

# Graduate Women in Science and Engineering Climate Survey

Prepared for GWISE and WISEguys Members

## 2020

---

NOVEMBER 17

---

**Graduate Women in Science and Engineering**

Prepared by: GWISE Advocacy and Outreach Co-chairs

Amanda Pinheiro and Jillian Rix



---

# Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....2

Introduction .....3

Demographic Data .....4

Experience at BU .....8

Proposal to Use “Womxn” in GWISE .....12

Respondent Comments .....13

    General Comments .....13

    Resources Respondents Would Like to See .....13

---

# Introduction

Dear GWISE and WISEguys Community,

This year has highlighted many deep-rooted areas of inequality and challenged us to grow as an institution and organization. To understand how GWISE (Graduate Women in Science and Engineering) and its allies can better serve its members and the BU community, we asked for feedback and data in the form of a climate survey. This survey gathered data on student experiences regarding identity and inclusion at BU from over ninety respondents, and will inform the initiatives and events GWISE pursues this academic year and in the future. Thank you to the participants for their valuable responses and comments.

The following is data compiled from the climate survey, along with brief summaries of student comments and input. All comments are summarized such that anonymity is preserved. If you have questions about how this data was collected, presented, or any other comments contact [bu.gwise@gmail.com](mailto:bu.gwise@gmail.com).

# Demographic Data

Figure 1: Position at BU

93 responses

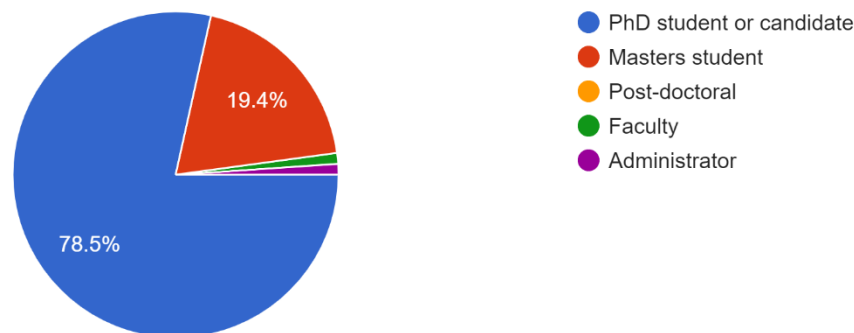
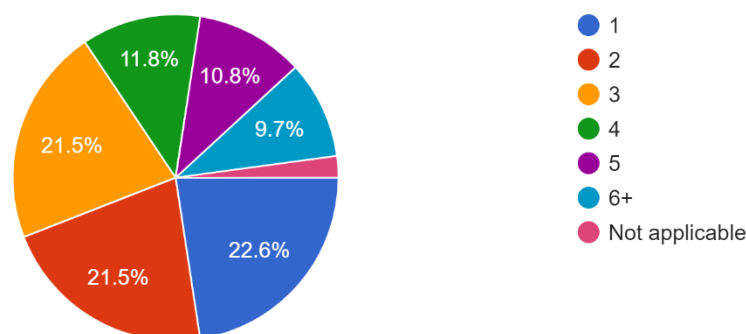


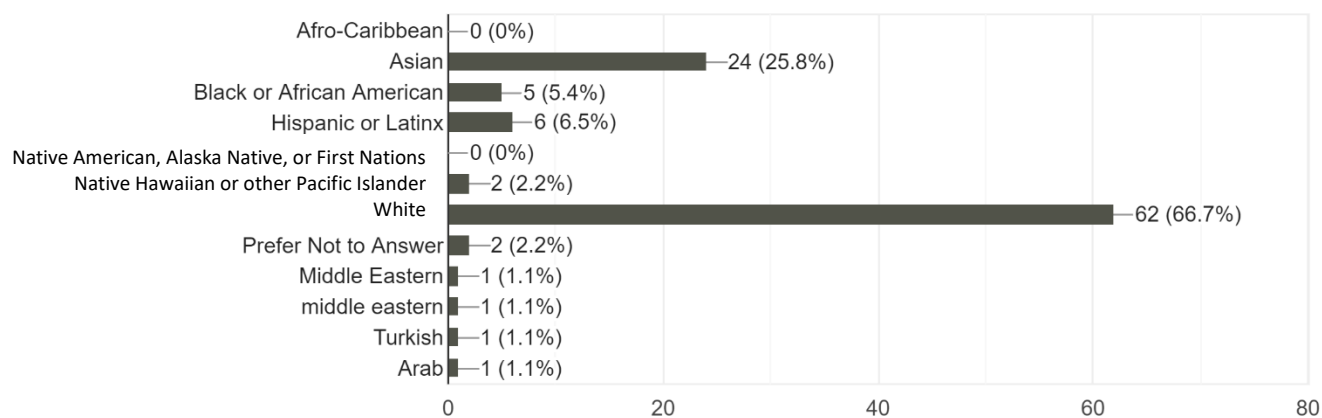
Figure 2: Year at BU

93 responses



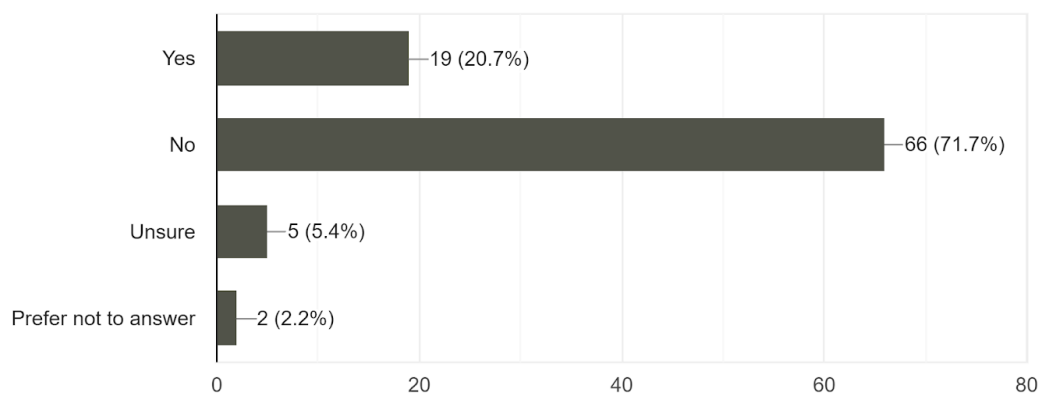
**Figure 3: Race and Ethnicity**

**93 respondents (multiple responses allowed)**



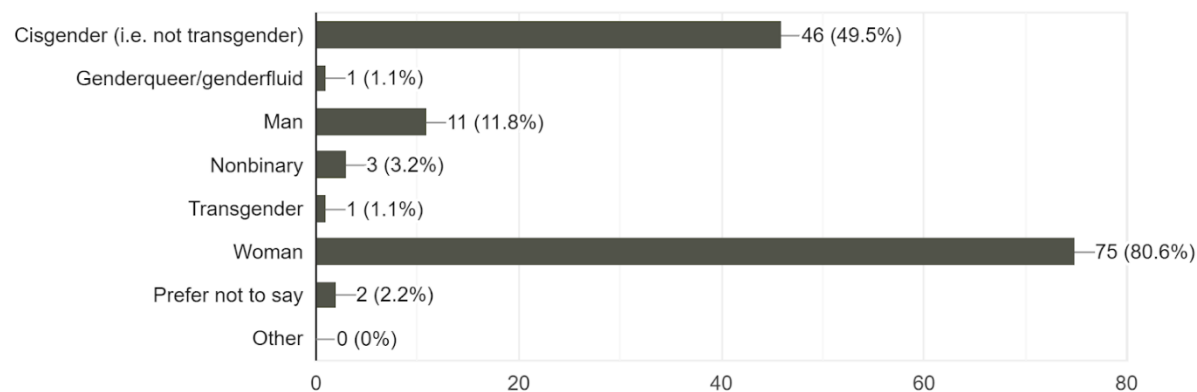
**Figure 4: Do you identify as being LGBTQIA+?**

**92 responses**



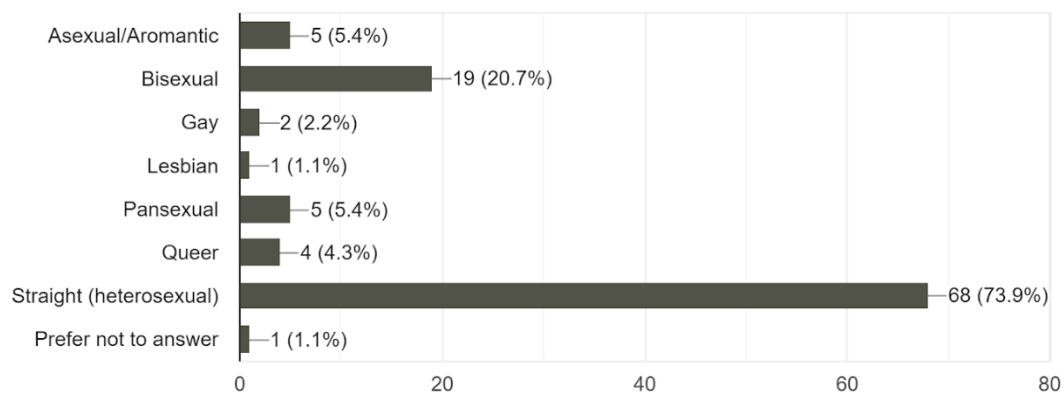
**Figure 5: Gender Identity**

**93 respondents (multiple responses allowed)**



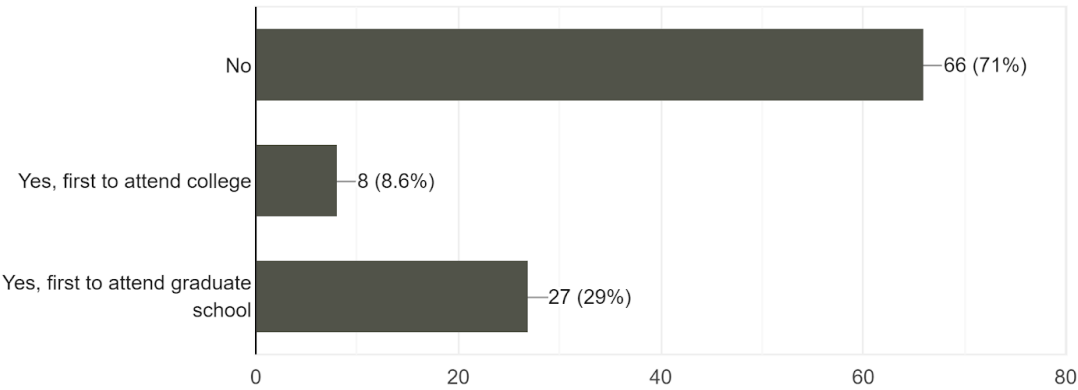
**Figure 6: Sexuality**

**92 respondents (multiple responses allowed)**



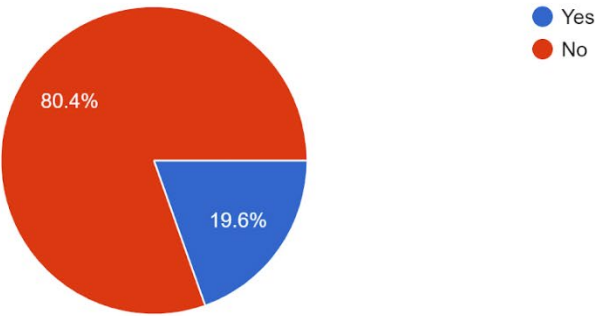
**Figure 7: Are you the first person in your immediate family to attend college or graduate school?**

**93 respondents (multiple responses allowed)**



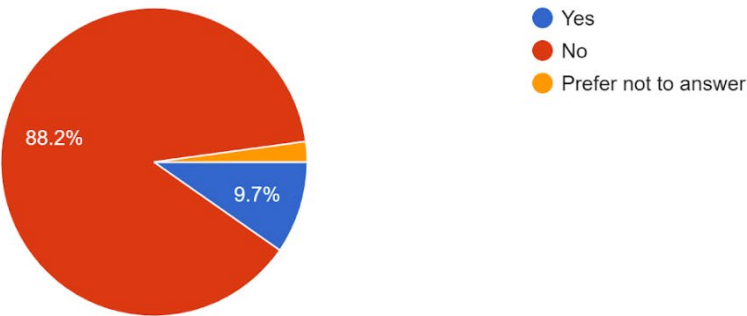
**Figure 8: Are you an international student?**

**92 responses**



**Figure 9: Do you identify as a person with a disability?**

**93 responses**



# Experience at BU

Figure 10: Has a disability or mental health condition prevented you from attending or enjoying any student group events this past year?

92 responses

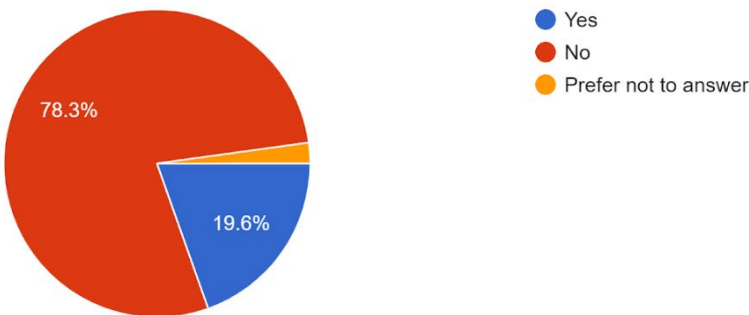
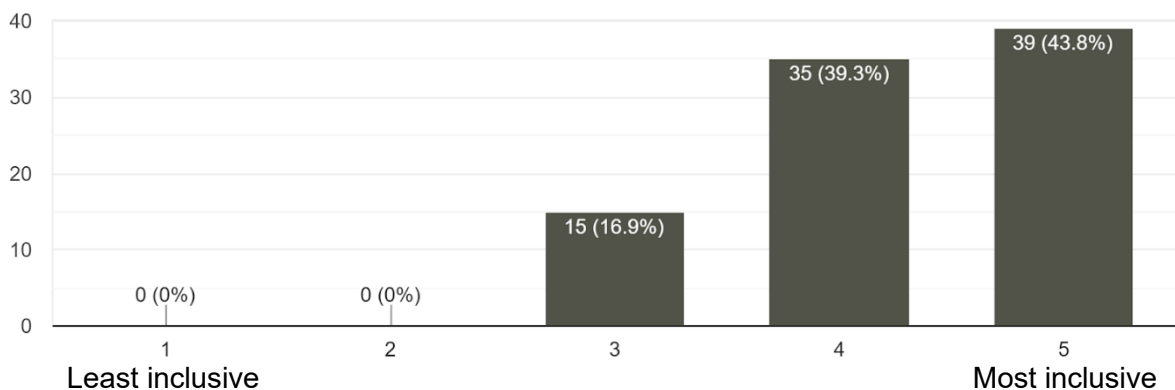


Figure 11: In your experience, how inclusive is Graduate Women in Science and Engineering (GWSE)?

89 responses

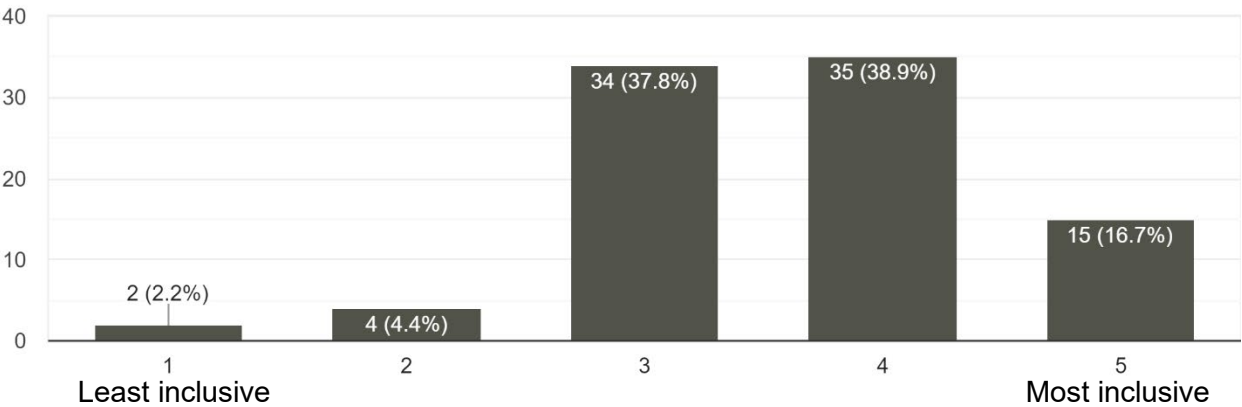


Please note that **Figures 11-12** are partially reflective of **Figures 1-9** (demographic data). To protect the privacy of individual respondents we cannot publish plots specific to each identity demographic, but we acknowledge that respondent identity potentially has a strong impact on the results.



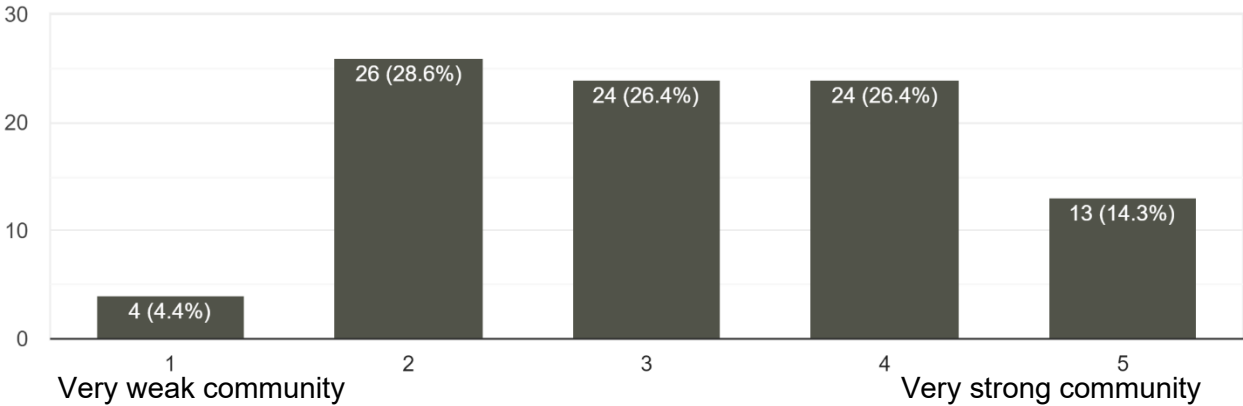
**Figure 12: In your experience, how inclusive is BU?**

**90 respondents**



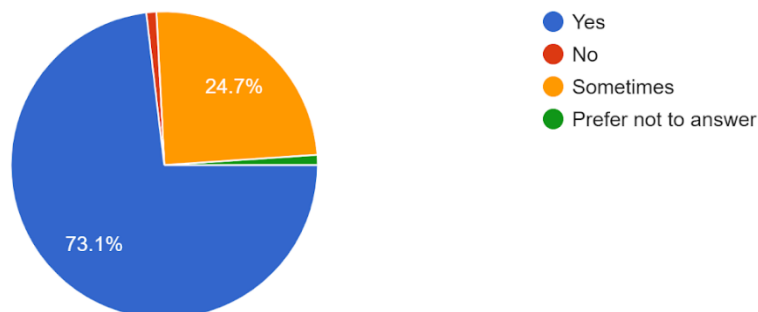
**Figure 13: In your experience, do you feel BU has a strong sense of community?**

**91 responses**



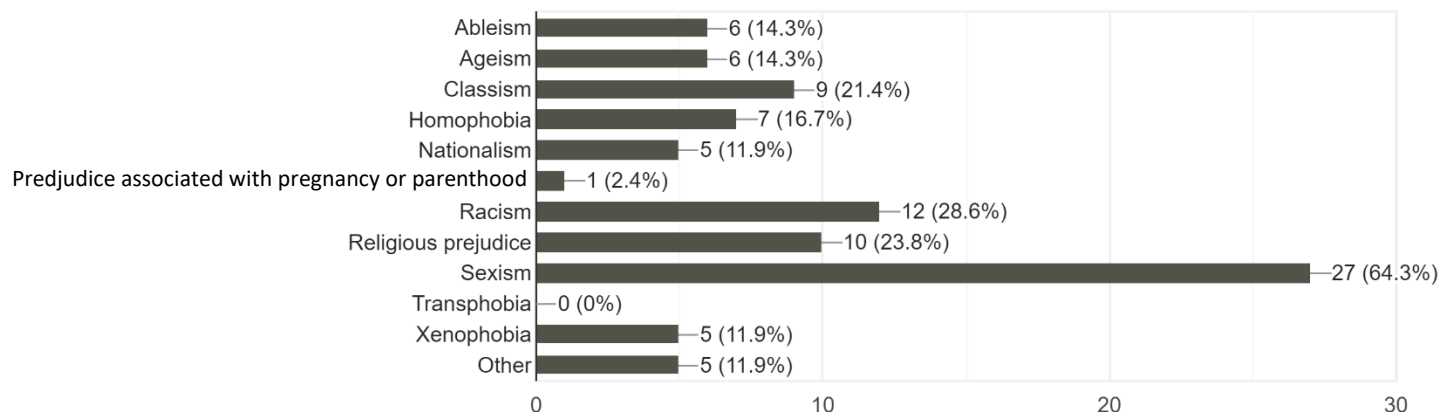
**Figure 14: Do you feel included and welcomed to student group events (including GWISE, WISEguys, and other groups)?**

**93 responses**



**Figure 15: During your time at BU, have you experienced any prejudices while on the BU campus?**

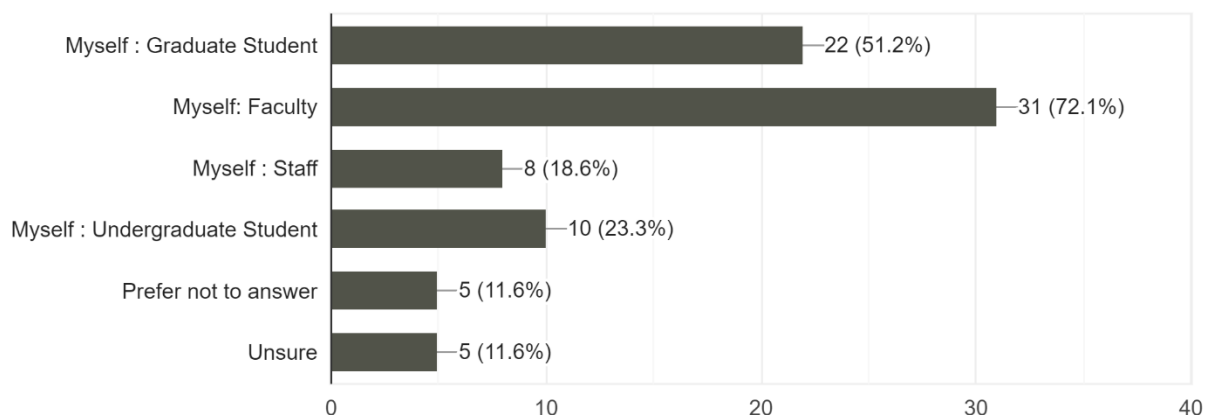
**42 responses**



Please note that the above results are impacted by the results shown in **Figures 1-9** (demographic data). For example, the result that 64.3% of respondents experienced sexism while 14.3% experienced ableism is partially reflective of the result that 80.6% of respondents identified as women and 9.7% identified as a person with a disability.

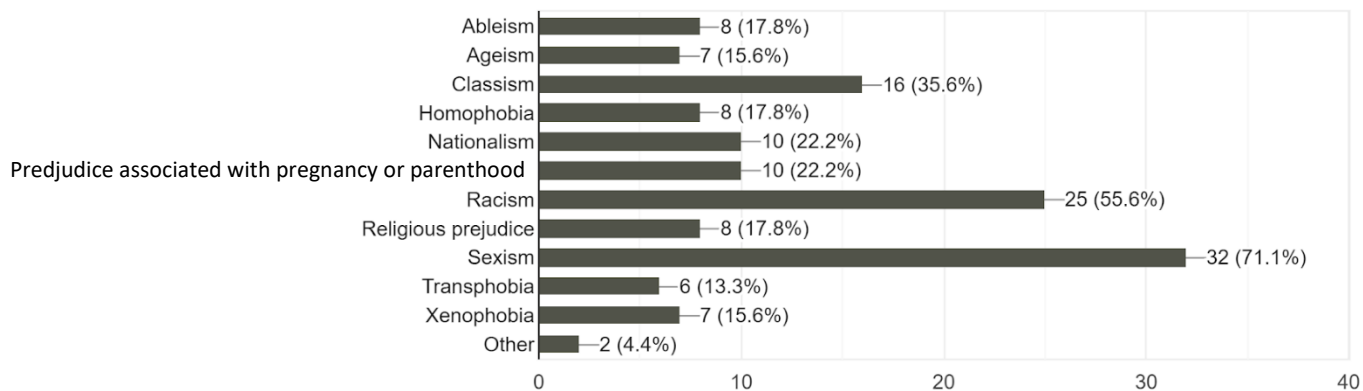
**Figure 16: If you checked any of the answers above (Figure 15), what was the power dynamic between you and the individual that expressed this prejudice?**

**43 responses**



**Figure 17: Have you seen someone other than yourself experience any of the prejudices listed below (same choices as Figure 13)?**

**45 responses**



Comments describing instances of prejudice are omitted for privacy. However, regarding witnessed prejudice (**Figure 17**), respondents largely indicated that these instances involved mainly students and faculty members, or two graduate students.

---

# Proposal to Use “Womxn” in GWISE

In the spring of 2020, the GWISE board began discussing changing “Women” in “Graduate Women in Science and Engineering” to “Womxn”. The term “womxn” has been used in a variety of contexts, but is purported to be inclusive of women of color, feminine-identifying individuals, transgender individuals, and non-binary individuals. Ebony Miranda, an organizer of Womxn’s March Seattle, said her understanding of the term included “women and those affected by misogyny, or women-related issues” (source: [New York Times](#)). In considering this change, GWISE surveyed its members, asking whether respondents were represented by the term “womxn.”

Out of 92 responses, 40.2% said the term represented them, 1.1% said the term represented them better than “women,” 21.7% said the term did not represent them, 15.2% were unsure, and 16.3% said they would prefer to do more research before deciding. Please also refer to **Figure 5**, which summarizes respondent gender identify.

Comments from respondents are summarized below:

- Unfamiliar with the term, and unsure about the name change
- The term shouldn’t be used because it furthers the use of coded language to describe transgender and nonbinary persons
- The term shouldn’t be used because it is exclusive to transgender and nonbinary persons who identify as “women”
- This name change would be largely symbolic and not impactful to meaningful inclusion efforts
- The term should be used, because it explicitly includes a wider range of gender identities

GWISE is currently planning a Coffee and Conversations event and/or listening session on the topic of inclusive language.

---

# Respondent Comments

Respondent comments are summarized below, rather than reprinted verbatim, to preserve anonymity and highlight central themes.

## General Comments

- White students are centered at BU in many spaces, including spaces like GWISE
- Many diversity, equity, and inclusion focused conversations are US centric
- Zoom programming has been useful in expanding event accessibility

## Resources Respondents Would Like to See

- Anti-racism programming within GWISE
- More resources to connect under-represented students to career networks
- Intersectional events with GWISE, UGSO, and oSTEM
- Support spaces for first-generation and low-income students