tech (18) or in a previous year (7). Another 49 students opted not to share any details of their experience, including where or when it occurred. Of the known incidents that occurred during the 2021-2022 academic year, the majority occurred in September (26).

This underscores the sobering fact that the early weeks of the school year are an especially high-risk time for students.

In addition to the reports discussed above, the Title IX team received 213 reports of sexual harassment – the most common incident type – as well as 28 reports of intimate partner violence and 26 reports of stalking.

Sexual harassment was the most common incident type.

University Response

The Title IX team contacted every identified student who reported or was the subject of a third-party report of sexual harassment or violence. All non-anonymous reports resulted in direct outreach to a student. Of those students, 415 had follow-up meetings with staff and were provided resources, support measures, and options for filing a complaint.

415 students

had follow-up meetings and received resources, support measures, and options for filing a complaint.

Support Measures

Sexual harassment and violence deeply impacts students' participation in academic life. To help limit the effects, students are offered resources and support measures. Those include referrals to confidential resources for counseling and advocacy, academic support, housing changes, university-issued no contact orders, and more. In some cases, these initial support measures helped students feel more secure to make future decisions about filing formal complaints or participate in an investigative process. In other cases, students received support measures on an ongoing basis, over multiple semesters and years, to ensure that they had the opportunity to succeed at Virginia Tech.

91%

of students who received support measures continued their studies at Virginia Tech.

Virginia Tech offers resources and support measures to students, no matter where or when their experience occurred. During the 2021-2022 academic year, 194 students received support measures. Ninety-one percent of those students continued their studies in the following semesters or graduated from the university.

Investigations and Their Outcomes

When an individual chooses to file a formal complaint and pursue an investigation, the Title IX office is obligated to investigate. Staff conducted 28 investigations during the last academic year. The complaints involved the full spectrum of behaviors that fall under Title IX and the gender-based violence policies outlined in the Virginia Tech [Student Code of Conduct](#). In five cases, due to the seriousness of the allegations and the threat to the safety of individuals or the community, students received interim suspensions, pending the investigative outcomes.

The Title IX team works together with the [Office for Student Conduct](#) to resolve Title IX cases, with Student Conduct holding required live hearings and deciding the outcomes, including sanctions, in each case.

During the 2021-2022 academic year, 16 students were found not responsible for violating university policies related to sexual harassment and violence, and 12 students were found responsible.

For cases in which a student was found to have violated university policy, sanctions included dismissal from the university (2 cases), suspension (5 cases), and deferred suspension (5 cases).

Trends

While the data represent individual cases, there are some commonalities that provide insight into how sexual harassment and violence impact our community and how those who experience it make decisions about when and how to report it.

First, it is clear that both reports and incidents in the previous academic year – especially those involving sexual assault – were highly concentrated in the early fall semester. This time of year, sometimes referred to as “the red zone,” marks a time when students are at heightened risk for experiencing violence.

Second, more students than ever before engaged with the Title IX team to receive resources and support measures. For many, these support measures were ongoing, both because the impact of harassment and violence on the university experience is so significant and because the Title IX team has worked to maintain relationships with students over time.

Reports were **highly concentrated** in the early fall semester.

More students than ever before engaged with the Title IX team to **receive resources and support** measures.

Finally, as in previous years, the rate at which students chose to pursue investigations remained low, despite the increased engagement. One possible explanation for this is the investigation and adjudication process itself may be perceived as difficult. It will be imperative to examine policies and procedures to ensure that the process complies with the requirements of Title IX and does not pose any barriers to reporting.

The **rate** at which students chose to pursue investigations **remained low**, despite the increased engagement.

Culture and Climate

In response to increasing reports of sexual violence and student activism, Virginia Tech President Tim Sands created the Sexual Violence Culture and Climate Work Group (SVCC) in the fall of 2021. President Sands charged the group with creating a sustainable transformation to move Virginia Tech’s culture toward one that protects against sexual violence.

During its initial phase, the work group focused on undergraduate students and the high-risk time for violence that occurs in the early months of the school year known as “the red zone.” The group consisted of representatives from offices across the university and included professional faculty, academic faculty, and undergraduate and graduate student representatives.

To carry out SVCC’s ambitious work, the group formed subcommittees dedicated to each element of its charge. SVCC’s key 2021-22 accomplishments include:

- **Identifying a framework for sustainable culture change.**
 - The group identified opportunities to engage with residential undergraduate students to help shape a more protective culture. As a result, employees and student leaders within Residential Well-Being received significant additional training on sexual assault prevention and addressing culture within the residence halls.
 - An organizational model was identified to establish work groups and recurring events, necessary to sustain the work of culture change and maintain awareness of sexual violence at Virginia Tech.
- **Assessing prevention and culture change.**
 - The group inventoried existing efforts and programming aimed at sexual violence prevention and developed a tool to assess the reach and effectiveness of those programs.

■ **Carrying forward recommendations from the 2019 Task Force.**

- In addition to creating a new full-time position dedicated to sexual violence prevention (which was filled in February 2022), the Task Force made recommendations for improving communications about Title IX resources as well as implementing a universitywide prevention campaign. This year, SVCC created the new [SAFE at VT](#) website, which provides useful information for students and survivors in an approachable way. SVCC created the foundations for a universitywide prevention campaign which launched during the fall of 2023 to increase awareness.

■ **Increasing transparency in how the university responds to sexual violence.**

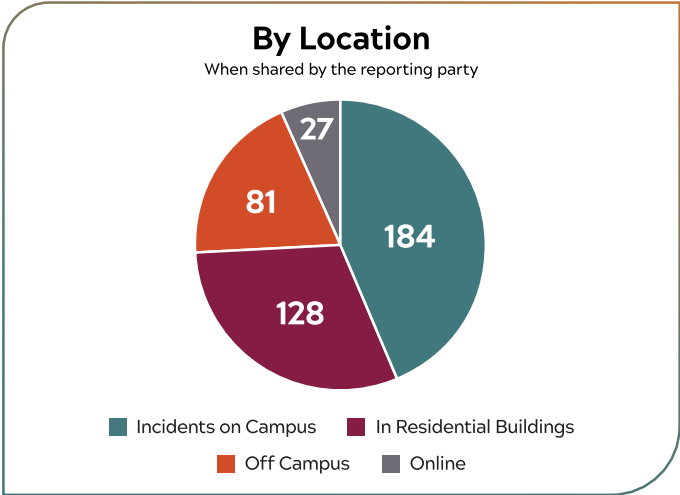
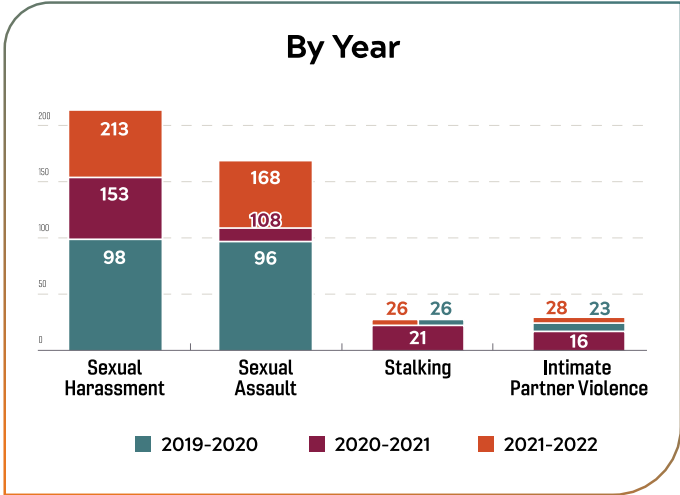
- Based on feedback from community members, including students, improvements were made to the ways the university provides information about sexual violence on campus. [Timely Warning emails](#) were overhauled to provide more clarity and useful information about incidents and prevention.
- Additionally, content was added to both the [SAFE at VT](#) and [Virginia Tech Police Department](#) websites to provide more helpful information about how the university responds to reports.

■ **Encouraging community engagement.**

- In addition to the employees and students appointed to SVCC, subject matter experts and students were invited to join the various subcommittees. In total, 32 university personnel and 57 students served on SVCC or one of its subcommittees.
- A community engagement event, open to all students, was held to gather student feedback on the path of SVCC. Students provided feedback to each subcommittee and that feedback helped guide SVCC's work.

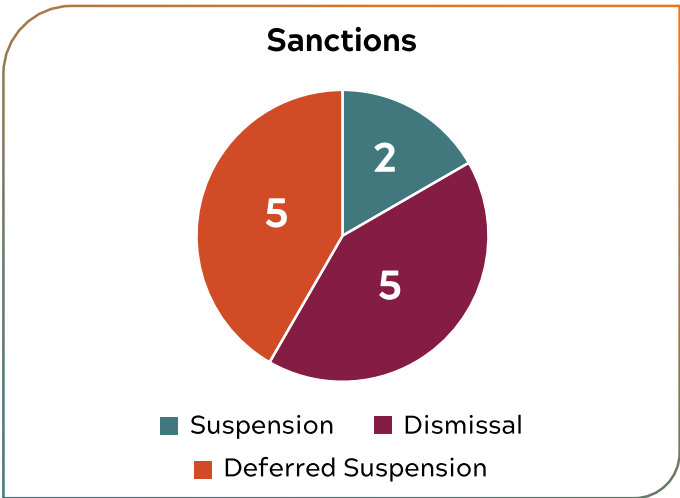
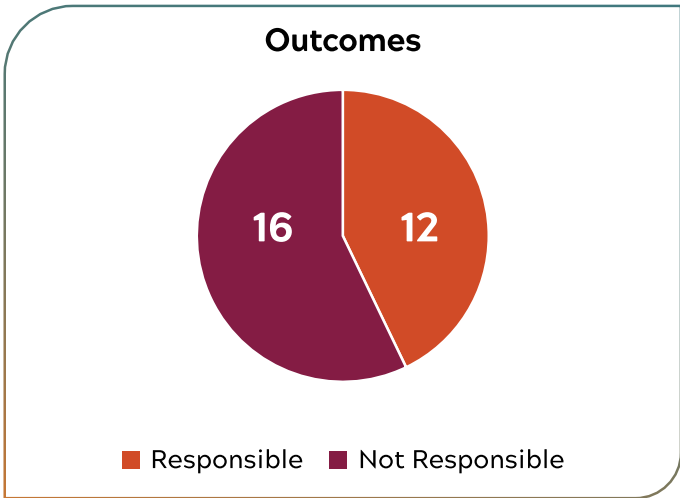
Sexual Harassment and Violence Fact Sheet

The Office for Equity and Accessibility received 435 reports of gender-based harassment and violence involving students. Of those reports, 213 were of sexual harassment, 168 of sexual assault, 26 of stalking, and 28 of intimate partner violence.



Outcomes

Of the reports that resulted in formal complaints and investigations, a student was found responsible for gender-based harassment or violence in 12 cases. In 16 cases, the respondent was found not responsible.





Katie Polidoro, Title IX Coordinator

Office for Equity and Accessibility

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Every member of our community has the right to live in an atmosphere free from sexual harassment and violence.

Virginia Tech is committed to providing a safe environment, consistent with our [Principles of Community](#), free from harassment and violence of any kind. If you have experienced sexual harassment or violence, we encourage you to reach out for support. Advocacy and assistance, including measures through Title IX, are available to you—whether you choose to report or not and no matter where you are located.

Report to the University

Scan this code to report gender based harassment and violence.



Office for Equity and Accessibility

220 Gilbert Street, Suite 5200

540-231-2010

equityandaccess@vt.edu

Virginia Tech Police Department

911 ▪ 540-382-4343

police.vt.edu

Calling 911 from a Virginia Tech landline in Blacksburg will reach the Virginia Tech Police Department. Calling 911 from a cell phone will connect with the local off-campus police department.

Confidential Resources

Confidential resources cannot share identifying information about you without your consent. They can support and advise you as you make decisions.

Cook Counseling Center

ucc.vt.edu

Women's Center at Virginia Tech

womenscenter.vt.edu

Schiffert Health Center

healthcenter.vt.edu

**Office of the Ombudsperson –
Graduate School**

graduate.ombudsman.vt.edu

**TimelyCare Virtual Mental
Health Counseling**

timelycare.com/virginiatech

Private Resources

Private resources are required to report some information about incidences to the Title IX Coordinator. Other university departments may also be involved to help survivors or protect the campus community.

Office of Student Conduct

studentconduct.vt.edu

Dean of Students Office

dos.vt.edu

Cranwell International Center

international.vt.edu

Get Involved

Each member of the community can help the university in the ongoing work to transform our culture and protect against sexual violence.

Visit safe.vt.edu

to access resources and learn how you can be part of Virginia Tech's culture of change.

Resources

Accessibility Portal	vt.edu/accessibility
Accessible Technologies	assist.vt.edu
Cook Counseling Center	ucc.vt.edu
OEA Glossary	oea.vt.edu/about/glossary
Report a Barrier	vt.edu/accessibility/barrier
SAFE at VT	safe.vt.edu
Services for Students with Disabilities	ssd.vt.edu



Scan the QR code or click the link below for the Gender-Based Harassment and Violence Reporting form.

bit.ly/TitleIX_Reporting_Form



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