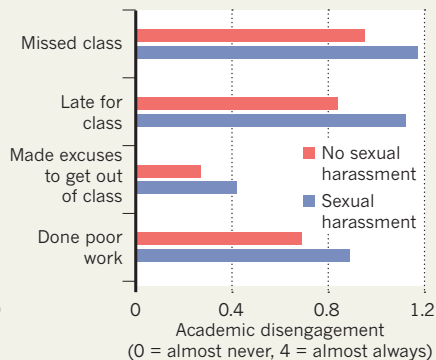
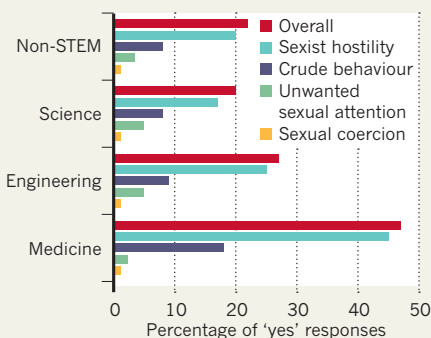


PERVASIVE PROBLEM

All forms of sexual harassment are prevalent in US academic science, a new report finds.

Harassment by major. The proportion of female students in the University of Texas system who report having been harassed by faculty members or staff varies between those who major in science, technology, engineering and medicine (STEM) and those who do not.

Academic impact. Female science majors at the University of Texas who say they have been harassed by faculty members or staff also report higher rates of disengagement with their studies.



the university over its handling of sexual-harassment allegations against a researcher in her department; the case is ongoing. “We are still waiting for tangible changes at our university, despite having voiced similar recommendations over two years ago in the wake of multiple student complaints about sexual harassment by a faculty member,” she says.

The report comes as the flagship national academy is facing criticism over its policies on harassment. Since early May, more than 3,500 people have signed a petition requesting that the National Academy of Sciences expel members who have been sanctioned for sexual harassment, retaliation or assault.

Academy president Marcia McNutt says the group’s governing council will consider proposed changes when it meets in August. “This is something we have to take seriously as an organization,” she says. But, she adds, the academy would probably not initiate its own investigation of a member — instead referring any complaints that it receives to the leadership of that person’s university. “One is ongoing right now,” she says. “No, I won’t tell you who it is.” ■

1. Ilies, R., Hauserman, N., Schwochau, S. & Stibal, J. *Personnel Psychol.* **56**, 607–631 (2003).
2. Clancy, K. B. H., Lee, K. M. N., Rodgers, E. M. & Richey, C. J. *J. Geophys. Res. Planets* **122**, 1610–1623 (2017).
3. Konik, J. & Cortina, L. M. *Social Justice Res.* **21**, 313–337 (2008).
4. Rosenthal, M. N., Smidt, A. M. & Freyd, J. J. *Psychol. Women Q.* **40**, 364–377 (2016).

were perceived as stars in their department.

An institution’s workplace climate is by far the greatest predictor of sexual harassment, the academies’ report says. Title IX and related laws are a good start, says Clancy, but universities need to embrace other methods of addressing sexual harassment. These include ways for victims to report incidents without being re-traumatized or subjected to retaliation.

“Many targets of harassment are women and minorities in vulnerable positions,” says Akiko

Iwasaki, an immunologist at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut. “If they feel like their careers rely on future recommendation letters from the harassers, they are less likely to want to come forward.”

However strong the report’s findings, it is still up to universities to interpret them, says Jessica Cantlon, a cognitive neuroscientist who is in the process of leaving the University of Rochester in New York. There, she was part of a group of faculty members who sued

BUSINESS

Microsoft’s GitHub buyout raises fears

Users worry popular data-sharing site will become less open.

BY ANDREW SILVER

GitHub — a website that has become popular with scientists collaborating on research data and software — is to be acquired by Microsoft for US\$7.5 billion. In the wake of the takeover announcement on 4 June, some scientists and programmers voiced concerns about the deal on social media. They fear that the site will become less open, or less useful for sharing and tracking scientific data, after the buyout. But others are hopeful that Microsoft’s stewardship will make the platform even more valuable.

GitHub launched in 2008, and is now widely used to store, share and update data sets and software code. As of 13 June, more than 223,000 academic papers on Google

Scholar cited the website, which is free to use for projects that release their code. GitHub uses a version-control software known as Git, which transparently records changes to files. This allows programmers in different locations to work on the same project in real time, and to track changes and merge updated data.

Although Microsoft says GitHub will remain open to any project, some scientists are sceptical about that commitment. “Open Science is not compatible with one corporation owning the platform used to collaborate on code. I hope that expert coders in #openscience have a viable alternative to #github,” tweeted Tom Johnstone, a cognitive neuroscientist at the University of Reading, UK.

Björn Grüning, a bioinformatician at the University of Freiburg in Germany, says some

researchers are wary because Microsoft has been slow to make its own tools available in open-source code, and to make its services compatible with open-source projects. He has several projects on GitHub, but says he will move them to another service if the company makes the platform less open, forces Microsoft tools on users or changes its pricing model.

Mahmood Zargar, who studies open-source communities at the Free University of Amsterdam, is more concerned that Microsoft will impose changes that will make GitHub less efficient for him to use. He’s planning to move his projects to other services.

A spokesperson for Microsoft did not answer *Nature’s* questions about researchers’ concerns, but referred to a blogpost by company chief executive Satya Nadella. “We are committed to being stewards of the GitHub community, which will retain its developer-first ethos, operate independently and remain an open platform,” Nadella wrote.

Arfon Smith, a data-science manager at the Space Telescope Science Institute in Baltimore, Maryland, says the fears are overblown. He doesn’t think Microsoft will change the features that researchers care about, such as its ease of use. Katy Huff, a nuclear engineer at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, thinks GitHub will give Microsoft an opportunity to support science. ■