

Almost two thirds (62%) of students and graduates have experienced sexual violence at UK universities, finds [new report](#).

- Only **1 in 10** reported their experiences to the university or police; only **6%** of respondents reported their experience of sexual violence to the university.
- Only **2%** of those experiencing sexual violence felt both able to report it to their university and were satisfied with the reporting process
- **A third** of students (**31%**) felt pressured into doing something sexual.

With no recent data to reflect their testimonials and demonstrate the scale of the problem, [Revolt Sexual Assault](#), in partnership with [The Student Room](#), launched the first national consultation for students and graduates on this issue in a decade.

Of the **4,500 students from 153 different institutions** who took part in this survey, **62%** have experienced sexual violence at UK universities. This figure rises to **70%** of female respondents, **48%** of which have experienced sexual assault, and **73%** of respondents with a disability, where **54%** have experienced sexual assault.

‘Every one of my female friends has stories about sexual assault and/or harassment at university. I have given only the most harrowing example but could elaborate with over a dozen incidents for me alone. I have been unwilling to report the sheer volume of incidents I have endured I fear would make me look like a fantasist.’
– survey respondent.

26% of male respondents had experienced sexual violence at university.

Revolt Sexual Assault is a national campaign fighting to hand back the power and give a voice to student survivors of sexual violence. Founded by recent graduates, the campaign first used Snapchat videos to give students a platform to tell their story, with any degree of anonymity they choose through the app’s facial and voice obscuration software, and share their experiences of sexual assault and harassment.

Hannah Price, Founder of Revolt Sexual Assault, said:

‘While at university I experienced everything from harassment and ‘casual’ groping to rape, none of which I reported – and I am not alone. I set up Revolt Sexual Assault to bridge the gap between institutions and student survivors, so that the scale of this epidemic is acknowledged and addressed. This consultation demonstrates that the experiences shared through the videos of our campaign participants are far from tragic exceptions; this is everyday reality for the majority of students.’

Students' experience of sexual violence:

Revolt Sexual Assault found that the most commonly experienced form of sexual assault was groping and unnecessary touching in a sexual manner. The most common locations on campus where students experience sexual violence are halls of residence (**28%**), social events (**24%**) and university social spaces like bars, refectories and shops (**23%**).

[[Snapchat video testimony](#); can be embedded. Transcript available [here](#)]

The [Office for National Statistics](#) estimates 4% of females have experienced rape – the estimation from this consultation doubles, where **8%** of female respondents report having been raped at university. Notwithstanding differences in methodology, this a strong indication that the incidence of rape is far more likely amongst the student population than the general population in England and Wales.

A third of respondents (**31%**) felt pressurised to do something sexual while at university.

In the majority of cases (**57%**) the perpetrator was known to the student. And amongst those who knew the perpetrator it was most frequently another student from their university (**75%**).

As a result of experiencing sexual violence within that university bubble, students reported significant impacts on their self-confidence, mental health, studies, access to the local area and social life. Respondents considered or engaged in academic consequences that included; **25%** skipping lectures, tutorials, changing or dropping certain modules to avoid the perpetrators, and **16%** suspending their studies or dropping out of their degree.

'I know far too many female students whose education has been negatively affected by unwanted sexual advances, in particular from course peers. Is anyone in power actually listening?'

– survey respondent.

Reporting of sexual violence:

Students spoke of a 'normalised' culture of sexual violence within the university environment, only **16%** believed incidences of sexual violence are regularly discussed, and **6%** of those who had experienced sexual assault or harassment reported their experience of sexual violence to the university.

Only **10%** of respondents reported their experiences of sexual violence to either the university or the police. When asked why, **56%** of students were convinced it 'wasn't serious enough'. **35%** felt too ashamed. **29%** did not even know how to make a report to the university.

Only **2%** of those experiencing sexual violence felt both able to report it to their university and were then satisfied with the process.

[[Snapchat video testimony](#); can be embedded. Transcript available [here](#)]

'My university failed me entirely when I reported my sexual assault, and it was brushed under the carpet. I didn't bother reporting the second incident. I figured out that I had the emotional strength to do one of two things: I could pursue a complaint against my rapist, or I could finish my degree. I chose the latter and went for counselling after graduating, but I still have not recovered and I think about it literally every day. I am still so angry.'

– survey respondent.

Support available at universities:

Bryony Chellew, a second-year student at the University of Bristol, spoke to us about her experience of informing the university about being sexually assaulted:

'The entire pastoral system is failing its student body. I had to go through months of meetings and emails, while trying to balance my studies with my deteriorating mental state, something which significantly impacted my grades.'

'Even after eight months, I had to revisit the assaults by having to relay them again, and still I was yet to receive the support that I needed.'

Compounded by the reported lack of support available at universities, students also reported worrying attitudes towards sexual violence on campus. Just **51%** of respondents believed there was an understanding of what constitutes consent at their university.

Only **47%** could report that at their university there is a belief that groping constitutes sexual assault and **78%** agreed that certain people blame the victim for the sexual violence they experienced.

When asked what their university does well in efforts to combat sexual violence on campus, respondents praised their university for reaching out to students very early on in the academic year, and telling them about support services they provide during fresher's week. They spoke highly of posters and flyers awareness campaigns, and education classes for all genders on consent and bystander activism.

Hannah Price concluded:

'During the campaign so far, I've heard countless stories of sexual violence from brave, incredible students – each of which has been too powerful to forget. Beneath the filters, the life-long effects of these assaults are shockingly apparent.'

'The sad reality is the same themes emerge; students are suffering in silence and blaming themselves. They are having an extremely poor student experience and in too many cases being deprived of their education because of sexual violence and the lack of support available to them.'

'We want to see a uniform national response to what now must be recognised as a nation-wide issue – an enforced and consistent standard of care implemented across the higher education sector, with student survivors at its heart.'

'For instance, universities need accessible reporting systems, that minimise the distress caused to students, carried out by specially trained and independent staff.'

'Universities are currently relying on statements of a 'zero tolerance approach' but have none of the appropriate frameworks in place to substantiate or enforce this; shockingly, in some cases the same procedures used for plagiarism are being applied to students reporting rape. It is not good enough to shoehorn response to sexual violence into pre-existing policy framework like this; it is why it is so important for specific policies for sexual violence on campus to be developed, and applied in a consistent nation-wide approach.'

'Additionally, the introduction of extensive education from a young age on what consent, sexual harassment and sexual assault really mean, is essential.'

'Most of all, we want a society where Snapchat filters and digital disguises are not necessary. Where sexual violence at university is no longer normalised and survivors feel secure and supported enough to come forward, safe in the knowledge that they will be supported and they will be heard.'

Mhairi Underwood, Head of Community at The Student Room, stated:

'This consultation has shown there's a lack of confidence about what consent means, and on The Student Room, we see young people asking 'was this rape?' almost everyday.'

'There is a great deal of work to be done around ensuring young people are knowledgeable about what sexual harassment and assault actually are.'

'It's worrying to think there is still not a widely-acknowledged truth about what is and isn't okay.'

Georgina Calvert-Lee, Senior Counsel at McAllister Olivarius, a leading international law firm that specialises in discrimination and unfair treatment at colleges and universities commented:

'This comprehensive survey should be a wake-up call to universities that they're not providing the safe and non-discriminatory environment the law requires.'

'That less than 2% of those experiencing sexual violence felt both able to report it to their university and then satisfied with the reporting process means that almost all student sexual assault victims are being left to fend for themselves.'

'This is bad for students, bad for education, and bad for universities, which may also find themselves taken to court for breaching the Equality Act. '

Those affected by rape or sexual violence can contact [Rape Crisis](#) on 0808 802 9999 (England and Wales) or on 08088 01 03 02 (Scotland).

A note to editors: the statistics contained in this report, and the way in which they are framed, are accurate and validated to professional market research and statistical standards. Please seek prior approval from Revolt Sexual Assault if you wish to change the wording of a statistic or the sentence in which it is contained, as so doing could affect the statistical integrity of the data.

For more information and interviews, please contact:

Hannah Price, Revolt Sexual Assault founder

T: 07920161465 (alt 07584 258423)

E: contact@revoltsexualassault.com

[@hanhanprice](#)

www.revoltsexualassault.com

Revolt's media pack: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=19KEQN7aJWqbnd5soQQIRKMW4SFUMTrUm>

Transcripts from Snapchat videos:

Transcript 1

In my first term of freshers I walked a drunken friend home after a night out. One thing led to another. I was never intending for anything to happen but he was pushing for a bit more. I refused to let anything happen but he said, 'it's not rape, you want this'.

Transcript 2

So, I was out with my friends in first year and the next morning I woke up in bed naked with a stranger and I had a black eye, bruises all over my body.

My drink had been spiked and I had been raped vaginally, orally and forcefully.

The stranger turned out to be another student at the university, in my year, in my faculty.

I reported it to the police and the university.

He couldn't explain the bruises and the black eye, but there wasn't enough evidence to continue so they dropped the case.

The university sent me a letter regarding the 'serious allegations' I'd made against another student. It made me feel like I was the criminal.

For example, it's me who has to check whether I share an exam hall with him and if I do I have to explain, normally to a new member of staff, what happened so that they change the room for me.

I had to change gyms, I've never been on the university ski trip.

Rape is revolting and so was the way I was treated after. Something really needs to change.