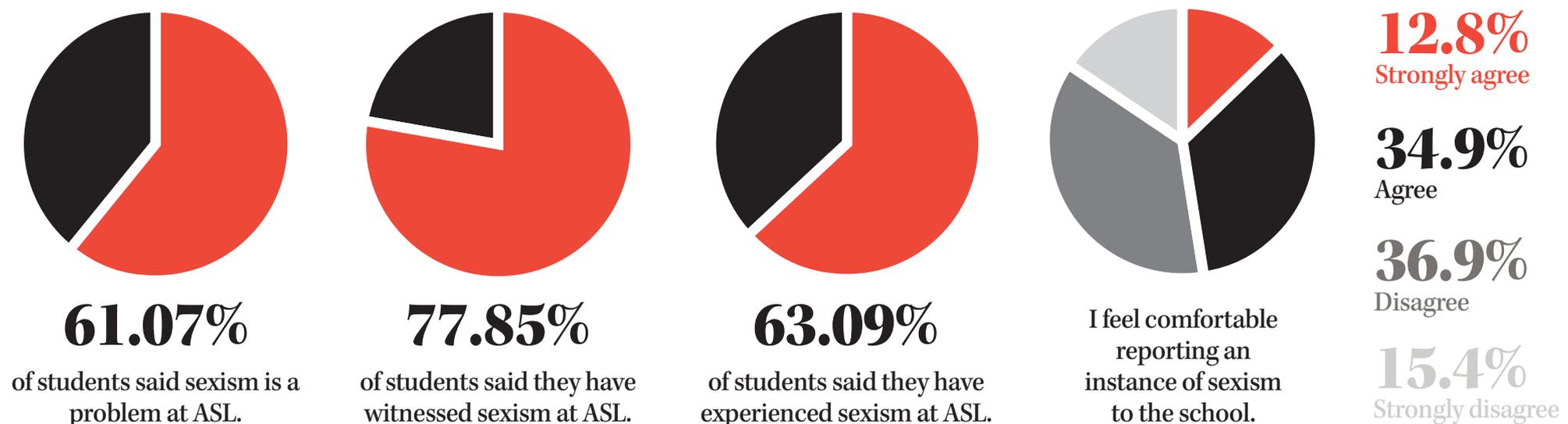


Stats on sexism.

Data collected from an online survey conducted by The Standard March 7-22 with 149 student responses



idea to other guys around me, and even in many cases to girls, that I guess I'm not capable of being normal or, basically, that I'm a freak," Ben-Gacem said. "You see it in how people interact with you, you see it in how they look at you. It's uncomfortable. It's unfortunate, but it is how it is I suppose."

Ben-Gacem said male students' aversion to theater as a result of sexist culture breeds insecurity. As one of the few male students auditioning for musical roles, Ben-Gacem said he is able to play principal roles frequently, and, as a result, he struggles with feeling worthy and deserving of the parts he is assigned.

"There's a much higher chance that you're going to get a lead role because you're, well, there are so many male roles and there are only so many males," Ben-Gacem said. "In being selected for a main role, there's this nagging thought in your

head, you know, like, was I chosen because I actually am capable of doing what is set out for me, or is it just because I'm a man? Is it just because of who I am?"

Math Teacher Jenny Wexler said she has noticed a lack of progress in the attitudes of other community members toward her position.

"I always get both students and parents of students telling me how important it is that I'm a woman doing math to my female math students, and that has been a comment I've gotten across my entire career," Wexler said. "Twenty-seven, twenty-eight years ago when I started, that was a comment that I often got, and I'm still getting it today, so it doesn't feel different to me at all, which I think is sad because I would like to say it feels better now ... it seems like over 25 years, it should get better, and I'm not convinced that it feels like it's better."

Addressing sexism at ASL

Although Kira said the school provides opportunities to discuss issues such as sexism, the general reaction to these events reveals students' unwillingness to listen to other's experiences.

"Based only on how the reception of Aequitas week is and I guess other school events, like assemblies, people are generally not excited about such school-wide events ... just because it's another thing that ASL has a meeting about, it's another thing that we all have an assembly about and interrupts our Conference B," Kira said. "On some level, we have to meet halfway. You have to be willing to hear, and I just don't think people are willing to at this current moment."

Kaya said events held by the school to address sexism are not "taken seriously at all, especially by boys."

While Bhatia finds that these events are impactful for his personal growth, he recognizes not everyone may feel the same.

"I'm happy that I get to be challenged within my own masculinity and I agree with a lot that comes out of these conversations, and I think that they're very valuable lessons for me, personally, to learn," Bhatia said. "But, at the same time, I do think that it takes a certain sense of security and acceptance to be able to see that for a lot of guys, and I do think that's just something that maybe at 16 or 17 years old, you either have or you don't."

Moreover, Kim said there are obstacles regarding student participation when it comes to opportunities to discuss sexism.

"There's a lot of different spaces," Kim said. "What's funny about those safe spaces is that they're occupied by the same sort of people, and those are the people who

are interested in feminism, who are interested or passionate about gender dynamics and gender equity."

However, while Kim said she acknowledges the deficiencies in such spaces, she said school-organized opportunities to discuss issues of sexism are essential in dismantling the problem.

"Those workshops, at least, begin to promote a culture of talking about these problems in school, and having students lead those conversations is really helpful and productive," Kim said.

Yet, Kim said despite the school's attempts, sexist culture remains extremely difficult to combat.

"Because this is on more of a social level, it's really hard to change people's mindsets into being like, 'Let's not be sexist, because that's just the wrong thing to do,' rather than like, 'Oh, let's not be sexist because there'll be consequences,'" Kim said.

Correspondingly, Bhatia said modifying beliefs and opinions cannot be forced.

"To change the fundamental outlook of a person is a very difficult thing, and I think to change the culture of a group of people is even harder," Bhatia said. "You can only take a horse to the water, you can't really make them drink it."

Next steps

In regards to efforts to end the problem, Holmberg said because sexism tends to be a "generational

thing," it is hard to combat amongst teenagers.

"I don't think we can come in now and tell kids to stop being sexist," Holmberg said. "It has to happen in the Lower School."

While the root of sexism culture at the school is nuanced, Mears said there are ways to shift the issue toward resolution.

"I don't think we can come in now and tell kids to stop being sexist ... It **has to happen** in the Lower School."

— Olivia Holmberg (25)

"It's a lot of awareness," Mears said. "It's a lot of acknowledgment of patterns. I think the acknowledgment of inequities, even in really small everyday situations, is the first step to

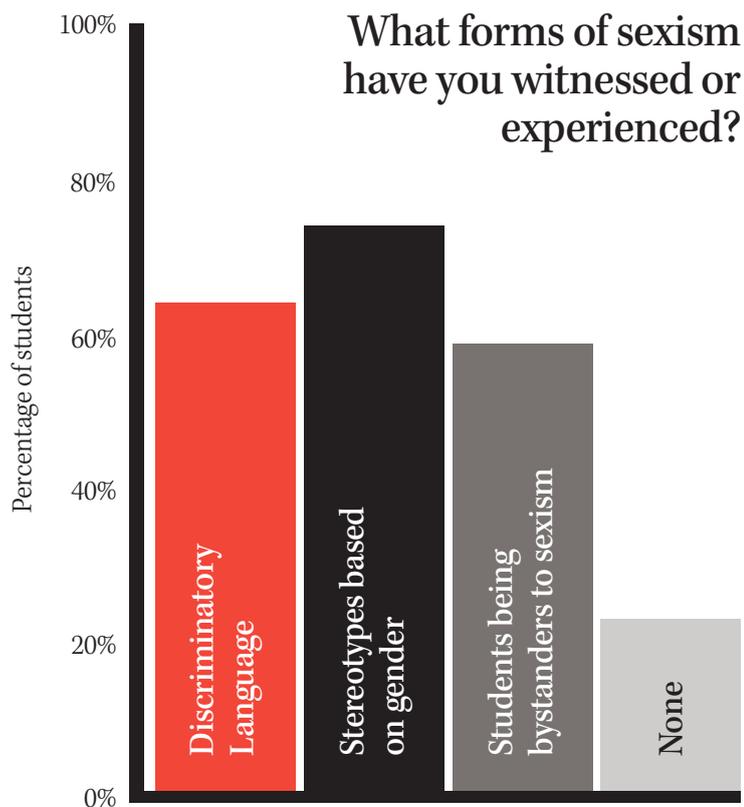
being able to name it and being able to change it."

Wexler said awareness can hold great power in improving sexist ideologies at the school.

"We all have to be mindful," Wexler said. "As a community, the only way it gets better is if everyone's kind of paying attention and looking at it."

For Harrold, the path to improvement is clear.

"The biggest and most important tool is the student body we already have," Harrold said. "We need to be constantly engaged in conversation about them. We need to translate those conversations into practical action to keep our eyes and ears open ... We now need to put some teeth behind it and say, 'You know what? There are consequences for misogynistic actions.'"



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