



# Sexual Health Matters

Strath Union Sexual Health Survey 2020



Strathclyde  
Students'  
Union

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## Acknowledgements

We would first and foremost like to thank Clodagh Halliday, the Strath Union Women's Rep 2019/20, for all of the hard work and passion that went into laying the groundwork for this survey. We'd also like to thank Ilja Koncar for his data analysis of our raw survey results. We'd like to give a special thanks to Bristol SU, whose "Let's Talk About Sex" survey provided us the platform to build our own survey, specially for the needs of Strathclyde students.

And finally, we'd like to thank all of the 600+ students who took the time to respond to our survey, helping to make Strathclyde a more sex positive, safer, and more inclusive space for all.

Strath Union is a trading name of The University of Strathclyde Students' Association, a charity registered in Scotland No: SC005914. Registered company in Scotland No: SC568857.

[strathunion.com](https://strathunion.com)  
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[#strathunion](https://www.instagram.com/strathunion)

## Content Warnings

Explicit mentions of **sex**,  
**sexual violence**, **sexual**  
**harassment**, **assault**, **rape**,  
**self harm** and **suicide**,  
**gender** and **sexuality**,  
and **relationship abuse**.

## Introduction

At Strath Union we're always working to improve the experiences of students on campus. A large part of what we do is ensuring student health and wellbeing, including sexual health and wellbeing, and countering sexual violence and assault.

In 2019, we had the opportunity to run a pop-up sexual health clinic after hearing of students' frustrations with long waiting times at specialist clinics like Sandyford. The clinic was hugely popular, and encouraged the Union to collect more information on student sexual health. The Union does a lot of work that focusses on sexual violence and assault, and having additional information to help improve provisions for our student survivors would be extremely beneficial.

We (Rachel Cairns, Vice President Inclusion 2019/21, and Benn Rapson, Vice President Welfare 2020/21) were directly inspired by the Let's Talk About Sex survey run by Bristol Students' Union, and wanted to create our own survey that was bespoke to Strathclyde. The survey was produced by ourselves and the raw data was only seen by us and two other members of staff - Silja Slepnev (Student Opportunities Coordinator) and Ilja Koncar (Student Engagement Support). Any data or comments shown to others were completely anonymised.

**We found the results of the survey extremely illuminating, and are excited to see all of the improvements that can be made to the student experience as a result of it.**



**If you find any of the information in this document upsetting,** you can get support from the disability and wellbeing service, and can access our Rape Crisis drop-in sessions.

**If you have experienced or witnessed anything concerning,** on campus or online, you can put in a report through the Report and Support system, or file an official complaint with the University or the Union.

Finally, **should you have any questions about the survey,** you can get in touch with the Union through our email at [strathunion.info@strath.ac.uk](mailto:strathunion.info@strath.ac.uk)

**Links:**

- [Rape Crisis Student Support Service](#)
- [Report & Support](#)
- [University of Strathclyde Complaints Procedure](#)
- [Strath Union Complaints](#)

# Survey Data Analysis

## Summary

Our survey was live from the 7th of October 2020 until the 25th of November 2020. It was advertised through our social media, and we offered entry to a prize draw for students to win £100 cash. The survey received 409 completed responses, with 601 responses total.

Following the closing of the survey, the raw data was given to Ilja Koncar, Student Engagement Support at Strath Union, for data analysis. Amongst other things, some of the highlights found in the data analysis were that 60% of students had never been tested for an STI or STD. 32% of students had experienced sexual harassment whilst studying at the University of Strathclyde. 88% of those were women, 8% were men, and 4% were non-binary or other had another gender identity. 9% of students had experienced sexual assault or rape whilst studying at the University of Strathclyde. 89% of those were women, 9% were men, and 3% were non-binary or had another gender identity. 34% agreed that their sex and relationship education had prepared them for healthy relationships. The rest of the data analysis can be found below.

Along with the raw data, there were around 100 pages of additional comments. We (Rachel Cairns, Vice President Inclusion 2019/21, and Benn Rapson, Vice President Welfare 2020/21) combed through these pages to identify any additional common threads that hadn't been picked up within the data analysis. There were a number of things we were able to identify through our combing through of the responses. Many students mentioned the implication of their sexual health education being combined with religious teaching, and there appeared to be a contrast between sex ed at religious and non-religious schools. A large number of students mentioned a lack of LGBT+ sex ed throughout their education in High School and beyond. A common remark was that students felt that they hadn't had any or enough education on consent, and that this had affected them in a negative way. Female and AFAB (assigned female at birth) students also commented that their sex education, if provided, focussed around not getting pregnant, and that female safety and pleasure was mostly disregarded.

Most of the comments around sex work were positive, however there appeared to be consensus that the porn industry can create harmful expectations of women and damage relationships. Students spoke about how their experiences with sexual assault, harassment, and rape affected their mental health, and subsequently their studies, and asked that any support material for survivors be better advertised to students.

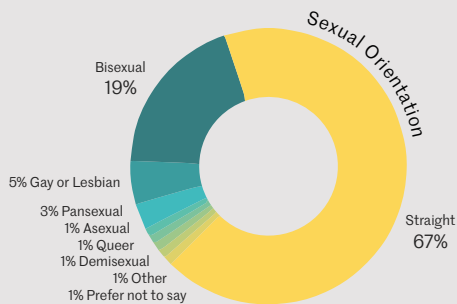
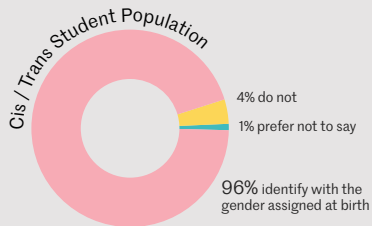
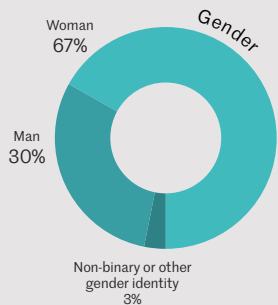


The survey gathered 661 responses, with a 61.88% completion rate (i.e. 409 complete responses).

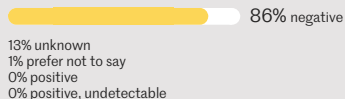
## Please note:

- Where the percentages across a specific group don't amount to 100%, this is due to rounding errors.
- The term LGB+ is used to identify the spectrum of diverse sexualities, when contrasting with heterosexuality. We are tracking data for Trans individuals separately. This in no way represents a desire to separate the Trans community from the LGBT+ community.

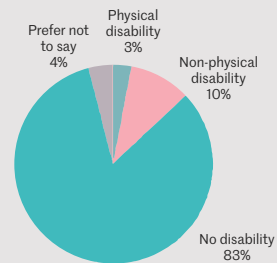
# Who took this survey?



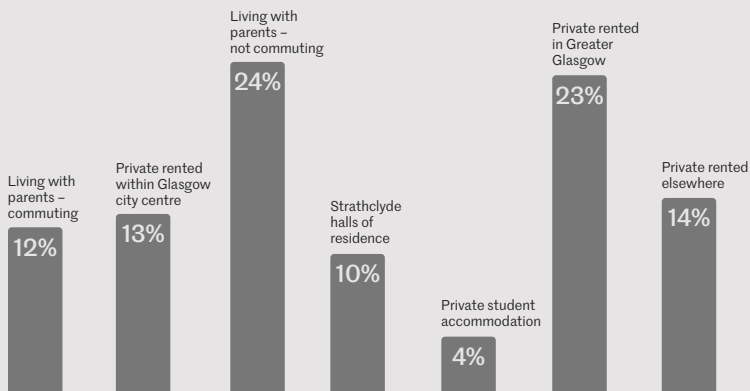
## HIV Status



## Disability



## Current Type of Accommodation



# Who took this survey?

## Academic/University Background



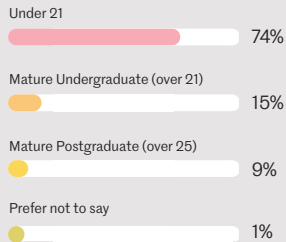
## Religion/Belief

- 43% NO RELIGION/BELIEF
- 17% ATHEIST
- 12% CHRISTIAN
- 10% CATHOLIC
- 8% AGNOSTIC
- 3% OTHER
- 3% PREFER NOT TO SAY
- 2% MUSLIM
- 1% HINDU
- 1% HUMANIST
- 1% MIXED
- 0% BUDDHIST
- 0% JEWISH

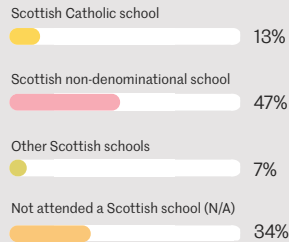
## Ethnicity

- 87% WHITE BRITISH, IRISH OR OTHER WHITE BACKGROUND
- 3% OTHER ASIAN BACKGROUND
- 2% ASIAN BRITISH
- 1% LATIN AMERICAN/HISPANIC
- 1% ANY OTHER MIXED/MULTIPLE BACKGROUND
- 1% ARAB
- 1% BLACK BRITISH
- 1% MIXED/MULTIPLE ETHNIC GROUPS: WHITE AND ASIAN
- 1% MIXED/MULTIPLE ETHNIC GROUPS: WHITE AND BLACK CARIBBEAN/AFRICAN
- 1% OTHER BLACK BACKGROUND
- 0% JEWISH
- 1% OTHER
- 1% PREFER NOT TO SAY

## Age on starting course



## Type of school if a student attended a Scottish school



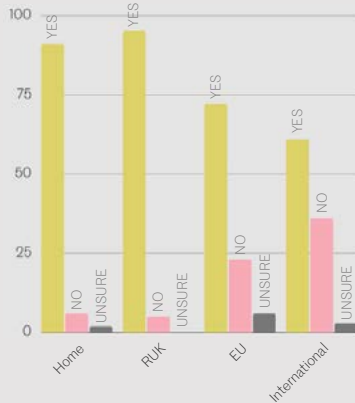
# Sex & Relationship Education



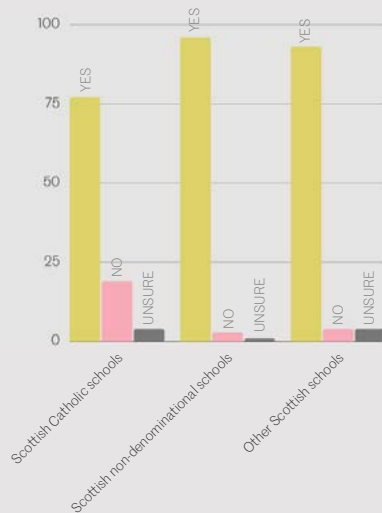
**Overall, 87% of students received sex and relationship education while at school.** 11% of students did not receive any sex and relationship education at school, with 3% being unsure.



**Q: Did students receive Sex and Relationship Education (by fee status)?**



**Q: Did students receive Sex and Relationship Education (by Scottish school type)?**





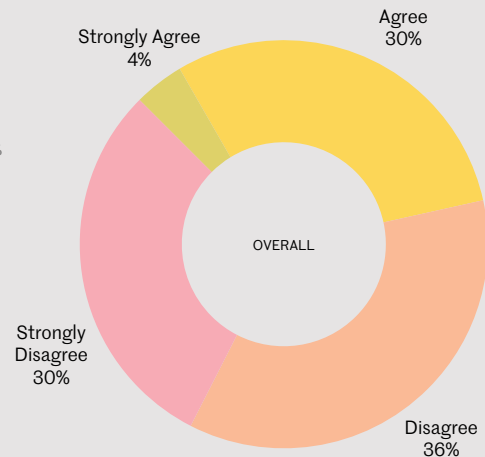
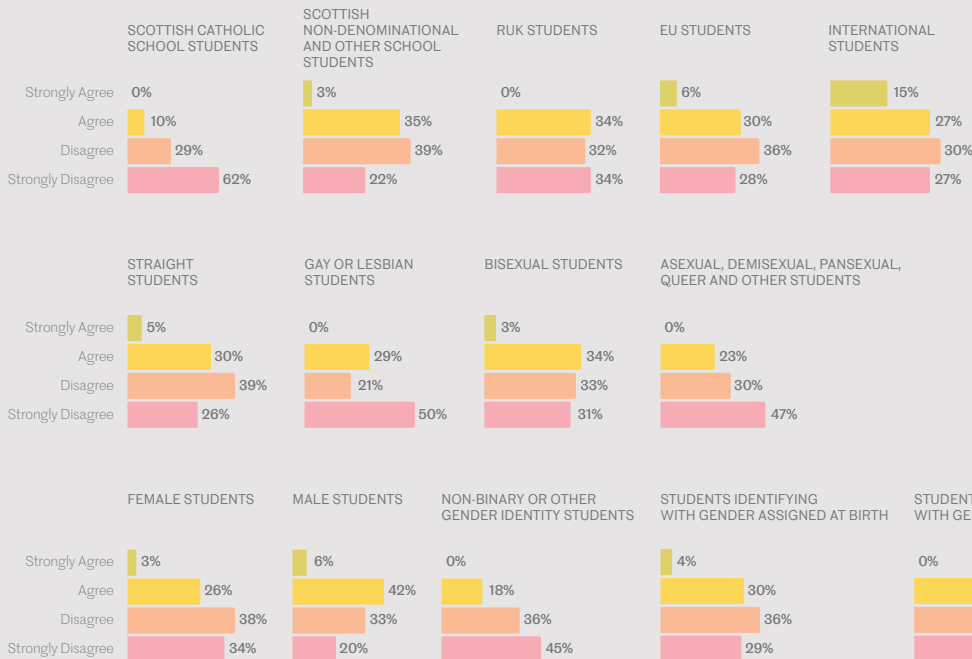
# Sex & Relationship Education

Breakdown of overall topics covered by school education  
(percentage of students who have received education on a particular topic)



# Agree or disagree:

*“The sex and relationship education I received whilst at school prepared me for healthy adult relationships”*



*Q: Was there anything you would have liked to have known about having healthy relationships before coming to university?*

**“Healthy, supportive relationships and their characteristics. How to tell if you’re in a dysfunctional or abusive relationship, especially non physical abuse.”**

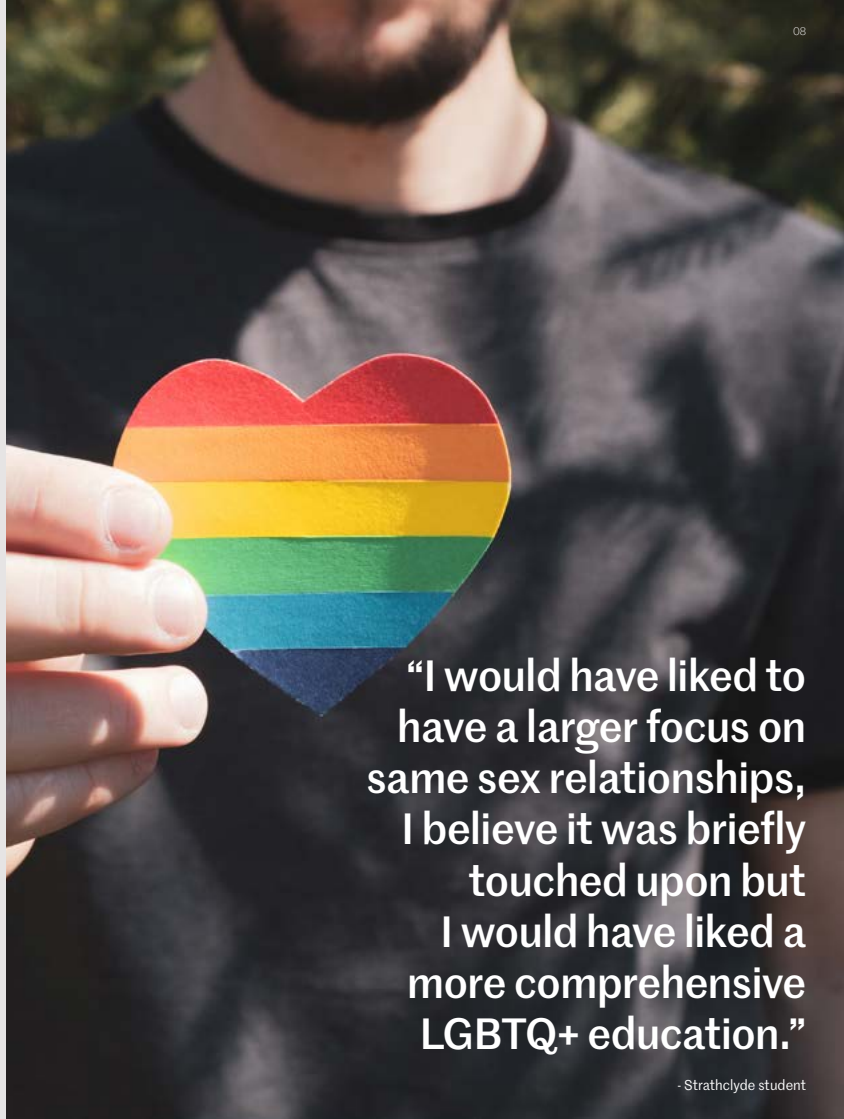
- Strathclyde student

*“I think that there should be more talk of power imbalances in relationships in schools as throughout high school there were many people (especially girls) dating someone years older than them (someone who could drive, worked full time etc) and saw it as appealing because their partner could offer something/were more interesting. I feel that maybe they didn’t realise that in a lot of these instances these older partners were somewhat predatory and held the majority of the power in the relationship.”*

- Strathclyde student

*“I would have liked to know that a person can always say no. I would have liked to know how to know you really like or love someone. I would have liked to know when I am being emotionally manipulated and sexually coerced, and how that is not the norm. I would have liked to know how realistically being in a relationship looks - people have other responsibilities than just the relationship.”*

- Strathclyde student

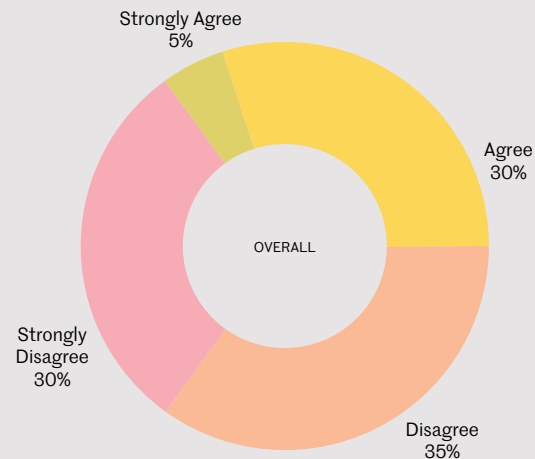
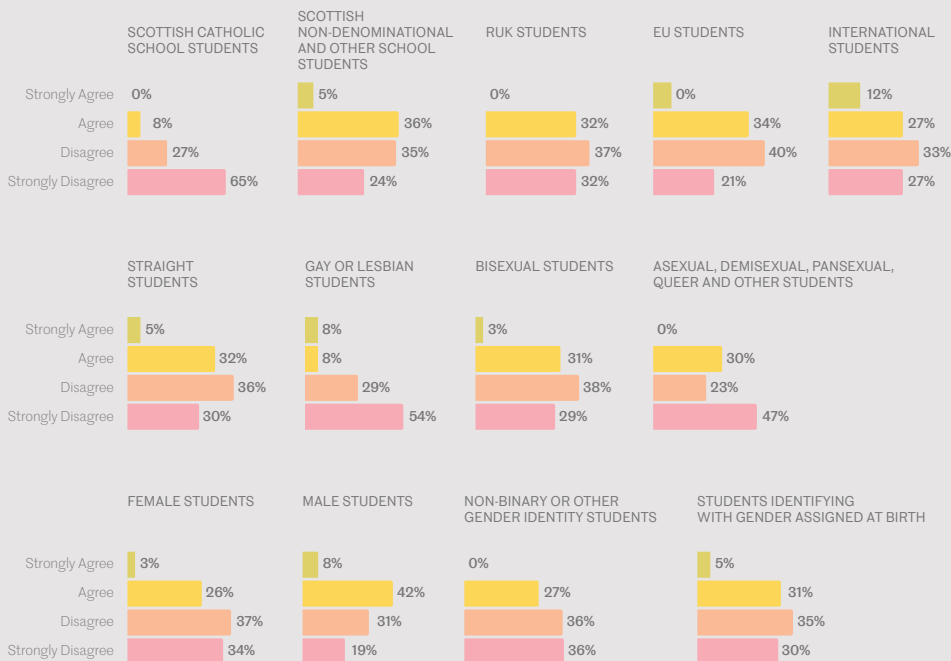


**“I would have liked to have a larger focus on same sex relationships, I believe it was briefly touched upon but I would have liked a more comprehensive LGBTQ+ education.”**

- Strathclyde student

# Agree or disagree:

*“The Sex and Relationship Education I received whilst at school prepared me for a healthy adult sex life”*



**Q:** Are there any comments you would like to make about your experience [of sex and relationship education] ?

***"I went to school and college in the UK, and I thought I had a fairly decent sexual education, but it's incredibly obvious that sexual education is dedicated towards a white, cis, straight point of view of what 'sex' is. I'm transgender and asexual and so most of the actual 'fundamental' stuff like condoms, pregnancy, birth control or whatever just doesn't apply to me physically or mentally. I basically self-taught myself sexual education."***

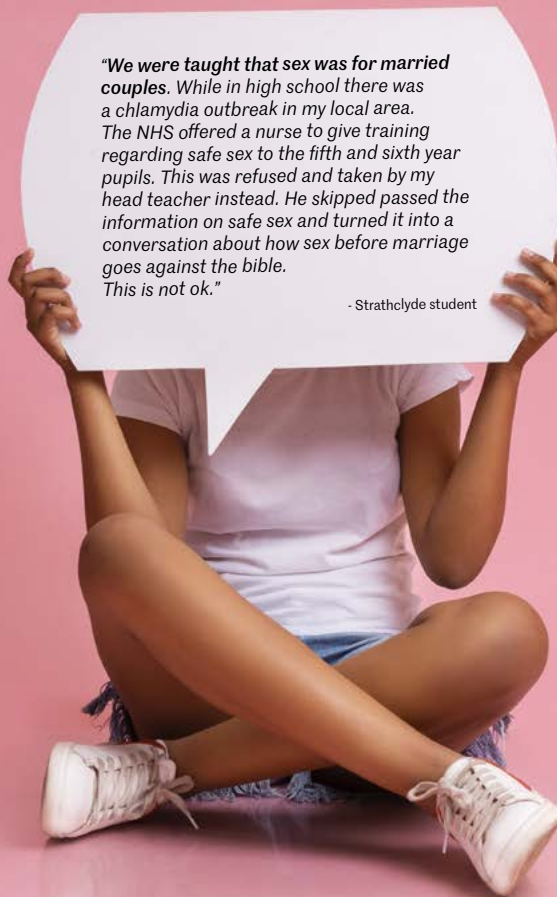
- Strathclyde student

***"Having gone to Catholic schools my whole life, not only did I have to learn everything from scratch as I became sexually active, but I also needed to unlearn many of the lessons that had been taught. For example, at a Catholic all-girls school, I was genuinely taught that 'giving away' my virginity too early was akin to 'opening your presents before Christmas day'; an irreversible mistake."***

- Strathclyde student

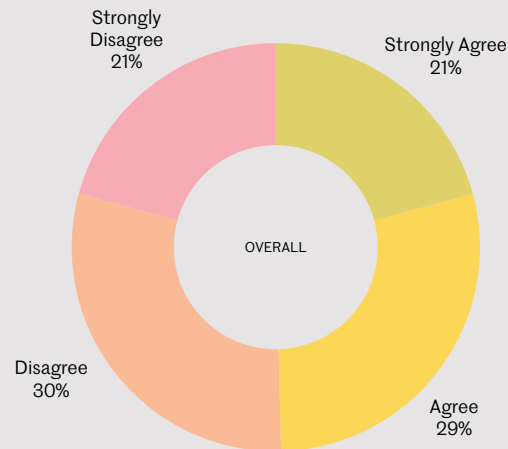
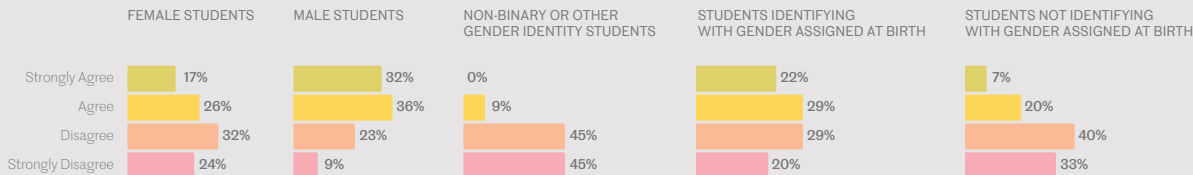
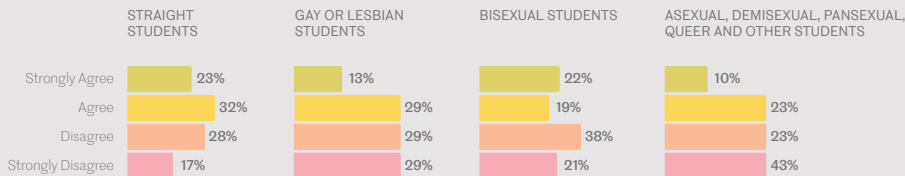
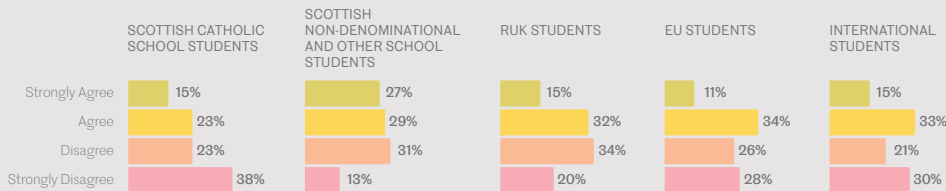
***"We were taught that sex was for married couples. While in high school there was a chlamydia outbreak in my local area. The NHS offered a nurse to give training regarding safe sex to the fifth and sixth year pupils. This was refused and taken by my head teacher instead. He skipped passed the information on safe sex and turned it into a conversation about how sex before marriage goes against the bible. This is not ok."***

- Strathclyde student



# Agree or disagree:

*“The Sex and Relationship Education I received gave me a comprehensive understanding of consent”*



**Q: Was there anything you would have liked to have known about sex or consent before coming to university?**

**“I would have liked to have understood that I can say no to any sexual situation,**

*whereas in younger years I didn't exactly understand that it was ok for me to say no even where it would make the other person 'feel bad'.”*

- Strathclyde student

*“Also would have been good to be taught what to do if someone harasses, assaults or rapes you, **what services are available to help and how to access them.** Also, a focus on teaching boys about looking out, not harassing women, and how to call their friends or peers out on it would be good.”*

- Strathclyde student

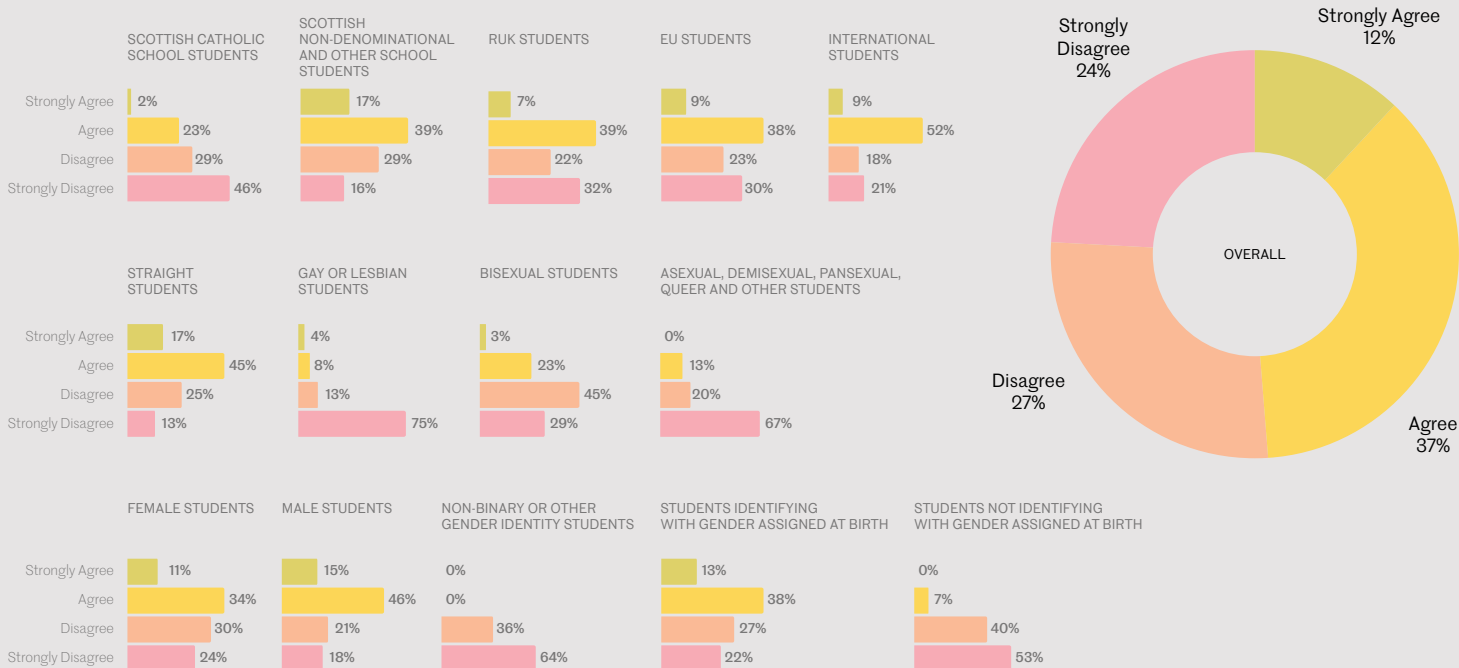
*“I would like to have been taught about consent/rape/sexual assault, more about healthy sexual relationships, more information about STDs/STIs so that I would have been more informed about different types and **less afraid of the topic,** more information about sexual health and sexual health services, more information about contraception, sexuality, same sex relationships and other topics such as pornography and body image.”*

- Strathclyde student

**88% of students did not undergo consent training since leaving school.** Among students who did, 4% did it with the establishment of employment, 4% with the university, and 3% with the Students' Union.

# Agree or disagree:

*“The sex and relationship education I received provided me with information relevant to me and my identity”*





# Sexual Health

Overall, 89% of students reported using some form of contraception, with 11% not using any form of contraception.

The most popular form of contraception used were condoms at 44% and the contraceptive pill at 29%. Other forms of contraception reported were implants (8%), IUDs (5%), dental dams (2%) and IUS (1%).

71% of students reported having never used emergency contraception, with 29% reporting that they had.

99% of students have never used PEP, with 1% of students being unsure if they had. Similarly, 99% of students reported never using PrEP, with 1% reporting that they had.

A lot of comments on the topic of contraception included the **need for more information of different type of contraception available**, as well as their side-effects and recommended usage.

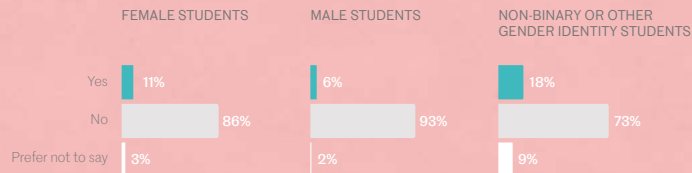
**29%**  
of students reported having used emergency contraception

Anti-HIV medication

**99%**  
of students have never used PEP or PrEP



88% of students reported not struggling to afford contraception whilst at university, while 10% did. 2% of respondents did not want to disclose this information. Across groups, the response to the question *“Have you ever struggled to meet the cost of contraception whilst at university?”* was as follows:



Q: *Would you like to make any additional comments about contraception?*

*"I would like to say that in my experience, men seem to be remarkably confident about their ability to avoid STI's through sheer will. My male friends who had very active sex lives had never had an STI test before in their entire lives. Shocking. Someone NEEDS to teach men that taking a condom off mid-sex IS rape as they are clearly not aware of the potential ramifications of doing this."*

- Strathclyde student

*"I never heard of PrEP and PEP before now."*

- Strathclyde student

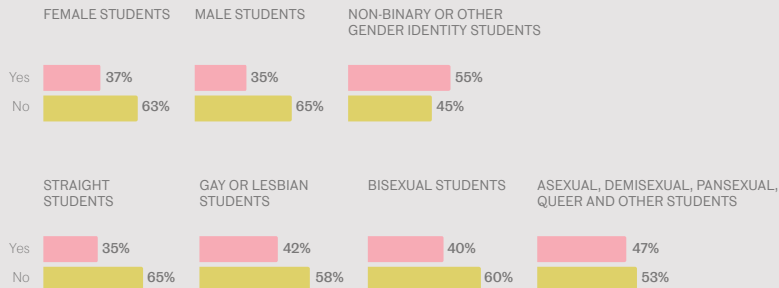
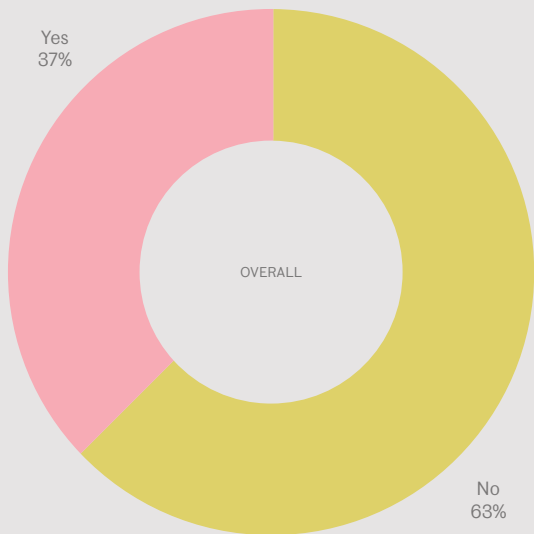
*"Had no idea PEP and PrEP even existed, was never mentioned at school."*

- Strathclyde student



# Sexual Health

Q: Are you concerned about contracting an STI/STD?



# Sexual Health

60% of all respondents have never been tested for STIs/STDs. Of those who have, 12% get tested after each new sexual partner, 5% only if they have symptoms of STIs/STDs, 9% only if they feel there is a risk, 2% every couple of months, 2% twice a year, 3% once a year and 6% less regularly than once a year.

**Q: Have you ever been tested for STI/STD?**

FEMALE STUDENTS



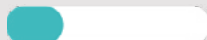
42% YES 58% NO

MALE STUDENTS



36% YES 64% NO

NON-BINARY OR OTHER  
GENDER IDENTITY STUDENTS



27% YES 73% NO

**60% of all  
respondents  
have never  
been tested  
for STIs/STDs**

Q: How easy did you find it to get tested for STIs/STDs in Glasgow?

*"Not easy. Didn't know you could go through your GP, tried to get an appointment at the Sandyford but couldn't and my experience with the GP was quite unnerving and unfriendly."*

- Strathclyde student

*"The wait is a joke and if there was actually an issue you would be in trouble because it would take too long to get help."*

- Strathclyde student

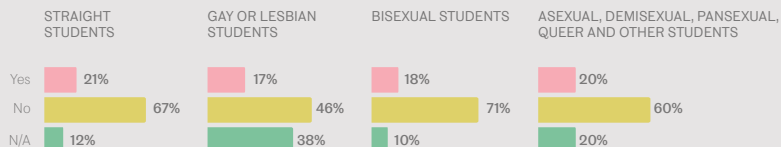
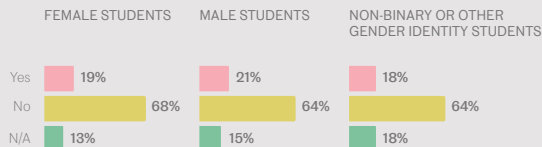
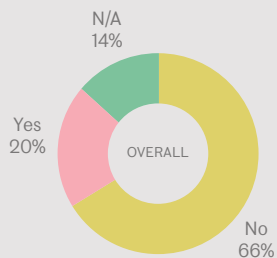
*"Often met with large waiting lists. I know the University offered testing days occasionally, but if this was more frequent and more discrete I would be more likely to use it."*

- Strathclyde student

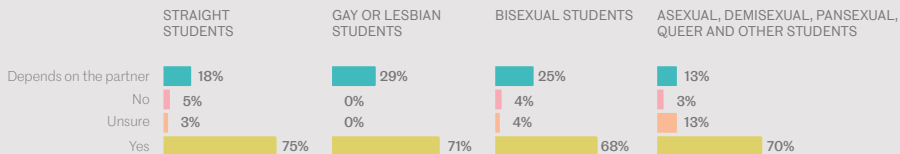
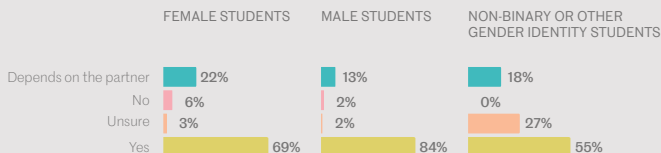
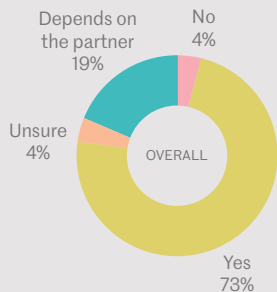


# Sexual Health

**Q: Are you concerned about your partner respecting your wishes in regards to contraception?**



**Q: Are you confident about discussing sexual health with a partner?**





**2% of respondents stated they have experienced an unintended pregnancy whilst at Strathclyde**

**91% of respondents stated that they have not experienced an unintended pregnancy whilst at Strathclyde,** with 7% stating this was not applicable to them, 2% saying they have, and 1% preferred not to disclose this information.

**Q: How supported do you feel by NHS services in Glasgow when it came to your sexual health?**

**“Unsupported.** I have wanted my implant out since March as I ended up with a period lasting over 4 months straight (didn't know that was possible but here we are). Instead they gave me another pill to take which caused migraines and so I had to stop. They are refusing to remove my implant to the point that I have 'researched' how to remove it myself. I will be cutting it out if the symptoms return and continue to cause suffering (breast tenderness, period pain, headaches and constant bleeding).”

- Strathclyde student

**“Sandyford** was very helpful when I wanted to get an IUS and helped me through the whole process, including an emergency check-up afterwards. **The GP doesn't really explain what the side-effects of a contraceptive can be or what the best option should be.**”

- Strathclyde student

**Q: Any further comments on Sexual Health?**

**“I think it's something that needs to be taught at university too** - a lot of people are having sex and I feel that it's not until I got a little older that I fully realised the dangers surrounding bad sexual health education. **Free condoms should be given out and leaflets about where to go for sexual health check ups.** Some may find it patronising but sexual health is so important and definitely something I feel was overlooked in Freshers week in my first year.”

- Strathclyde student



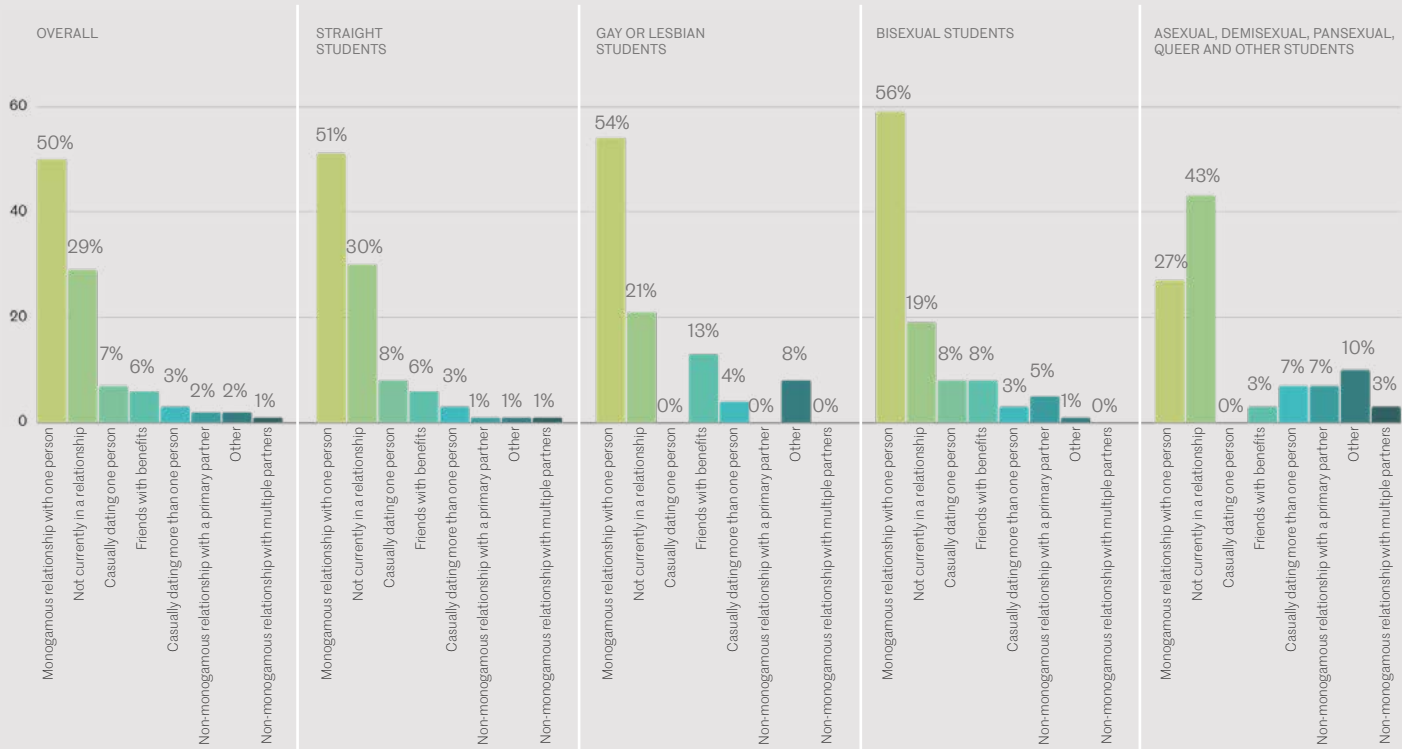


# Students' Relationships

**50%**  
of all respondents  
are in a  
monogamous  
relationship with  
one person

**29%**  
of all respondents  
are currently not  
in a relationship

**Q: What description best matches your relationship status?**



# Students' Relationships

## Dating Apps

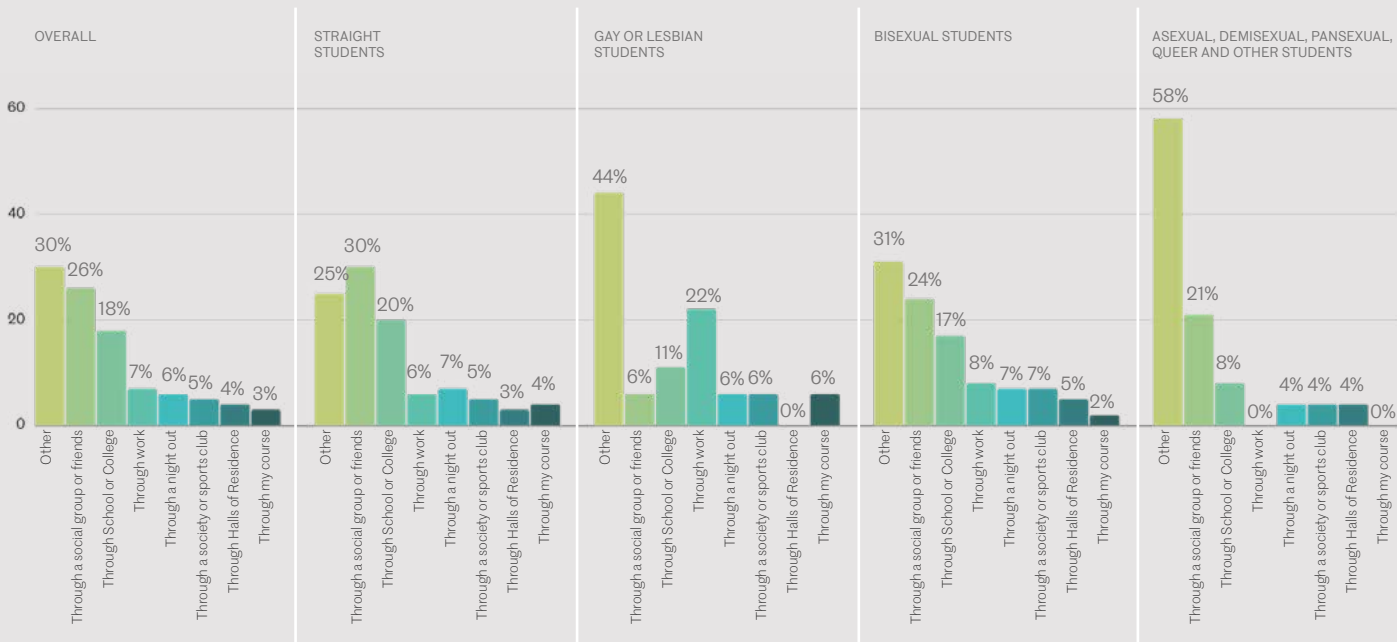
Most students reported using dating apps, with the most popular ones being Tinder at 36%, Bumble at 17% and Hinge at 8%. 27% of respondents have never used a dating app.

**18%**  
of all respondents met their current partner(s) through school or college

**26%**  
of all respondents met their current partner(s) through a social group or friends

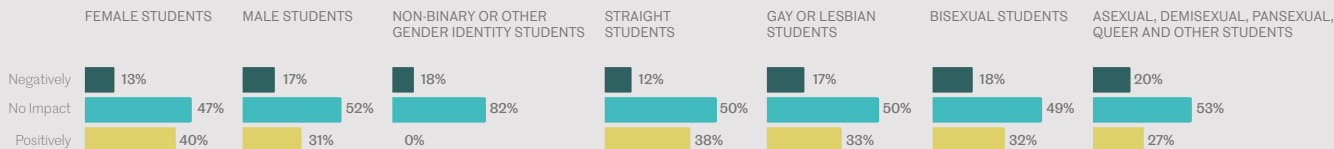
**30%**  
of all respondents met their current partner(s) some other way

**Q: If you are in a relationship, where did you meet your current partner(s)?**

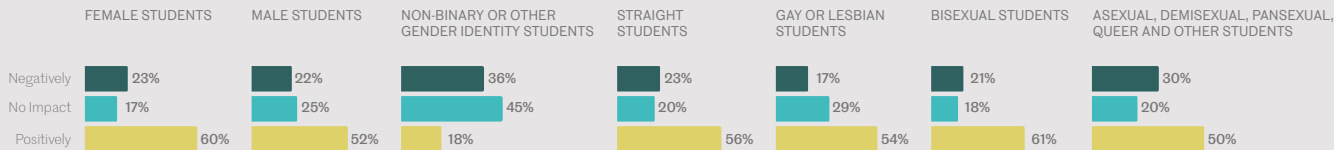


# Students' Relationships

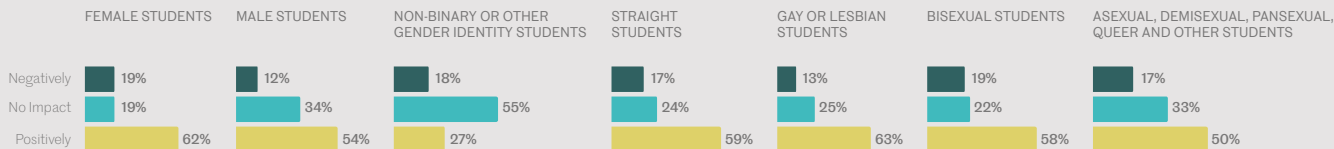
**Q: How has your relationship status impacted your studies?**



**Q: How has your relationship status impacted your mental health?**

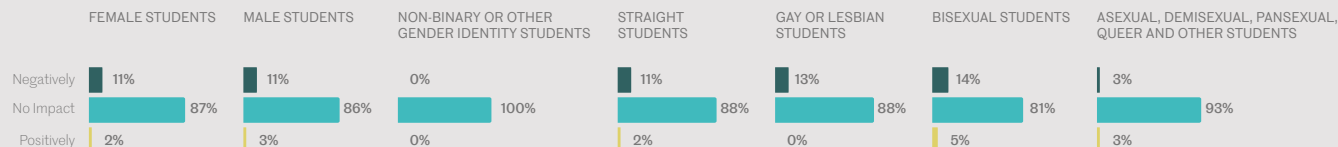


**Q: How has your relationship status impacted your personal confidence or self-esteem?**

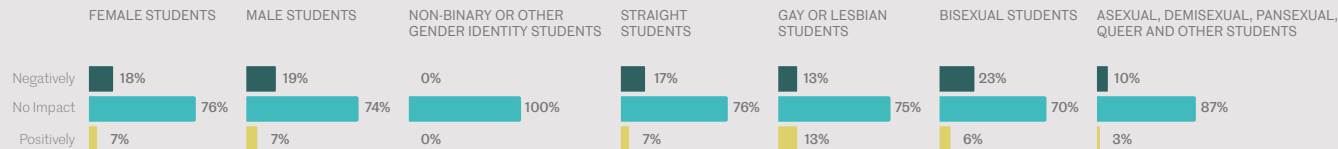


# Dating Apps

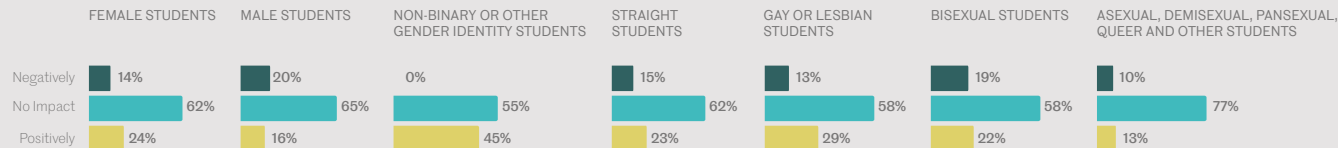
## Q: What impact has the use of dating apps had on your studies?



## Q: What impact has the use of dating apps had on your mental health?



## Q: What impact has the use of dating apps had on your personal confidence or self-esteem?



**Q:** Any comments on your experience of dating and relationships whilst at University?

**"My experiences started well in 1st year but then quickly went downhill** with the introduction of drink and drugs causing 2 years without female interaction and a deep lack of confidence. Only within the last year have I discovered the confidence to date and explore. Joining a sports club helped heavily with this, maybe from the constant socializing and improvement in physical appearance from exercising."

- Strathclyde student

**"I find sometimes dating and relationships at university have affected my self esteem which has affected my mental health. I think there is a lot of pressure surrounding relationship status and that has affected my self esteem and confidence as I have never had a relationship. I think dating apps have played into this because they can be superficial so it can affect confidence."**

- Strathclyde student

**"I would say that one of the problems I face to initiate relationships is that, as a person who's not big on parties and doesn't drink, I find it hard to meet new people.** While I do belong to a sports club and a society, the nature of both of these makes it difficult to actually meet someone with whom I could get into something in the long term (the sports club, for example, is usually composed mostly of masters/erasmus members). Additionally, being a doctoral student, most of the people I met at university tend to be younger than me, sometimes with up to 8 years of age difference."

- Strathclyde student



## Sex Life

**Overall, 32% of respondents were virgins upon starting their university**

**course**, with 67% not being virgins and 1% not wishing to disclose the information.

**Most students (26%) reported having sex several times a week,**

with 17% once a week, 11% every couple of months, 10% couple of times a year, 9% once a fortnight, 9% once a month, and 4% daily. 16% of students reported not currently having sex.

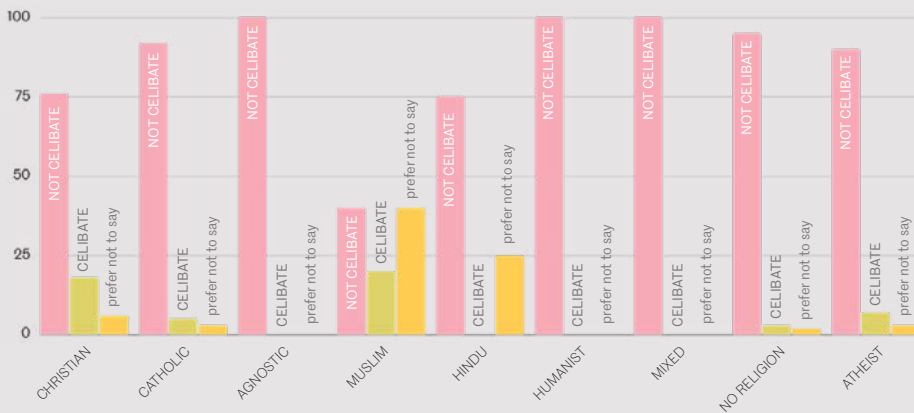
**48%**  
of respondents  
engage in  
sexting

**15%**  
engage in  
phone sex

**9%**  
engage in  
online sex

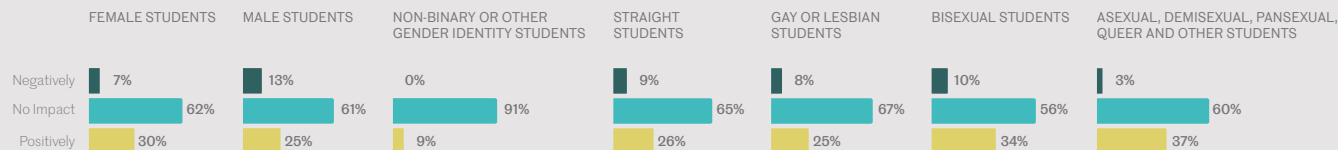
**90% of students reported not being celibate**, with 7% being celibate and 3% not disclosing this information. Across genders, 91% of female students, 92% of male students and 82% of non-binary or other gender identity students were not celibate.

A breakdown based on students' religion is shown below.

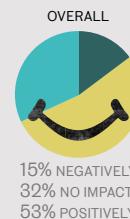
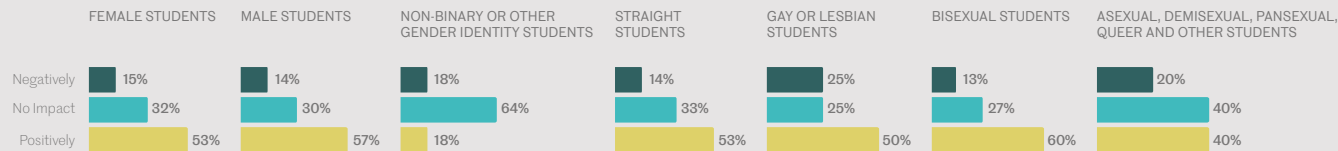


# Sex Life

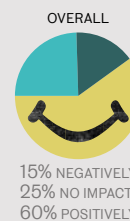
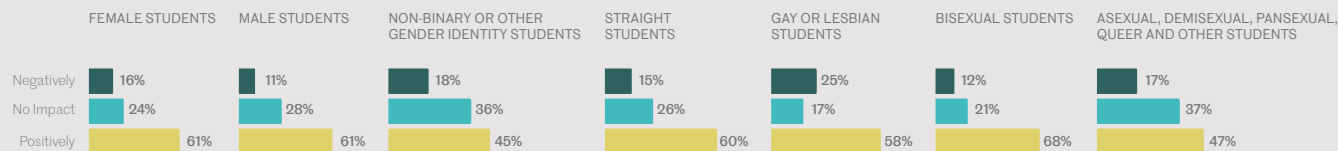
## Q: What impact has your sex life had on your studies?



## Q: What impact has your sex life had on your mental health?



## Q: What impact has your sex life had on your personal confidence / self-esteem?

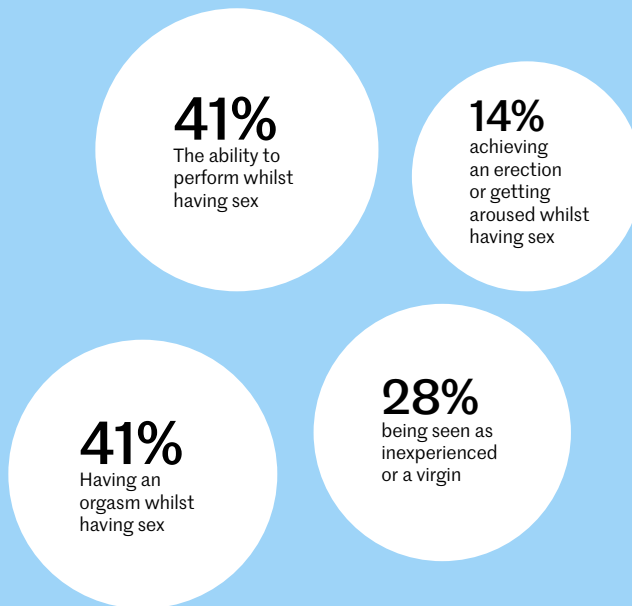


# Sex Life

Most prevalent concerns among respondents regarding their sex life were having an orgasm whilst having sex (41%) and the ability to perform whilst having sex (41%).

Other concerns included achieving an erection or getting aroused whilst having sex (14%) and being seen as inexperienced or a virgin (28%). Some other concerns students reported were **unwanted pregnancies, lack of education for non-heterosexual intercourse and sexually transmitted diseases.**

Most prevalent concerns among respondents regarding their sex life:





**Q:** Any further comments [on your sex life] ?

***“Having little sexual or relationship experience at the start of my course made me feel unprepared and nervous about sexual relationships.”***

- Strathclyde student

***“Not being able to have a female orgasm has had a negative impact on my mental health and impacted my sexual relationships. I think there should be more emphasis on educating people on female pleasure and eradicating the stigma of female masturbation.”***

- Strathclyde student

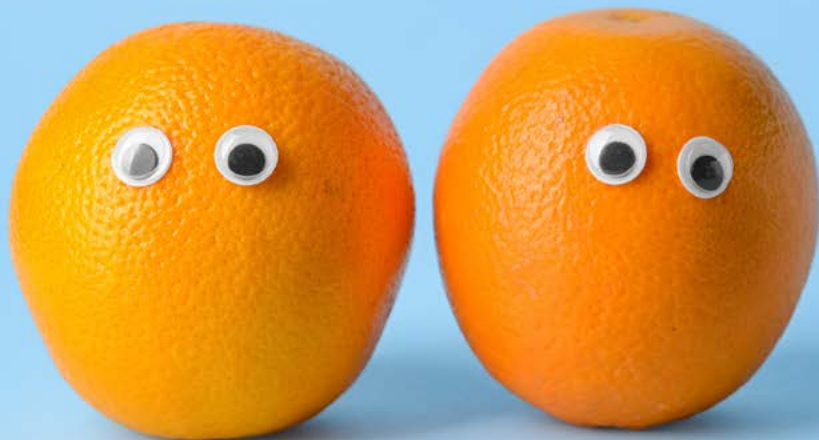
**Q:** Any other concerns about sex?

***“I’m usually concerned about my ability to pleasure my partner while we’re having sex. I’m sometimes a bit concerned as well with my physical aspect and if it will arouse my partner.”***

- Strathclyde student

***“Having never achieved an orgasm alone, I worry if I find a woman, I want to have a sexual relationship with that I won’t be able to perform as expected, or that there’s something wrong that I’ve never been able to make it happen. I also worry as having no experience and only recently allowing myself to accept my sexuality means that I don’t have an understanding of how to engage in sex with another woman correctly.”***


- Strathclyde student



*Q: Is there anything else you want to tell us about your thoughts and feelings about sex?*

*"I feel like nobody really knows how to have sex because we haven't been educated on it. Very few people received sexual education in school, and that was mainly focused on contraception, sexual health and things like that. But no one knows how to pleasure somebody else and that is terrifying in the beginning because we're too in our heads, and this may be a bigger problem for some and they might give up without even trying."*

- Strathclyde student



*"Sometimes I feel as though I 'should' have sex on a consistent basis even though I know my partner is understanding and would never make me do anything I don't want to, it is an internal feeling that I should be doing it."*

- Strathclyde student

# Pornography

**62% of students in the survey reported consuming pornography, while 38% didn't.**

Of the students who do, 65% reported this to not have an impact on their sexual or romantic relationships, with 16% reporting negative impact and 20% reporting positive impact on their relationships.

On the other hand, of the students who consume pornography, only 10% reported this having a positive impact on their self-esteem, with the majority (64%) reporting no impact and 25% reporting a negative impact on their self-esteem. Students noted that consuming pornography, while it can be helpful with stress, it could also create unrealistic expectations from sex, exploit individuals and cause an addiction.

*Pornography can create unrealistic expectations, exploit individuals and cause an addiction...*

- Strathclyde student

*It can be helpful with stress..*

- Strathclyde student

**Q: Do you have any comments about the impact of pornography you would like to share?**

*"It creates unrealistic expectations. It is often violent, vulgar, male-dominated, and made for men's pleasure. Women are treated as objects and female orgasms and pleasure are rare. Furthermore, young men often get desensitized mentally and physically from too much porn and it can also have negative impacts of female viewers. Overall porn creates an unrealistic and unhealthy image of what people "should" look like."*

- Strathclyde student

*"I understand that porn gives people some unrealistic expectations, but that doesn't stop me from consuming it, that being said I am quite selective in the porn that I watch. I would like to see the porn industry take a more realistic approach to the content they produce."*

- Strathclyde student

*"I am actually recovering from pornography addiction, which had affected me for years, even before university. It negatively affected all of my previous relationships and my current one. I will say that since quitting, things have been looking more positive. There is absolutely nothing good that comes from pornography."*

- Strathclyde student

**96% of students have never worked in the sex industry, with 2% working in the industry as a sex worker, 1% in another role, and 1% in both direct and indirect roles. 1% of students did not want to disclose this information.**

Of the students working in the industry as a sex worker, 29% identified as male, 29% as non-binary or other gender identity, and 43% as female. Of the students working in both direct and indirect roles or in a role different to a sex worker all identified as female. Additionally, 3% of students engaged in digital sex work – of which 67% identified as female, 17% as male and 17% as non-binary or other gender identity.

Of those who were a part of the sex industry, 58% reported it having no impact on their relationships, with 33% noting a positive impact, and 8% a negative impact. Furthermore, 83% of those students reported their involvement in the sex industry having a positive impact on their self-esteem, with 17% stating no impact.

Other students stated interest in being a part of the industry, noting their key apprehensions being the impact on their long-term relationship and lack of information on how to join the industry. A prevalent opinion seems to be that sex work should be less stigmatized in society and legally protected as a profession.

Sex work should be less stigmatized in society and legally protected as a profession



**Q: Would you like to make any additional comments about the sex industry?**

*"I would be happy to work in it as a lot of my friends do and they make a lot of cash from it but I feel like it would be cheating on my long term partner so I haven't. If I didn't have a relationship, I would definitely have engaged in sex work whilst at uni as it is so hard to find a job."*

- Strathclyde student

*"Like pornography, sex work should not be stigmatised as this awful thing that only the lowest in society participate in. Selling a few photos and videos to people is still a form of sex work, along with the more out-there stuff like making pornography or prostitution, but all should be viewed way more positively. I'm glad this survey brings up sex work as a thing that \*does\* happen and occur."*

- Strathclyde student



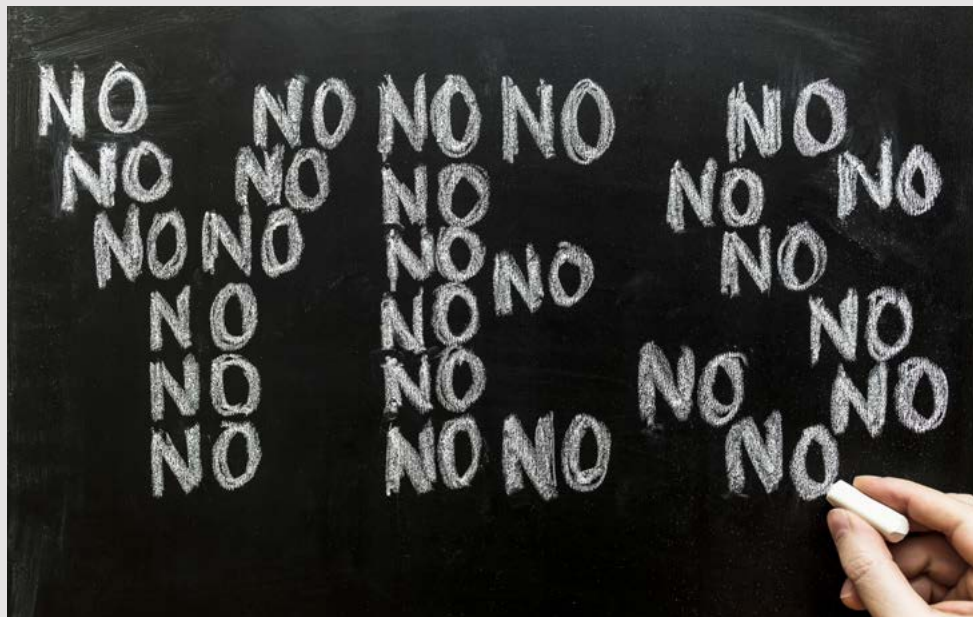
*"There's so much stigma around it, yes there can be abuse, but there are also so many people who just genuinely enjoy it and are good at it and are so incredibly self-reflective, and safe about it. Those I know all make it part of their work to educate people on sex, healthy relationships and consent. Criminalising sex work really doesn't help those that are getting abuse and also just adds more to our sex-negative culture that puts such a high burden on anyone who isn't a cis man."*

- Strathclyde student

## Experiences of Harassment and Assault

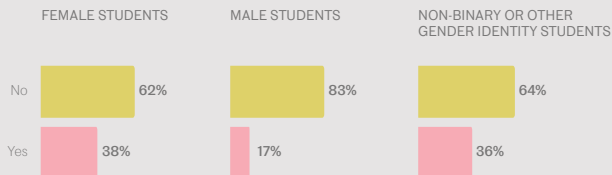
Overall, 90% of students were confident in understanding when their partner is giving consent, with 4% not confident, and 6% not engaged in sex or celibate.

When it comes to communicating consent, 91% felt comfortable doing this with long-term partners, 64% felt comfortable doing this with casual partners, and 7% of students did not feel comfortable communicating consent to anyone.



60% of students did not feel concerned about their partner feeling pressured to have sex, with 25% expressing this concern, while 14% did not engage in sex or are celibate. Additionally, 68% of students were not concerned about being pressured to have sex themselves, with 32% expressing this concern. This was further broken down as follows:

### Q: Are you concerned about being pressured to have sex?



*Q: Are there any other comments you would like to make about consent?*

***“Anecdotally: Over the past 3 years, I have explained consent to 5 different young women (aged 18-21). Each of them had experienced a situation where they were intoxicated and realized during or after the fact that an acquaintance or friend had penetrative sex with them. In all cases they were unaware that this was non-consensual sex (they all assumed they were somehow giving consent by putting themselves in the situation). All were from the UK.”***

- Strathclyde student

***“A large part of consent, as somebody who has multiple sexual partners besides my romantic partner, is the fact that sometimes you don't fall into a sexual encounter in the “usual” way that you're taught to consent for. It's not always a case of two people taking it to the bedroom and then consenting, sometimes there's actions such as slowly leading into consent in a different way that make consenting harder. I think this should be an area for further education for people.”***

- Strathclyde student

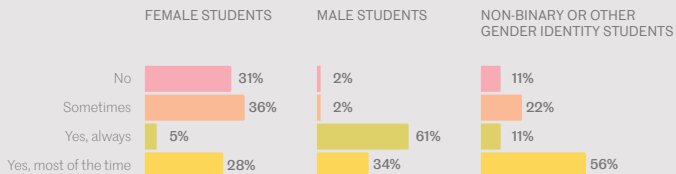
***“Neurodiversity can make it difficult to read more subtle queues regarding someone requesting sex/not wanting sex. Not everyone is willing to be explicit in communicating desires.”***

- Strathclyde student

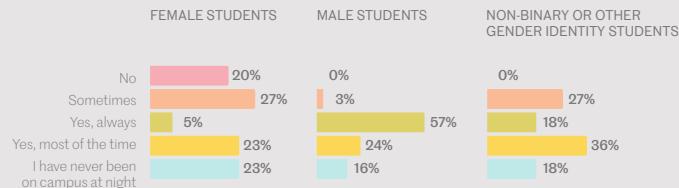


# Experiences of Harassment and Assault

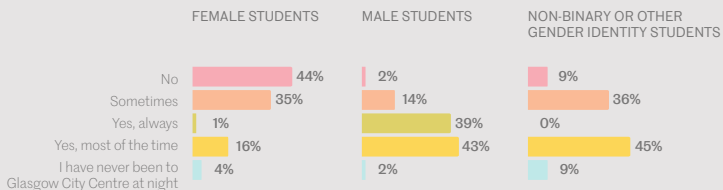
**Q: Do you feel safe walking home to your hall of residence or rented/private student accommodation at night?**



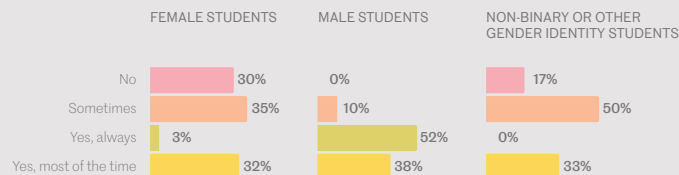
**Q: Do you feel safe walking around campus at night?**



**Q: Do you feel safe walking around Glasgow City Centre at night?**



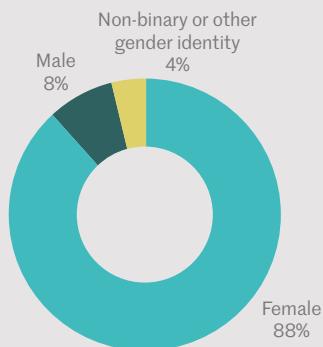
**Q: Do you feel safe during a commute home at night?**





# Experiences of Harassment and Assault

Whilst studying at the University of Strathclyde, 32% of students experienced sexual harassment, 64% did not and 4% were unsure.



Of the students who experienced sexual assault, 88% identified as female, 8% as male and 4% as non-binary or other gender identity.

Of those having experienced sexual harassment whilst at Strathclyde, 82% experienced sexual harassment from a member of public, 42% from a fellow student, 2% from a member of academic staff and 1% from a member of non-academic staff. Other responses included harassment from ex-partners and fellow co-workers.

Of those having experienced sexual harassment whilst at Strathclyde, 73% experienced sexual harassment in a nightclub, 69% on the street, 66% in a bar or a pub, 14% in halls of residence, 9% in student accommodation, 5% in the Students' Union and 4% in a university building.



## Students reported overwhelmingly negative effects of sexual harassment,

including **low self-esteem, feeling ashamed and embarrassed, stress, anxiety, fear, loss of trust in other people and worthlessness**. Students also reported negative effects on their studies, **feeling distracted, extreme trauma and PTSD**, and in **extreme cases dropping out of University due to sexual harassment**.

In terms of overall university experience, the students felt more cautious, and the negative experiences put a damper on their experience at university. While still largely causing negative effects, the students reported less detrimental effects of non-physical harassment.

**Q: What impact has your experience of sexual harassment had on your mental/physical health?**

***“Very anxious and hyper aware when I walk home in the dark, or just walking past men in the street during the day if they are looking at me. Caused me to not feel safe in my neighbourhood where I used to.”***

- Strathclyde student

***“Harassment by strangers is such an embedded part of daily life, that it is difficult to say what my mental health would be like without it. It is an entrenched aspect of our society that women and effeminate men are so used to experiencing, you just adjust to living in potential danger. I myself carry mace on me when it’s dark and I know many of my friends take a similar approach.”***

- Strathclyde student

**Q: What impact has your experience of sexual harassment had on your studies?**

***“It is infuriating that the winter months always bring with them heightened fear and awareness. There is no way I can leave the library before it gets dark these days which means walking back requires diligent awareness every time I leave.”***

- Strathclyde student

***“I was unable to go to the class that this tutor was in as it made me feel so uncomfortable. I didn’t get a good grade in that class.”***

- Strathclyde student

**Q: What impact has your experience of sexual harassment had on your university experience?**

***“I can’t enjoy going out to clubs with friends, I am scared to meet new people, especially males. I don’t like walking around in the dark unless I’m on the phone to my boyfriend which means that I have to depend on him a lot. I don’t go out to clubs anymore. I avoid joining societies which are male dominated. My confidence levels plummeted so group work, presentations, applying for jobs etc now very scary when before I was very confident.”***

- Strathclyde student

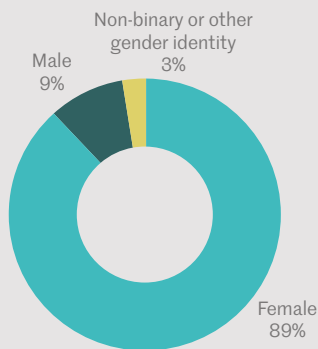
***“Difficult to say as my experiences mirror that of most women I know. For us, these issues are just a part of normal life, and a part of the uni experience we all have to go through. I can say that experiences of sexual harassment, despite their normalcy, are degrading, terrifying and isolating.”***

- Strathclyde student



## Experiences of Harassment and Assault

9% of students have experienced assault or rape whilst studying at the University of Strathclyde, while 89% did not and 3% did not wish to provide this information.



Of those experiencing assault or rape, 89% were identifying as female, 9% as male and 3% as non-binary or other gender identity. Furthermore, of those experiencing assault or rape, 63% experienced this from the members of the public and 31% from a fellow student. Other students noted they experienced assault or rape from ex-partners, current partners and family friends.

Students experiencing assault or rape reported negative effects on their mental and physical health, their studies and their university experience.

Students reported undertaking counselling, experiencing severe trauma, anxiety and fear, developing symptoms of depression, having mental breakdowns and affecting their ability to have sexual relationships moving forward. Students also reported effects of not being able to concentrate at university, being unmotivated and performing badly as a result. These experiences have caused students to shut off from other friendships and relationships and affected their ability to make new friends.

Of those experiencing assault or rape, or sexual harassment whilst at University of Strathclyde, 6% reported this to the University, while 61% did not and 32% did not know they could report it to the University. Of those that did report it to the University, 59% did not receive the support they required, 32% did and 9% did only partially. Of those who got support elsewhere, they did so by talking to Rape Crisis Rosey Project and other counselling services.





**Q: What impact has your experience of sexual assault or rape had on your mental/physical health?**

***"I worry that it's my fault. I never reported what happened and it's my word against his. I said no multiple times and he pressured me until I gave in. He gaslit me and coerced me and I still worry that he was right and that I did consent. I feel powerless."***

- Strathclyde student

***"Very bad effect. **Serious denial, suicidal thoughts, I wanted to die.** Feelings of worthlessness. Flashbacks, nightmares, triggers, PTSD. Depressive moods for weeks or months followed by happy moods for weeks or months."***

- Strathclyde student

**Q: What impact has your experience of assault or rape had on your studies?**

***"Ruined my final year of my undergrad, had to take a semester off and then sit my assessments in the second semester from first and second year in order to graduate on time."***

- Strathclyde student

**Q: What impact has your experience of assault or rape had on your university experience?**

***"I haven't made any friends because of my mental health issues that were in part born from my experiences of rape and sexual assault. I am closed off and scared to be myself around people."***

- Strathclyde student

# Experiences of Harassment and Assault

The students also suggested a number of mechanisms they believe could have been beneficial in receiving the support from the University.

These include a guarantee that victims of sexual abuse will be heard, believed and acknowledged, making these services more transparent and accessible, making the Rape Crisis webpages more welcoming and offer more sexual assault specific counselling.

Q: What more could the University have done to support you?

*"The number 1 thing any institution can do with regards to supporting victims of sexual abuse is to guarantee that you will be heard, believed, and acknowledged. Equally, that the support will take whatever form you decide, that you will not be pressured to involve the police if you do not want to, or that you will be fully supported by the university at all stages if you do decide to involve police. In my case, I would simply have wanted someone who I could tell the full story of what happened, and have them tell me that what happened to me was wrong - this would have made a huge difference in my ability to move on."*

- Strathclyde student

*"I think the rape crisis page on Strathclyde doesn't feel very welcoming. I know it's an information page but it's very clinical and cold. The drop in times don't work for people who have classes on a Friday - that's partially why it took me over 2 years to seek help. I think just making the page feel a bit more welcoming and more safe would help with the support side. It would have made me more inclined to seek help through university. Also more explicit that the uni can help."*

- Strathclyde student

*"Make services that are available to aid victims more obvious, and also provide education on what assault/harassment/rape actually is as too many people don't realise that what has happened to them actually is this and is not normal."*

- Strathclyde student

# Formalised Recommendations

**Following the initial analysis, we worked to identify what areas we could improve upon as an institution.**

As respondents conflated the University and the Union, we thought it was important to identify these areas of improvement for both organisations.



Strathclyde  
Students'  
Union

## Recommendations for the University of Strathclyde:

- Establishment of a sexual health clinic on campus. This would be in the form of immediate pop-up clinics and the creation of a permanent and fully resourced clinic on campus.
- The creation of sexual health & relationship training, that could be led by students through inductions, creating more opportunities for paid student roles.
- Establish LGBT+ inclusive sexual health and wellbeing education modules that could be accessed through MyPlace, collaborating with third sector experts on consent and bystander training, and potentially putting in place semi-regular consent testing.
- Clearer signposting and advertisements of services available to students seeking to disclose their experiences with sexual assault, rape, or relationship abuse.
- Mandatory consent & bystander for all student facing staff.
- Work with the chaplaincy and faith groups to provide information on sexual and relationship health in a faith informed way.

## Recommendations for the University of Strathclyde Students' Union:

- Run the sexual health survey annually to track any changes and needs within the student body.
- More sexual health awareness during freshers and refreshers weeks. This could be in the form of sexual health stalls, having all Welcome Team volunteers trained in consent and bystander, advertising the availability of free birth control from the Advice Hub, etc.
- Put in place support for students who engage in sex work, offering information on revenge porn, how to be safe in their work both online and in person, and collaborating with third sector experts.
- Provide students with a resource page for sexual health on the website.