

Four Years of Findings: SCP Survey Ratings by Instructor Sex

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Since the official launch of the Student Course Perceptions (SCP) survey in Winter 2022, Teaching Assessment Processes, in partnership with the Statistical Consulting and Survey Research Unit, has conducted annual analyses to examine whether SCP survey ratings differ by HR-recorded instructor sex. With four consecutive years (2022-2025) of institutional analysis now complete, a clear and consistent finding has emerged:

Across four consecutive years, the findings did not show evidence of systematic differences in SCP survey ratings between instructors recorded in HR data as male and instructors recorded in HR data as female, after accounting for Faculty, class size, course type, and instructor appointment type.

Statistical models accounted for factors known to influence student ratings of teaching - including Faculty, class size, course type, and instructor appointment type - allowing comparisons between instructors working under similar teaching contexts.

Annual analyses are limited to the instructor identity information currently available at sufficient institutional scale: instructor sex as recorded in Human Resources data. Because of broad nonresponse to the Equity Census, analyses have been unable to consistently examine gender identity, race, Indigeneity, disability, sexuality, or other identity dimensions, or consider intersectional patterns.

At a Glance

Years of Analysis: 4 (2022-2025)

Student Responses Analyzed: 178,933

Faculties Included: All Faculties

Main Finding: The findings did not show evidence of systematic differences in SCP survey ratings between instructors recorded in HR data as male and instructors recorded in HR data as female.

Four Years of SCP Survey Analysis: What We Found

Question

Do students rate instructors recorded in HR data as male higher than instructors recorded in HR data as female?

Does this result hold across Faculties?

Four-Year Finding

No consistent difference found in SCP survey ratings.

Yes. No consistent Faculty-level pattern favouring either instructors recorded in HR data as male or instructors recorded in HR data as female was observed.

Does this result hold across class sizes?	Yes. Differences were generally small and statistically non-significant across all class sizes.
Does this result hold across instructor ranks and appointment types?	Yes. SCP survey ratings remained largely similar after accounting for instructor appointment type.
Were any differences detected?	Occasionally. Small differences sometimes appeared within specific combinations of Faculty, class size, course type, or appointment type. When observed, <i>they were inconsistent across contexts, occurred in both directions</i> (sometimes favouring instructors recorded in HR data as male and sometimes those recorded in HR data as female), and <i>did not persist across years</i> .
Is there evidence of institution-wide sex differences in SCP survey ratings?	No. Four years of analysis have not identified a systematic pattern favouring either instructors recorded in HR data as male or instructors recorded in HR data as female.

What This Means

Concerns about the impacts of bias in student ratings of teaching have been widely discussed across higher education. For this reason, the University intentionally analyzed SCP survey ratings each year following its 2022 implementation.

The consistency of this finding across four independent annual analyses strengthens confidence that the observed pattern is stable rather than the result of a single year's data or random variation. This finding has remained consistent across thousands of course sections, all Faculties, multiple instructor appointment types, varying class sizes, and different modes of course delivery.

While individual students may hold conscious or unconscious biases, these analyses did not find evidence that such biases are reflected in systematic differences in SCP survey ratings between instructors recorded in HR data as male and instructors recorded in HR data as female.

Interpreting SCP Survey Results Responsibly

The University continues to emphasize that SCP survey ratings should not be interpreted in isolation. Decimal-point differences on a five-point scale can be easily overinterpreted, particularly when ratings tend to cluster at the upper end of the scale.

SCP survey ratings are most meaningful when considered alongside other sources of evidence, including:

- Peer review of teaching
- Teaching dossiers
- Reflective teaching statements

Together, these sources provide a more holistic and contextualized understanding of teaching effectiveness and student learning experiences.

Bottom Line

Across four years of institutional analysis, the University of Waterloo has not found evidence that instructors recorded in HR data as male and instructors recorded in HR data as female receive systematically different SCP survey ratings after accounting for relevant teaching contexts.

As with all evidence of teaching effectiveness, SCP survey ratings should be interpreted alongside complementary sources such as peer review, teaching dossiers, reflective teaching statements, and qualitative student feedback.

For readers interested in the detailed statistical analyses, TAP has shared the four annual reports on the Associate Vice-President, Academic's website, under Reports to the UW Community (uwaterloo.ca/associate-vice-president-academic/reports-uw-community).