

ALMOST TWO THIRDS OF STUDENTS HAVE EXPERIENCED SEXUAL VIOLENCE AT UK UNIVERSITIES, FINDS NEW REPORT

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- **Almost two thirds (62%) of students have experienced sexual violence**
- **Only one in 10 reported their experiences to the university or police**
- **Just 2% of those experiencing sexual violence felt both able to report it to their university and were then satisfied with the process**

A new report, which has been released today by sexual violence campaign [Revolt Sexual Assault](#) and the world's largest online student community [The Student Room](#), has revealed the scale of sexual assault and harassment amongst students in the UK.

The survey of 4,500 students from 153 institutions found that almost two thirds (62%) of respondents have experienced sexual violence at UK universities. This figure increased to 70% amongst female students, and almost three quarters (73%) for students with a disability.

The most common form of sexual assault was groping and unnecessary touching in a sexual manner. The report also revealed that the most common locations on campus where students experience sexual assault, with halls of residence (28%), social events (24%) and university social spaces like bars, refectories and shops (23%) topping the list.

As a result of experiencing sexual violence within the university microcosm, students reported significant impacts on their self-confidence, mental health, studies and social life. A quarter of students considered or engaged in skipping lectures, tutorials, changing or dropping certain modules to avoid the perpetrators, with 16% even considering or engaging in suspending their studies or dropping out of their degree.

The research also shed light on the 'normalised' culture of sexual violence within the university environment, with only one in ten reporting 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’, whilst over a third (35%) felt too ashamed.

A lack of knowledge of university reporting systems was also evident, with 29% of students admitting to not knowing how to make a report of sexual violence at their university.

Most concerningly, just 2% of those experiencing sexual violence felt both able to report it to their university and were then satisfied with the process.

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 report demonstrates that this is everyday reality for the majority of students.

“During the campaign so far, I’ve heard countless stories of sexual violence from brave, incredible students. 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 approach to what now must be recognised as a nationwide issue – an enforced and consistent standard of care implemented across the higher education sector, with student survivors at its heart. In addition, the introduction of extensive education from a young age on what consent, sexual harassment and sexual assault really mean, is essential.”

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 in educating young people 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.

For many young people, it’s not clear where they can turn if they experience sexual assault or harassment. There is a fear that what they’ve been through isn’t serious enough, or that they won’t be believed. This is a narrative we need to change, and young people’s voices need to be part of forming the solution.”

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

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Notes 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.

About Revolt Sexual Assault

<https://revoltsexualassault.com/>

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.

About The Student Room

thestudentroom.co.uk

Founded in 2001, The Student Room is the world's largest online student community and the UK's no.1 education website according to ComScore data. The Student Room has over 3 million registered members, primarily aged between 14-24 and attracts over 8 million visitors a month. It provides student-to-student advice on studying, educational career choice and lifestyle issues. The Student Room works directly with most UK universities as well as a wide range of leading brands and companies. 24/7 honest, realistic advice and support.

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Revolt's media pack: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=19KEQN7aJWqbnD5soQQIRKMW4SFUMTrUm>

Additional comment from Hannah Price:

“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 few 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.”

Transcripts from Snapchat video

Transcript 1 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4m3EqZP765c>

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 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASP3qF38oi0>

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.

Quotes from Survey respondents:

'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.

'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.

'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.

Bryony Chellow, 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.'