Is this normal?

Students' experiences of gender-based harassment and violence and attitudes towards professional boundaries with staff at a UK university

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Executive summary

This study is the outcome of a partnership between the Students' Union and academic staff at an anonymised university in England. In the absence of national or campus-based surveys in this area, it was carried out to build a picture of gender-based violence and harassment students are experiencing. It is being shared publicly in order to encourage other universities and students' unions to follow our example: to carry out robust research in partnership with academic staff into the types of, and attitudes towards gender-based violence that students are experiencing, and to publish the data publicly.

The survey was sent to all students enrolled at the University in November-December 2020 via email from their Students' Union Welfare Officer, Hayley Turner-McIntyre. 1303 students completed the survey over a 3 week period, 725 of these consenting to their responses being reported on publicly. We drew on three survey instruments, most notably the ARC3 campus climate survey from the US, in the absence of a standardised and validated survey instrument for UK universities. Therefore, this survey provides valuable information on adapting this survey tool to the UK context (for more detail see methods appendix).

Key findings
- Sexual or gender harassment, such as receiving offensive sexist remarks or being treated differently due to gender, had been experienced by 55% of respondents since enrolling at the University.
- 30% of respondents had been subjected to sexual violence, including rape, attempted rape, or sexual assault, since enrolling at the University.
- Stalking behaviours, such as receiving unwanted messages via email, instant messenger or on social media or being watched, followed, or spied upon, were experienced by 16% of respondents.

- 26% of survey respondents had been subjected to 'dating violence', such as being pushed, grabbed or shook, or being scared of someone they were in a relationship with. 11% (n = 78) of respondents had had at least one experience of being pushed, grabbed or shaken by someone they'd been in a relationship with during their time at the University.

Across all of these categories, women students were more likely to experience them than men, and also more likely to have experienced them multiple times. For example:
- Women reported two times more incidents of dating violence than men.
- Women and non-binary students were more likely than males to experience sexual or gender harassment   , and they also experienced harassment *more often* than men.
- Women and non-binary students were around three times more likely to have been subjected to some form of sexual violence than men students, and were also more likely to have been subjected to sexual violence more than once.

Most of these behaviours were carried out by other students at the University...

83% of sexual and gender harassment was carried out by another student studying at the University. Similarly, other students at the University were named as the person who carried

out 82% of reported sexual violence incidents, 70% of all stalking victimisation and 65% of dating violence incidents reported.

… and most of these behaviours were carried out by men

When asked to describe who carried out the behaviour for the most serious incident they experienced, men were named by 82% of those who experienced sexual harassment, 89% of those who were subjected to stalking, 79% of dating violence and 85% of sexual violence.

While most of these behaviours occurred off campus, there was still a relatively large amount occurring on campus. These behaviours tended to come from people who were acquaintances or friends of the person victimised, rather than strangers.

We also asked about students' attitudes towards 'rape myths'.

Rape myths are inaccurate assumptions about rape that deny, downplay or justify sexual violence. Tackling rape myths is part of the prevention work that needs to take place at the University around changing attitudes. This will help to create a climate where gender-based violence is seen as unacceptable.

The majority of students did not believe rape myths. However, there were a minority of students who agreed with some of the rape myths put forward, and there were also a large minority of students who were unsure whether they agreed with some of the statements. This large 'grey area' indicates that there are many students who might welcome an opportunity to discuss these issues in a non-judgmental space.

A number of items showed a concerning lack of understanding around consent and what rape is under the law. For example, 19% of respondents were unsure about, or agreed with the statement that "it can't be rape if both parties are drunk". In fact, the legal definition of consent for sexual activity very clearly states that someone must agree by choice, and have "the freedom and capacity to make that choice". The Crown Prosecution Service states that "a complainant does not consent if they are incapacitated through drink." and "does not need to be unconscious through drink to lose their capacity to consent". These beliefs need to be challenged urgently. If students do not understand what rape or sexual violence is under the law, then if they perpetrate it or experience it they will be unable to recognise these experiences as unlawful.

In addition, between a quarter and a third of respondents agreed with or were unsure with statements relating to the idea that men commit rape because they can't control themselves. These attitudes suggest that sexual violence is seen by this group as a normal part of male behaviour, which is not only untrue but also derogatory towards men.

Across all questions there was a clear pattern that male students were more likely to hold these beliefs than women. These findings are all the more stark when looked at in the context of the findings on sexual violence victimisation, which shows that women and non-binary people are three times more likely to be subjected to sexual violence than men.

Student attitudes towards professional boundaries with staff

The final area this survey explored was students' attitudes towards professional boundaries with staff. This is another aspect of exploring how safe students feel on campus. In light of recent media coverage of staff-student relationships, we wanted to understand what types of relationships with staff students are comfortable with.

The majority of students were uncomfortable with sexualised interactions with staff, such as sexual or romantic relationships or staff asking them on a date. Responses were more mixed when it came to online and off-campus interactions. However, across all questions, women students were less comfortable than men with all the types of interactions we asked about.

These gendered patterns suggest that for *all* students to feel safe and comfortable in their teaching and learning environment, clear professional boundaries need to be in place. The findings raise the question as to whether it is time for the University to follow other institutions, such as UCL, in prohibiting sexual and romantic relationships between students and staff where a teaching and learning relationship exists.

Limitations of the study

It is important to note in relation to these findings that there are some gaps in relation to intersectionality.

While it is difficult methodologically to measure the prevalence of gender-based violence and harassment, these findings suggest that the University is roughly in line with levels shown in other studies nationally and internationally. The findings in this report should be taken as representative of these wider patterns rather than being indicative of any particular issues at this University.

If you have been affected by the issues discussed in this survey, please contact the following support services:

- **FOR LGBTQ+ people:** specialist support is available from Galop, The LGBT+ anti-violence charity http://www.galop.org.uk/
- **For women:** Rape Crisis national helpline. You can call anonymously and confidentially to discuss any experience of sexual harassment or sexual violence. 12:00-14:30 and 19:00-21:30 every day of the year, Monday to Friday 15:00-17:30r 0808 802 9999

Introduction

From Monday 23rd November to Friday 11th December 2020 we invited students to share their opinions and experiences of gender-based violence/harassment/misconduct by completing a survey, answering questions in relation to the following topics:

- ➔ Professional Boundaries
- ➔ Attitudes to Sexual Misconduct
- ➔ Sexual Violence Victimisation
- ➔ Dating Violence Victimisation
- ➔ Stalking Victimisation
- ➔ Sexual Harassment Victimisation

Methods

The survey was sent to all students enrolled at the university (N = 31,059) in November 2020 via email from their Students' Union Welfare Officer. There was a strong response, with 1303 (response rate = 4.19%) students completing the survey over the 3-week period, 725 of these consenting to their responses being reported on publicly[1].

Why did we carry out this research?

There is currently a heightened focus on gender-based violence in universities and in wider society. In order to most appropriately address these issues, it's crucial to understand what is happening in more detail through gathering data. While many universities are carrying out ongoing work to improve their responses in this area, very few are systematically gathering data, or publicly reporting on it if they do.

Therefore, we wanted to make this report public to encourage other universities and students' unions to follow suit: to carry out similar surveys, to publish the data publicly, and to use the evidence to inform prevention and response work within the institution. Against the climate of secrecy that surrounds universities' responses to gender-based violence on campus, we hope that this report will lead to more openness and public reporting of data on this issue. As the data shows, it seems that the prevalence of gender-based violence and harassment among respondents to this survey at the University is roughly in line with findings from other studies nationally and internationally. If anything, rates are lower than previous studies, perhaps due to this data being gathered during the Covid-19 pandemic. Gender-based violence is an issue across the higher education sector and across society as a whole, and therefore the findings in this report should be taken as representative of these wider patterns rather than being indicative of any particular issues at the University.

Overall, we wanted to better understand who is being subjected to gender-based violence, from whom, and what the attitudes are that create an environment where this is able to

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[1] In this study therefore we report on data from the 725 respondents who were happy for their data to be publicly reported on. Comparisons of the two datasets showed no significant differences between them.

occur. This data is needed in order to create an environment where all students can be safe to study. Previous research has found that being subject to sexually harassing behavior "interfered with [students'] academic or professional performance", "limited their ability to participate in an academic program" or "created an intimidating, hostile or offensive social, academic or work environment"[2]. Given that women students are around three times more likely than men students to be subjected to sexual or gender-based violence or harassment, this is a crucial issue for ensuring equal access to education across genders. If this issue is not addressed, then many students, particularly women students, may not be able to engage and flourish at university.

What's the wider picture on gender-based violence in universities?

Existing data shows that women students in the UK are *three times* more likely than women in other occupational groups to be subject to sexual assault. Nationally, among full-time students in 2020, 12% of women students had experienced sexual assault in the last year, compared with 4% of men[3]. Despite these shocking findings, there is very little robust evidence that explores what is going on behind these headline figures. While in the US and in Australia, large-scale national surveys have been carried out into gender-based violence on campus, no such work has been done in the UK.

However, studies in the UK have given some data on where, how, and to whom gender-based violence and harassment on campus occurs. In 2011, the National Union of Students surveyed 2058 women students and found that one in seven survey respondents had experienced a serious physical or sexual assault during their time as a student and 16 per cent had experienced unwanted kissing, touching or molesting during their time as a student, the majority of which took place in public[4]. More recently, UK sexual health charity Brook surveyed 5,649 students in 2019 and found that nearly half of women students had been subjected to wolf-whistling or inappropriate touching, and 4% had been forced into a sexual act[5].

International findings show similarly high prevalence. A US study of 150,000 students across 27 universities found that 41% of students have been subjected to sexual harassment since enrolling as a student, or during their time on campus, and 13% of students in the sample had been subjected to 'nonconsensual sexual contact by physical force or inability to

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[2] Cantor, D., Fisher, B., Chibnall, S., Harps, S., Townsend, R., Thomas, G., Lee, H., Kranz, V., Herbison, R., & Madden, K. (2019). *Report on the AAU Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Misconduct* (p. 433). Association of American Universities. https://www.aau.edu/key-issues/campus-climate-and-safety/aau-campus-climate-survey-2019 p.xiii

[3] Office for National Statistics. 2021. 'Sexual Offences Victim Characteristics, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics'. 2021. https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/sexualoffencesvictimcharacteristicsenglandandwales/march2020?s=03.

[4] National Union of Students. 2010. 'Hidden Marks. A Study of Women Students' Experiences of Harassment, Stalking, Violence and Sexual Assault'. National Union of Students. https://www.nus.org.uk/Global/NUS_hidden_marks_report_2nd_edition_web.pdf.

[5] Brook. 2019. 'Sexual Violence and Harassment in UK Universities'. http://legacy.brook.org.uk/data/Brook_DigIN_summary_report2.pdf.

consent' from other students[6]. All these studies found conclusively that men were overwhelmingly likely to be named as perpetrators, that women were much more likely to be victimised, and that LGBTQ+ people are more likely than straight people to be targeted.

Results

This report explores five key areas and examined four specific types of victimisation: sexual harassment; sexual violence; stalking; and dating violence. The questions we answer in this report are as follows:

- What level of gender-based violence and harassment do students at this university experience during their studies?
- Who are the students most likely to experience these harms?
- What are the characteristics of those most likely to be perpetrators in terms of gender, relationship to victim and site of experiences (i.e., on or off campus)?
- To what extent to respondents agree or disagree with "rape myths"?
- What professional boundaries with staff are students comfortable with?

The first three questions explore what experiences students have, from whom, and where. The final two questions look at issues relating to prevention of gender-based violence, focusing on what appropriate professional boundaries between staff and students would look like; and whether students hold attitudes that create a climate which enables sexual or gender-based violence.

What levels of gender-based violence/harassment do students experience, and who are the students most likely to experience these harms?

To explore student's experiences in greater depth we explored four measures that capture different forms of gender-based violence/harassment: sexual harassment, stalking victimisation, 'dating violence' and sexual violence. These measures don't capture the full extent of gender-based violence that students might experience, but we chose these as we had good quality survey tools to use to explore them.

As shown in Figure 1, sexual harassment was the most common form of and gender-based violence/harassment with 55% of respondents reporting some experience of sexual or gender harassment whilst studying at the University. The second most common form was sexual violence which was experienced by 30% of respondents. Third, dating violence behaviours, broadly conceived, were experienced by 26% of survey respondents. Finally, stalking behaviours were experienced by 16% of survey respondents.

Below, we look at each of the four types of gender-based violence/harassment in more detail. For each of these measures we look at how gender, level of study and whether students are home or international students impacts their experiences of gender-based violence/harassment in terms of a) whether they have experienced that form of gender-

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[6] Cantor, David, Bonnie Fisher, Susan Chibnall, Shauna Harps, Reanne Townsend, Gail Thomas, Hyunshik Lee, Vanessa Kranz, Randy Herbison, and Kristin Madden. 2019. 'Report on the AAU Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Misconduct'. Association of American Universities. https://www.aau.edu/key-issues/campus-climate-and-safety/aau-campus-climate-survey-2019 p. 9

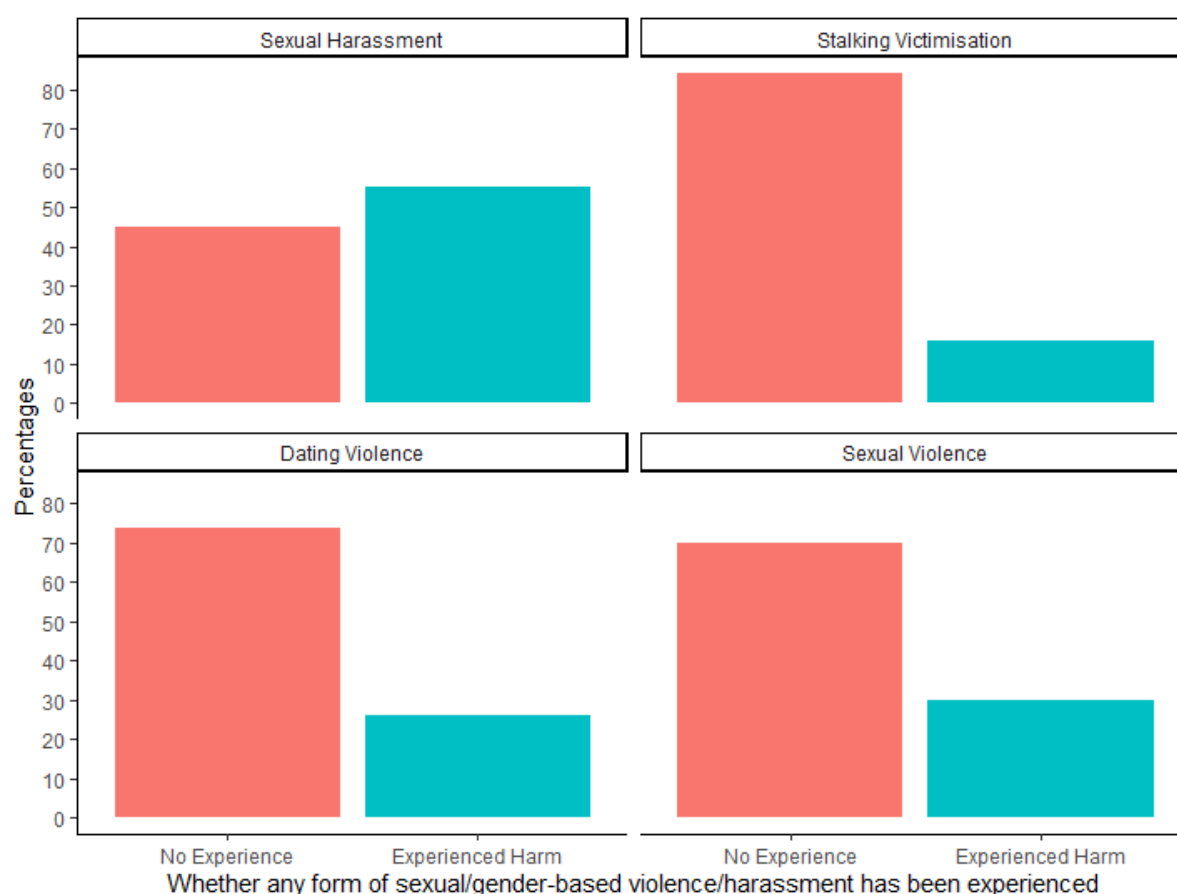based violence/harassment and b) the volume of experiences they had whilst studying at the University.

Figure 1. Percentage of students who reported experiences across sexual harassment, stalking victimisation, dating violence and sexual violence.

Sexual Harassment Experiences

Under the Equality Act 2010, harassment is defined as unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating the recipient's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment can also relate to 'sex', sexuality, or other "protected characteristics" under the Equality Act[7]. It's important to understand the wider climate of gender inequality and sexual harassment occurring within the university because these experiences can have a powerful impact on students' ability to engage with their studies, work, and social life, but also as this can create a context where sexual violence and other forms of harm are accepted and seen as normal.

Receiving offensive sexist remarks was the most common form of sexual harassment with 35% of respondents reporting at least one experience and 20% experiencing it more than once or twice. The second most common form was being treated differently due to gender,

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[7] Below, we conflate these forms to call this 'sexual or gender harassment', referring to sexual harassment as unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, and 'harassment on the basis of sex' as gender harassment.

which was experienced by 35% of students surveyed at least once, with 19% experiencing it more than twice. 30% of respondents stated that someone had put them down or was condescending to them because of their sex/gender and similar numbers reported receiving offensive remarks about their appearance/body or sexual activities at least once.

There was also evidence that a minority of students are being subjected to homophobia, with, around 11% of those surveyed reporting that they had been called gay or lesbian negatively at least once or more. For more details on the breakdown of sexual harassment see *Figure 2*.
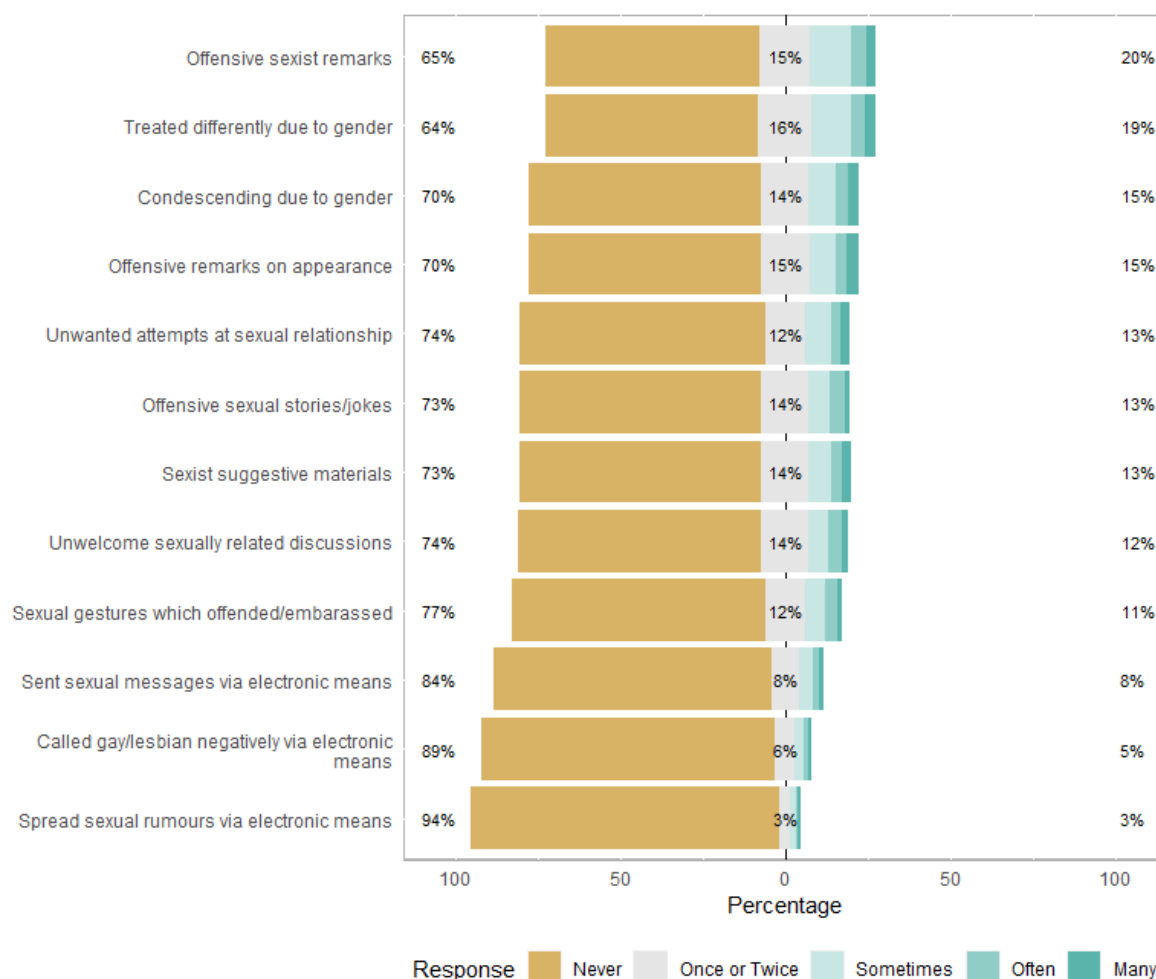
Figure 2. Frequency of different types of sexual harassment experienced by students. The percentage on the left, in dark yellow, indicates those who had never experienced these. The percentage in the middle, in white, are those who had experienced these things once or twice. The percentage given on the right, and in green on the graph, refers to those who had been subjected to these experiences sometimes, often or many times.

55% of respondents had experienced some form of sexual or gender harassment whilst studying at the University.

Who is experiencing sexual harassment?

In the sections below, we look at how many people had experienced each type of behaviour, and then among those who experienced it, how many times it happened - i.e. who was more likely to be repeatedly targeted.

Overall, 55% of respondents had experienced some form of sexual or gender harassment whilst studying at the University. Gender was an important predictor of being targeted for harassment with women and non-binary students being substantially more likely to have experience victimisation[8]. In particular, women students were 2.16 times more likely than men to experience this, whilst non-binary students were 5.75 times more likely than males to have been the subject of victimisation. Although there were only a small number of non-binary students in the sample (n = 20) it is stark just how many of them have experienced sexual or gender harassment.

Who is experiencing sexual and gender harassment most often?

Looking at how often people were subject to sexual harassment, gender, home/international students and level of study were all important predictors of how often people experience victimisation. Women and non-binary students were more likely compared to males to have experienced higher levels of victimisation with females experiencing 2.15 times the incident rate of males, and there was 3.78 times the incident rate for non-binary compared to males. International students experienced less sexual/gender harassment with 0.63 incident rate than home students. Those in the second and third year experienced more victimisation events than those in first year, however this is likely to be because we asked about any experiences since being enrolled at the University, so those in second and third year are responding about experiences over a longer period of time [9].

Overall, these findings show that, for many students, their experience of university life is shaped by everyday experiences of sexual or gender harassment. It is a positive finding that nearly half of respondents to the survey did not report being subject to sexual harassment, but it is concerning that women and non-binary students' experiences are so different to men's experiences. For a large minority of students, these experiences were not one-off, but occurred 'sometimes', 'often' or 'many times'. As outlined below, sexual harassment was most likely to be carried out by another University student who was male. These findings indicate that much more work needs to be done to raise awareness of appropriate behaviours among the student body such as bystander programmes and awareness campaigns.

Responses to sexual harassment

> *"I was going to report it, but then the first lockdown happened, he graduated, and I haven't seen him since." (survey respondent)*

The University uses the 'Report and Support' system for reporting any form of harassment or bullying behaviours. This system allows anonymous reports as well as accessing support

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[8] To explore whether students had experienced victimisation whilst studying at the university, a binary logistic regression was conducted. To address the issue of who is most likely to experience more sexual victimisation we performed a negative binomial regression model.

[9] Second year Incident rate ratio (IRR) = 1.91, Third year IRR = 1.78

and links for making a formal report. Figure 3 shows the most common ways that students handled incidents of sexual harassment were to avoid that person in the future (34%), ignore the person and doing nothing (31%) and telling the person to stop (29%). Only 5% of those who were subjected to sexual or gender-based harassment indicated that they had reported this in some way.

Such low rates of reporting have been found to be normal across wider studies of sexual harassment, but this rate of reporting is lower than some other studies have found, and it suggests that more awareness-raising of the Report and Support system could be undertaken as well as building trust among students around reasons to report.
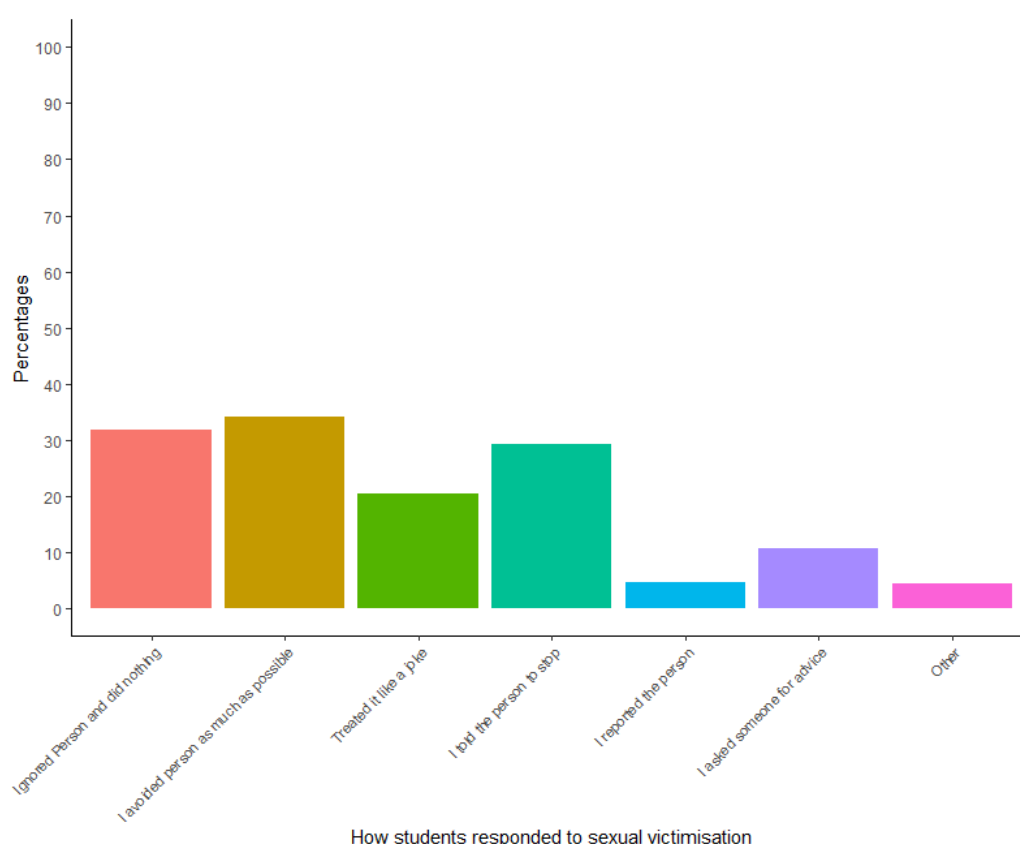
Figure 3. Different ways of responding to sexual harassment.

Sexual Violence

> *"As a woman in society, [it's] normal and something we have to bitterly deal with."*
> *(survey respondent)*

These questions asked about unwanted sexual experiences including rape, attempted rape, sexual assault by penetration, and sexual assault. Just over a quarter of students (26%, n = 145) who responded to the survey reported having at least one experience of their private parts being fondled/kissed/rubbed up against, or having their clothes removed without their

consent (see Figure 4). 13% (n = 89) of respondents indicated that someone had attempted without consent to have oral/anal or vaginal sex with them. 8% (n = 56) reported that they had experienced without their consent a finger, penis or object being inserted into their vagina or bum. In UK law these acts count as rape or sexual assault by penetration. Finally, 4% (n = 28) had experienced some form of oral sex without their consent.

Across all of these experiences, in total 30% of respondents had been subjected to sexual violence since enrolling at the University. These figures are not dissimilar to other studies of students' experiences. A recent study of over 6000 students in Ireland that used the same survey questions found that 44% of respondents had experienced sexual violence at any point since enrolling in higher education[10]. In a less directly comparable study from the UK, in the two years to March 2020, 7% of all students had experienced rape, assault by penetration, indecent exposure and unwanted sexual touching at least once[11].
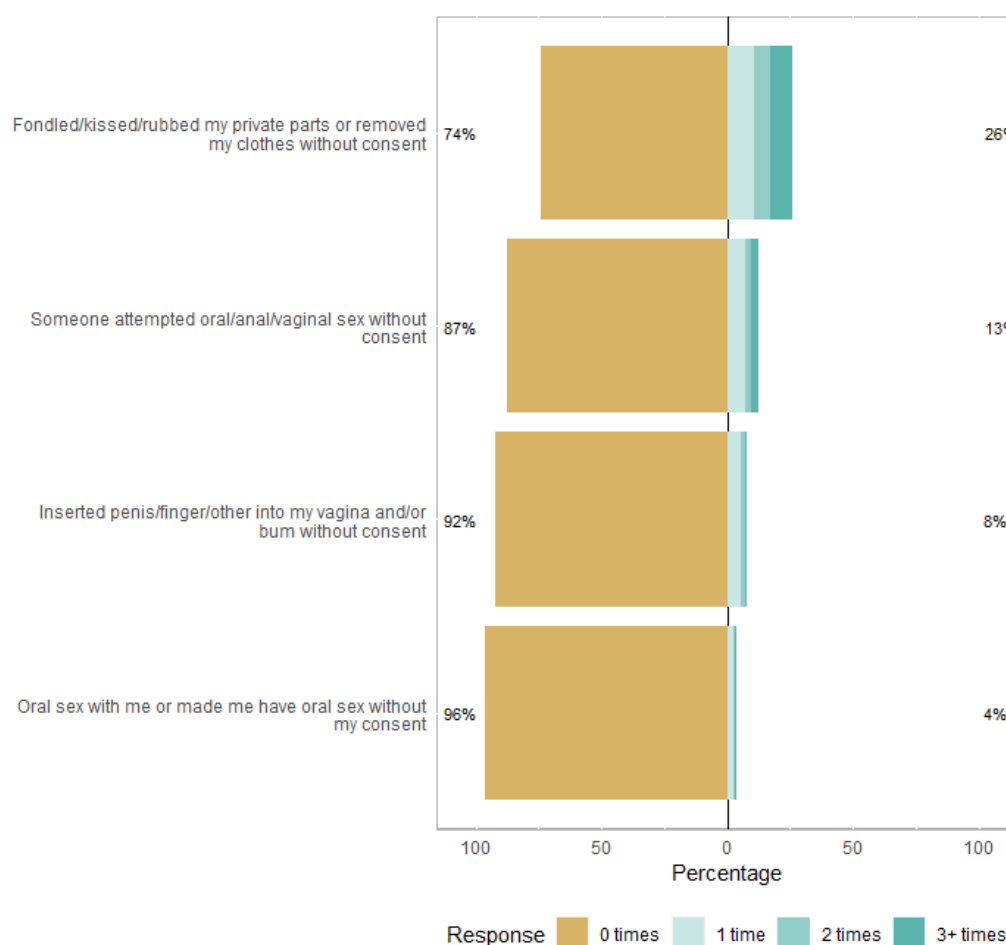
Figure 4. Frequencies of different types of sexual violence experienced by respondents.

[10] Active Consent, & Union of Students in Ireland. (2020). *Sexual Experiences Survey 2020. Sexual Violence and Harassment Experiences in A National Survey of Higher Education Institutions,* p.14. Retrieved 22 June 2020, from https://www.nuigalway.ie/media/smartconsent/Sexual-Experiences-Survey-2020.pdf

[11] The Office for National Statistics have included slightly different measures in this figure than are included in this survey, therefore the data is not directly comparable. See: Office for National Statistics. (2021). *Sexual offences victim characteristics, England and Wales—Office for National Statistics*. https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/sexualoffencesvictimcharacteristicsenglandandwales/march2020?s=03

Who was subjected to sexual violence?

First of all we looked at everyone who had been subjected to sexual violence at least once. 30% of students in the survey whilst studying at the University experienced some form of sexual violence. Gender, and being a home or international student were significant predictors of experiencing at least one occasion of sexual violence[12].

- Women and those who identified as non-binary were significantly more likely to have experienced some form of sexual violence compared to men
  - Women were 2.93 times more likely than men to have experienced sexual violence
  - Non-binary students were 3.09 times more likely than men to have experienced sexual violence

International students were **less** likely to be subjected to sexual violence compared to home students.

We found that second, third or fourth year students were more likely to have been subjected to some form of sexual violence compared to first years. However, this is probably because we asked about any experiences they had had since starting university, so it is not surprising that students who had been at university for longer were more likely to have had more experiences of gender-based violence.[13]

We also looked at respondents who had been subjected to sexual violence more than once, to see who was at risk of experiencing *more* incidents of sexual violence. There were similar patterns visible[14]. Gender, home vs international and level of study were all predictors of experiencing more sexual violence.

> *"It was a very scary experience as I've never encountered anything like that before and it was hard to speak up to others about it at the beginning."*
> *(survey respondent)*

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[12] Binary logistic regression was carried out to reach this finding.

[13] Odds ratios (OR) as as follows: International students were less likely to experience sexual violence compared to home students (OR = 0.43). For level of study second (OR = 3.88), third (OR = 3.44) and fourth (OR = 4.49) year students were more likely to have experience some form of sexual violence compared to first years.

[14] Negative binomial regression was used to explore who was at risk of experience more sexual violence. Females (IRR = 2.86) and non-binary (IRR = 3.02) students were more likely to have experience more incidents of sexual violence than males. International students experienced less sexual violence than home students (IRR = 0.51) and those in second (IRR = 2.40), third (IRR = 2.17) and fourth (IRR = 2.47) year all experienced more incidents of sexual violence.

Figure 5. How students described their experience of sexual violence. This word cloud is made up of all of the comments that students made in response to the question 'how do you label this experience?'

Stalking and Harassment Victimisation[15]

Stalking can be defined as 'a pattern of fixated and obsessive behaviour which is repeated, persistent, intrusive and causes fear of violence or engenders alarm and distress in the victim'[16]. In the UK, stalking can overlap with criminal harassment (as distinct from harassment on the basis of protected characteristics under the Equality Act, as outlined above). Stalking may also overlap with dating violence, in which people who are in abusive relationships may also be subjected to stalking behaviours (online or offline) from their partners.

First of all, we looked at whether people had ever experienced these behaviours several times since enrolling as a student[17]. Overall, 16% (119 out of 725) experienced some form of stalking behaviours. The three most common forms of stalking victimisation experienced by students were receiving rude/mean online comments (15%), receiving unwanted

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[15] Thanks to Dr Emma Short from De Montfort University for advice on this section of the report.
[16] Unmasking Stalking: A Changing Landscape. (2021). Suzy Lamplugh Trust. https://www.suzylamplugh.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=fcfb781a-f614-48c8-adcf-4cfa830c16a7 p.3
[17] We measured stalking by including anyone who had experienced one stalking event happening 6-8 times, three stalking events happening 1-2 times, or one stalking event at 1-2 times and one stalking event happening 3-5 times. However, we did not look at the period of time within which these events happened, which is usually important for determining whether a pattern of intrusions can be considered as stalking. This questionnaire was formulated in the US according to the legal definition of stalking there, but in the UK the criminal offence of stalking requires that these intrusions cause fear, alarm, or distress.These questions did not capture this aspect of stalking, so these findings should be considered indicative rather than definitive in the UK context, and some of the behaviours captured may constitute criminal harassment rather than stalking.

messages via email, instant messenger or on social media (17%) and left you unwanted notes, texts or voice messages (15%) (see Figure 6), all of which occurred at least one or more times. Some forms of stalking victimisation experienced were very intrusive for example, 12% report at least one experience or more of being watched, followed, or spied upon from a distance or with listening device/camera or GPS. Equally, 12% also reported at least one experience of being approached at home, work or school when they did not wish the person to be there.

Stalking 'can lead to feelings of depression, anxiety and even post-traumatic stress'[18]. Not only that, but it is also 'is a key indicator for future potential serious harm'[19] and therefore stalking behaviours need to be taken very seriously when they occur.
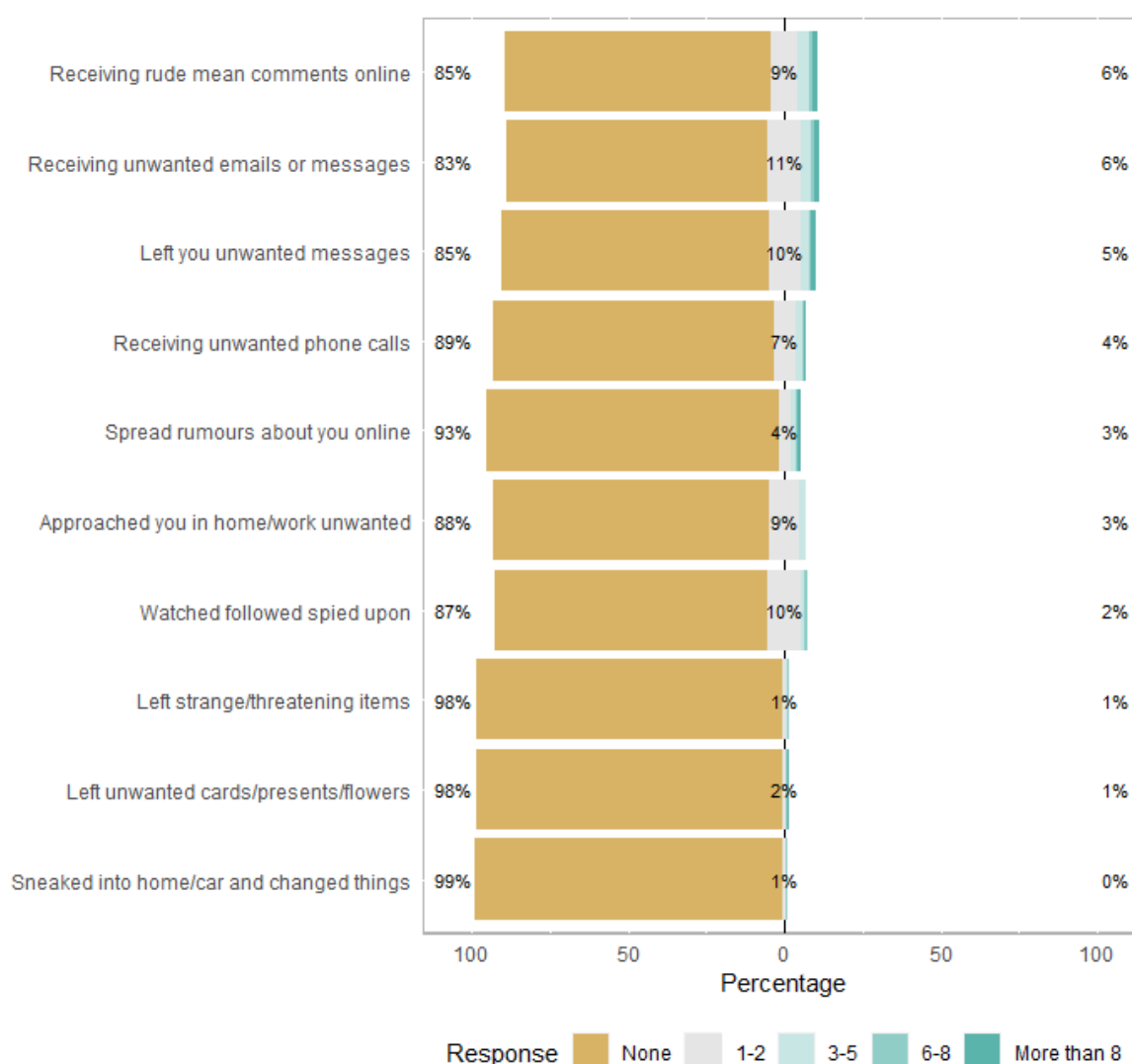
Figure 6. Frequency of the different types of stalking experienced by students.

[18] *Unmasking Stalking: A Changing Landscape*. (2021). Suzy Lamplugh Trust.
https://www.suzylamplugh.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=fcfb781a-f614-48c8-adcf-4cfa830c16a7 p.3
[19] Monckton Smith, Jane, Karolina Szymanska, and Sue Haile. 2017. 'Exploring the Relationship between Stalking and Homicide'. Cheltenham: University of Gloucestershire in association with Suzy Lamplugh Trust.

Who is experiencing stalking?

16% of respondents to the survey had experienced some form of stalking during their time at the University. Women were more likely than males to have experienced the behaviours described above whilst there was no difference between males and those who defined their gender as "prefer not to say'. Second years, third years and PhD students were all more likely to have experienced stalking compared to first year students[20].

Dating Violence

Dating violence, also known as 'intimate partner violence' or domestic abuse can take a wide variety of forms[21]. Domestic abuse is defined in the UK as:

> Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional. This definition includes so-called 'honour'-based violence, forced marriage, and female genital mutilation (FGM).[22]

This survey was carried out in November 2020, as the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic was underway, and a second national lockdown in England was in place from 5th November onwards. As the End Violence Against Women Coalition described, the first lockdown led to an increased demand for support for domestic abuse, and those who sought help were experiencing escalating violence and abuse[23] due to the isolation brought about by the lockdown. This context needs to be taken into account in understanding these findings.

National data (not gathered during a lockdown) shows that full time students (7.7%) are the most likely to experience domestic abuse compared to any other occupation with, women students (11%) were more than twice as likely than male students (5%) to be a victim[24].

We asked about physical and psychological forms of dating violence that had been experienced from someone they had been in a relationship with - regardless of the length of

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[20] Both logistic and negative binomial regression was performed to identify factors that increased student likelihood of having experienced being stalked.

[21] We use the term 'dating violence' here to reflect the term used in the original ARC3 survey. This term reflects the fact that the questions asked only addressed psychological and physical dating violence rather than the full spectrum of coercive and controlling behaviour, including sexual and economic abuse, as covered in the UK CPS definition. Therefore, some of the experiences reported of stalking, sexual harassment and sexual violence may have occurred in the context of an abusive relationship.

[22] The Crown Prosecution Service. (n.d.). *Controlling or Coercive Behaviour in an Intimate or Family Relationship*. Retrieved 17 June 2021, from https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/controlling-or-coercive-behaviour-intimate-or-family-relationship
See also Khan, R. (2021). *Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities*. HARM network and UCLan. http://clok.uclan.ac.uk/37526/1/Domestic%20Abuse%20Policy%20Guidance%20for%20UK%20Universities%202021.pdf

[23] *EASING OF CORONAVIRUS RESTRICTIONS. JOINT STATEMENT FROM VAWG SECTOR ORGANISATIONS*. (2020). End Violence Against Women Coalition. https://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Statement-by-VAWG-orgs-re-easing-COVID-restrictions-July-2020.pdf

[24] Office for National Statistics (2018) Domestic abuse victim characteristics, England and Wales year ending March 2020, cited in Khan (2021).

the relationship - since they enrolled at the University. The survey explained that this included 'any hook-up, boyfriend, girlfriend, husband or wife you have had, including exes'.

Dating violence was experienced by a significant minority of respondents (see Figure 7). We asked about physical and psychological experiences of dating violence. It's important to remember that dating violence can also take other forms such as controlling behaviour or economic abuse, which we didn't ask about.

Physical experiences of dating violence included 11% (n = 78) of respondents reporting experiencing at least one experience of being pushed, grabbed or shook by someone they'd been in a relationship with during their time at the University, 4% (n = 29) reported one or more experiences of being hit, and 1% (n = 7) reported being physically beaten up once or more times.

However, a relationship can be abusive without any physical violence ever occurring. Fear is a common emotion in abusive relationships. The survey asked about this aspect of dating violence by asking respondents 'Not including joking around, the person threatened to hurt me and I thought I might get really hurt'. 16% (n = 118) of respondents reported at least one experience of someone scaring them without making physical contact. 8% (n = 57) report being threatened.

While domestic abuse may be a single incident or several incidents, it is important to note that some students were being subjected to these behaviours 'sometimes', 'often', or 'many times'. This included 2% (n = 15) of those who received threats of harm, and 1% (n = 7) of those who were hit.

> **"[It was] a betrayal of trust - the continued secrecy among our friends became mentally consuming, and shook my self-confidence. It contributed to me taking time out of university."** *(survey respondent)*
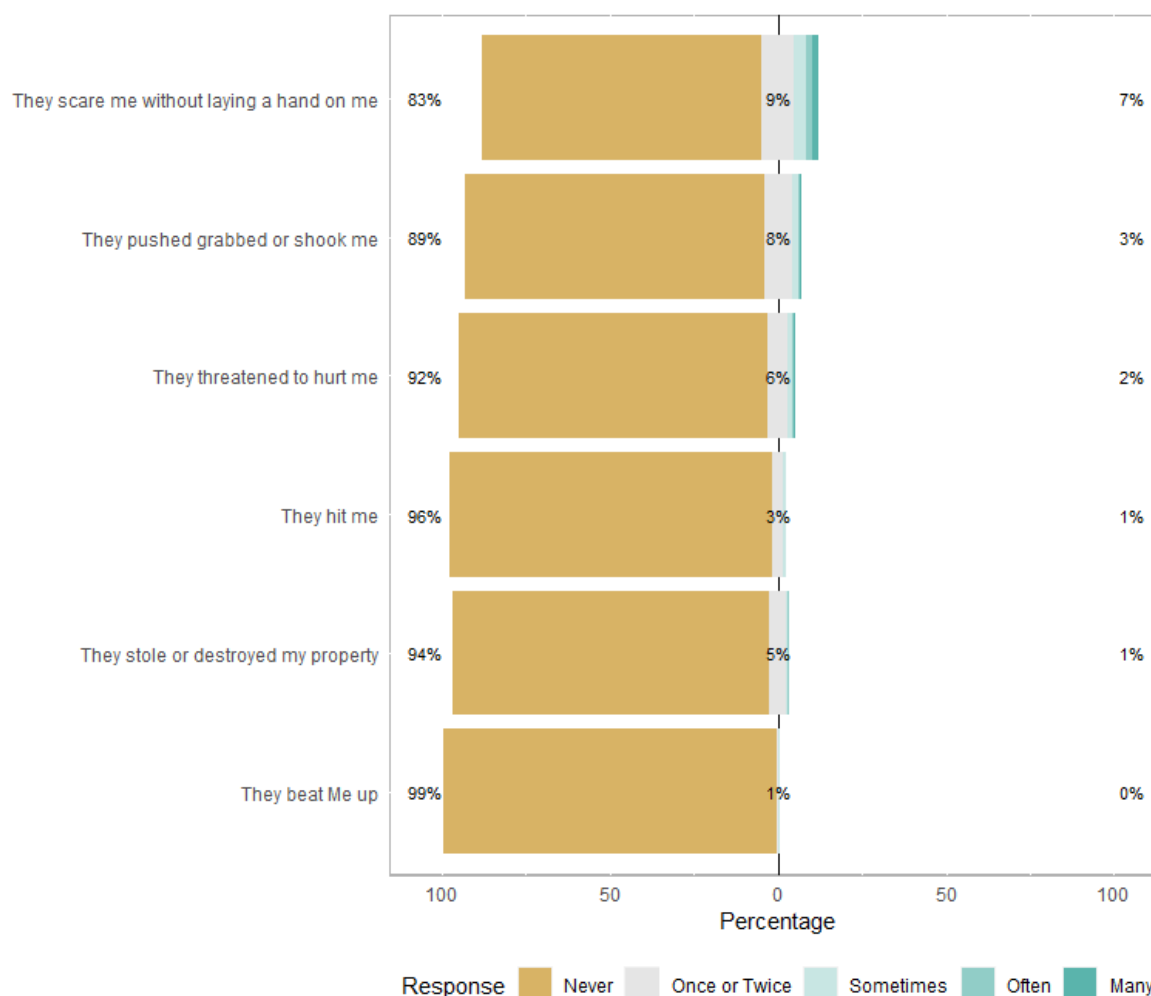
Figure 7. Frequencies of different types of dating violence experienced.

Who is experiencing dating violence?

The findings were very clear that women students are much more at risk of dating violence than men students. Overall, a quarter (26%) of students who completed the survey had experienced at least one behaviour associated with dating violence with 15% experiencing some form of physical dating violence and 23% experiencing some form of psychological dating violence. Gender and level of study were predictors of experiencing some form of dating violence[25]. Women were 1.4 times more likely to have experienced dating violence compared to men, whilst those who identified as non-binary were 4 times more likely to have experienced dating violence.

The number of times that people had been subjected to the experiences we asked about are very important in understanding dating violence as multiple incidents may occur over time. Women reported two times more incidents than men[26].

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[25] This analysis used binary logistic regression
[26] These results are from a negative binomial regression. They indicate that only gender predicted more experiences of dating violence and this effect was only found for females compared to males.

What were the characteristics of those most likely to be perpetrators of gender-based violence/harassment?

> **82% of reported sexual violence incidents were carried out by other students at the University**

As Figure 8 clearly shows and analyses support, students at the University were more likely to have been perpetrators than non-students across all four types of gender-based violence/harassment studied. For example, 83% of sexual harassment reported was carried out by a student studying at the University. Similarly, another student at the University was identified as the person carrying out the behaviour in 82% of sexual violence incidents, 70% of all stalking victimisation and 65% of dating violence incidents.
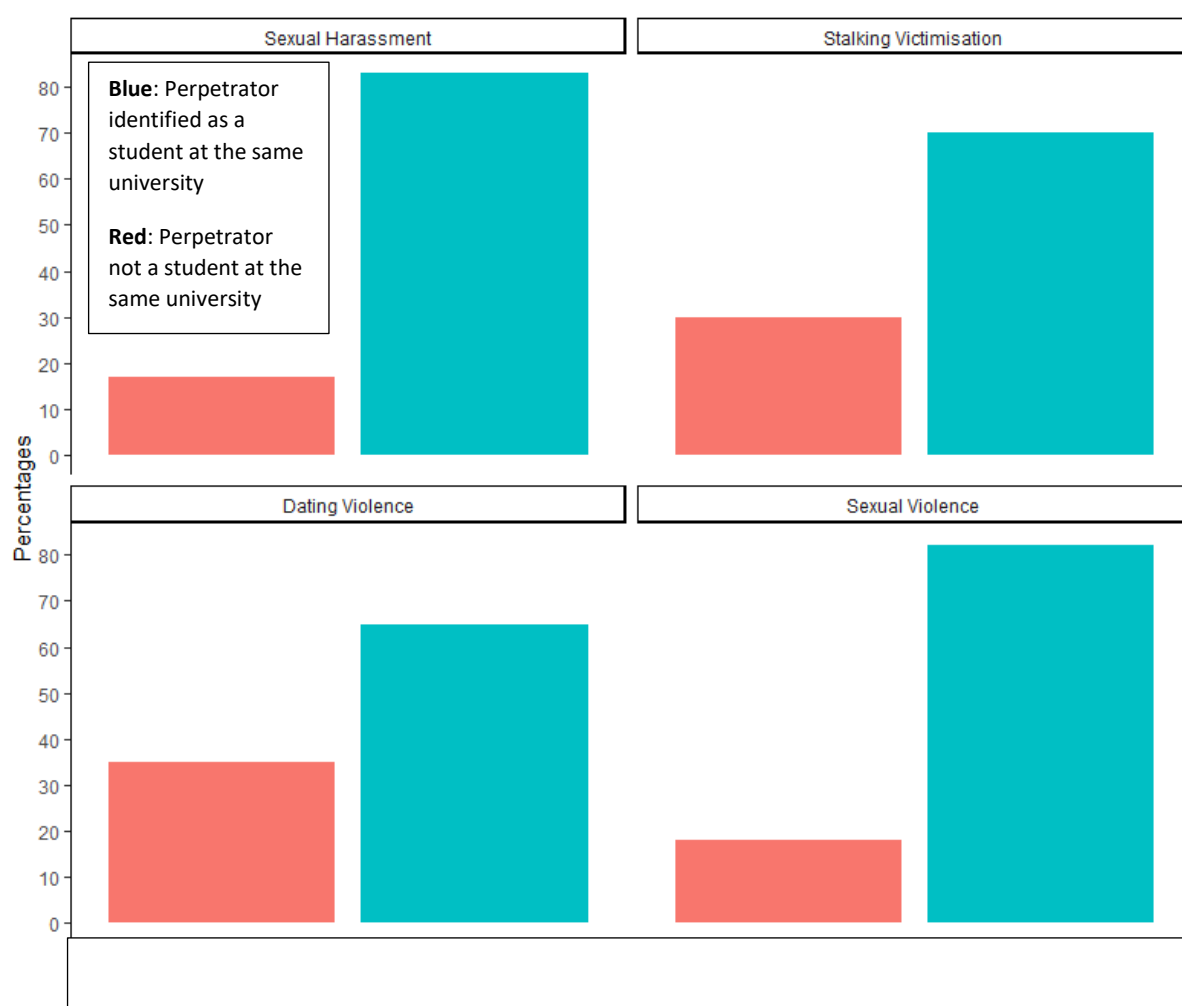

Figure 8. Percentage of perpetrators who were described as students at the same university across the four different types of gender-based violence/harassment.

Respondents named men as the majority of perpetrators, rather than women or those who self-identified their gender as 'other'[27]. For example, when asked to describe the person who

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[27] Descriptive statistics and univariate analyses were used for this analysis

carried out the behaviour for the most serious incident they experienced, men were named by 82% of those who experienced sexual harassment, 89% of those who were subjected to stalking, 79% of dating violence and 85% of sexual violence (see Figure 9)[28].
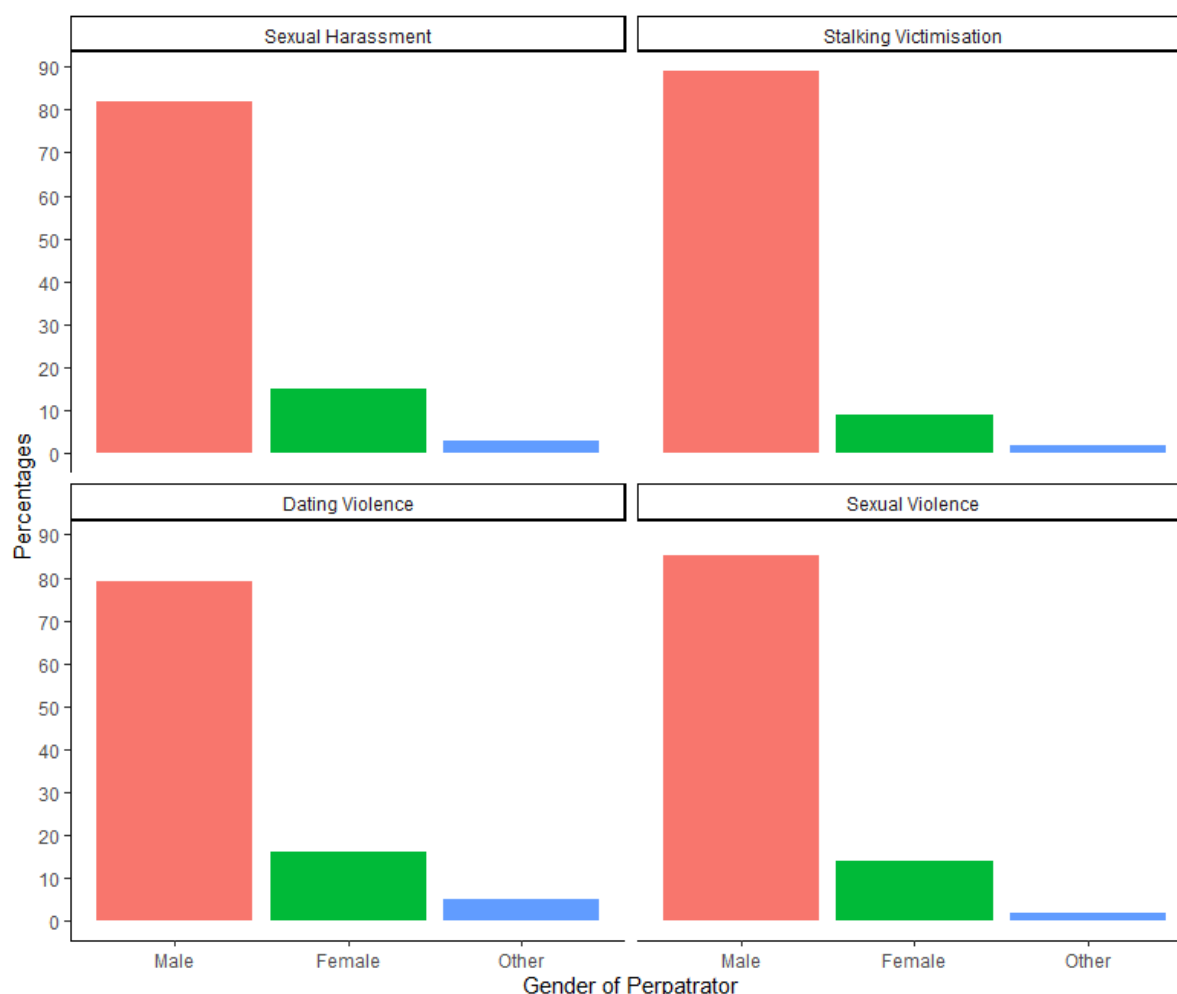

Figure 9. Gender of perpetrators by different types of gender-based violence/harassment.

Some forms of perpetrator-to-victim relationship occurred more frequently within gender-based violence/harassment than others. For example, across most forms of gender-based violence/harassment, stranger, acquaintance and friend relationships were most common. Dating violence noticeably breaks this pattern where acquaintances (27%), former romantic partners (23%) and strangers (18%) were the most common type of relationship between perpetrators and victims. Concerningly, University staff were also reported to have taken part in some forms of sexual and gender harassment (3%) and dating violence (2%).

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[28] Respondents were asked to 'think about the one situation that had the greatest effect on you' and answer questions about who perpetrated it and where it occurred.
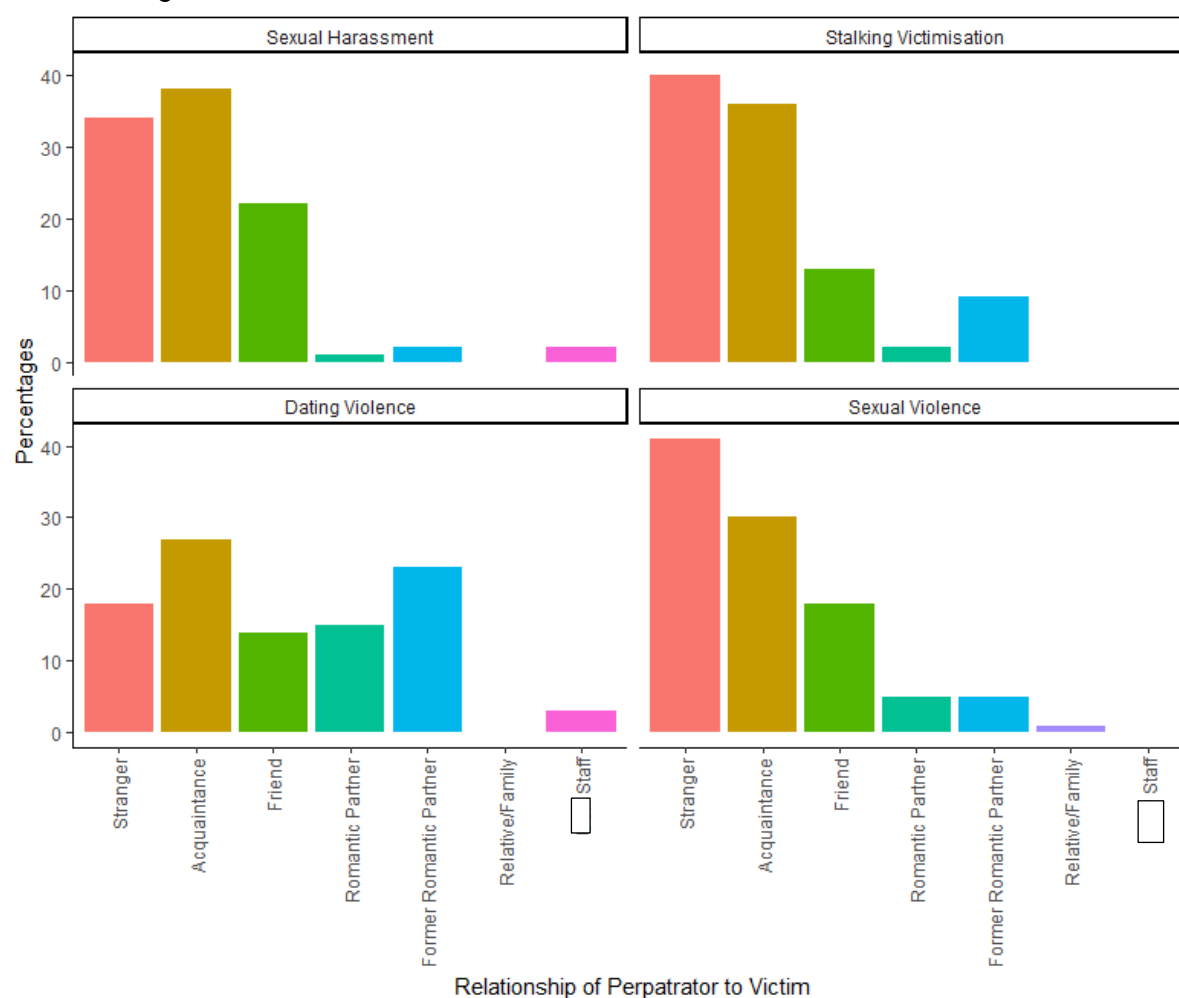
sexual and gender-based

Figure 10. Relationship of perpetrator to victim by type of gender-based violence/harassment.

Are any of these behaviours taking place on campus?

Figure 11 shows where gender-based violence/harassment typically tend to occur. While most occurred off campus, there was still a relatively large amount occurring on campus[29].

The most common form of gender-based violence/harassment on campus only, and not off campus, was sexual/gender harassment at 20% of all incidents, followed by dating violence behaviours (16%) and sexual violence (15%).

However, the most common site for gender-based violence/harassment to occur was off campus with 85% of sexual violence, 61% of dating violence behaviours, and 53% of stalking occurring off campus.

Some behaviours were described by respondents as occurring both on and off campus, in particular incidences of stalking victimisation at 27% followed by sexual harassment (24%) and dating violence (17%).

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[29] It is unclear from the survey findings whether students identified student accommodation as being on or off campus. This point will need to be clarified in future iterations of the survey.

These findings show that for many students, being on campus is not a place where they can be safe from gender-based violence or harassment. If they are targeted by another student (as detailed below) then this was even more so the case.

However, behaviours taking place off campus can have a very serious impact on students' ability to engage with their studies, as well as their wellbeing and safety. Universities have a duty of care to support students who are subjected to gender-based violence no matter where this is occurring or who is perpetrating it.
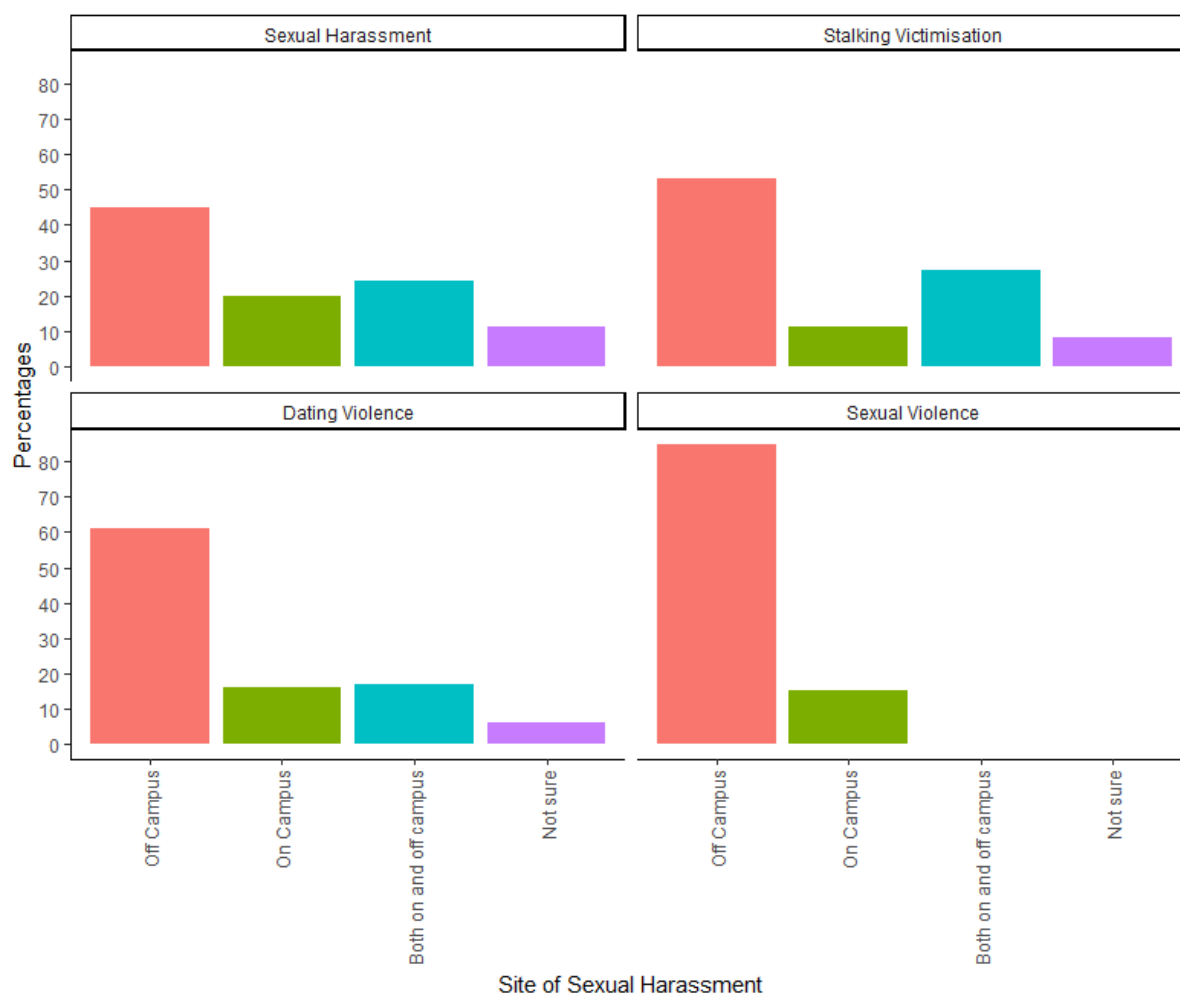

Figure 11. Illustrates where gender-based violence/harassment most commonly occurred.

> **"[This experience was] a warning not to trust people and that once you reject them they can get nasty indeed."** *(survey respondent)*

If a University student is carrying out these behaviours, what is their relationship to the victim and where are they happening?

We asked survey respondents who had carried out the behaviours they experienced[30]. From these answers, we found that if someone experienced sexual harassment carried out by a

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[30] This section used four binary logistic regressions one for each of the main measures of gender based violence and harassment with the predictors of gender, relationship to victim and location.

University student, that student was much more likely to be an acquaintance or a friend than a stranger. Similarly, stalking behaviours were much more likely to be carried out by a friend, acquaintance or a former romantic partner than a stranger[31].

Where a University student was carrying out the behaviour it was more likely to take place on campus or both on and off campus, than off campus alone. Stalking behaviours, sexual harassment and dating violence, where they were perpetrated by a University student, were much more likely to take place *on* campus, or both on and off campus, rather than solely off campus. This was not the case for sexual violence, however, where perpetration by a student could happen equally on or off campus.

There are important implications in these findings for prevention and response to gender-based violence on campus, as discussed in the conclusion.

> *"Being felt by a stranger in a club [is] unpleasant but also extremely common." (survey respondent)*

Students' attitudes towards sexual misconduct

In this section we asked about the extent to which students agreed or disagreed with "rape myths". A "rape myth" is an inaccurate assumption about rape[32]. They are important to understand because they "serve to deny, downplay or justify sexual violence" - put simply, believing rape myths appears to indicate that people are more likely to commit sexual violence[33]. Rape myths can be organised into a wider set of beliefs, which include

- Beliefs that blame the victim/survivor
- Beliefs that cast doubt on allegations
- Beliefs that excuse the accused
- Beliefs that assume rape only occurs in certain social groups[34]

In this survey, we used an internationally-recognised survey instrument for measuring rape myth acceptance[35]. It comprises four subscales: "she asked for it", "he didn't mean to", "it wasn't really rape" and "they lied". Each of these scales asked a set of questions that have been combined to give an overview of the extent to which the respondent believes these myths about rape.

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[31] There were no similar relationships for dating violence or sexual violence.

[32] Burrowes, Nina. 2013. 'Responding to the Challenge of Rape Myths in Court. A Guide for Prosecutors'. NB Research, p. 5 http://www.nb-research.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Responding-to-the-challenge-of-rape-myths-in-court_Nina-Burrowes.pdf.

[33] Bohner, Gerd, Marc-André Reinhard, Stefanie Rutz, Sabine Sturm, Bernd Kerschbaum, and Dagmar Effler. 1998. 'Rape Myths as Neutralizing Cognitions: Evidence for a Causal Impact of Anti-Victim Attitudes on Men's Self-Reported Likelihood of Raping'. *European Journal of Social Psychology* 28 (2): 257–68. https://oi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-0992(199803/04)28:2<257::AID-EJSP871>3.0.CO;2-1 p. 14

[34] Smith, Olivia, and Tina Skinner. 2017. 'How Rape Myths Are Used and Challenged in Rape and Sexual Assault Trials'. *Social & Legal Studies* 26 (4): 441–66. https://doi.org/10.1177/0964663916680130 pages 3-4

[35] McMahon, S., and G. L. Farmer. 2011. 'An Updated Measure for Assessing Subtle Rape Myths'. *Social Work Research* 35 (2): 71–81. https://doi.org/10.1093/swr/35.2.71.

In filling out the survey, some students expressed concern that these scales made assumptions about the gender of the perpetrator and the victim. As a result, we included the following statement in the survey to explain this:

> The following statements are looking at attitudes in relation to heterosexual behaviours. They are based on research and reports in the UK that a large proportion of rape cases, including harassment, hate crime and violence, are committed by men against women.

It is a limitation of these survey questions that they do not take into account the more fluid gender identities of many young people today; indeed as the data from this survey shows, non-binary students were highly likely to be subject to sexual or gender harassment. However, these questions do capture the attitudes that enable sexual- and gender-based violence to occur: attitudes relating to gender. Therefore this data is helpful in understanding what kinds of prevention work needs to take place at the University around changing attitudes.

We review students' attitudes on each of these sub-scales and assess student characteristics that are more predictive of higher/lower scores indicating more or less tolerance towards rape myths. For interpretation going forwards all scale items were numbered from 0 meaning strongly disagree to 4 strongly agree. Higher scores (closer to 4) therefore show that respondents **agree with** rape myths, while lower scores (closer to 0) indicate that respondents **do not agree with** rape myths.

"She asked for it"

One of the beliefs that enables sexual violence to continue is the idea that women are - at least in part - to blame if they are raped.

Mean responses across the items on this scale ranged from 1.27-1.95 indicating that the average response was between "disagree", and "neither agree nor disagree". Figure 12 illustrates that for all items the majority of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. The item that saw the most uncertainty and positive responses related to "If a girl initiates kissing/hooking up she should not be surprised if a guy assumes she wants to have sex".

A minority of respondents held victim-blaming attitudes or were unsure about what they thought about the statement that "When girls go to parties acting "slutty" and/or wearing "revealing" clothes, they are asking for trouble". In fact, women can be raped no matter what they are wearing. These types of statements "attempt to remove responsibility from the rapist by taking away their agency - that they are so provoked by clothing or behaviour they cannot help themselves"[36].

> *"Although drunk, people should still have control of their body and understand [that] my body is mine. Not an open invitation." (survey respondent)*

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[36] The Crown Prosecution Service. (2021, May 21). *Rape and Sexual Offences—Annex A: Tackling Rape Myths and Stereotypes*. https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/rape-and-sexual-offences-annex-tackling-rape-myths-and-stereotypes
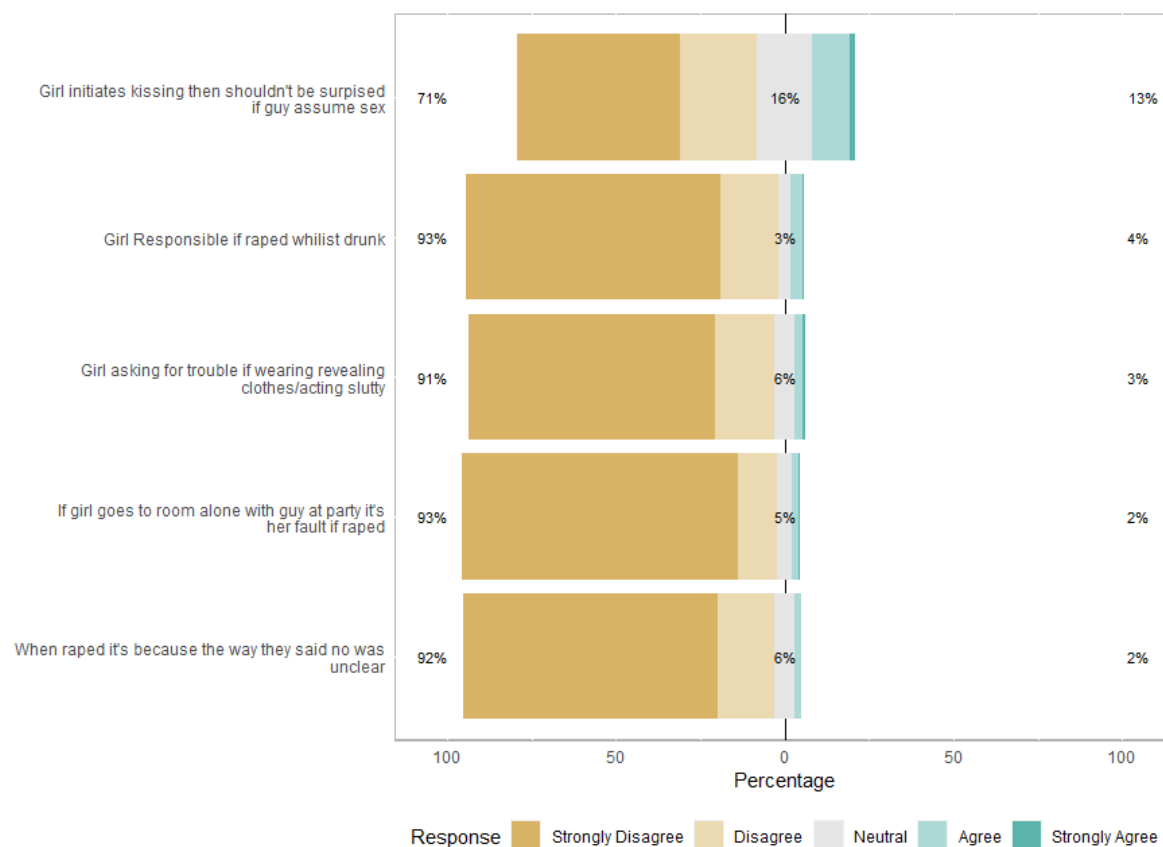
Figure 12. Breakdown of each of the items on the "she asked for it" subscale.

"He didn't mean to"

> *"'Boys being boys and not understanding boundaries" (survey respondent, explaining how she understood her experience of sexual violence)*

Figure 13 shows that for all the items the majority response was to disagree or strongly disagree. That said, a number of items do show a concerning lack of understanding around consent and what rape is under the law. For example, 19% were unsure about, or agreed with the statement that "it can't be rape if both parties are drunk". Similarly, 11% are neutral or agreed with statement that "it's not rape if the guy is drunk and doesn't realise what he is doing".

In fact, the legal definition of consent for sexual activity very clearly states that people must agrees by choice, and have "the freedom and capacity to make that choice". The Crown Prosecution Service states that "a complainant does not consent if they are incapacitated

through drink." and "does not need to be unconscious through drink to lose their capacity to consent"[37].

A common rape myth is that men commit rape because they can't control themselves. Between a quarter and a third of respondents agreed with or were unsure with the statements "Guys don't usually intend to force sex on a girl, but sometimes they get too sexually carried away", and "Rape happens when a guy's sex drive goes out of control". These beliefs are not only untrue, but they are derogatory towards men as they assume men can't control themselves. As outlined by the UK's Crown Prosecution Service, the first statement "attempts to remove the responsibility for the rape from the rapist'". As they go on to state, "men are capable of controlling sexual urges and refraining from raping women and other men. An assertion contrary to this is sexist"[38].
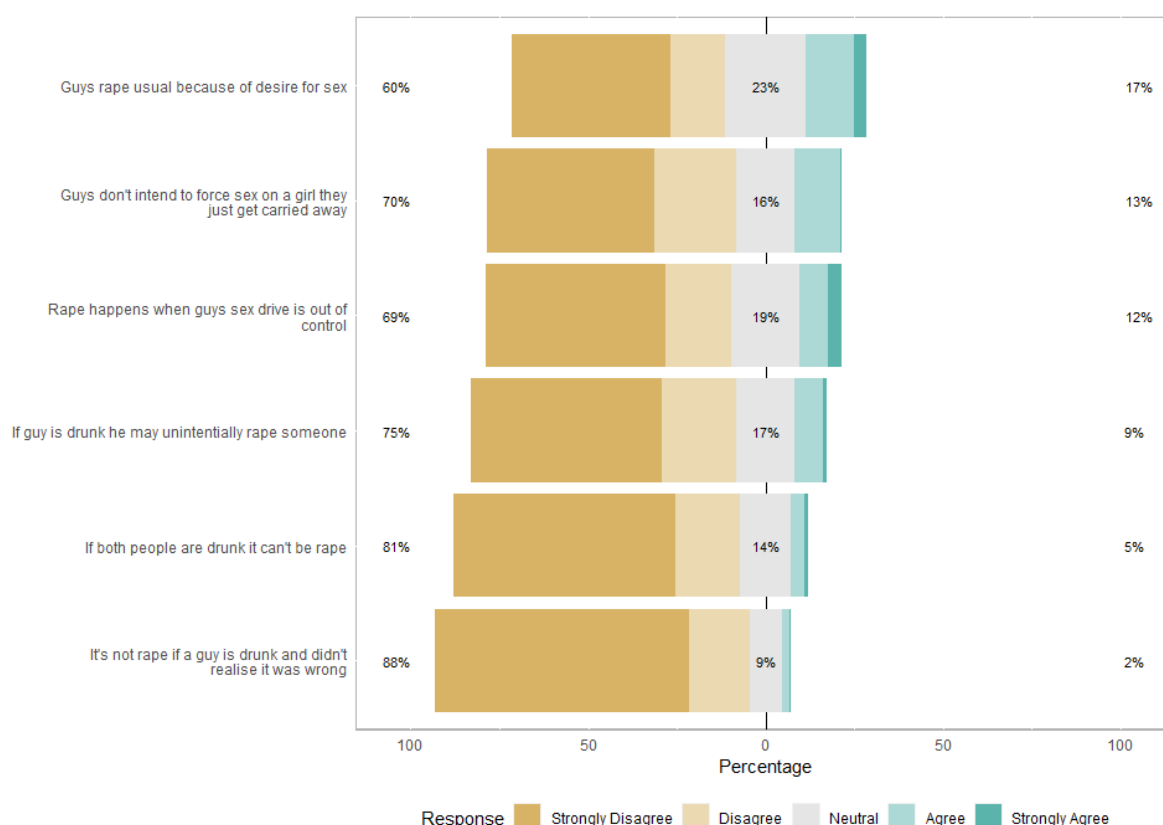

Figure 13. Percentages for each of the items on the "he didn't mean to" scale.

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[37] The Crown Prosecution Service. (2021, May 21). *Rape and Sexual Offences—Chapter 6: Consent*. Retrieved 19 June 2021, from https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/rape-and-sexual-offences-chapter-6-consent

[38] The Crown Prosecution Service. (2021, May 21). Rape and Sexual Offences—Annex A: Tackling Rape Myths and Stereotypes. https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/rape-and-sexual-offences-annex-tackling-rape-myths-and-stereotypes

"It wasn't really rape"

> *"I think it was probably misguided, I wasn't keen on it happening, but I think he honestly thought it was a joke." (survey respondent)*

Figure 14 shows the most frequent response across all items is to strongly disagree with the statements, showing that most respondents understood that rape can occur even if there are no other forms of physical violence. However, one item was a grey area for some respondents: "if a girl doesn't say no she can't claim rape" with 7% agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement and 11% unsure about it.

This statement is a myth. As the University own webpage on Safe Sexual Relationships at Uni states, "Lack of consent may not always be communicated verbally. If your partner pulls away from you, tries to push you away or seems uncomfortable in any way during sexual contact, ask them if they're okay to continue"[39]. It's also important to be aware that for many people, when under threat their response might be to freeze. The varying responses that people have include 'Fight, flight, freeze, flop, friend' - 'friend' can mean to try and negotiate or placate their attacker.

This shows that if someone feels under threat, they may not be able to react. This also shows that consent should be read in non-verbal as well as verbal ways. As 18% of respondents did not understand this point, then education and awareness-raising in this area is needed.

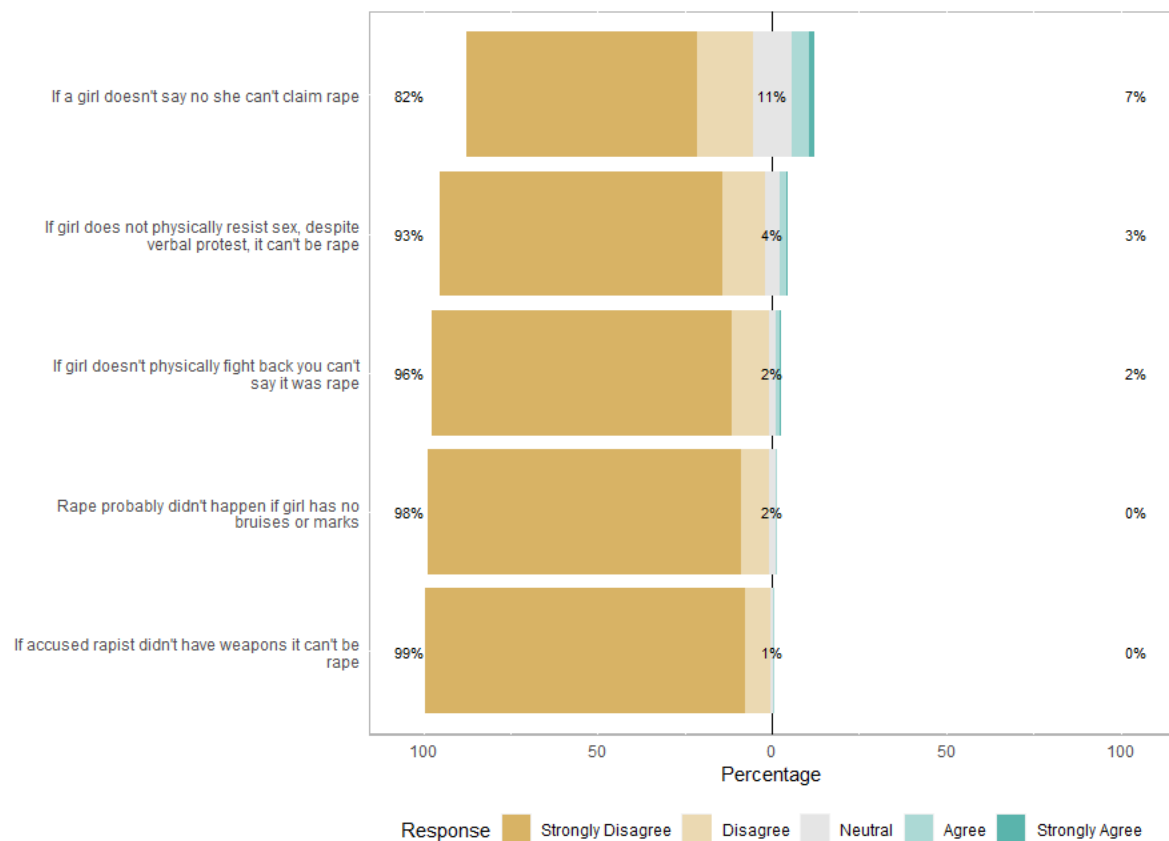[39] University of xxx. (2021). Safe sexual relationships at uni.

Figure 14. Percentages of each item of the "It wasn't really rape" subscale.

"They lied"

"I tried to advise the person in a light-hearted way but I'm worried they will just dismiss it as a complete joke." (survey respondent)

False accusations of sexual violence might happen a lot on TV, but they are rare in real life. A study of reporting to the Metropolitan police found that false reports of rape were at most 3% but likely lower[40]. A far bigger problem is that many people do not tell anyone at all about experiencing sexual violence, and one of the reasons that this occurs is that they are worried they won't be believed. They may also be very ashamed of what happened, and so if they are met with even slightly sceptical responses when they do tell someone, this can be extremely harmful.

The responses to the questions in this section show that there is a relatively high level of disbelief and even stigma towards women who disclose rape, as well as a high level of uncertainty - just under a quarter to just under a third of people selected the "neither

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[40] Kelly, L., Lovett, J., & Regan, L. (2005). A Gap or A Chasm?: Attrition in Reported Rape Cases (Home Office Research Study 293) [Data set]. Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate. https://doi.org/10.1037/e669452007-001 p.47

disagree or agree" response. Items that respondents were mostly likely to agree with were 'girls caught cheating on boyfriends sometimes claim rape' and 'rape accusation are often a way of getting back at a guy' with 15% either agreeing or strongly agreeing and nearly a third unsure. These statements suggest that many students think false accusations of rape are in fact much more common than they really are. This belief contributes to the ongoing silencing and shame around sexual violence as it means people are reluctant to speak out.

In addition, a large minority of respondents also agreed with beliefs that reinforce stereotypes of women as vindictive and untruthful. 30% and 40% of respondents either agreed with or were unsure about statements about women saying they have been raped because they regretted having sex.

Overall, the responses in this section suggest that students hold strong, and also harmful gender stereotypes that need to be challenged through education and awareness-raising.
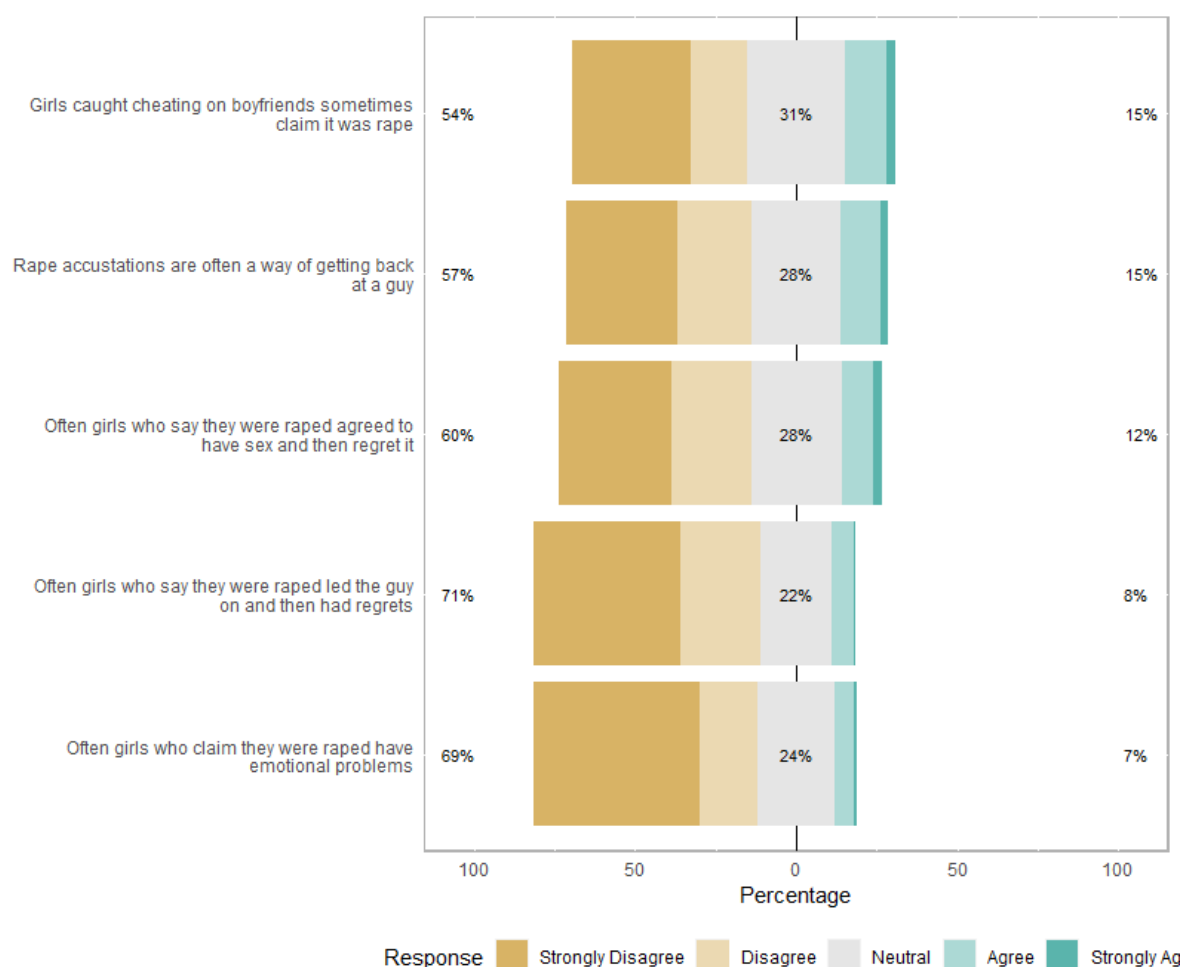

Figure 15. Percentages for each item on the subscale "They lied".

Who is more likely to hold these beliefs?

Across all four scales there is a clear pattern that male students were more likely to hold these beliefs than women[41].

In some cases particularly for the last scale, "they lied", students further on in their studies, i.e. third year students, were more likely to have lower scores, meaning they were less likely to agree with these statements. In addition, international students were more likely than home students to provide higher scores.

Why do these attitudes matter?

These attitudes matter because they shape the culture at the University and can help create a climate excuses are made for men who perpetrate sexual violence, while women may not be believed if they speak up about their experiences. These findings are all the more stark when looked at in the context of the findings on sexual violence victimisation, which shows that women and non-binary people are three times more likely to be subjected to sexual violence than men.

These attitudes also make it extremely difficult for *men* to speak up when they are victimised. The beliefs about men's attitudes towards sex that emerge from the findings above - that men's desire for sex is overwhelming or out of control - then how is it possible for men to speak out about being raped?

Overall, these findings show that while the majority of respondents do not believe these stigmatising and damaging beliefs about gender, there were many who were unsure and would perhaps welcome an opportunity to discuss these issues in a non-judgmental space.

There was also a minority of respondents who believe rape myths. These students need others around them - friends, family, teachers, peers - to challenge these beliefs when they voice them, so that they understand that these are unacceptable. They also need education and awareness-raising so that they are aware of the law on consent, as if they acted on some of these beliefs they would be breaking the law. Most of all, students need to understand how sexual violence impacts those who experience it and develop empathy for victim-survivors, not just for perpetrators.

These points are taken up in the recommendations at the end of this report.

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[41] A negative binomial regression was used to reach these findings.

Student attitudes towards professional boundaries with staff

The final area this survey explored was students' attitudes towards professional boundaries with staff. This is another aspect of exploring how safe students feel on campus. In light of recent media coverage of staff-student relationships, we wanted to understand what types of relationships with staff would make students feel comfortable.

The questions asked in this survey were first used in the National Union of Students' survey with The 1752 Group in 2018[42]. This study found that nearly 80% of students were uncomfortable with staff having sexual or romantic relationships with students. Despite this, however, most universities in the UK have policies that allow sexual and romantic relationships between staff and students, although often it is required that staff to declare such relationships to a manager.

Figure 16 shows quite clearly that the majority of students feel more uncomfortable or neutral with members of academic staff engaging with them on a social or more personal level across a whole variety of behaviours. A member of staff adding a student on social media was the most acceptable with 34% feeling comfortable with this and 39% feeling either somewhat uncomfortable or very uncomfortable. The next three social behaviours between students and staff were arranging meetings outside of the academic timetable,, sending private messages via social media to a student, and getting drunk with students. In all three cases students are generally either neutral, somewhat uncomfortable, or very uncomfortable with these behaviours. The majority of responses to items on romantic relationships - telling you they are attracted to you, asking you on a date, having sexual relations or commenting on your body - were to feel very uncomfortable.
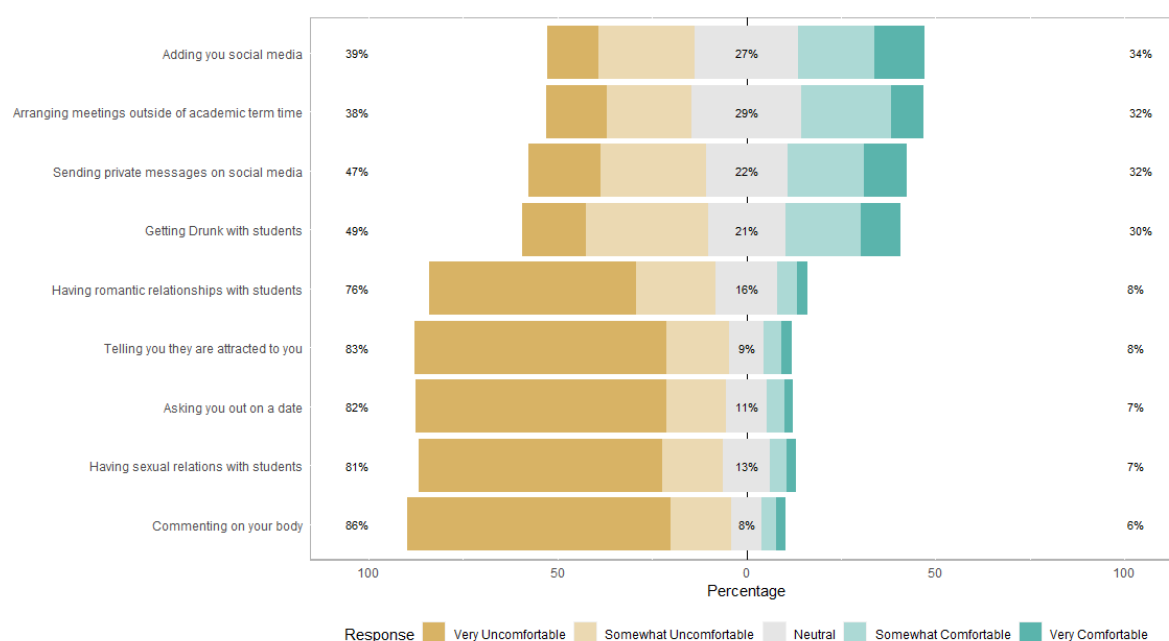

Figure 16. Illustration of how comfortable students are with academic staff across a variety of different behaviours.

[42] National Union of Students. (2018, April 4). *Power in the academy: Staff sexual misconduct in UK higher education*. https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/nus-staff-student-sexual-misconduct-report

Previous research with this questionnaire suggests these questions capture two underlying constructs capturing 'comfort with sexualised interactions' and 'comfort with personalised interactions'[43]. Gender was a significant predictor of comfort with 'sexualised interactions' (the last five questions) with women students being substantially less likely than males to feel comfortable with sexualised interactions[44]. Similarly, for 'personal interactions' - which includes interactions online - women students, and those who preferred not to disclose their gender were much less comfortable than male students[45].

We don't know the reasons why women students are less comfortable with these interactions but it seems likely that this reflects the higher rate of gender-based violence that women face more generally, and shows how women students feel the need to be more vigilant in their interactions with others, including staff. These gendered patterns suggest that for *all* students to feel safe and comfortable in their teaching and learning environment, clear professional boundaries need to be in place.

Some universities in the UK have recently introduced policies on intimate personal relationships between staff and students, for example UCL's Personal Relationships Policy, introduced in 2020, prohibits intimate relationships between staff and students where there exists a teaching and learning relationship[46]. The findings from this study suggest that women students could feel more comfortable if such a policy were in place at all universities.

Conclusion

This report has demonstrated what we think **all** universities in the UK should be doing to gather and report data on gender-based violence.

We need to acknowledge the shortcomings of this study in relation to intersectionality. There are significant gaps in the findings above, in particular, we did not ask about respondents' race, sexuality, or disability, and the questions on gender identity did not allow for the identification of trans students' experiences. This is important because we know that different social groups are subjected to gender-based violence in different ways. For example, LGBTQ+ people are more likely than cis straight people to be targeted for sexual harassment, and people of colour may experience sexualised racism or may experience more barriers trying to report their experiences than white people.

The report shows, first and foremost, that it is predominantly women and non-binary students who are being targeted for a range of harassing and violent behaviours, both on and off campus. This point bears repeating: the vast majority of students who experience gender-based violence and harassment are women and non-binary students. And the vast majority of students perpetrating these behaviours are men students. This is not to say that men aren't also targeted for abuse and harassment - they are. But the figures are overwhelmingly skewed. For example, women and non-binary students were around three times as likely to be subjected to sexual violence as men. This shows that gender needs to

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[43] Bull, A., Page, T., Bradley, A., Shi, C., Kanyeredzi, A., & Wilson, J. (Under review). *Professional boundaries between faculty/staff and students in UK higher education: Students' levels of comfort with personal and sexualised interactions*.

[44] A negative binomial regression model was used to reach this finding

[45] This findings was reached using a multiple regression analysis

[46] https://www.ucl.ac.uk/human-resources/personal-relationships-policy [accessed 29 June 2021]

be the focus of prevention programmes, and such programmes and campaigns must foreground male students.

The findings also show that for most of those who were subjected to gender-based violence and harassment, this was carried out by other students at the University. 83% of sexual harassment was perpetrated by a student studying at the University. Over 80% of the sexual violence and sexual harassment experienced by respondents to this survey was carried out by another student studying at the University. Over two-thirds of the stalking and dating violence that respondents experienced was also carried out by other students. While these are sobering findings, they show that first and foremost we need to get our own house in order. This is an important opportunity for the university and the students' union to intervene in addressing this issue - it is predominantly students who are both perpetrators and victims. While many students reading this might feel that sexual harassment - for example on nights out - is inevitable and is something they just have to put up with, we think that it can and must be changed. If students are targeting other students, then it's possible for activists, bystanders, other students, and for the university itself to intervene and change attitudes in order to change behaviours.

In addition, more research is needed to understand where the harassment is most likely to occur. It is clear that nightlife is one area where harassment is rife. The free text responses were revealing in this regard with a number of people talking about the normality of sexual harassment in local clubs, even singling out specific clubs.

Our report shows that a minority of students do hold very problematic attitudes about sexual violence, believing that women are likely to lie about sexual violence, or that it is a woman's responsibility to 'say no' to sex rather than their partner's responsibility to make sure they have consent. A first step for the students' union and the university in acting on this report, is therefore to make space for students to explore these attitudes and understand the link between such attitudes and accepting and enabling gender-based violence.

Finally, the findings show that three-quarters of students surveyed are uncomfortable with staff having sexual or romantic relationships with students. This confirms what some universities in the UK have already acknowledged - that clear professional boundaries between staff and students are needed in order to make sure that teaching and learning relationships are prioritised. While some staff may prefer to leave this as a grey area, these findings give a clear indication of what students want and need to have a safe learning environment and therefore the university should introduce a clear policy on staff-student relationships.

Recommendations for next steps

What can individual students do?

- Talk to your friends about this report!
- If you feel comfortable to, challenge your friends if you think they are behaving in ways that are not ok
- Get involved with campaigns and programmes within the Students' Union and the university
- Learn about how gender-based violence affects different groups of people differently, eg people of colour or LGBTQ+ people may have different experiences to white, straight, cis people
- Read the Student Charter and help to cultivate a culture that upholds the University's values of showing dignity and respect.

- Set up your own campaigns or student societies within your School or among your friends to discuss and raise awareness of the issues raised in this report
- Hold the university to account; demand that they regularly, and publicly, report on the actions they are taking in this area. For instance, write to university leaders to ask how they are implementing the recommendations below.

What can staff members do?

- Attend the university's training on how to respond to disclosures of gender-based violence
- Learn about how gender-based violence affects different groups of people differently
- Make sure your teaching materials include trigger warnings if you are discussing sexual or gender-based violence
- Hold the university to account; make sure they regularly, and publicly, report on what actions they are taking in this area.
- Support students in any activism and awareness-raising they want to carry out

What can Schools and Faculties do:

➢ Work with specialist partners to develop and embed a tutorial session within core teaching for first year students to raise awareness of gender-based violence within the university
➢ Ensure staff are fully aware of the University's reporting procedures and feel empowered to support students who want to report through the appropriate processes.
  ○ For students who do report, Schools need to support the student to continue engaging with their studies while managing the emotional toll of their experiences. This may include moving the student or the perpetrator to another class to minimise contact.
➢ Ensure staff themselves are supported with the emotional labour of handling sexual misconduct disclosures. Many staff are survivors themselves and so may need extra support.
➢ Encourage students to help cultivate a culture that upholds the University's values of showing dignity and respect.
➢ Invite external guest speakers from charities, organisations, or elsewhere who can share their knowledge on sexual misconduct to educate students on consent and how to be active bystanders. This may be particularly beneficial to enhance the learning of humanities, law and media students.
➢ Embed respect and bystander training for students in core first year teaching. Students may also find it beneficial if this training be recognised to include in their CV and future job applications.

What should Students' Unions do:

➢ Ensure there is student representation in meetings discussing policy and processes that influence the reporting process for serious misconduct. This can include representation from an Elected/Sabbatical Officer.
➢ Have a clear and robust approach to sexual violence on and off campus, particularly for student societies, and ensure staff are fully trained and empowered to support the student with taking action when they have made a disclosure. This means that The Union should investigate any kind of disclosures or complaints relating to sexual misconduct.

- Engage students in this topic via regular surveys and focus groups to help inform decision making of policies and processes at University level.
- Run campaigns in collaboration with the University for students throughout the year that raise awareness of sexual misconduct in addition to signposting students to internal or external support, including their Advice Service / Student Support Service that is independent from the University.
- Create and develop a robust, mandatory consent training programme for student societies led by Union staff, who are also fully trained to support students if they make a disclosure.
- Work in collaboration with the night time economy to ensure there are safe zones and spaces in nightclubs and bars in the instance a student experiences sexual assault or violence in one of their venues.

What should the University do?

- Publish publicly and regularly review a strategy plan for tackling gender-based violence and harassment across the university.
  - This should include implementing findings from the Domestic Abuse policy guidance for universities[47]
  - This should also include publishing of the number of formal reports relating to gender-based violence/harassment, and the outcomes of these reports, drawing on examples from UCL, Cambridge, Goldsmiths and Durham[48].
- Continue the Freshers' week programme that trains students to support others arriving at university, and which includes materials on sexual harassment and violence
- Embed the committee that addresses gender-based harassment and violence within the formal organisational structure of the university
- Appoint a member of the senior management team and a member of the Board of Governors as institutional leads on this work
- Publicise Report and Support even more widely so that students use it more
- Include gender-based violence, including a definition of sexual consent, explicitly in the Code of Conduct for students
- Continue with ongoing improvements to complaints handling for gender-based harassment/violence reports
- Make sure all personal tutors are trained to deal with disclosures of sexual violence and all student services, HR, and other staff handling student complaints receive specialist gender-based violence training
- Appoint a specialist sexual violence support officer for the university, to support students through the reporting process and to support prevention programmes and run training
- Invest in prevention programmes including bystander programmes and awareness-raising programmes
- Carry out regular surveys (for example, every two years) similarly to this one, to a) measure whether any of the suggested improvements help reduce levels of harm and b) to see if initiatives work and c) to capture intersectionality more robustly (i.e. on sexuality, 'race', and further questions on gender identity)

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[47] Domestic Abuse Policy Guidance for UK Universities

[48] See for example https://report-support.ucl.ac.uk/support/annual-reports-on-bullying-harassment-and-sexual-misconduct

- Future surveys could also ask about faculty of respondents in case people on certain courses (i.e. more male-dominated courses) are more likely to experience harms
- Work with accommodation providers to ensure Residential Assistants and wider student halls team are fully trained to handle disclosures of serious incidents. This includes regular / monthly check-ins with the student affected. Students in private rented accommodation should also be supported by community liaison worker.
- Allocate funding for local gender-based violence services to run independent survivors' groups within the university

<p style="text-align:center">Appendix</p>

Sample and recruitment

1309 began the online questionnaire and of these, 725 consented for their data to be used for publication purposes. Of the 725 62% of the sample were female, 33% were male, 3% non-binary and 2% prefer not to disclose (see Table 1). The majority of respondents were between 18-24 (83%) years old, were home students (84%) and studying at an undergraduate level (85%). All participants were sent an email from the Students' Union Welfare Officer, asking if they would like to take part with a link to the survey. After reading an information sheet and confirming they were over 18, participants provided consent before being allowed to complete the survey. On average participants spent 22.12 minutes on the survey. All participants who completed the survey were offered the opportunity of entering into a raffle to win a £50 Amazon voucher (all respondents were informed that there were three vouchers available).

The project gained a favourable ethical opinion from the University's Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities research council before the survey was distributed. There were various measures involved in the survey to make sure any distress that respondents might experience was minimised. Respondents were signposted to support services both inside and outside the university at the start and the end of the survey, and we liaised with the university's Wellbeing Service in order to make sure that they were on hand to offer support while the survey was being rolled out. In addition, respondents were informed that all questions were voluntary to respond to, in case they wanted to skip any.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the sample

Demographics of Sample	n	% of sample
Gender		
Female	446	62
Male	238	33
Non-Binary	20	3
Prefer not to say	14	2
Other	5	0
Age		

18-24	601	83
25-29	58	8
30-39	41	6
40-49	15	2
50-59	5	1
60-65	1	0
Over	2	0
Home or International Students		
Home	602	84
International	117	16
Level of Study		
First Years	300	42
Second Year	159	22
Third Year	121	17
Fourth Year	23	3
Placement Student	7	1
Masters Year	84	12
PhD	10	1

Other	17	2

Design

A cross sectional online survey via Qualtrics was used to collect the data. In order to assess the level of gender-based violence and harassment students experienced we used percentages of individual items, means and medians from the sum score of four questionnaires designed to capture: sexual harassment, stalking, dating violence and sexual violence. We then used sum scores of these four questionnaires along with demographic factors like gender, level of study and home vs international students to explore students who were most likely to experience these harms. The same four questionnaires were also used to identify perpetrators with four key predictors of: gender of perpetrator, whether the perpetrator was a student at this university, where the harms were experienced and the relationship of the perpetrator to the victim. Percentages, means and medians were used to explore how comfortable students were with professional boundaries and the extent to which they agreed/disagreed with rape myths. Sum scores of both these scales along with demographic variables like gender, home or international students and level of study were also used to explore how students' views on these areas varied.

Materials

The online survey contained three questionnaires along with items to capture demographic information. Three separate survey instruments were drawn on in designing this survey:

1. Questions on sexual harassment, sexual violence, dating violence and stalking are all taken from the Administrator Researcher Campus Climate Collaborative (ARC3) survey tool. This survey was developed by a group of academic researchers and higher education administrators in the US, and has been used extensively in research in this area in the US. The sexual harassment measure consisted of 12 items on a 5 point scale from never (0) to many times (4) where high scores represent more experiences of sexual harassment (α = .94). Stalking victimization was captured with 10 items on a 5 point scale from none (0) to more than 8 (4) (α = .83). Dating violence scale contained 6 items measured on a 5 point scale from never (0) to many times (4)(α = .74). Sexual violence victimisation was measured by four items on a 4 point scale from 0 times (0) to 3+ times (4) (α = .73). Further details can be found at https://campusclimate.gsu.edu/arc3-campus-climate-survey/ . Each measure was followed by four items designed to capture perpetrator characteristics. The four items were: the gender of the perpetrator, whether the perpetrator was a student, the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim and whether the incident/s took place on campus. Very small adaptations were made (such as removing the word 'horseplay' and substituting 'joking around') to make it suitable for the UK context.
2. The Rape Myth Acceptance questions are taken directly from the short form updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance questionnaire[49]. All the items on the questionnaire had a five point scale from strongly disagree (0) to strongly agree (4) .The Rape Myth Acceptance scale is further subdivided in four subscales which were: she asked for it containing five items (α = .83), he didn't mean to with six items (α = .82), it wasn't

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[49] McMahon, S., and G. L. Farmer. 2011. 'An Updated Measure for Assessing Subtle Rape Myths'. *Social Work Research* 35 (2): 71–81. https://doi.org/10.1093/swr/35.2.71.

really rape with 5 items (α = .81) and they lied which consisted of five items (α = .93). A sum score was generated for each of the four subscales.

3. Questions on professional boundaries are from the National Union of Students'/The 1752 Group report Power in the Academy (2018) and are adapted from Auweele et al.'s questions on coach-athlete boundaries[50]. The questionnaire contained twelve items on a five point scale from very uncomfortable (0) to very comfortable (5)(α = .92).

Demographic information consisted of: gender (male, female, non-binary, prefer not to say, other) , age group (18-24, 25-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-65, Over 65), home/international student, and level of study (undergraduate year 1, year 2, year 3, year 4, placement year, masters, PhD and other).

Part of the purpose of using the ARC3 survey tool was to test its use in the UK context, and the authors will publish advice and reflections on the use of this survey tool in the near future. Should other researchers wish to use the same survey tool please email anna.bull@1752group.com for a copy of the full survey, and/or see https://campusclimate.gsu.edu/ for modules on sexual harassment, sexual violence, dating violence and stalking victimisation and perpetration.

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[50] Auweele, Yves Vanden, Joke Opdenacker, Tine Vertommen, Filip Boen, Leon Van Niekerk, Kristine De Martelaer, and Bert De Cuyper. 2008. 'Unwanted Sexual Experiences in Sport: Perceptions and Reported Prevalence among Flemish Female Student-athletes'. *International Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* 6 (4): 354–65. https://doi.org/10.1080/1612197X.2008.9671879.