



Deposited via The University of York.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:

<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/id/eprint/235378/>

Version: Published Version

---

**Article:**

BULL, ANNA LOUISE and Bradley, Alexander (2026) Who is experiencing faculty/staff-student sexual misconduct in UK higher education? *Journal of Gender Based Violence*. ISSN: 2398-6808

<https://doi.org/10.1332/23986808Y2025D000000120>

---

**Reuse**

This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) licence. This licence allows you to distribute, remix, tweak, and build upon the work, even commercially, as long as you credit the authors for the original work. More information and the full terms of the licence here:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>

**Takedown**

If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing [eprints@whiterose.ac.uk](mailto:eprints@whiterose.ac.uk) including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.



## research article

# Who is experiencing faculty/staff–student sexual misconduct in UK higher education?

Anna Bull , [anna.bull@york.ac.uk](mailto:anna.bull@york.ac.uk)  
University of York, UK

Alexander Bradley , [Alexander.bradley@port.ac.uk](mailto:Alexander.bradley@port.ac.uk)  
University of Portsmouth, UK

Sexual misconduct perpetrated by staff/faculty in higher education towards students remains underexplored compared to perpetration by peers. The article examines the types of sexual misconduct students in UK higher education experience from staff and differences in experience across groups, drawing on findings from a non-representative survey of students in UK higher education (n=1,768). It opens up a methodological discussion around measuring power-based sexual misconduct, introducing an adapted version of the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire that removes references to whether students said no to sexual advances; accounts for how power imbalances affected ability to consent; and incorporates intersectionality. These adaptations aimed to capture the extent to which students experience a sexualised environment – which we label as sexual misconduct – rather than asking whether sexualised behaviours are unwanted.

Data is analysed using a hurdle model, analysing factors that increase likelihood of experiencing sexual misconduct as well as factors that increase the *amount* of sexual harassment experienced. Findings show that while women were the only group more likely to have experienced sexual misconduct in general, when examining amount of misconduct experienced, women, non-binary students, Asian students, gay/lesbian and bisexual students, first-in-family, and disabled students were all more likely to experience more incidents.

**Keywords** sexual harassment • higher education • faculty/staff • students • sexual misconduct

### Key messages

- This study uses hurdle models to reveal not only who experiences faculty/staff sexual misconduct, but also which groups experience more incidents.
- Survey measures to study power-based sexual misconduct should capture the extent to which people experience a sexualised environment rather than whether behaviours are unwanted.

To cite this article: Bull, A. and Bradley, A. (2026) Who is experiencing faculty/staff–student sexual misconduct in UK higher education? *Journal of Gender-Based Violence*, Early View, DOI: 10.1332/23986808Y2025D000000120

## Introduction

There is evidence that power-based sexual harassment – where harassment occurs across ‘gendered relations of power’ within a gendered institution (Connell, 2006) – is prevalent in academia. Sexual harassment perpetrated by staff/faculty towards students has been documented for decades across international higher education (HE) contexts (Dziech and Weiner, 1990; Zindi, 1994; Carter and Jeffs, 1995). It has academic and non-academic impacts that can be lasting and deleterious (Rosenthal et al, 2016; Bull and Rye, 2018; McClain et al, 2021; Bull, 2022; Cipriano et al, 2022; Pilinkaitė Sotirovič and Blažytė, 2023; Humbert and Strid, 2024; Bull and Bradley, 2025).

While there is a body of work on this issue from recent decades, it requires more attention in the context of continuing high-profile scandals across the globe (Anitha et al, 2020; Bikales, 2020; Jack, 2023). It also remains underexplored compared to sexual harassment in HE perpetrated by peers, and there is a dearth of peer-reviewed research on this issue in the UK and Ireland (Reynolds et al, 2023).<sup>1</sup> Where data on staff/faculty–student sexual harassment is included in victimisation studies, the full picture of students’ experiences is not captured or reported, for example, surveys only ask about the perpetrator of most impactful incident of sexual harassment (Heywood et al, 2022; MacNeela et al, 2022), which may obscure staff/faculty harassment, or focus on a particular subset of students such as graduate or medical students (Rosenthal et al, 2016; Lorenz et al, 2019; McClain et al, 2021). Where such studies do exist they draw on data from the United States (for example, Swartout’s analysis within National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, 2018), but the US legal, social, and institutional HE context – not least its distinct dynamics of racialised inequalities – is not necessarily generalisable. A recent pan-European study of gender-based violence in HE has not yet reported quantitative findings on perpetrator characteristics (Humbert et al, 2022). Furthermore, despite the global nature of HE there is evidence that experiences of staff/faculty–student sexual harassment vary across contexts (Morley, 2011; Dey, 2020).

As we have outlined elsewhere, rather than the term ‘sexual harassment’, this study discusses ‘sexual misconduct’, defined as any conduct of a sexual nature ‘that adversely affects students [or staff’s] ability to participate in learning, teaching, or professional environments’ (The 1752 Group and McAllister Olivarius, 2020: 28). This includes consensual relationships and/or sexual conduct that are not ‘unwanted’, but that nevertheless negatively impacts students’ access to education (Page et al, 2019) in line with Amia Srinivasan’s argument that any sexualised conduct within the teaching and learning relationship constitutes pedagogical failure (Srinivasan, 2020).

There are also methodological reasons for this reconceptualisation. Faculty/staff–student sexual harassment has generally been studied using tools designed to capture workplace sexual harassment or to assess sexual harassment in general, whether between peers or across a power differential. A commonly used instrument for surveying sexual harassment is the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ), which is also widely used within HE (Cantor et al, 2019; McClain et al, 2021). In this article we open up a methodological discussion on using specific measures for power-based sexual misconduct that take into account the ways in which power affects the possibility for expressing – or experiencing – sexualised behaviour as unwanted. In HE, this methodological discussion also needs to take into account

the introduction of institutional policies prohibiting staff–student relationships as well as emerging discussions on ‘professional boundaries’ between faculty/students (Schwartz, 2012; Bull et al, 2023).

This article aims to document the types of sexual misconduct that students are experiencing from staff/faculty, as well as which students are being targeted. The article first briefly reviews existing literature in this area, before outlining a rationale for the methodological amendments made to the SEQ. It then presents the methods and findings from the study.

### *Existing studies of faculty/staff–student sexual harassment*

Studies in Australia, the United States and Ireland have found prevalence rates of sexual harassment from staff/faculty towards students from 0.5 per cent to 20 per cent (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, 2018; Cantor et al, 2019; McClain et al, 2021; Wood et al, 2021; MacNeela et al, 2022). In one of the largest studies in this area, of 28,270 students enrolled at the University of Texas, 3,831 students (20 per cent) reported experiencing sexual harassment perpetrated by a faculty or staff member (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, 2018: 277).

Studies from the United States have documented the types of sexual harassment most likely to be experienced, with gender harassment/sexist hostility being the most common, followed by ‘crude behaviour’ or sexual hostility, then unwanted sexual attention, and finally the least common being sexual bribery, coercion or assault (Fitzgerald et al, 1988a: 162–3; Rosenthal et al, 2016: 371; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, 2018: 277; McClain et al, 2021: 261). Qualitative studies have revealed that repeated behaviour is common in staff/faculty–student sexual harassment (Cantalupo and Kidder, 2017; Bull and Rye, 2018; Naezer et al, 2019).

Many studies that explore sexual harassment by faculty/staff also gather data on sexual harassment from peers, and may not disaggregate between perpetrators systematically in the findings (Lorenz et al, 2019; Heywood et al, 2022; MacNeela et al, 2022). As such, it is not straightforward to report on which groups are most likely to be subjected to sexual harassment from staff/faculty. However, it is clear that women are subjected to higher rates than men; and trans, genderqueer and non-binary students to higher rates than women (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, 2018: 277; Cantor et al, 2019: 47; McClain et al, 2021; Wood et al, 2021); women also experience a higher *number* of incidents of sexual harassment than men (Rosenthal et al, 2016: 370). ‘Sexual minority students’ (all those who identified as non-heterosexual) have been found significantly more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to report experiencing sexual harassment by faculty/staff in the United States (McClain et al, 2021: 261; Wood et al, 2021: 4529).

In the United States, Europe and Australia postgraduate students have been found to experience substantially higher rates of sexual harassment from staff/faculty than undergraduate students (Cantor et al, 2019: 47; Lorenz et al, 2019; Heywood et al, 2022; MacNeela et al, 2022), although Wood et al found similar rates of victimisation across undergraduate and postgraduate students (2021: 4529). Furthermore, graduate students are more likely to experience sexual harassment from faculty than from peers (Kelley and Parsons, 2000: 555; Cantor et al, 2019: 78; Lorenz et al, 2019: 215).

There is no consensus in existing literature as to how racialisation affects prevalence. In the United States, among women science, technology, engineering and mathematics students, white (non-Hispanic) students have been found to experience significantly higher incidence of sexual harassment by faculty/staff than students of another race or ethnicity (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, 2018: 285; Wood et al, 2021: 4529). This echoes Cortina et al's earlier study (Cortina et al, 1998: 435), which found that Asian Americans reported significantly fewer harassing behaviours than other women. By contrast, McClain et al's study of medical students in the United States found 'no significant differences emerged by race/ethnicity' in relation to sexual harassment by faculty/staff (McClain et al, 2021: 261). However, patterns of racialisation and racialised inequalities vary across national and regional contexts so these findings may be specific to the United States.

Types of harassment may also vary across national/regional contexts. Research from several African countries has documented *quid pro quo* sexual harassment as a common or the most common type of sexual harassment; in Ethiopia, Sidelil et al's qualitative study found evidence of 'bribing or threatening students with grades in order to advance the sexual interests of the perpetrators' (Sidelil et al, 2021: 236). Similar findings have emerged in South Africa (Adams et al, 2013), Zimbabwe (Shumba and Matina, 2002), Nigeria (Ladebo, 2003; Nwadiwe, 2007), and Ghana and Tanzania (Morley, 2011). Morley (2011) found that 'the most common form of sexual harassment cited was the *quid pro quo* or sex-for-grades exchange in which some male lecturers considered that they had a *droit de seigneur*, or patriarchal entitlement to the sexual favours of their female students' (2011: 103) but such 'transactional sex' 'was frequently presented as power-neutral', even agentic (2011: 113).

By contrast, in the UK context, different forms of sexual harassment have been documented. Lee described PhD students' experiences where their supervisor 'hijacks' meetings to talk about his personal problems (Lee, 1998). Bull and Page theorise 'boundary-blurring' behaviours that transgress 'often tacit' professional boundaries in HE, and lead to those targeted feeling complicit in the behaviour (Bull and Page, 2021). Also in the UK, Whitley and Page describe sexual harassment that occurs, unopposed, in public, such as sexualised jokes (Whitley and Page, 2015: 42; see also Nisbet et al, 2022: 12, in Australia). In some disciplinary cultures, crude language and sexual banter is seen as normal, as documented in US medical schools (Wear et al, 2007). Indeed, this culture appears to contribute to a much higher prevalence of staff/faculty-student sexual harassment in medicine than in most other disciplines; engineering and law also have higher prevalence (Rosenthal et al, 2016; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, 2018). Overall, there is evidence that types of harassment experienced by students from faculty/staff vary to some degree across national, cultural and disciplinary contexts. Studies that report on data from outside the United States – where the majority of research in this area has been carried out to date – are needed.

### *Surveying sexual misconduct within a relationship of unequal power*

Most of the studies described thus far draw on versions of the SEQ. It is a widely used instrument in HE, for example in the ARC3 survey (ARC3, nd) as well as national US studies (Cantor et al, 2019). It includes questions such as whether someone has 'made sexual remarks or told sexual jokes or sexual stories that were insulting or offensive to you', 'tried to get you to talk about sexual matters when you didn't want to', or

‘continued to ask you to go out, get dinner, have drinks or have sex even though you said, “No”’ (Cantor et al, 2019: A5–12).<sup>2</sup> However, in studying power-based sexual harassment – which we define, as noted earlier, as ‘sexual misconduct’ – it is inappropriate, and potentially victim-blaming, to ask whether the person harassed said ‘no’. We also contend that in the context of power-based sexual misconduct such as between staff/faculty and students, it is unnecessary to ask whether respondents were insulted or offended or found such behaviour unwanted. In what follows we outline reasons for this argument.

In this article, we understand power-based sexual misconduct following Connell’s theorisation of ‘gender regimes’ within organisations (2006). Connell describes gender relations of power as ‘the way in which control, authority, and force are exercised along gender lines, including organizational hierarchy, legal power, and collective and individual violence’ (2006: 838; see also Bull and Shannon, 2025). While the SEQ does include questions on power-based sexual harassment in the form of ‘quid pro quo’ sexual harassment, qualitative studies demonstrate that this is not the only or the primary way in which it manifests. Bull and Page (2021), in an interview study of students subjected to sexual misconduct from staff/faculty, describe ‘grooming’ and ‘boundary-blurring’ behaviours where consent was a grey area, and where staff/faculty’s sexualised conduct was not always unwelcome but was still of concern to interviewees. In addition, even if students do not find such sexualised approaches problematic at the time they occur, this behaviour – including consensual relationships – can still be deemed inappropriate by them at a later stage, or inappropriate for others even if not for them personally (Glaser and Thorpe, 1986; Bellas and Gossett, 2001).

A further way in which power-based sexual misconduct can manifest is through sexualised behaviours being normalised within department or disciplinary cultures, for example, where faculty use their institutional status to create and perpetuate sexualised environments (Lee, 1998; Vohlídalová, 2015; Whitley and Page, 2015; Bull and Rye, 2018; Ahmed, 2021; Bull and Page, 2021). As these authors argue, it is difficult to understand how a student could freely consent to such sexualised interactions within a relationship of unequal power. These findings need to be contextualised within an emerging body of work on professional boundaries between staff/faculty and students in HE which reveals some groups of students are less comfortable in sexualised environments (Schwartz, 2012; Bloom et al, 2021; Bull et al, 2023).

Faculty/staff–student sexual misconduct can also involve professional boundaries being tested and/or violated through sharing of intimate personal information that makes students feel uncomfortable (Lee, 1998; Whitley and Page, 2015; Bull and Rye, 2018; Bull and Page, 2021; Nisbet et al, 2022). Such behaviour, while not necessarily fitting legal or academic definitions of sexual harassment, affects different groups of students differently (Bull et al, 2023). As a result, it makes sense for surveys to capture *any* sexualised interactions, not just unwanted ones. Indeed, sexualised interactions are increasingly being deemed inappropriate regardless of whether they are ‘wanted’ or not; many higher education institutions (HEIs) now have – or are moving towards having – policies which prohibit sexual interactions between staff and students (Richards and Nystrom, 2022; Horne, 2023).

This approach of capturing all sexualised interactions also builds on critiques of the term ‘unwanted’ in sexual harassment definitions. Page et al argue for ‘a theorization of power-based sexualized behavior that does not have to be recognized by the student at the time as harmful’ (Page et al, 2019: 1312). As Fiona Vera-Gray argues in theorising

‘intrusion’ as a form of street harassment, the terms ‘unwanted’ or ‘unwelcome’ assume that ‘intrusive practices that are not experienced in this way are unproblematic or at least do not “count” and leaves unexamined ‘the possibility of negative impact for the women who may experience such intrusions as wanted or desired’ (Vera-Gray, 2016: 7). However, sexualised environments or ‘grooming’ behaviours that are not clearly ‘unwanted’ are not captured by the SEQ, despite the evidence that they can be harmful. As such, there are arguments for including sexualised environments – regardless of whether they are ‘welcome’ or not – in surveys of power-based sexual harassment, while avoiding the term ‘unwanted’.

These critiques of the term ‘unwanted’ also reveal ethical reasons for amending the SEQ. Asking survey respondents whether someone ‘continued to ask you to go out, get dinner, have drinks or have sex even though you said, “No”’ implies that respondents should have said no. However, some interviewees in Bull and Page (2021) discussed feeling complicit in sexual misconduct because they did not say no or because the behaviour was not entirely unwelcome. The wording of the SEQ, which sets out a stark distinction between behaviour that is ‘unwanted’ to which people ‘say no’, in contrast with behaviour that is ‘wanted’, is therefore at odds with empirical evidence of how faculty/staff–student sexual harassment occurs. As such, the existing SEQ wording risks perpetuating victim-blaming myths that women targeted for sexual misconduct are partly to blame if they have not made their non-consent apparent (Bull and Page, 2021).

A further ethical issue is that these questions imply that if the respondent did not say no, then the behaviour does not count as sexual harassment. This is at odds with UK and European legal definitions of sexual harassment, which refer to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that has the *purpose or effect* of violating someone’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them (Zippel, 2006; Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2024). According to this definition, those targeted do not have to say no in order for the behaviour to count as sexual harassment. Even if sexual conduct is not ‘offensive’ or ‘insulting’ as in the SEQ, it may still count as sexual harassment if its purpose was to create this effect. This legal definition is adopted by many UK HEIs in their institutional policies (Jordan et al, 2023). It is often argued that studies of gender-based violence in HE must go beyond legalistic definitions (Humbert et al, 2025a), and implied in this is that survey measures should not be *narrower* than legal definitions. A definition of sexual harassment that fails to capture behaviours that fall within legal and institutional definitions of sexual harassment is unethical as it may deter survey respondents from reporting or seeking help. This is particularly important as surveys also have a pedagogic role in educating respondents about sexual harassment; respondents may only label their experiences as sexual harassment as a result of filling out a survey (Schredl et al, 2025: 10). As a result, we amended the wording of the SEQ to avoid asking whether the person targeted said no; whether or not they wanted to talk about sexual matters; or whether they found sexual remarks insulting or offensive. Instead, we focused on the behaviours themselves.

A further amendment made to the SEQ in this study relates to ongoing methodological debates about measuring and analysing intersectionality (Colpitts, 2022; Humbert et al, 2025a). The SEQ has been criticised for ‘lack[ing] sensitivity measuring intersectional experiences of sexual harassment and other forms of oppression’ (McClain et al, 2021: 263). Indeed, most existing studies introduce intersectionality in the analysis only, exploring which groups are more likely to be

subjected to sexual harassment. However, this approach obscures the ways in which sexual harassment may be racialised, or racial harassment sexualised (Sundaram et al, 2023), or other identity characteristics such as sexual, gender or religious identity may be targeted through sexualised conduct. To address this, we adapted the questionnaire to ask about sexualised comments that references identity characteristics (see also MacNeela et al, 2022). Further detail on these amendments are outlined in the ‘Measures’ section.

### *Current study*

The study used a cross-sectional research design via a survey encompassing questions on experiences of faculty/staff–student sexual misconduct, impacts, reporting behaviour, attitudes towards professional boundaries, and demographic questions. Descriptive findings from this dataset were initially reported in the report ‘Power in the Academy’ (National Union of Students and The 1752 Group, 2018). This article focuses on the findings relating to experiences of misconduct in order to answer the following research questions:

1. What types of sexual misconduct are students in UK HE experiencing from staff?
2. What differences are there across gender, race, sexual and gender identity, and level of study in these experiences?

## **Method**

### *Participants*

The survey drew on two distinct populations. The first population was current students studying in UK HE during the 2017–2018 academic year, who were members of the National Union of Students (NUS) and, via its commercial arm NUS Services, held a discount card called the ‘NUS Extra’ card. The survey was distributed via email to selected members of the NUS Extra cardholder database – which includes all students enrolled at most UK HEIs – during November 2017 and January 2018; the entire sample size was unable to be disclosed for reasons of commercial confidentiality dictated by NUS Services. This population provided a snapshot of the experiences of current students. Invitations were sent to ensure the sample included a high proportion of postgraduate students, who are more likely to experience sexual misconduct from staff/faculty (Cantor et al, 2019: 47). The second – much smaller – survey population was former students, recruited via social media. This group were included in order to gain a wider picture of patterns of staff sexual misconduct. Therefore, the sample of former students is much more likely to include those who have experienced staff sexual misconduct. The differences between these two samples are taken into account throughout the analysis (as ‘graduated students’ versus ‘current students’). As such, the survey aims to describe experiences of sexual misconduct but not to generalise or provide data on prevalence.

An incentive of being entered into a prize draw of five lots of £100 was offered. Of the 1,834 survey responses, 66 (3.6 per cent) respondents did not wish their data to be used for research hence they were removed, leaving a final sample of 1,768.

The sample was 62 per cent women ( $n=1,091$ ) with 35 per cent men ( $n=613$ ), 2 per cent non-binary ( $n=31$ ) and 1 per cent 'prefer not to say', account for the rest ( $n=26$ ) (see [Table 1](#)). Ninety-seven per cent stated that their gender was the same as that assigned at birth ( $n=1,707$ ); 2% ( $n=28$ ) stated it was not, 1% ( $n=19$ ) preferred not to say; there were 14 missing values. The sample was composed of 76 per cent of students who identified as white ( $n=1,338$ ), 12 per cent Asian ( $n=203$ ), 6 per cent mixed race ( $n=103$ ), 3 per cent Black ( $n=52$ ) and other or 'prefer not to say' at 4 per cent ( $n=67$ ). The majority identified as heterosexual (75 per cent,  $n=1,333$ ), followed by bisexual (12 per cent,  $n=205$ ), gay/lesbian (5 per cent,  $n=83$ ), queer (2 per cent,  $n=42$ ), 'in another way' or 'prefer not to say' (6 per cent,  $n=103$ ). Forty-seven per cent of the sample were studying an undergraduate course (year 1: 20 per cent,  $n=359$ , year 2: 13 per cent,  $n=223$ , year 3: 11 per cent,  $n=196$ , year 4: 3 per cent,  $n=61$ , and year 5: 0 per cent,  $n=8$ ) while 37 per cent were engaged in postgraduate studies (postgraduate taught: 19 per cent,  $n=343$ , postgraduate research: 18 per cent,  $n=320$ ) and 14 per cent classified themselves as 'other' ( $n=252$ ). The majority were therefore currently studying at undergraduate level (48 per cent,  $n=808$ ) or postgraduate level (37 per cent,  $n=623$ ) with only around 15 per cent ( $n=256$ ) of respondents having already graduated. Twenty-one per cent ( $n = 362$ ) reported that they had some form of disability compared to 75 per cent ( $n=1,325$ ) with no reported disability, 2 per cent who preferred not to say ( $n=33$ ), and a further 2 per cent who did not know ( $n=38$ ). Forty-one per cent reported that they were the first in their family to attend a HEI compared to 57 per cent who had parents/carers who had attended HEI and 2 per cent who were unsure. Ethical review was conducted by the University of Portsmouth's Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Ethics Committee. The study was compliant with APA ethical standards, for example, all questions were optional, and the option was given to withdraw on the final page.

## Measures

### *Sexual misconduct*

Sexual misconduct was measured using an adapted version of the SEQ, which has three subscales: gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention and sexual coercion ([Fitzgerald et al, 1988a](#)). As noted earlier, we made significant adaptations to the survey to ensure it was ethical and appropriate for measuring sexual misconduct – including boundary-blurring behaviours – experienced by students from staff/faculty. In total there were 18 items, all on a three-point scale from 'Never' (0) to 'Once or twice' (1) to 'Three or more times' (2). We added further detail to questions to make sense of the items within the HE context, for example, 'experienced consequences for refusing' became 'retaliated after you ended a sexual relationship with them (e.g., withdrawing teaching or ignoring reference requests)'. We also included two questions on sexual violence, adapted from the Sexual Experiences Survey ([Koss et al, 2006](#)) in the 'sexual coercion' scale. The revised questionnaire was piloted with current students at a UK university. The full survey can be seen in [Appendix 1](#). Sum scores of each of the subscales and a combined scale of all subscales was created each with acceptable to good internal consistency according to the Cronbach Alphas (sexualised comments and communications  $\alpha=0.76$ , unwanted

**Table 1: Showing the count and percentage of different demographic characteristics within the sample**

Demographic characteristics	Count	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	1,091	62%
Male	613	35%
Non-binary	31	2%
Prefer not to say	26	1%
<i>Ethnicity</i>		
Asian	203	12%
Black	52	3%
Mixed race	103	6%
Other	30	2%
Prefer not to say	37	2%
White	1,338	76%
<i>Sexual orientation</i>		
Bisexual	205	12%
Gay/lesbian	83	5%
Heterosexual	1,333	75%
Queer	42	2%
In another way	34	2%
Prefer not to say	69	4%
<i>Year of study</i>		
Year 1	359	20%
Year 2	223	13%
Year 3	196	11%
Year 4	61	3%
Year 5	8	0.45%
Postgraduate taught	343	19%
Postgraduate research	320	18%
Other	252	14%
<i>Disability</i>		
Disability	362	21%
No disability	1,325	75%
Prefer not to say	33	2%
Don't know	38	2%
<i>First in family</i>		
Not first in family	997	57%
First in family	715	41%
Not sure	45	3%

sexual attention  $\alpha=0.83$  and sexual coercion  $\alpha=0.83$ , total sexual misconduct  $\alpha=0.89$ ). Next, we briefly describe each of the three subscales, including our adaptations.

### *Sexualised comments and communications*

This subscale drew on questions related to both sexualised gendered comments/communication (sexist hostility) as well as crude harassment (sexual hostility). To keep the survey succinct, we combined the measures ‘told suggestive stories; made crude sexual remarks; made offensive remarks’ and removed terminology requiring respondents to make a judgement of whether it was offensive, to ‘Made sexualised remarks or jokes, either publicly (e.g., in the classroom), or to you privately’. We adapted ‘displayed offensive materials’ to fit the HE context to: ‘Displayed, used, or distributed sexualised materials (e.g., pictures, stories, or pornography)’. We included questions on sexualised remarks relating to race, trans/non-binary identity, sexuality and religion, such as ‘Made sexualised comments that included reference to your race or ethnicity’ or ‘Made sexualised comments that included reference to your sexuality’.

### *Unwanted sexual attention*

There were five items each on a three-point scale from ‘Never’ (0) to ‘Once or twice’ (1) to ‘Three or more times’ (2). The items cover physical contact, for example, ‘They touched you (e.g., laid a hand on your arm, put an arm around your shoulders) in a way that made you feel uncomfortable’, with the examples added to include touch that was not explicitly sexual. More explicit behaviours were captured through the question ‘They persisted with suggestions that you establish a sexual or romantic relationship with them’, amended from ‘repeated requests for drinks or dinner, despite rejection’. Building on research showing that ‘grooming’ behaviours could escalate to sexual harassment and abuse, we added to the ‘unwanted sexual attention’ scale the question ‘Shared intimate information about their personal life with you, such as their mental health or family-related stresses, that made you feel uncomfortable’.

### *Sexual coercion*

The three areas on sexual bribery, coercion and assault from [Fitzgerald et al \(1988a: 157\)](#) were combined in this subscale. It was measured by five items ranging from non-consensual sexual contact to sexual assault and rape. The items also measure experiences of reward or retaliation for encouraging sexualised contact or discouraging lack of sexual co-operation, for example, retaliation for non-co-operation, with examples specific to HE added.

### *Definitions and demographic variables*

‘Staff member’ was described to respondents as referring to:

any higher education staff member who you have met through being a student at any UK higher education institution. This could be at your current institution or at any previous institution that you have attended or visited in the UK. This includes academic staff (lecturer, tutor, supervisor or other staff member involved in academic teaching or research) or

non-academic staff (library staff, sports coach, residential staff, security staff, IT support staff, or others). This includes behaviour that takes place on campus as well as off campus, including at conferences, on university trips or fieldwork.

Demographic variables drew on categories from the Higher Education Statistics Agency, with adjustments following advice from the NUS. We used a two-part question on gender identity (Which of the following best describes your gender? Does the gender you live in match the gender you were assigned at birth?). In relation to sexual orientation, five categories were included, based on discussions with NUS colleagues: heterosexual, gay/lesbian; bisexual; queer; in another way (where participants could give more detail); and ‘prefer not to say’.

## **Design and procedure**

### *Pre-analysis*

The results section is divided into three subsections, one for each form of harassment, with both descriptive and inferential statistics presented in each. The descriptive statistics provide an overview of the prevalence of each form of harassment addressing research question one. The inferential statistics identify demographic and contextual characteristics that predict both the likelihood of experiencing harassment and, the frequency of incidents addressing research question two. The use of both descriptive and inferential statistics provides a more comprehensive picture of sexual harassment showing the scale of the problem (descriptive analysis) and the factors associated with experiencing it (inferential analysis).

The sexual misconduct data contains two main challenges to find a suitable modelling approach. First, there are a large number of zeros in the outcome variables which represent the majority of respondents having not experienced different forms sexual misconduct. Second, the underlying process that increases one’s chances of experiencing misconduct may be determined by forces that are different from predictors of the frequency with which sexual misconduct is experienced. Hurdle models address both challenges by estimating two separate models within the overall model (Mullahy, 1986; Zeileis et al, 2008). The first model performed is known as the zero component, which is typically a binomial model which investigates whether independent variables significantly account for crossing the hurdle (that is, moving from zero to a positive count). For example, demographic factors that might predict whether a student will experience sexual harassment. The second model is the count component, which is usually a negative binomial or truncated Poisson model which explores whether the independent variables account for the number of occurrences among those positive values, for example, the demographic factors that might predict experiencing a higher frequency of unwanted sexual attention. Hurdle models are powerful as they allow researchers to disentangle whether the same factors that are driving the likelihood of experiencing sexual harassment and the amount of sexual harassment experienced are the same, different or vary in their predictive power of the two processes. For the zero components, odds ratio are calculated as the coefficients, while for the count components an incident rate ratio is calculated. Coefficients are tested for their contribution to the model using Wald tests which evaluate whether each coefficient is significantly different from zero.

Wald tests were also performed to check whether the predictors for the count process (non-zero numbers) were different from the zero process (hurdle part) and was thus testing whether a simpler model like a negative binomial would better fit the data than the hurdle models. The null hypothesis was that no hurdle model would be required to capture adequately the count data. All three tests showed that hurdle models were an appropriate choice to model the data (sexualised comments and communication  $\chi^2(28) = 135.25, p < 0.001$ ; unwanted sexual attention  $\chi^2(28) = 200.4, p < 0.001$ ; sexual coercion  $\chi^2(14) = 89.28, p < 0.001$ ; total sexual misconduct  $\chi^2(28) = 105.89, p < 0.001$ ).

The result section reports four hurdle models: sexualised comments and communications; unwanted sexual attention; sexual coercion; and total sexual misconduct. Three models on sexualised comments/communication, unwanted sexual attention and total sexual misconduct contained the demographic predictors: current or graduated student, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, first in family to attend university, disability, and level of study. The model on sexual coercion could not contain disability, first in family to attend university, current or graduated student, or level of study, since inclusion of these predictors causes the model to fail due to complete separation. Complete separation is where one level of the predictor can perfectly predict the outcome (Clark et al, 2023).

All analyses were conducted with R Studio (version 1.4.1717). The data, and survey questions can be found on the UK data archive.<sup>3</sup> The analysis code script can be found on the Open Science Framework.<sup>4</sup> The study was not pre-registered.

## Results

### *What types of sexual misconduct are students experiencing from staff?*

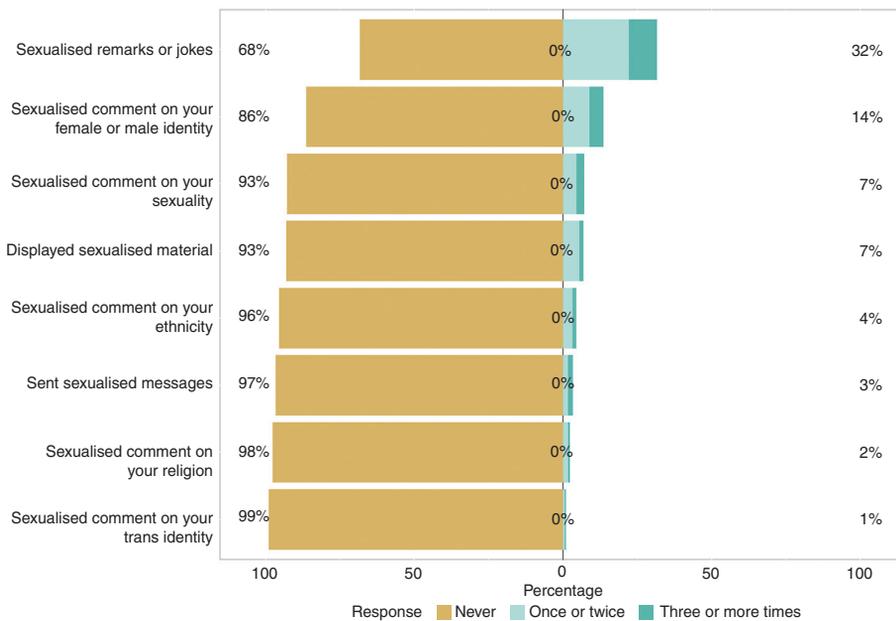
#### *Sexualised comments and communications*

Thirty-five per cent (n=621) of respondents in this sample reported experiencing some form of sexualised comments/communications. The most common form of sexual comments/communications experienced within the sample was a sexualised remark or joke which was reported at least once by 32 per cent of respondents (see Figure 1). Fourteen per cent reported experiencing a sexualised comment on their female or male identity and 7 per cent experienced at least one or more times a sexualised comment on their sexuality. Three per cent of respondents reported having staff send them private message of a sexual nature.

A hurdle model was conducted to explore: (a) factors predicting whether sexual misconduct was experienced; and (b) factors predicting a higher number of sexual comments/communications (see Table 2 and Table 3).

In terms of the likelihood of experiencing sexualised comments/communications, women (OR 1.32, SE=0.13,  $p < 0.01$ ) were 1.32 times more likely to have experienced sexual sexualised comments/communications compared to men. Bisexual (OR 1.45, SE=0.18,  $p < 0.001$ ) and queer students (OR 1.81, SE=0.46,  $p < 0.05$ ) were 1.81 times more likely compared to heterosexual students to have experienced sexualised comments/communications. Similarly, postgraduate research students were over 2.8 times more likely to have experienced sexualised comments/communications compared to first-year undergraduates (OR 2.82, SE=1.20,  $p < 0.05$ ) and those students engaged in another year of study were also at increased odds of experiencing

Figure 1: Frequency of sexual comments and communications experienced



sexualised comments/communications compared to first-year undergraduates (OR 2.06, SE=0.72,  $p < 0.05$ ). Disabled students were 1.42 times more likely than non-disabled students to have experienced sexualised comments/communications (OR 1.32, SE=0.13,  $p < 0.01$ ).

The expected number of sexualised comments/communications was 1.36 times higher for women than for men (IRR=1.36, SE=0.11,  $p < 0.001$ ) and 1.71 times higher for non-binary students than for men (IRR=1.71, SE=0.29,  $p < 0.001$ ). Bisexual and gay/lesbian students, experienced 1.34 and 1.42 times higher number of sexual comments and communication compared to heterosexuals (bisexuals RR 1.34, SE=0.11,  $p < 0.001$ ; gay/lesbian RR 1.42, SE=0.18,  $p < 0.01$ ). Compared to current undergraduates, graduated students and current postgraduate students also experienced 2.41 and 2.11 times higher numbers of sexualised comments/communications (graduated students RR 2.41, SE=0.41,  $p < 0.001$ ; current PG RR 2.11, SE=0.52,  $p < 0.01$ ). Second, third, fourth year, postgraduate taught and students in other years of study (that is, placement) all reported fewer incidences of sexualised comments/communications than first-year undergraduates (second RR 0.62, SE=0.10,  $p < 0.01$ ; third RR 0.75, SE=0.10,  $p < 0.05$ ; fourth RR 0.60, SE=0.15,  $p < 0.05$ ; PG taught RR 0.53, SE=0.14,  $p < 0.05$ ; other year of study RR 0.63, SE=0.14,  $p < 0.05$ ). There was no impact of ethnicity, disability or first-in-family to attend university.

There is an apparent contradiction in the finding that first-year undergraduates were less likely to sexualised comments/communications, but experienced a higher number of incidences. This appears to be due to three first-year students reporting a high number of sexualised comments/communications and experiencing them more often. If the analysis is repeated without those three students, then there is no impact of the year of study on the number of incidents (see Sensitive Analysis file for the results of this hurdle model available on the OSF).

**Table 2: Zero components within hurdle models on sexualised comments and communications, unwanted sexual attention, sexual coercion, and total sexual misconduct**

	Sexualised comments and communications	Unwanted attention	Sexual coercion	Total sexual misconduct
	(0.135)	(0.273)		(0.159)
Zero:Intercept	0.261*** (0.034)	0.116*** (0.019)	0.030*** (0.007)	0.337*** (0.091)
Current/graduate student (ref: Current UG)				
Zero:Current PG	0.621 (0.262)	0.741 (0.325)		0.685 (0.326)
Zero:Graduated student	0.957 (0.316)	1.567 (0.546)		1.084 (0.343)
Gender (ref: Male)				
Zero:Female	1.320** (0.129)	1.836*** (0.223)	2.325** (0.614)	1.454* (0.261)
Zero:Non-binary	1.552 (0.453)	2.774** (0.895)	4.656** (2.637)	1.618 (0.789)
Zero:Prefer not to say	1.484 (0.505)	1.784 (0.713)	2.052 (1.699)	1.536 (0.774)
Ethnicity (ref: White)				
Zero:Black	0.870 (0.249)	0.796 (0.273)	0.283 (0.285)	0.671 (0.233)
Zero:Asian	0.754 (0.113)	0.749 (0.130)	0.570 (0.225)	0.702 (0.149)
Zero:Mixed	1.190 (0.203)	1.374 (0.257)	0.439 (0.259)	1.413 (0.287)
Zero:Other	0.777 (0.284)	0.711 (0.299)	0.522 (0.526)	0.677 (0.318)
Zero:Race prefer not to say	0.820 (0.255)	0.997 (0.344)	1.907 (1.077)	0.835 (0.281)
Sexual orientation (ref: Heterosexual)				
Zero:Gay/Lesbian	1.053 (0.210)	1.450 (0.314)	1.906 (0.830)	1.104 (0.237)
Zero:Bisexual/Bi	1.448** (0.180)	1.552** (0.218)	2.014** (0.495)	1.615 (0.501)
Zero:Queer	1.811* (0.445)	1.186 (0.348)	1.263 (0.732)	2.049 (1.237)
Zero:Sexual orientation prefer not to say	1.059 (0.236)	0.933 (0.248)	0.997 (0.555)	1.084 (0.268)
Zero: In an other way	1.584 (0.434)	2.195** (0.639)	0.507 (0.513)	2.022 (1.070)
First in family to attend university (ref: No)				
Zero:First in family	1.102 (0.096)	1.026 (0.103)		1.001 (0.090)
Zero:Not sure	0.990 (0.294)	1.203 (0.373)		0.802 (0.280)

(Continued)

Table 2: Continued

	Sexualised comments and communications	Unwanted attention	Sexual coercion	Total sexual misconduct
Disability (ref: No disability)				
Zero:Disability	1.318** (0.134)	1.230 (0.144)		1.286 (0.290)
Zero:Prefer not to say	1.262 (0.403)	1.296 (0.484)		1.287 (0.435)
Zero:Don't know	0.820 (0.286)	0.654 (0.277)		0.841 (0.293)
Level of study (ref: 1st year UG)				
Zero:2nd year UG	0.808 (0.134)	0.961 (0.194)		0.817 (0.147)
Zero:3rd year UG	1.292 (0.200)	1.221 (0.239)		1.270 (0.218)
Zero:4th year UG	1.328 (0.319)	1.110 (0.353)		1.468 (0.391)
Zero:5th year UG	1.910 (1.022)	0.553 (0.563)		1.650 (0.985)
Zero:Postgraduate taught	1.308 (0.553)	1.453 (0.643)		1.198 (0.526)
Zero:Postgraduate research	2.820* (1.196)	3.070* (1.359)		2.543 (1.715)
Zero:Other year of study	2.061* (0.721)	2.029+ (0.751)		2.059 (1.032)

Notes: Table 2 shows the zero component within a hurdle model which are the binomial regression conducted exploring the likelihood of events occurring, that is, experiencing unwanted sexual attention. The stars indicate level of probability so \*\*\* denotes significant at  $p < 0.001$ , \*\* denotes significant at  $p < 0.01$ , \* denotes significant at  $p < 0.05$ . The zero model report odds ratios and the standard error (SE) of the coefficients. The Sexual Coercion model did not include disability, first to attend university or year of study or whether they were a current or graduated student due to complete separation (see pre-analysis section for explanation).

### Unwanted sexual attention

In this sample 26 per cent ( $n=465$ ) experienced some form of unwanted sexual attention. The most common form of unwanted attention was discussing intimate personal life details such as mental health or family-related stress which was experienced at least once by 17 per cent of respondents in this sample (see Figure 2). Fifteen per cent of respondents reported being touched, at least once or more times, in a way that made them feel uncomfortable. Four per cent of respondents experienced a staff member persistently suggesting that they should engage in a romantic or sexual relationship with them and 6 per cent reported at least on one occasion where a staff member asked, hinted or suggested that they have sex with them.

A hurdle model was performed to investigate: (a) what demographic factors increased the number of unwanted sexual attention events experienced; and (b) which identity characteristics increased the chance of experiencing an unwanted sexual attention event or not (see Table 2 and Table 3).

Female and non-binary students compared to males were more 1.84 and 2.77 times more likely to have experienced unwanted sexual attention (females OR 1.84,

**Table 3: Count component of hurdle models on sexualised comments and communications, unwanted sexual attention, sexual coercion, and total sexual misconduct**

	Sexualised comments and communications	Unwanted attention	Sexual coercion	Total sexual misconduct
Count:Intercept	1.377** (0.140)	1.189 (0.165)	1.926*** (0.379)	1.915*** (0.137)
Current/graduate student (ref: Current UG)				
Count:Current PG	2.111** (0.522)	1.317 (0.356)		1.345+ (0.218)
Count:Graduated student	2.407*** (0.466)	1.928** (0.434)		2.015*** (0.267)
Gender (ref: male)				
Count:Female	1.363*** (0.108)	1.291* (0.131)	1.238 (0.261)	1.418*** (0.075)
Count:Non-binary	1.712** (0.285)	1.609* (0.301)	1.655 (0.755)	1.886*** (0.204)
Count:Prefer not to say	0.449+ (0.201)	1.008 (0.360)	13.833* (16.154)	0.882 (0.190)
Ethnicity (ref: White)				
Count:Black	1.002 (0.217)	0.677 (0.218)	0.000 (0.008)	0.977 (0.151)
Count:Asian	1.152 (0.118)	1.081 (0.140)	1.533 (0.359)	1.159* (0.081)
Count:Mixed	0.996 (0.129)	1.215 (0.160)	1.513 (0.558)	1.006 (0.081)
Count:Other	1.311 (0.265)	0.985 (0.280)	0.000 (0.006)	1.082 (0.164)
Count:Race prefer not to say	0.914 (0.240)	0.782 (0.204)	0.270 (0.261)	0.909 (0.143)
Sexual orientation (ref: Heterosexual)				
Count:Gay/Lesbian	1.420** (0.179)	1.199 (0.180)	1.072 (0.353)	1.407*** (0.119)
Count:Bisexual/Bi	1.337*** (0.107)	1.342*** (0.115)	1.127 (0.209)	1.341*** (0.068)
Count:Queer	0.993 (0.154)	1.160 (0.204)	0.292 (0.219)	0.927 (0.096)
Count:Sexual orientation prefer not to say	1.104 (0.184)	1.156 (0.211)	0.691 (0.404)	0.985 (0.107)
Count:In an other way	1.016 (0.197)	0.612* (0.152)	0.000 (0.000)	0.837 (0.112)
First in family to attend university (ref: No)				
Count:First in family	1.056 (0.065)	1.226** (0.085)		1.198*** (0.047)
Count:Not sure	1.370 (0.262)	0.875 (0.202)		1.388* (0.177)

(Continued)

Table 3: Continued

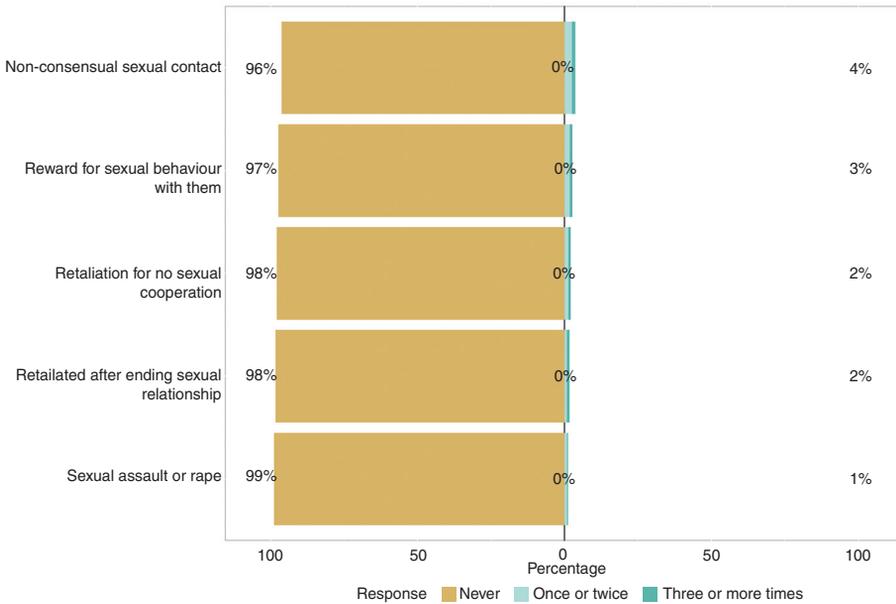
	Sexualised comments and communications	Unwanted attention	Sexual coercion	Total sexual misconduct
Disability (ref: No disability)				
Count:Disability	1.077 (0.075)	1.147 (0.086)		1.143** (0.050)
Count:Prefer not to say	1.012 (0.257)	0.811 (0.259)		0.903 (0.160)
Count:Don't know	1.208 (0.244)	0.992 (0.273)		0.958 (0.145)
Level of study (ref: 1st year UG)				
Count:2nd year UG	0.629** (0.099)	0.734 (0.143)		0.754** (0.076)
Count:3rd year UG	0.754* (0.101)	0.958 (0.160)		0.912 (0.080)
Count:4th year UG	0.598* (0.148)	0.461 (0.186)		0.565** (0.100)
Count:5th year UG	0.780 (0.329)	0.847 (0.786)		0.635 (0.223)
Count:Postgraduate taught	0.533* (0.139)	0.813 (0.231)		0.893 (0.151)
Count:Postgraduate research	0.687 (0.175)	1.129 (0.309)		1.243 (0.206)
Count:Other year of study	0.631* (0.135)	1.126 (0.273)		1.112 (0.159)

Notes: Table 3 shows the count components of hurdle models which are the truncated Poisson models conducted to model the expected frequency with which an event like sexualised comments and communications occurs. The stars indicate level of probability so \*\*\* denotes significant at  $p < 0.001$ , \*\* denotes significant at  $p < 0.01$ , \* denotes significant at  $p < 0.05$ . The Count model report incident rate ratios and the standard error (SE) of the coefficients. The Sexual Coercion model did not include disability, first to attend university or year of study or whether they were a current or graduated student due to complete separation (see pre-analysis section for explanation).

SE=0.22,  $p < 0.001$ ; non-binary OR 2.77, SE=0.90,  $p < 0.01$ ). Bisexuals (OR 1.55, SE=0.22,  $p < 0.001$ ), and those who define their sexuality in another way (OR 2.20, SE=0.64,  $p < 0.01$ ) were 1.55 and 2.20 times more likely compared to heterosexuals to have experienced unwanted sexual attention. Postgraduate researchers were, respectively, three times more likely to have experienced unwanted sexual attention than first-year undergraduates (postgraduate research OR 3.07, SE=1.36,  $p < 0.05$ ). There was no impact of ethnicity, disability or being first-in-family to attend university.

The number of unwanted sexual attention incidents experienced was 1.29 times higher for women and 1.61 times higher for non-binary respondents compared to men (women RR 1.29, SE=0.13,  $p < 0.05$ ; non-binary RR 1.61, SE=0.30,  $p < 0.05$ ). Bisexual respondents experienced 1.34 times higher number of unwanted sexual attention events than heterosexuals (bisexuals RR 1.34, SE=0.12,  $p < 0.001$ ). Graduated students also experience 1.93 times higher number of unwanted sexual events than current undergraduate students (graduated students RR 1.93, SE=0.43,

**Figure 2: Frequency of unwanted sexual attention**



$p < 0.01$ ). Those who were first-in-family also experienced 1.22 times more unwanted sexual attention incidents compared to not-first-in-family students (RR 1.22, SE=0.08,  $p < 0.05$ ). There was no impact of ethnicity, disability or level of study on the number of unwanted sexual attention incidents experienced.

### Sexual coercion

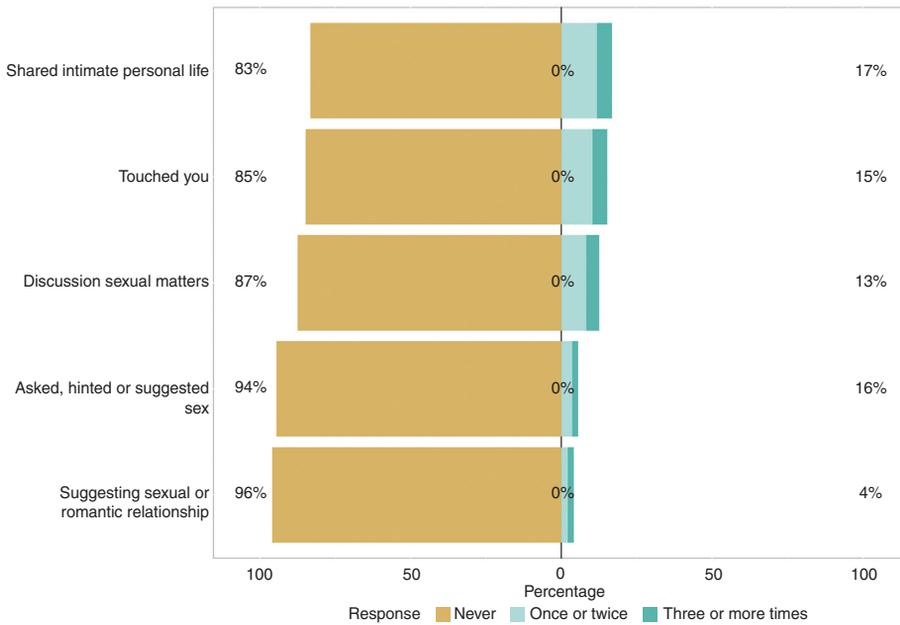
In total 6 per cent ( $n=104$ ) of respondents in this sample had experienced some form of sexual coercion. Four per cent of respondents reported at least one instance where faculty/staff members had engaged in contact of a sexual nature, such as kissing or touching through clothing (see Figure 3). Two per cent of respondents had experienced retaliation, at least once, for ending a sexual relationship with a staff member (for example, ignoring a reference request). Similarly, 2 per cent reported experiencing retaliation for not being sexually co-operative with a staff member (for example, mentioning upcoming assessments). One per cent of students had experienced once or more a sexual assault or rape committed by a staff member.

A hurdle model was run to look at demographic factors predicting: (a) a higher number of incidences of sexual coercion being reported by certain groups of students; and (b) the likelihood of experiencing sexual coercion (see Table 2 and Table 3).

Women were 2.33 times more likely to have experienced some form of sexual coercion compared to men (OR 2.33, SE=0.61,  $p < 0.01$ ). Similarly, those who identified as non-binary were 4.66 times more likely to have experienced sexual coercion compared to men (OR 4.66, SE=2.64,  $p < 0.01$ ). Students who identified as bisexual were two times more likely to have experienced sexual coercion compared to those who identify as heterosexuals (OR 2.01, SE=0.50,  $p < 0.01$ ).

The number of incidents of sexual coercion was very small and as a result, the variable on level of study could not be included in the model as it prevented it from

Figure 3: Frequency of sexual coercion



converging due to complete separation. The only predictor which showed an increased risk of experiencing more sexual coercion events were students who preferred not to disclose their gender, at 13 times higher number of events compared to males (prefer not to say RR 13.83, SE=16.15,  $p < 0.05$ ). Caution ought to be used interpreting this finding as the number of students in this group is very small ( $n=26$ ), of which two experienced sexual coercion.

### Total sexual misconduct

In this sample a total of 42 per cent had experienced some form of sexual misconduct ( $n=734$ ), which includes sexualised comment/communication, unwanted sexual attention and/or sexual coercion. Note that due to the sampling methodology, this is not intended as a description of prevalence, but rather reflects the experience of students within this sample. Of the 42 per cent who had experienced some form of sexual misconduct the majority experienced one (13.7 per cent,  $n=243$ ), two (8 per cent,  $n=142$ ), three (4.4 per cent,  $n=78$ ), four (3 per cent,  $n=53$ ), five (2.5 per cent,  $n=44$ ) or six (1.8 per cent,  $n=32$ ) incidents, and thereafter 1 per cent or fewer, up to 36 incidents.

The hurdle model showed that women were 1.45 times more likely than men to have experienced some form of sexual misconduct (OR 1.45, SE=0.26,  $p < 0.05$ ). No other predictors in the model explained an increased likelihood of experiencing sexual misconduct.

Both women and non-binary students experienced a higher number of sexual misconduct incidents at 1.42 times and 1.87 times higher (women RR 1.42, SE=0.8,  $p < 0.001$ ; non-binary RR 1.87, SE=0.20,  $p < 0.001$ ). Other predictors of higher number of incidents were ethnicity; Asian students were 1.16 times higher compared

to white students (RR 1.16, SE=0.08,  $p < 0.05$ ), gay/lesbian at 1.41 times higher and bisexuals at 1.34 times higher number of sexual misconduct events compared to heterosexuals (gay/lesbian RR 1.41, SE=0.12,  $p < 0.001$ ; bisexuals RR 1.34, SE=0.07,  $p < 0.001$ ), first-in-family at 1.20 times higher compared to those not-first-in-family (RR 1.20, SE=0.05,  $p < 0.001$ ) and those with a disability at 1.14 times higher compared to those not disabled (RR 1.14, SE=0.05,  $p < 0.001$ ).

## Discussion

A key contribution of this study is to use hurdle models to reveal not only who experiences faculty/staff sexual misconduct, but also *how much* sexual misconduct different groups experience. As Walby et al note, 'the default assumption in measuring violence is still one victim, one perpetrator, one event', but in fact 'repetition means an accumulation of harm in high-frequency victims, who are disproportionately women' (Walby et al, 2017: 38), an observation that is supported here. While women were the only group to be more likely to have experienced sexual misconduct in general, when looking at the total amount of sexual misconduct experienced across all measures, women, non-binary students, Asian students, gay/lesbian and bisexual students, first-in-family, and disabled students were all more likely to experience a higher number of incidents. While we do not know whether the same faculty/staff member was responsible for repeated incidents, these findings raise questions around whether some groups are more likely to be trapped within harmful relationships of unequal power in HE, a scenario that is documented in qualitative research (Cantalupo and Kidder, 2017; Bull and Rye, 2018; Bull and Page, 2021).

There may be different reasons why these groups experience more incidents. For example, those who are first-in-family to attend HE have pointed to their lack of familiarity, with norms of faculty-student relationships in HE as a factor in their victimisation (Bull and Page, 2021: 1066). In relation to disability, we do not know whether disability is caused by the sexual misconduct experienced, that is, post-traumatic stress disorder or other impacts (Bull and Bradley, 2025) or whether students who disclose disability have been targeted due to their disclosure. In relation to other identity characteristics, the survey adaptations to include intersectionality in the instrument (as well as in analysis) help to shed light on this question, revealing that sexualised comments relating to sexuality were the most common way in which identity was mobilised in sexual misconduct experiences, with 7 per cent of respondents having experienced this. Next most common were sexualised comments relating to ethnicity, at 3 per cent of respondents. Sexualised comments relating to faith/religion and trans identity were also reported. These findings support Hearn et al's observation that 'different groups experience different forms of violence differently' (2025: 11).

More generally, in line with previous studies, the most common type of sexual misconduct experienced by students from faculty/staff was sexualised communication/comments (this section encompassed material that in previous surveys is labelled as 'sexist hostility', 'crude behaviour' and 'gender harassment'). Sexualised remarks or jokes were the most common type of sexualised communication. Perhaps surprisingly (given findings in Bull and Rye, 2018; Kirkner et al, 2020), sexualised messages were less common than other types of sexualised communication.

The inclusion of the question about whether someone had ‘shared intimate information about their personal life with you ... that made you feel uncomfortable’ appears justified; 17 per cent of respondents reported this, a similar level to those who experienced touching that made them feel uncomfortable (15 per cent). Both of these are ‘boundary-blurring behaviours’ (Bull and Page, 2021) that may or may not constitute sexual harassment (depending on whether the touching is seen as ‘sexual’, for example) but may constitute sexual misconduct where they are part of a pattern of ‘grooming’ behaviours. The rate of touching that is reported in this study is higher than others have found (Rosenthal et al, 2016; McClain et al, 2021). This could be due to the examples included in this version of the survey or sampling techniques.

The sexual coercion subscale found that non-consensual sexual contact and being rewarded for sexual behaviour were slightly more common than other types of bribery, coercion and assault such as retaliation, but all the items had been experienced by at least 1 per cent of respondents, in line with the findings from Swartout (in National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine, 2018: 277).

In relation to LGBTQIA+ people’s experiences, while some studies combine all ‘sexual minority’ students into one category and find that this group are more likely to report experiencing sexual harassment from faculty/staff (McClain et al, 2021: 261; Wood et al, 2021), this study disaggregated this group into gay/lesbian, bisexual, queer, and those who identify ‘in another way’, finding differences between groups across different types of misconduct. Across all three subscales, bisexual respondents were more likely to report being targeted, as well as being targeted more often for the first two subscales (sexualised comments/communication and unwanted sexual attention). Queer and bisexual respondents were more likely than heterosexual students to have experienced sexual comments/communications. Bisexual as well as gay/lesbian students reported higher incidence in this area. These findings show the importance of disaggregating groups within LGBTQIA+ respondents, and support studies within and outside HE that show bisexual people are at higher risk of sexual misconduct and violence (Flanders et al, 2020; MacNeela et al, 2022: 146). This study also confirmed that non-binary students are at increased risk of sexual misconduct from staff/faculty (Wood et al, 2021; Humbert et al, 2025b).

The only impact relating to ethnicity in this study was that Asian students were less likely to be targeted, but when targeted, experienced *more* incidents. This is in line with Cortina et al (1988: 435), and not dissimilar to Swartout’s analysis in National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (2018: 285), but conflicts with McClain et al (2021: 261); however, these studies are all from the United States, which is a different racialised context. Evidence from the UK has found that Black and Asian students are less comfortable than white students with ‘personal interactions’ with academic staff/faculty, such as getting drunk with students or social media interactions (Bull et al, 2023: 718).

In terms of types of misconduct experienced, these findings show similarities with studies from the United States and Australia (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2017; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, 2018; Cantor et al, 2019; McClain et al, 2021; Heywood et al, 2022; Nisbet et al, 2022), but differences from studies carried out in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Ghana and Tanzania, where evidence of rewards and retaliation for sexual interactions are more common (Shumba and Matina, 2002; Ladebo, 2003; Nwadike, 2007; Morley, 2011; Adams et al, 2013). These differences show the importance of avoiding generalisations across

national and regional contexts; there are contextual, cultural differences in types of harassment that occur. Furthermore, there are implications of this finding for handling of sexual misconduct reports and training of staff in relevant roles; in the UK, HEIs may fail to identify sexual harassment when it is reported (Bull and Rye, 2018; Bull et al, 2021; Bull and Page, 2022; Bull and Shannon, 2023). Similarly, in the United States, complaints by graduate students of sexual harassment were more likely to be actionable where they related to severe or stereotypical sexual harassment (Cipriano et al, 2022). By contrast, many of the types of sexual misconduct reported by students in this study may not be recognised as 'severe' or 'stereotypical'.

The survey tool was adapted from the SEQ to reflect findings from qualitative studies of staff–student sexual misconduct. Removing wording such as 'offensive' and 'insulting', or phrases such as 'when you didn't want to' or 'even after you said "no"' allowed sexual misconduct experiences to be captured where the target did not say no or find the behaviour insulting/offensive. This is important for measuring sexual misconduct across an imbalance of power, as students may be uncomfortable with saying no to someone in a position of power, or may be flattered or confused by sexual attention from someone they admire and respect, and therefore questions that ask them to judge whether they found the behaviour unwanted or 'insulting/offensive' may be experienced as victim-blaming. These modifications are also important for accurate data collection, as sexual misconduct can create an intimidating or hostile environment regardless of whether the person targeted 'said no' or the behaviour was 'unwanted'.

### *Limitations*

Limitations to this study include lack of data on discipline or subject of study. This was excluded to assuage respondents' fears about being identifiable. There is mixed evidence as to whether disciplinary context affects prevalence of sexual harassment (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, 2018; Lorenz et al, 2019). Therefore, it is recommended to include this in future studies. A further limitation is being unable to report the response rate due to issues of commercial sensitivity from the partner organisation. In addition, this article has reported findings across all academic and non-academic staff/faculty, rather than solely academic staff/faculty. The majority of perpetrators were, however, male academic staff (National Union of Students and The 1752 Group, 2018). As such, solely reporting data from those who were harassed by academic staff perpetrators would be helpful. Finally, this study focuses on sexual misconduct but does not capture the full range of forms of gender-based violence that may occur between staff and students, such as economic violence (Schredl et al, 2025).

### *Implications and next steps*

This article has presented data from a study that uses an adapted version of the SEQ to measure faculty/staff–student sexual misconduct within UK HE. The findings have implications empirically, conceptually, methodologically and for policy.

Empirically, we have demonstrated that analysing repeat victimisation reveals a different picture to a focus on victimisation in general. Therefore, prevalence studies

that do not consider repeat victimisation and accumulation of harm are failing to provide a full picture of who is harmed by sexual misconduct in HE. We do not know whether the same perpetrator is responsible for repeat victimisation, although, as noted earlier, qualitative work demonstrates such patterns of behaviour (Cantalupo and Kidder, 2017; Bull and Rye, 2018). Future empirical studies could explore this point.

Moving onto conceptual implications, we build on Hearn et al, who argue that HE contexts ‘reshape and reconstitute ... power dynamics’ of gender-based violence (GBV). They argue that an understanding of prevalence of GBV needs to take into account the ways different groups experience this differently (Hearn et al, 2025: 523). We suggest that prevalence also needs to account for how *much* sexual misconduct/GBV each group experiences. This should include consideration of the temporality of repeat victimisation, as well as who is initially targeted, then who is retained as a target and further victimised. Further conceptual/theoretical work can support this using Connell’s theorisation of ‘gender regimes’ within institutions to explain how power-based harassment occurs over time, drawing on conceptual work on GBV such as Walby et al’s arguments on repetition of violence (2017) and Hearn et al’s work on theorising GBV within HE.

Methodologically, we argue that there are ethical, methodological and theoretical reasons for adapting the SEQ to measure power-based sexual *misconduct*, defined more broadly than sexual *harassment*. We suggest that power-based sexual misconduct should be studied using measures that recognise how power imbalances may affect people’s ability to consent, and that avoid victim-blaming such as by asking whether they said ‘no’. As such, we have outlined adaptations to provide data that better reflects hostile educational environments and captures the extent to which students experience a sexualised environment, as well as exploring intersectional experiences. Further research should compare the SEQ with the adapted version used here. In addition, against previous arguments that sexual harassment surveys should not take account of local legal frameworks (Cortina and Areguin, 2021), we highlight the pedagogic work that surveys do in alerting respondents to behaviours that constitute sexual harassment, and argue that there is an ethical imperative to ensure that sexual harassment surveys do not give false information about what constitutes sexual harassment in a particular context.

In relation to policy, our findings raise the question of whether institutions are focusing too much on whether sexual misconduct occurs to the detriment of how often it occurs. They also highlight the importance for HEIs of preventing further incidents once sexual misconduct has already occurred, as has been highlighted in recent technical guidance for employers in the UK (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2024). Policies should be explicit on this point, in recognition that some groups experience repeated sexual misconduct and that experiencing more incidents exacerbates the impacts (Bull and Bradley, 2025).

In addition, in some contexts, more HEIs are now implementing policies to prohibit staff–student sexual relationships (Office for Students, 2024) and to clarify professional boundaries in HE (Bull et al, 2023). However, there remain ‘grey areas’, for example, liminal spaces such as conferences. Innovations in policy and practice are needed to address these (Bull and Prince, 2025).

This article has revealed the limitations of widely used methodological tools in this area and pointed towards ways forward to address these limitations. The methodological adaptations in this survey could be adopted for studies that explore power-based

sexual misconduct both within and beyond HE. Overall, we urge an ongoing focus not only on who experiences power-based sexual misconduct, but who experiences *more* misconduct, in order to reveal a more accurate picture of the ways in which such harms occur.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> In the UK context, the term ‘staff’ refers to both academic and professional services employees in HEIs, whereas in the United States the term ‘faculty’ refers to academics and ‘staff’ to non-academics. Here, we use both, and use ‘academic staff/faculty’ where necessary.
- <sup>2</sup> The widely used ARC3 survey now contains separate versions for studying peer–peer or faculty–student sexual harassment. We support this step, however, the faculty version of ARC3 still contains some of the problems that this article outlines.
- <sup>3</sup> DOI: 10.5255/UKDA-SN-855140
- <sup>4</sup> [https://osf.io/7f6h8/?view\\_only=4275eb2149d14da79ad0e892e30b223f](https://osf.io/7f6h8/?view_only=4275eb2149d14da79ad0e892e30b223f).

### ORCID IDs

Anna Bull  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2732-3240>

Alexander Bradley  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4304-7653>

### Funding

The authors disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article: the UK’s National Union of Students contributed £500 for financial incentives to participate in the survey.

### Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the National Union of Students for their support in carrying out this study. We would like to thank Tiffany Page and Chi-Chi Shi for their work on the study that this article draws on, as well as other colleagues who reviewed the adapted survey.

### Contributor statement

Study conceptualisation, design, ethics and data collection (ABull with contributions from colleagues as acknowledged earlier); ABull wrote first and subsequent drafts of introduction, literature review, discussion and conclusion; ABradley carried out data analysis and wrote first draft of methods and findings sections; ABull edited methods and findings sections.

### Research ethics statement

Ethical review was conducted by the University of Portsmouth Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Ethics Committee (November 2017).

### Data availability statement

Data and materials supporting this study are available from the UK Data Service under the title ‘Perception of Professional Boundaries and Experiences of Misconduct among Different Demographic Groups Within Higher Education in the UK, 2017–2018’ at doi: 10.5255/UKDA-SN-855140.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

## References

- The 1752 Group and McAllister Olivarius (2020) *Sector Guidance to Address Staff Sexual Misconduct in UK Higher Education: Recommendations for Reporting, Investigation and Decision-Making Procedures Relating to Student Complaints of Staff Sexual Misconduct*, <https://1752group.files.wordpress.com/2021/09/5ed32-the-1752-group-and-mcallister-olivarius-sector-guidance-to-address-staff-sexual-misconduct-in-uk-he.pdf>.
- Adams, J.D., Mabusela, M.S. and Dlamini, E.T. (2013) Sexual harassment: the ‘silent killer’ of female students at the University of Ayoba in South Africa, *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 27(5): Article 5. doi: 10.20853/27-5-290
- Ahmed, S. (2021) *Complaint!* Duke University Press.
- Anitha, S., Marine, S. and Lewis, R. (2020) Feminist responses to sexual harassment in academia: voice, solidarity and resistance through online activism, *Journal of Gender-Based Violence*, 4(1): 9–23, doi: 10.1332/239868019x15764492460286
- ARC3 (nd) ARC3 campus climate survey: technical documentation, <https://www.arc3survey.org/>.
- Australian Human Rights Commission (2017) *Change the Course: National Report on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment at Australian Universities*, Australian Human Rights Commission, <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination/publications/change-course-national-report-sexual-assault-and-sexual>.
- Bellas, M.L. and Gossett, J.L. (2001) Love or the ‘lecherous professor’: consensual sexual relationships between professors and students, *The Sociological Quarterly*, 42(4): 529–58, doi: 10.1525/tsq.2001.42.4.529
- Bikales, J.S. (2020) Protected by decades-old power structures, three renowned harvard anthropologists face allegations of sexual harassment, *The Harvard Crimson*, <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2020/5/29/harvard-anthropology-gender-issues/>.
- Bloom, B.E., Sorin, C.R., Wagman, J.A. and Oaks, L. (2021) Employees, advisees, and emerging scholars: a qualitative analysis of graduate students’ roles and experiences of sexual violence and sexual harassment on college campuses, *Sexuality & Culture*, 25(5): 1653–72, doi: 10.1007/s12119-021-09841-w
- Bull, A. (2022) Staff sexual misconduct in higher education: impacts, responses and challenges, in C.J. Humphreys and G. Towl (eds) *Stopping Gender-based Violence in Higher Education*, Routledge, pp 196–216.
- Bull, A. and Rye, R. (2018) *Silencing Students: Institutional Responses to Staff Sexual Misconduct in Higher Education*, The 1752 Group/University of Portsmouth, [https://1752group.files.wordpress.com/2018/09/silencing-students\\_the-1752-group.pdf](https://1752group.files.wordpress.com/2018/09/silencing-students_the-1752-group.pdf).
- Bull, A. and Page, T. (2021) Students’ accounts of grooming and boundary-blurring behaviours by academic staff in UK higher education, *Gender and Education*, 33(8): 1057–72, doi: 10.1080/09540253.2021.1884199
- Bull, A. and Page, T. (2022) The governance of complaints in UK higher education: critically examining ‘remedies’ for staff sexual misconduct, *Social & Legal Studies*, 31(1): 27–49, doi: 10.1177/09646639211002243
- Bull, A. and Shannon, E. (2023) *Higher Education After #MeToo: Institutional Responses to Reports of Gender-Based Violence and Harassment*, The 1752 Group/University of York, <https://1752group.com/higher-education-after-metoo/>.

- Bull, A. and Bradley, A. (2025) Losing confidence and networks as an impact of staff/faculty-student sexual harassment: quantitative findings from the UK, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, doi: [10.1177/08862605251322814](https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605251322814)
- Bull, A. and Prince, K. (2025) *Addressing Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Experienced by Postgraduate Researchers*, The 1752 Group, [https://1752group.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/harassment\\_pgrs.pdf](https://1752group.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/harassment_pgrs.pdf).
- Bull, A. and Shannon, E. (2025) How do institutional gender regimes affect formal reporting processes for sexual harassment? A qualitative study of UK higher education, *Law & Policy*, 47(1): e12255, doi: [10.1111/lapo.12255](https://doi.org/10.1111/lapo.12255)
- Bull, A., Calvert-Lee, G. and Page, T. (2021) Discrimination in the complaints process: introducing the sector guidance to address staff sexual misconduct in UK higher education, *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, 25(2): 72–7, doi: [10.1080/13603108.2020.1823512](https://doi.org/10.1080/13603108.2020.1823512)
- Bull, A., Bradley, A., Kanyeredzi, A., Page, T., Shi, C.C. and Wilson, J. (2023) Professional boundaries between faculty/staff and students in UK higher education: students' levels of comfort with personal and sexualised interactions, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 47(6): 711–26, doi: [10.1080/0309877x.2023.2226612](https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877x.2023.2226612)
- Cantalupo, N.C. and Kidder, W.C. (2017) A Systematic Look at a Serial Problem: Sexual Harassment of Students by University Faculty (SSRN Scholarly Paper No. ID 2971447), Social Science Research Network, <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2971447>.
- Cantor, D., Fisher, B., Chibnall, S., Harps, S., Townsend, R., Thomas, G., et al (2019) *Report on the AAU Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Misconduct*, Association of American Universities, p 433, <https://www.aau.edu/key-issues/campus-climate-and-safety/aau-campus-climate-survey-2019>.
- Carter, P. and Jeffs, T. (1995) *A Very Private Affair: Sexual Exploitation in Higher Education*, Education Now Books.
- Cipriano, A.E., Holland, K.J., Bedera, N., Eagan, S.R. and Diede, A.S. (2022) Severe and pervasive? Consequences of sexual harassment for graduate students and their Title IX Report outcomes, *Feminist Criminology*, 17(3): 343–67, doi: [10.1177/15570851211062579](https://doi.org/10.1177/15570851211062579)
- Clark, R.G., Blanchard, W., Hui, F.K.C., Tian, R. and Woods, H. (2023) Dealing with complete separation and quasi-complete separation in logistic regression for linguistic data, *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*, 2(1): 100044, doi: [10.1016/j.rmal.2023.100044](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rmal.2023.100044)
- Colpitts, E.M. (2022) 'Not even close to enough': sexual violence, intersectionality, and the neoliberal university, *Gender and Education*, 34(2): 151–66, doi: [10.1080/09540253.2021.1924362](https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2021.1924362)
- Connell, R. (2006) Glass ceilings or gendered institutions? Mapping the gender regimes of public sector worksites, *Public Administration Review*, 66(6): 837–49, doi: [10.1111/j.1540-6210.2006.00652.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2006.00652.x)
- Cortina, L.M. and Areguin, M.A. (2021) Putting people down and pushing them out: sexual harassment in the workplace, *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 8: 285–309, doi: [10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-012420-055606](https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-012420-055606)
- Cortina, L.M., Swan, S., Fitzgerald, L.F. and Waldo, C. (1998) Sexual harassment and assault: chilling the climate for women in academia, *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 22(3): 419–41, doi: [10.1111/j.1471-6402.1998.tb00166.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1998.tb00166.x)

- Dey, A. (2020) 'Me Too' and the 'List' – power dynamics, shame, and accountability in Indian academia, *IDS Bulletin*, 51(2), doi: [10.19088/1968-2020.130](https://doi.org/10.19088/1968-2020.130)
- Dziech, B.W. and Weiner, L. (1990) *The Lecherous Professor: Sexual Harassment on Campus*, 2nd edn, University of Illinois Press.
- Equality and Human Rights Commission (2024) *Sexual Harassment and Harassment at Work: Technical Guidance*, <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/guidance/sexual-harassment-and-harassment-work-technical-guidance>.
- Fitzgerald, L.F., Shullman, S.L., Bailey, N., Richards, M., Swecker, J., Gold, Y., et al (1988a) The incidence and dimensions of sexual harassment in academia and the workplace, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 32(2): 152–75, doi: [10.1016/0001-8791\(88\)90012-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/0001-8791(88)90012-7)
- Fitzgerald, L.F., Weitzman, L.M., Gold, Y. and Ormerod, M. (1988b) Academic harassment: sex and denial in scholarly garb, *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 12(3): 329–40, doi: [10.1111/j.1471-6402.1988.tb00947.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1988.tb00947.x)
- Flanders, C.E., Anderson, R.E. and Tarasoff, L.A. (2020) Young bisexual people's experiences of sexual violence: a mixed-methods study, *Journal of Bisexuality*, 20(2): 202–32, doi: [10.1080/15299716.2020.1791300](https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2020.1791300)
- Glaser, R.D. and Thorpe, J.S. (1986) Unethical intimacy: a survey of sexual contact and advances between psychology educators and female graduate students, *American Psychologist*, 41(1): 43–51, doi: [10.1037//0003-066x.41.1.43](https://doi.org/10.1037//0003-066x.41.1.43)
- Hearn, J., Strid, S., Humbert, A.L., Bondestam, F. and Husu, L. (2025) Gender-based violence in higher education and research performing organisations: three steps in critique and reconceptualisation, *Journal of Gender-Based Violence*, 9(4): 513–35, doi: [10.1332/23986808y2025d000000093](https://doi.org/10.1332/23986808y2025d000000093)
- Heywood, W., Myers, P., Powell, A., Meikle, G. and Nguyen, D. (2022) *Report on the Prevalence of Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault Among University Students in 2021*, Social Research Centre, [https://assets.website-files.com/61c2583e4730c0d5b054b8ab/623a86e60a6118c69da92d37\\_2021%20NSSS%20National%20Report.pdf](https://assets.website-files.com/61c2583e4730c0d5b054b8ab/623a86e60a6118c69da92d37_2021%20NSSS%20National%20Report.pdf).
- Horne, M. (2023) Scottish academics told not to have relationships with students, *The Times*, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/scottish-academics-told-not-to-have-relationships-with-students-09p9thmfj>.
- Humbert, A.L. and Strid, S. (2024) Institutional confidence, underreporting and academic consequences of gender-based violence among university staff and students in Europe, *Studies in Higher Education*, 50(11): 2517–32, doi: [10.1080/03075079.2024.2440544](https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2024.2440544)
- Humbert, A.L., Ovesen, N., Simonsson, A., Strid, S., Hearn, J., Huck, A., et al (2022) *UniSAFE D6.1: Report on the Multi-Level Analysis and Integrated Dataset*, <https://zenodo.org/records/7540229>.
- Humbert, A.L., Strid, S., Tanwar, J., Lipinsky, A. and Schredl, C. (2025a) The role of intersectionality and context in measuring gender-based violence in universities and research-performing organizations in europe for the development of inclusive structural interventions, *Violence Against Women*, 31(6–7): 1688–711, doi: [10.1177/10778012241231773](https://doi.org/10.1177/10778012241231773)
- Humbert, A.L., Tzanakou, C., Strid, S. and Lipinsky, A. (2025b) Non-binary experiences of (gender-based) violence at work, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 36(7): 1249–81, doi: [10.1080/09585192.2025.2507964](https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2025.2507964)
- Jack, P. (2023) *Academics Oppose Publisher Removing Chapter of Book on Sexual Misconduct*, Inside Higher Ed, <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/hundreds-sign-letter-against-spiking-sexual-misconduct-chapter>.

- Jordan, A., Anitha, S. and Chanamoto, N. (2023) *Policies on Gender-Based Violence in UK Universities: Understanding Current Practice, Mapping Future Directions*, University of Lincoln, <https://gbvpolicies.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk>.
- Kelley, M.L. and Parsons, B. (2000) Sexual harassment in the 1990s, *The Journal of Higher Education*, 71(5): 548–68, doi: [10.2307/2649259](https://doi.org/10.2307/2649259)
- Kirkner, A.C., Lorenz, K. and Mazar, L. (2020) Faculty and staff reporting & disclosure of sexual harassment in higher education, *Gender and Education*, 34(2): 199–215, doi: [10.1080/09540253.2020.1763923](https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2020.1763923)
- Koss, M.P., Abbey, A., Campbell, R., Cook, S., Norris, J., Testa, M., et al (2006) *The Sexual Experiences Long Form Victimization (SES-LFV)*, University of Arizona.
- Ladebo, O.J. (2003) Sexual harassment in academia in Nigeria: how real? *African Sociological Review/ Revue Africaine de Sociologie*, 7(1): 117–30.
- Lee, D. (1998) Sexual harassment in PhD supervision, *Gender and Education*, 10(3): 299–312, doi: [10.1080/09540259820916](https://doi.org/10.1080/09540259820916)
- Lorenz, K., Kirkner, A. and Mazar, L. (2019) Graduate student experiences with sexual harassment and academic and social (dis)engagement in higher education, *Journal of Women and Gender in Higher Education*, 12(2): 205–23, doi: [10.1080/19407882.2018.1540994](https://doi.org/10.1080/19407882.2018.1540994)
- MacNeela, P., Dawson, K., O'Rourke, T., Healey-Cullen, S., Burke, L. and Flack, W.F. (2022) *Report on the National Survey of Student Experiences of Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish HEIs*, Higher Education Authority, <https://assets.gov.ie/214118/d8734a4d-1947-4aad-9fad-995822e91f27.pdf>.
- McClain, T., Kammer-Kerwick, M., Wood, L., Temple, J.R. and Busch-Armendariz, N. (2021) Sexual harassment among medical students: prevalence, prediction, and correlated outcomes, *Workplace Health & Safety*, 69(6): 257–67, doi: [10.1177/2165079920969402](https://doi.org/10.1177/2165079920969402)
- Morley, L. (2011) Sex, grades and power in higher education in Ghana and Tanzania, *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 41(1): 101–15, doi: [10.1080/0305764x.2010.549453](https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764x.2010.549453)
- Mullahy, J. (1986) Specification and testing of some modified count data models, *Journal of Econometrics*, 33(3): 341–65, doi: [10.1016/0304-4076\(86\)90002-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-4076(86)90002-3)
- Naezer, M.M., van den Brink, M.C.L. and Benschop, Y. (2019) *Harassment in Dutch Academia: Exploring Manifestations, Facilitating Factors, Effects and Solutions*, Landelijk Netwerk Vrouwelijke Hoogleraren (LNVH).
- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (2018) *Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine*, The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, doi: [10.17226/24994](https://doi.org/10.17226/24994)
- National Union of Students and The 1752 Group (2018) *Power in the Academy: Staff Sexual Misconduct in UK Higher Education*, [https://1752group.files.wordpress.com/2021/09/4f9f6-nus-staff-student\\_misconduct\\_report.pdf](https://1752group.files.wordpress.com/2021/09/4f9f6-nus-staff-student_misconduct_report.pdf).
- Nisbet, L., Halse, G., van Esbroek, E.M., Heywood, W., Powell, A. and Myers, P. (2022) *Qualitative Research on Experiences of Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault Among University Students in 2021*, Social Research Centre, [https://assets.website-files.com/61c2583e4730c0d5b054b8ab/623a86e53198c32ab7d0a449\\_2021%20NSSS%20Qualitative%20Report.pdf](https://assets.website-files.com/61c2583e4730c0d5b054b8ab/623a86e53198c32ab7d0a449_2021%20NSSS%20Qualitative%20Report.pdf).
- Nwadigwé, C.E. (2007) Unwilling brides: 'phallic attack' as a barrier to gender balance in higher education in Nigeria, *Sex Education*, 7(4): 351–69, doi: [10.1080/14681810701636036](https://doi.org/10.1080/14681810701636036)

- Office for Students (2024) Condition E6: harassment and sexual misconduct (worldwide), Office for Students, <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/>.
- Page, T., Bull, A. and Chapman, E. (2019) Making power visible: ‘slow activism’ to address staff sexual misconduct in higher education, *Violence Against Women*, 25(11): 1309–30, doi: [10.1177/1077801219844606](https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801219844606)
- Pilinkaitė Sotirovič, V. and Blažytė, G. (2023) What makes academia (un)safe: experiences, observations, and consequences of gender-based violence in different stages of individual researchers’ careers, in A. Limantė, A. Tereškinas and R. Vaičiūnienė (eds) *Gender-Based Violence and the Law*, Routledge, pp 206–32.
- Reynolds, M., Anyadike-Danes, N., Lagdon, S., Aventin, A. and Armour, C. (2023) Prevalence of unwanted sexual experiences and their associations on university students in the United States, United Kingdom, and Ireland: a systematic review, *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 31(1): 1–32, doi: [10.1080/13552600.2023.2243992](https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600.2023.2243992)
- Richards, T.N. and Nystrom, A. (2022) Examining faculty-to-student consensual sexual relationship policies on campus: have there been changes in the era of #MeToo, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 37(3–4): NP1835–59, doi: [10.1177/0886260520926319](https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260520926319)
- Rosenthal, M.N., Smidt, A.M. and Freyd, J.J. (2016) Still second class: sexual harassment of graduate students, *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 40(3): 364–77, doi: [10.1177/0361684316644838](https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684316644838)
- Schredl, C., Lipinsky, A. and Humbert, A.L. (2025) You can’t see what you don’t measure! A scoping review of measurements of gender-based violence, its determinants and consequences in academia, *PLOS ONE*, 20(2): e0317872, doi: [10.1371/journal.pone.0317872](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0317872)
- Schwartz, H.L. (2012) *Interpersonal Boundaries in Teaching and Learning*, John Wiley & Sons.
- Shumba, A. and Matina, A.E.M. (2002) Sexual harassment of college students by lecturers in Zimbabwe, *Sex Education*, 2(1): 45–59, doi: [10.1080/14681810220133613](https://doi.org/10.1080/14681810220133613)
- Sidelil, L.T., Cuthbert, D. and Spark, C. (2021) Institutional betrayal and sexual harassment in STEM institutions: evidence from science and technology universities of Ethiopia, *Gender and Education*, 34(2): 231–46, doi: [10.1080/09540253.2021.1952935](https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2021.1952935)
- Srinivasan, A. (2020) Sex as a pedagogical failure, *Yale Law Journal*, 129(4): 924–1275.
- Sundaram, V., Bell, B. and Jessop, N. (2023) ‘Everything is racialised on top’: Black and minoritised girls’ and young women’s experiences of public sexual harassment in the UK, Plan International UK, <https://plan-uk.org/file/everything-is-racialised-reportpdf/download?token=bVe1kW6->.
- Vera-Gray, F. (2016) *Men’s Intrusion, Women’s Embodiment: A Critical Analysis of Street Harassment*, 1st edn, Routledge.
- Vohlídalová, M. (2015) Coping strategies for sexual harassment in higher education: ‘An official action may harm you in the end more than if someone slaps your butt’, *Sociológia*, 47(3): 20.
- Walby, S., Towers, J., Olive, P., Francis, B., Strid, S., Balderston, S., et al (2017) *The Concept and Measurement of Violence Against Women and Men*, Policy Press.
- Wear, D., Aultman, J.M. and Borges, N.J. (2007) Retheorizing sexual harassment in medical education: women students’ perceptions at five U.S. medical schools, *Teaching and Learning in Medicine*, 19(1): 20–9, doi: [10.1080/10401330709336619](https://doi.org/10.1080/10401330709336619)
- Whitley, L. and Page, T. (2015) Sexism at the centre: locating the problem of sexual harassment, *New Formations*, 86: 34–53, doi: [10.3898/newf.86.02.2015](https://doi.org/10.3898/newf.86.02.2015)

- Wood, L., Hofer, S., Kammer-Kerwick, M., Parra-Cardona, J.R. and Busch-Armendariz, N. (2021) Sexual harassment at institutions of higher education: prevalence, risk, and extent, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36(9–10): 4520–44, doi: [10.1177/0886260518791228](https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260518791228)
- Zeileis, A., Kleiber, C. and Jackman, S. (2008) Regression models for count data in R, *Journal of Statistical Software*, 27: 1–25, doi: [10.18637/jss.v027.i08](https://doi.org/10.18637/jss.v027.i08)
- Zindi, F. (1994) Sexual harassment in Zimbabwe's institutions of higher education, *Zambezia*, 21(2): 177–86.
- Zippel, K.S. (2006) *The Politics of Sexual Harassment: A Comparative Study of the United States, the European Union, and Germany*, Cambridge University Press.

## Supplementary material: Appendix 1

*Adapted version of the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire to measure power-based sexual misconduct*  
Sexualised comments or communications

1. Made sexualised remarks or jokes, either publicly (for example, in the classroom), or to you privately
2. Displayed, used, or distributed sexualised materials (for example, pictures, stories, or pornography)
3. Privately sent you sexualised messages electronically, via text message, email, social media, and so on
4. Made sexualised comments that included reference to your race or ethnicity
5. Made sexualised comments that included reference to your trans and/or non-binary identity
6. Made sexualised comments that included reference to your identity as female or male
7. Made sexualised comments that included reference to your sexuality
8. Made sexualised comments that included reference to your religion

Unwanted sexual attention

9. Made attempts to draw you into a discussion about sexual matters (for example, attempted to discuss or comment on your sex life or their sex life)
10. Touched you (for example, laid a hand on your arm, put an arm around your shoulders) in a way that made you feel uncomfortable
11. Asked, hinted or suggested that you have sex with them
12. Persisted with suggestions that you establish a sexual or romantic relationship with them
13. Shared intimate information about their personal life with you, such as their mental health or family-related stresses that made you feel uncomfortable

Sexual coercion

14. Stated or suggested there would be reward or special treatment if you engaged in sexual behaviour with them (for example, access to resources or opportunities)
15. Threatened you with some sort of retaliation for not being sexually cooperative (for example, the mention of an upcoming assessment, and so on)
16. Retaliated after you ended a sexual relationship with them (for example, withdrawing teaching or ignoring reference requests)
17. Engaged in sexual contact when you did not consent (this could include kissing or touching you, including through clothes)
18. Sexually assaulted or raped you, such as through penetration or attempted penetration (oral, anal, vaginal)