



Summer 2018

Sexual Misconduct in the UMC: Central Conferences in Africa

General Commission on the Status
and Role of Women in the UMC

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The United Methodist Church, through the work of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (GCSRW), has been addressing sexual misconduct in the United States for over 25 years, the first study mandated by the General Conference of 1988, and published in 1990. A second assessment was done in 2005 and a third was completed in 2017. That third report led a number of the Central Conference Bishops to request data collection in their regions, so they can better understand the issues and address the concerns. In response, the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women staff were able to attend a number of gatherings in Africa, where a survey was distributed. This then represents the first large scale study of sexual misconduct in The UMC outside of the U.S.

The Sample

Paper surveys were distributed and collected at two meetings on the continent of Africa in the summer of 2018: the African Clergywomen’s Leadership Summit at Africa University in Zimbabwe, and the first ever Pastor’s School in North Katanga in the Congo. At these two gatherings, 234 women from all three Central Conferences (Africa, Congo and West Africa), both clergy (81%) and lay (19%) were able to complete it. The surveys were prepared and completed in three languages: English, French and Portuguese, and translators on site in both places helped those who could not read those languages, and a few who could not read at all. Because this is the first survey of its kind, the focus was on understanding the basic issues: types and locations of sexual misconduct experienced, responses made, and knowledge of resources for help. Suggestions for what the church can do were also invited in open ended questions. The full survey appears at the Appendix to this report. Key findings appear in the report in bold.

Table 1: Demographics of the 2018 African Respondents (N=234)

Demographics	n	%
Central Conference (n=189)		
Africa	112	59.3
Congo	51	27.0
West Africa	26	13.8
Age Groups (n= 210)		
≤ 29	19	9.0
30-49	105	50.0
50-69	82	39.0
70+	4	1.9
Role (n=216)		
Clergy	175	81.0
Laity	41	19.0
Language (n=234)		
English	92	39.3
French	89	38.0
Portuguese	53	22.7

Table 1 shows the demographic breakdown of the respondents. Not all indicators include the full total of 234 persons because not everyone answered every question. While this is a convenience sample, available only to those who could attend the gatherings, it did reach a fairly wide variety of women based on age, region, and language.

Experiences of Sexual Misconduct

Reports of sexual misconduct were common. Every lay woman who completed that part of the survey (n=40) reported at least one kind of sexual misconduct, as seen in Table 2. Note that women in the Africa Central Conference were the least likely to report an incident, but even there, the large majority of women reported at least one incident. Also, younger women were more likely to report incidents than older women, with those in the middle age groups falling somewhere in between. In sum, four in five women reported at least one incident.

Table 2: Percent (n)s Reporting Any Sexual Misconduct by Central Conference, Age and Clergy/Lay Status

Demographic	% (n)	Demographic	% (n)
Central Conference		Age Group	
Africa	72.5 (74)	Under 30	94.7 (18)
Congo	98.0 (48)	30-49	81.4 (83)
West Africa	92.3 (24)	50-69	84.2 (64)
Status		70+	66.6 (2)
Clergy	79.1 (129)	All	82.6 (180)
Laity	100.0 (40)		

Table 3 delineates the specific kinds of misconduct participants reported, both for the full sample and then broken down by clergy/lay status and Central Conference. Because this is not a random sample of United Methodist women in these conferences, it is impossible to generalize to the full population, so measures of statistical significance should be used with caution. In this case, they can be helpful in identifying the behaviors where there are the largest differences, even if not representative more widely.

Table 3: Percent (n)s Experiencing Specific Types of Sexual Misconduct

Behaviors	All	Clergy	Laity	Africa	Congo	West Africa
Looks/Leers	35.9 (84)	43.3 (56)	55.0 (22)	35.0 (26)	56.3 (27)	58.1 (14)*
Touching/Closeness	24.4 (57)	27.1 (35)	50.0 (20)**	25.7 (19)	50.0 (24)	33.3 (8)*
Fondle/Kiss	16.2 (38)	16.3 (82)	32.5 (34)*	9.5 (7)	37.5 (18)	16.7 (4)***
Comments/Jokes	47.7 (111)	63.3 (82)	60.0 (106)	62.2 (46)	60.4 (29)	58.3 (14)
Mail/Phone	33.8 (79)	38.8 (50)	62.5 (25)**	45.9 (34)	54.2 (26)	33.3 (8)
Pressure to Date	17.1 (40)	25.6 (33)	15.0 (6)	29.7 (22)	20.8 (10)	12.5 (3)
Physical Aggression	12.8 (30)	10.9 (14)	32.5 (13)***	12.2 (9)	27.1 (13)	8.3 (2)*
Sexual Assault	12.0 (28)	14.7 (19)	12.5 (5)	10.8 (8)	16.7 (8)	8.3 (2)
Mean # of Types	2.2	1.9	3.2***	1.7	3.2	2.1***
TOTALS	n = 218	n = 129	n = 40	n = 74	n = 48	n = 24

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$ for χ^2 test of correlation and ANOVA test for difference of means

Regarding clergy/lay reports, most behaviors were similarly reported, but in the cases noted, lay women were more likely to report four of the behaviors. Perhaps more powerfully summarized, **lay women reported an average of 3.2 experiences, while clergywomen reported an average of 1.9.**

These behaviors also differed based on Central Conference. Once again, the mean scores at the bottom of Table 3 are helpful as they summarize the overall number of experiences. **Women from the Congo Central Conference reported a much larger number of types experienced (3.2) than women from the other two Central Conferences.** That is also true for the specific behaviors where there is a statistically significant difference except for Looks/Leers, which was equally likely to be reported by women from the West Africa Central Conference as from the Congo Central Conference.

Settings

Regarding all respondents, **the most commonly reported site for incidents were workplaces (48.4%),** as seen in Table 4. **The community was the second most selected option (45.7%) and quite a few persons wrote in that they were targets of misconduct when “going from place to place” or while “traveling long distances.”** The church was also listed as a common location (41.3%). More rarely, incidents occurred at school, although this was the most common place reported by laity (62.5%; $p = .000$), and at home.

Table 4: Percent (n) of Sites Where Sexual Misconduct Incidents Occurred by Gender

Setting	All	Clergy	Laity	Africa	Congo	West Africa
Workplace	48.4 (89)	44.4 (59)	57.5 (23)	43.2 (32)	59.2 (29)	41.7 (10)
Community	45.7 (84)	44.4 (59)	57.5 (23)	32.4 (24)	57.1 (28)	50.0 (12)*
Church	41.3 (76)	46.6 (62)	30.0 (12)	47.3 (35)	32.7 (16)	58.3 (14)
School	33.2 (61)	24.8 (33)	62.5 (25)***	25.7 (19)	59.2 (29)	4.2 (1)***
Home	24.5 (45)	21.8 (29)	30.0 (12)	25.7 (19)	30.6 (15)	16.7 (4)
TOTALS	$n=184$	$n=133$	$n=40$	$n=74$	$n=49$	$n=24$

* $p \leq .05$; *** $p \leq .001$; Totals exceed 100% because respondents could identify more than one location.

In addition, respondents from the Africa Central Conference were the least likely to report incidents in the community, and those from the West Africa Central Conference were least likely to report incidents at school. It is also notable though, that the respondents from the Congo Central Conference included many more laity (62%) than the other two Conferences (8% from the West Africa Central Conference and 2.8% from the Africa Central Conference); this explains the very high rate of incidents at school reported by those from the Congo Central Conference.

Reactions and Effects

The most common response to sexual misconduct is to tell the person to stop (50.9%), followed by avoiding the person (44.5%) and ignoring the behavior (40.5%), although laity were most likely to avoid the person (65.0%) and they were statistically significantly more likely than clergy to respond with five of the options provide in the survey, as noted in Table 5. There were also five notable differences by Central Conference, such as **those from the Africa and Congo Central Conferences were most likely to tell the person to stop, while those from the West Africa Central Conference were most likely to avoid the person.**

Table 5: Percent Reactions to Sexual Misconduct by Gender and Age

Reaction	All	Clergy	Laity	Africa	Congo	West Africa
Told to Stop	50.9 (88)	50.4 (67)	52.5 (21)	47.3 (35)	59.2 (29)	50.0 (12)
Avoided Person	44.5 (77)	38.8 (51)	65.0 (26)**	27.0 (20)	55.1 (27)	66.7 (16)***
Ignored Behavior	40.5 (70)	42.9 (57)	32.5 (13)	44.6 (33)	30.6 (15)	45.8 (11)
Told Authority	28.9 (50)	24.1 (32)	45.0 (18)**	21.6 (16)	46.9 (23)	20.8 (5)**
Threatened to Tell	24.3 (42)	19.5 (26)	40.0 (16)**	20.3 (15)	38.8 (19)	16.7 (4)*
Got Depressed	15.0 (26)	12.8 (17)	22.5 (9)	9.5 (7)	20.4 (10)	8.3 (2)
Transferred/Quit	14.5 (25)	8.3 (11)	35.0 (14)***	6.8 (5)	32.7 (16)	4.2 (1)***
Medical Help	13.9 (24)	9.8 (13)	27.5 (11)**	8.1 (6)	28.6 (14)	0.0 (0)***
TOTALS	<i>n</i> =173	<i>n</i> =133	<i>n</i> =40	<i>n</i> =74	<i>n</i> =49	<i>n</i> =24

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$; Respondents could select more than one reaction, so totals are the number of people who selected any option(s).

As for reactions to specific behaviors, telling the person to stop was the most common response to every behavior except sexual assault. In those cases, the most common responses were to tell someone in authority and to seek medical help, selected by 53.6% of those who reported having experienced such assaults. All of the percentages of responses based on types of misconduct are in Table 6.

Table 6: Percent of Most Common Reactions Based on Types of Misconduct

Behavior/Reactions	<i>n</i>	Stop	Avoid	Ignore	Authority	Quit	Med	Depress
Looks/Leers	84	64.3	59.9	44.0	41.7	22.6	23.8	20.2
Touching/Clovenes	57	71.9	56.1	45.6	49.1	35.1	28.1	28.1
Fondling/Kissing	38	78.9	63.2	52.6	52.6	31.6	31.6	34.2
Comments/Jokes	111	63.1	55.0	45.9	34.2	17.1	19.8	19.8
Mail/Phone	79	68.4	62.0	41.8	40.5	25.3	26.6	17.7
Pressure to Date	40	72.5	60.0	45.0	45.0	30.0	37.5	35.0
Physical Aggression	30	63.3	46.0	26.7	53.3	36.7	53.3	33.3
Sexual Assault	28	50.0	46.4	32.1	53.6	10.7	53.6	35.7

*Respondents could select more than one reaction, so “*n*”s are the number of people who selected each behavior and any of the option(s).

Respondents were asked how serious the problem of sexual harassment is in their communities. Responses were scored on a scale of 3 (very serious) to 0 (not serious at all). Among all respondents ($n=184$), the average seriousness score was 2.21 which is higher than

the center of the scale score of 1.5; that is, **on average, respondents see the problem as serious. Those from the Congo Central Conference reported the problem as the most serious, with a mean score of 2.68. Those from the Africa and the West Africa Central Conferences saw it as less serious, with means of 2.10 and 2.12 respectively.** Again, while on average all respondents see the problem as serious, the differences between Central Conferences was statistically significant ($F=7.188$; $p=.001$). Similarly, **clergywomen’s average seriousness score was 2.06, while laity scored 2.79**, another statistically significant difference ($F=18.258$; $p=.000$). Smaller differences by age group were not statistically significant.

Awareness of Resources

Respondents were asked a whether they were aware of any resources for reporting incidents, and if they said they knew of one, they were asked to write it in. In this way, we could not only check to see if people simply said “yes” but didn’t really know of one, and we could determine what resources people named most often.

Table 7: Percent (n) of Respondents Indicating Awareness of Resources for Reporting

	<i>n</i>	Checked No	Checked Yes Only	Named One	χ^2
Clergy (164)	164	54.9 (90)	15.2 (25)	29.9 (49)	
Laity (40)	40	92.5 (37)	2.5 (1)	5.0 (2)	19.370***
Africa (100)	100	41.0 (41)	18.0 (18)	41.0 (41)	
Congo (50)	50	88.0 (44)	4.0 (2)	8.0 (4)	
West Africa (25)	25	76.0 (19)	12.0 (3)	12.0 (3)	34.504***
ALL (204)	204	62.3 (127)	12.7 (26)	25.0 (51)	

*** $p \leq .001$;

Note that **the large majority of respondents knew of no resource at all**, and laity were aware of resources at a much lower level (7.5%) than clergy (45.1%), as seen in Table 7. **Respondents from the Africa Central Conference were more likely to not only SAY they knew of a resource (18%) but also to name one (41%)**, than those from the other two Central Conferences. Of the resources that were provided, **42% named the police**, by far the most cited resource. Church-related resources, such as members, pastors and the church hierarchy in general, were named by only 14% of respondents, and varied greatly.

Respondents were also asked if the church can do anything to help, and if so, what. Responses to this question did not differ significantly by group (clergy/lay or Central Conference), so only the overall scores are worth noting. That is, **86.9% (172) thought the church could do something**, while 13% (26) said there was nothing the church could do, or were not sure.

As to suggestions of what the church can do, responses varied greatly, but many called for increased **education and training programs**, and others requested **places be built where women can go for safety and guidance**.

Appendix

General Commission on the Status and Role of Women

Sexual harassment is commonly defined as harassment in a workplace, or other professional or social situation, involving the making of unwanted sexual advances or obscene remarks.

The following survey is designed to measure sexual harassment and determine the effects it has on individuals. You are free to skip any questions, although complete surveys are the most useful for analysis. All responses are anonymous and data will only be reported in the aggregate.

Thank you so much for taking a few minutes to help make the UMC a safe and welcoming place for everyone.

Have you experienced any of the following unwanted sexual behaviors? (Check all that apply)

- Looks and leers
- Touching and closeness
- Fondling or kissing
- Comments or jokes
- Mail, phone, or online messages
- Minor Physical Aggression
- Sexual assault
- Other (please describe):

Where did this happen? (Check all that apply)

- In the church
- In the workplace
- In the community
- In school
- At home
- Other (please identify):

How did you respond? (Check all that apply)

- Avoided the person
- Ignored the behavior
- Told the person to stop
- Told someone in authority
- Threatened to tell someone
- Asked for a transfer or quit
- Sought medical help

- Felt anxiety or depression
- Other (please describe):

Are you aware of resources for reporting?

- Yes (please name at least one):
- No

How serious is the problem of sexual harassment/assault in your community?

- Very serious
- Fairly serious
- Not too serious
- Not serious at all

Do you believe the church can do something about this?

- Yes (if possible, name at least one thing):
- Not sure
- No

I am :

- Female
- Male

I am:

- Clergy
- Lay

I am:

- Under 30 years old
- 30-49 years old
- 50-69 years old
- 70 or older

My Annual Conference is in:

- Africa
- Europe
- the Philippines

My Annual Conference is:

Is there anything else you'd like to share with the Commission on the Status and Role of Women of the United Methodist Church?