

Government Department Climate Survey Report: Executive Summary



In the year since revelations of alleged persistent sexual harassment by a faculty member, the Government Department has made a concerted effort to examine and reform our community's climate. As part of these efforts, an extensive survey fielded during October 2018 shows that a majority find the department to have a satisfactory climate, be a place worth recommending, and have a positive professional environment. That said, women and, especially women graduate students, have less positive experiences than men. In other respects and with other groups, the department has also not met the standards of inclusion to which we aspire.

Sample and Method: A committee of department faculty, students, and staff designed the survey in order to measure how well the department allows all its members to thrive. The voluntary survey achieved a high response rate — 86% of 58 faculty, 92% of 166 graduate students, 59% of 244 undergraduate concentrators, and 91% of 11 staff members (355 total respondents). The Office of Institutional Research securely handled all personally identifiable information, and tabulations of the responses are publicly available.

Climate: On two general questions, members were largely satisfied with the department climate. Over 65% of all respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the department, as well as feeling that they belong in the Government Department. Similarly, over 75% of respondents reported being likely to encourage a peer to join the department.

Disparities by Gender: On the other hand, 35% of women graduate students report being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, compared with 16% of graduate students who are men.

Disparities by Role: Graduate students in general face challenges: while 66% of faculty and 49% of undergraduates report that the department provides a sense of personal accomplishment most of the time, only 26% of graduate students report the same.

Harassment and Discrimination: The survey placed an emphasis on capturing the prevalence of harassment (conduct that interferes with one's performance or creates a hostile work environment) and discrimination (unjust or prejudicial treatment). Nine individuals (3%) reported harassment, while 29 (9%) reported discrimination. About half of these individuals either considered leaving the community or considered discouraging others from joining because of their experience. Women and graduate students are among the most likely to report harassment. More cited gender as a basis of harassment or discrimination, compared to race, political views, or socio-economic status.

Sensitivity to Inclusion: Twenty-five percent of all respondents, 34% of graduate students, and 47% of women graduate students disagree or strongly disagree that their mentors, teachers, and advisers are sufficiently sensitive to issues of diversity and inclusion. Thus, the high levels of overall climate satisfaction may nevertheless be masking unaddressed misunderstanding.

Next Steps: The [full survey instrument](#) covered issues including workplace needs, teaching and mentoring, and professional goals. The survey helps inform other efforts in the Government Department as we deliberate how to best serve the communities of our large, diverse, and excellent department.

Contact: Ryan Enos renos@gov.harvard.edu

[Read the full report.](#)