

Summary of 2016 Graduate Student Campus Climate Survey Results

In 2016, a graduate campus climate assessment, conducted by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies (OGAPS), used the Graduate Student Campus Climate Survey to assess the graduate community at Texas A&M University. The survey was sent to all graduate students and colleges at the College Station campus, with the aim of evaluating and understanding their experiences and perception of the campus climate. The participants identified with the following ethnicity and citizenship: 46% White, 3% Asian, 11% Hispanic, 6% African American/Black, and 30% International students (Table 1). The demographics of the respondent pool closely mimic that of the 2016 graduate student body, which was 41% white, 4.3% Asian, 10% Hispanic, 4% Black, and 37% International students.

Table 1
Response Rate Representation by Ethnicity/Citizenship

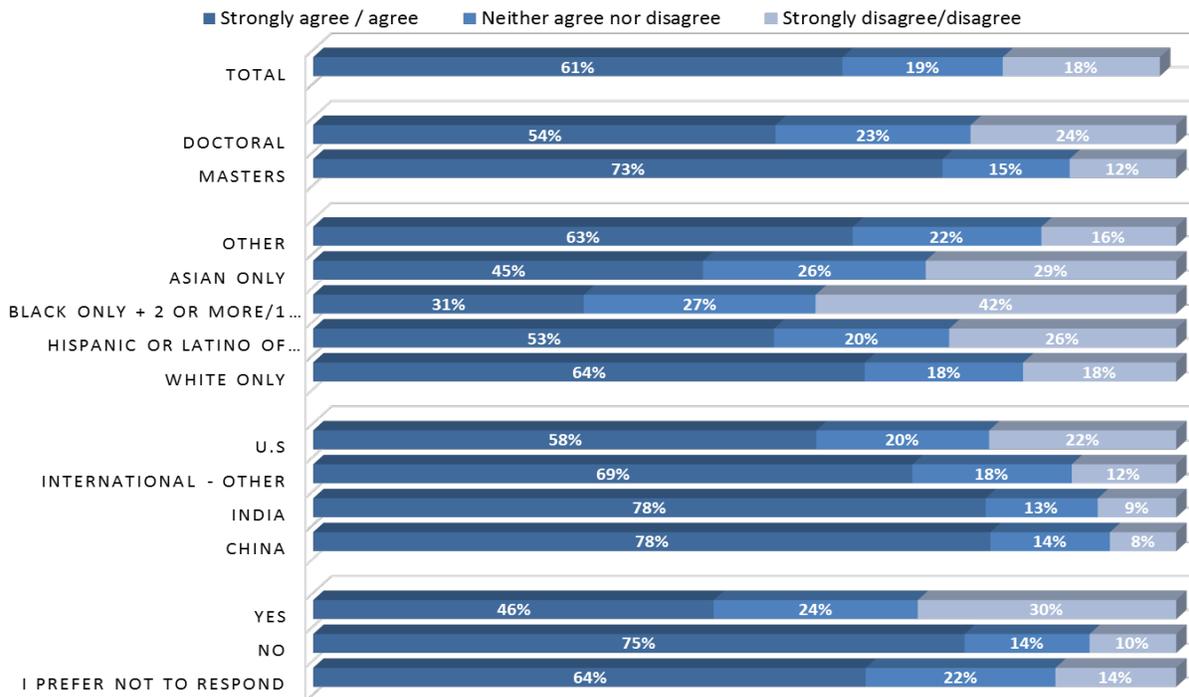
Ethnicity/Nationality		Population		Survey Respondents		Respondent s- Population Difference
		Count	Percent	Count	Percent	
US Citizens & PRs	White Only	5323	42%	701	46%	4%
	American Indian	22	0%	2	0%	0%
	Asian Only	594	5%	46	3%	-2%
	Black & 2+/1 Black	552	4%	87	6%	1%
	Hispanic	1289	10%	168	11%	1%
	Native Hawaii	44	0%	7	0%	0%
	2 or more/ Excluding Black	162	1%	27	2%	0%
International	4582	36%	467	30%	-5%	
Unknown/Not Reported	245	2%	27	2%	0%	
Total	12813		1532			

Feeling valued

Respondents were asked how to rate how much people were valued at Texas A&M regardless of their background (Figure 1). The response was rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with 1 being strongly agree, 3 being neither agree nor disagree, and 5 being strongly disagree. The resulting data were broken down by degree, ethnicity/race, citizenship, and self-reported historically underrepresented status. The findings revealed that 73% of master's students strongly agreed/agreed with the statement that diversity was valued at Texas A&M regardless of background, while 54% of doctoral students felt the same way. Black and Asian students reported the lowest level of agreement with the statement, at 45% and 31% respectively. Fifty-three percent of Hispanic/Latino students appear to strongly agree/agree diversity is valued at the university. The White student population recorded 64% of agreement while the percentage for both Chinese and Indian students was 78%, and for other International students was 69%. This suggests that students from non-US backgrounds appeared to show more agreement with the

value statement than American students. Overall, forty-six percent of students from historically underrepresented groups strongly agreed/agreed that all people are valued at TAMU compared to 75% of students who did not belong to one of these groups.

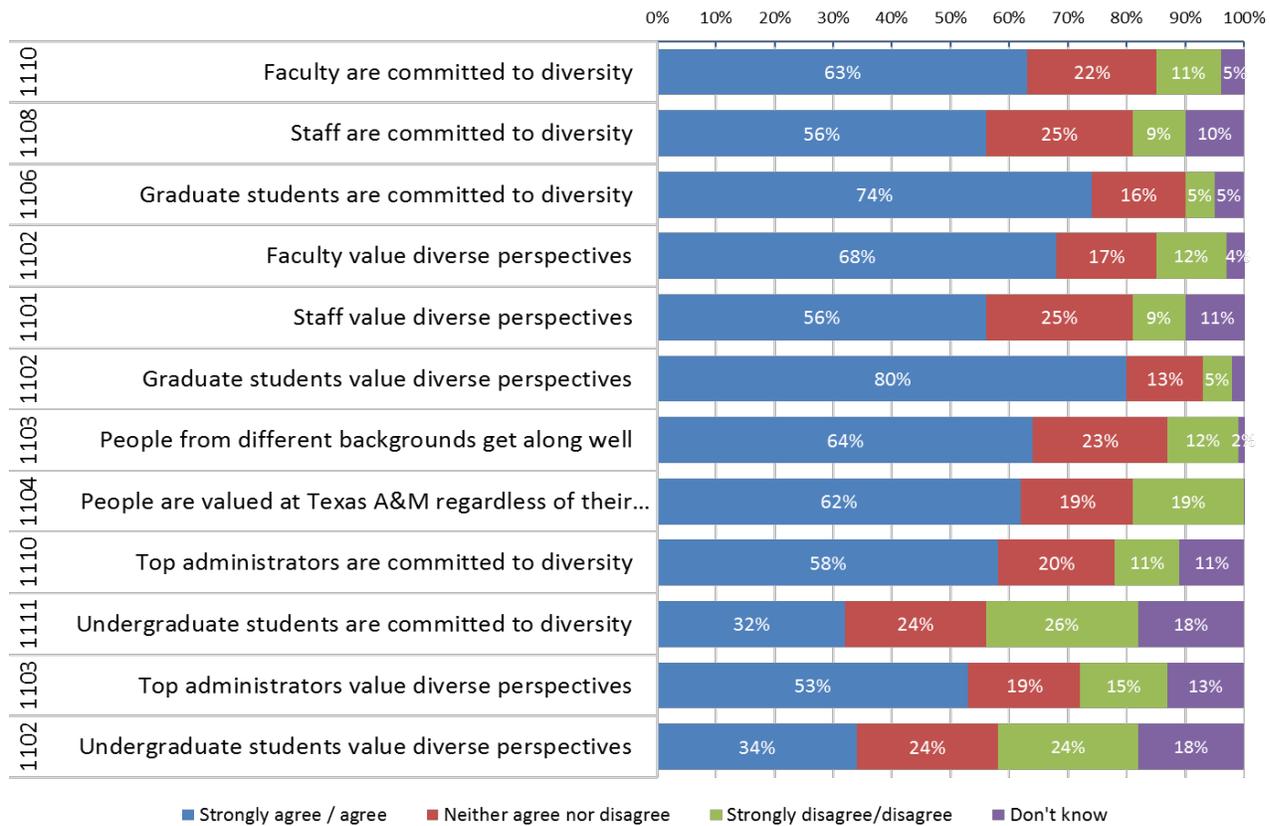
Figure 1.
Responses to “People are Valued at Texas A&M regardless of their backgrounds”



Commitment to Diversity

Respondents were asked a series of questions addressing the perceived commitment of students, faculty, staff, and administrators to diversity at Texas A&M. 80% of respondents agreed that graduate students value diverse perspectives, 68% for faculty, 53% for top administrators, 56% for staff, and 34% for undergraduate students. 74% of respondents agreed that graduate students are committed to diversity, 63% for faculty, 58% for top administrators, 56% for staff, and 32% for undergraduates. Graduate students had the highest level of agreement among graduate student respondents for the items “committed to diversity” and “value diverse perspectives”, while undergraduate students had the lowest level of agreement among graduate student respondents.

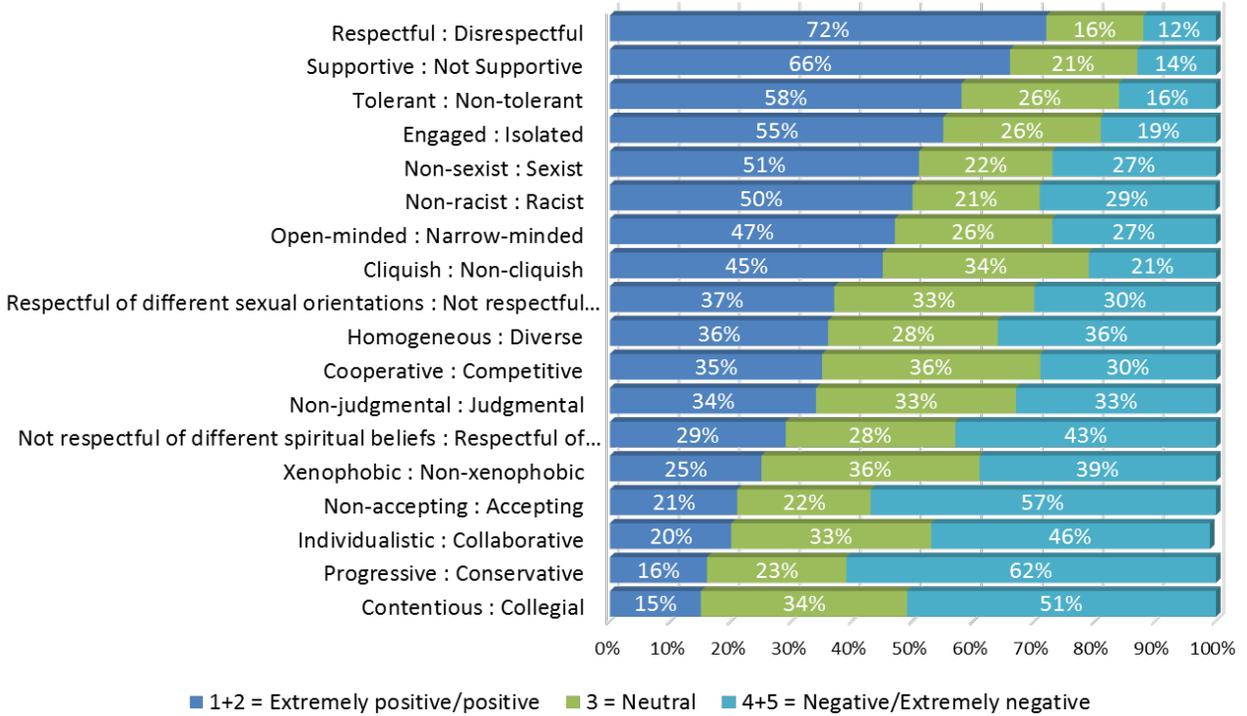
Figure 2
Commitment to Diversity



Campus Climate

The survey was rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with 1 being extremely positive, 3 being neutral, and 5 being extremely negative. The results of survey suggest that a sizable portion of graduate students found the campus climate very “respectful,” “supportive,” and “tolerant,” with the highest rated category being “respectful” (Figure 3). Seventy-two percent of respondents characterized the university climate as “respectful,” 66% characterized it as “supportive,” and 58% characterized it as “tolerant.” Twelve percent of respondents characterized the university climate as “disrespectful”, 14% characterized it as “not supportive”, and 16% characterized it as “non-tolerant”. Overall, it appears that graduate students consider the campus climate to be positive, with a smaller but sizable portion of students considering the campus climate to be negative.

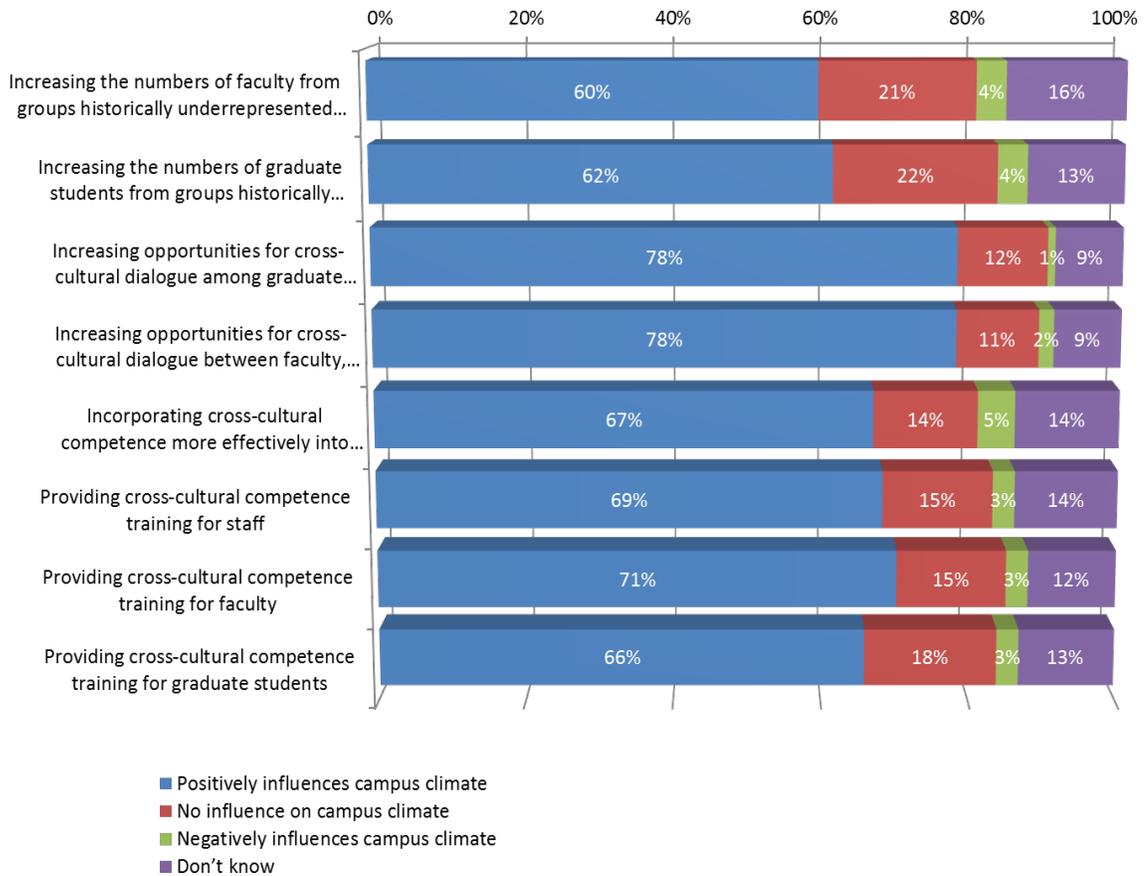
Figure 3.
Campus Climate Characterization



Impact of Cross-Cultural opportunities on campus climate

The graduate student survey also assessed the impact of cross-cultural opportunities on the campus climate for diversity at Texas A&M. According to the survey, 78% of respondents rated the statements “increasing opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue among graduate students” and “increasing opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue between faculty, staff and graduate students” as having the most potential for exerting positive influence on the diversity climate at the university. Additionally, 60% of respondents agreed that increasing the numbers of faculty from groups historically underrepresented affects the campus climate positively. 62% of respondents agreed that increasing numbers of graduate students from groups historically underrepresented affects the campus climate positively. Overall, respondents also agreed that providing training in cross-cultural competencies would positively affect the campus climate for diversity at Texas A&M. Specifically, 69% of respondents agreed trainings would be beneficial for staff, 71% for faculty, and 66% for graduate students. These results are presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4
 Responses to “To what extent do you think the following positively or negatively affects the campus climate for diversity at Texas A&M?”



Respondents were given the opportunity to share their views in open-ended comment sections. The examples provided below address the benefits of establishing a positive campus climate for diversity.

“In addition to ignorance, outright defiance and denial is a usual response to discussions of oppressions with dominant groups (white, male, European, etc...), mandating these people address and acknowledge what behaviors are harmful will be a first step. In addition, teaching of discussion-subversion techniques such as derailing, plausibly deniable statements, and the use of macroaggressions would be critical to these courses.” – Master’s, Hispanic or Latino of any Race, Male

“Diverse group is more effective as they can think out of the box. Just like interdisciplinary studies help to promote field, diverse group will also promote the field.” - Doctoral, International student, Female

Other respondents expressed their views on what they considered the “dangers” of establishing a “superficial and forced” campus climate for diversity through mandatory diversity trainings:

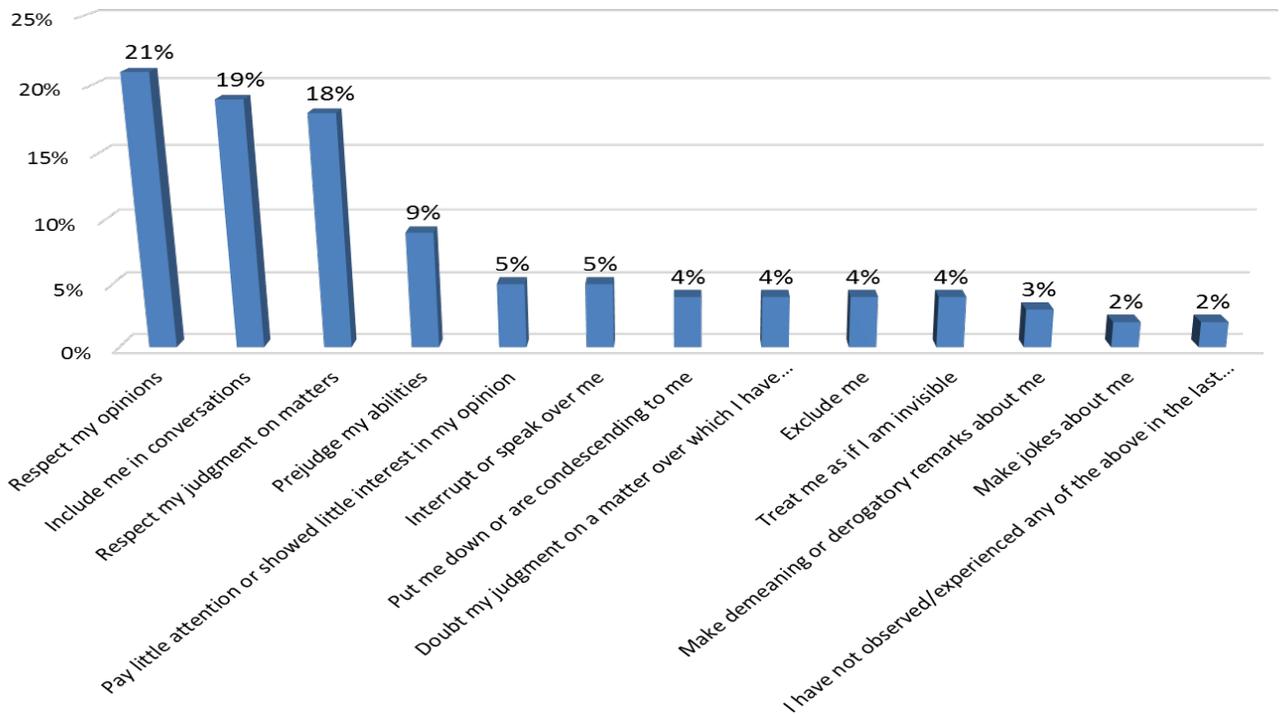
“I would be concerned that any forced “diversity” training would be met with a backlash, so I don’t know how the school would address the potential negative effects of “diversity” training.” - Master’s, White only, Female

“In theory, promoting discussions on other cultures and diversity would be useful, however, realistically, the only students who would attend are not the ones who need them. The racist, sexist, etc. students have no interest in improving these aspects of the campus climate because they likely do not realize that they are the problem.” - Doctoral, Hispanic or Latino of any Race, Female

Incivility Experienced

The overall trends and results of the 2016 survey with regards to the statement that probed the participants’ opinions on the (in)civility experienced in interactions on campus are consistent with those reported in the 2012 survey. The three categories connected to respectful interactions registered the highest percentage (58%), while the eleven categories that made reference to acts of incivility were all lower than 10%. These results are presented in Figure 5.

Figure 5.
Respectful Interactions – Percentages of (In)civility Experienced



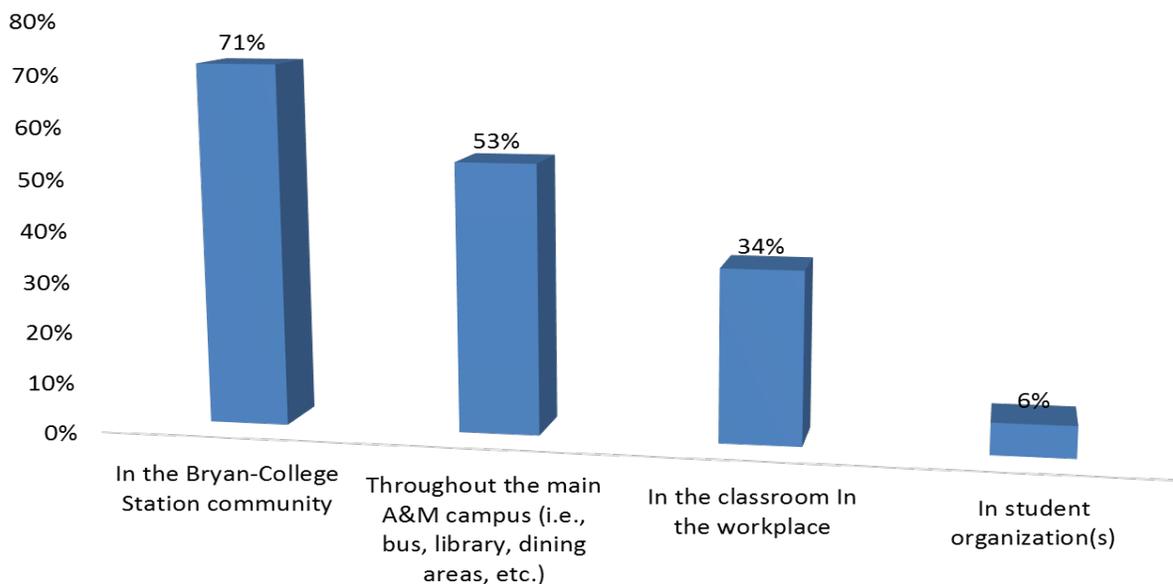
Personal Safety Concerns

Graduate students were asked to report whether they had experienced concerns in regard to their personal safety at Texas A&M. Eighty-five percent of the graduate student respondents reported “no” to this question. The remaining 12% that replied “yes” were further asked specific questions to the causes of these concerns. These findings are summarized in Figure 6, and revealed the following results:

- 71% of the respondents expressed safety concerns from the Bryan/College Station community;
- 53% of the participants expressed safety concerns from the A&M campus (bus, library, dining areas, etc.); and
- 34% of the respondents felt that they were made uncomfortable in the classroom and in the workplace.

Figure 6.

Responses to “Where have you experienced a concern for your personal safety?”



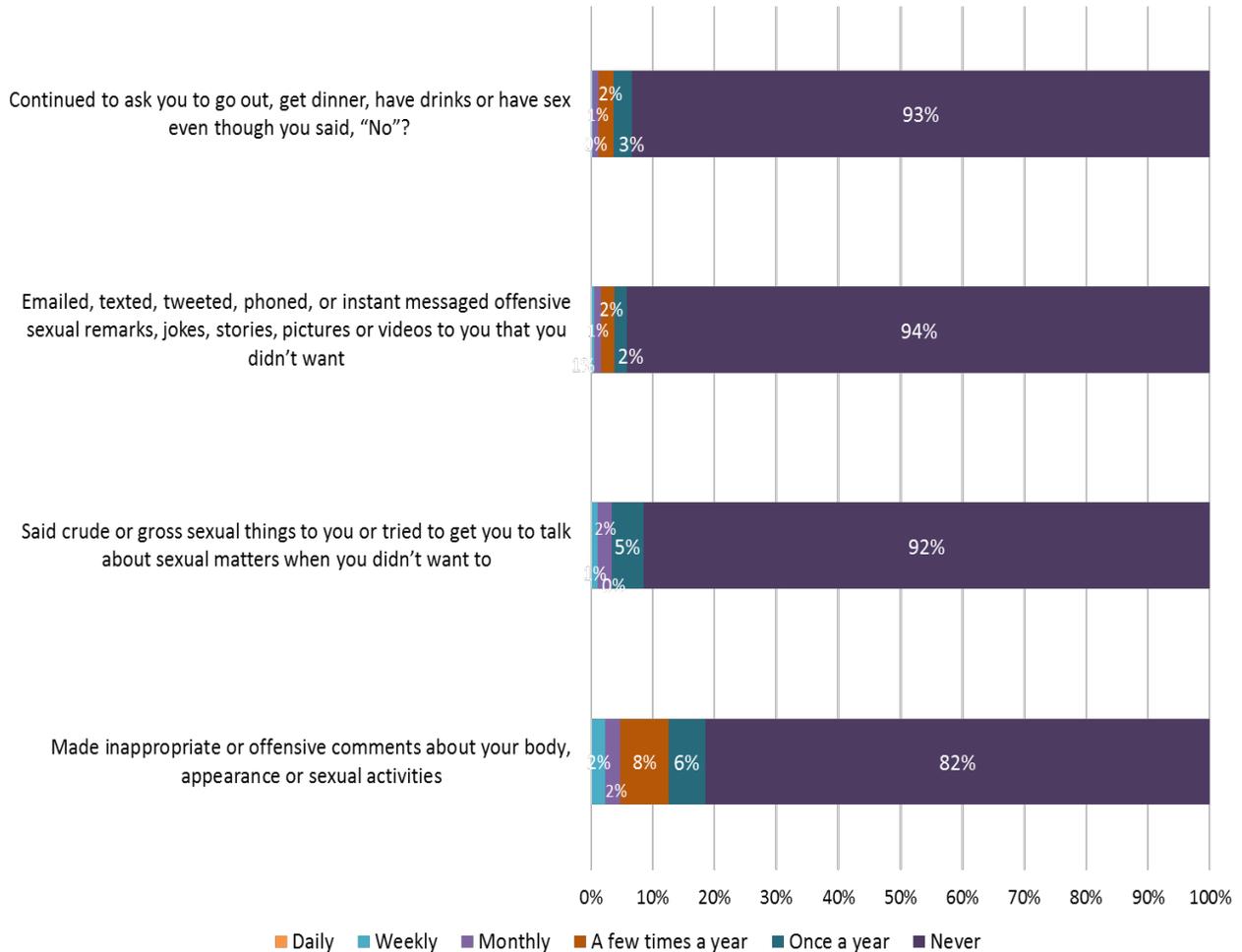
Instances of Sexual Misconduct

The survey investigated whether graduate students at Texas A&M had encountered instances of sexual misconduct. Overall, most respondents reported they had never experienced sexual offences from anyone associated with Texas A&M. The overall findings for this section are presented in Figure 8. The data analysis revealed the following results:

- 93% of respondents reported “never” to the survey item “continued to ask you to go out, get dinner, have drinks, or have sex even though you said ‘No’?” as compared to 2% of those who reported having had such encounters daily; and
- 94% of participants chose “never” as their response to the item “emailed, texted, tweeted, phoned, or instant messaged offensive sexual remarks, jokes, stories, pictures,

or videos to you that you didn't want" as compared to 2% of those who reported they having had these types of encounters daily.

Figure 8
Responses to "Sexual Misconduct – Since you have been a graduate student at Texas A&M"



Persistent challenges from the graduate student campus climate assessments include:

- 1) What can be done to change the climate so that students from all demographic groups feel valued?
- 2) What types of actions can the university take to engage with the Bryan/College Station community to address students' safety concerns?
- 3) In what ways can cross-cultural opportunities be infused into the curriculum and other experiences?