



# Become The Voice Exeter

A report on the student experience of sexual  
violence on campus



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## An introduction

Become The Voice (BTV) is a UK-based community interest company that delivers bespoke programmes that equip and empower communities to make a positive change. We focus on training communities in campaigning and community action to find creative ways to use their convictions, shared values and beliefs to make positive, practical and lasting change. Gender and sexual equality, as well as platforming a liberally progressive society are at the core of what we are trying to achieve through our work and efforts. In Exeter we are working on tackling and generating awareness around the issue of gender and sexuality-based violence through our new programme: 'The Good Relationship Guide' designed by students for students.

'The Good Relationship Guide' will be a series of measures rolled out at the University of Exeter designed to raise awareness of and help to combat sexual and gender-based violence. We are hopeful that this programme could be rolled out at other universities around the UK in the near future.

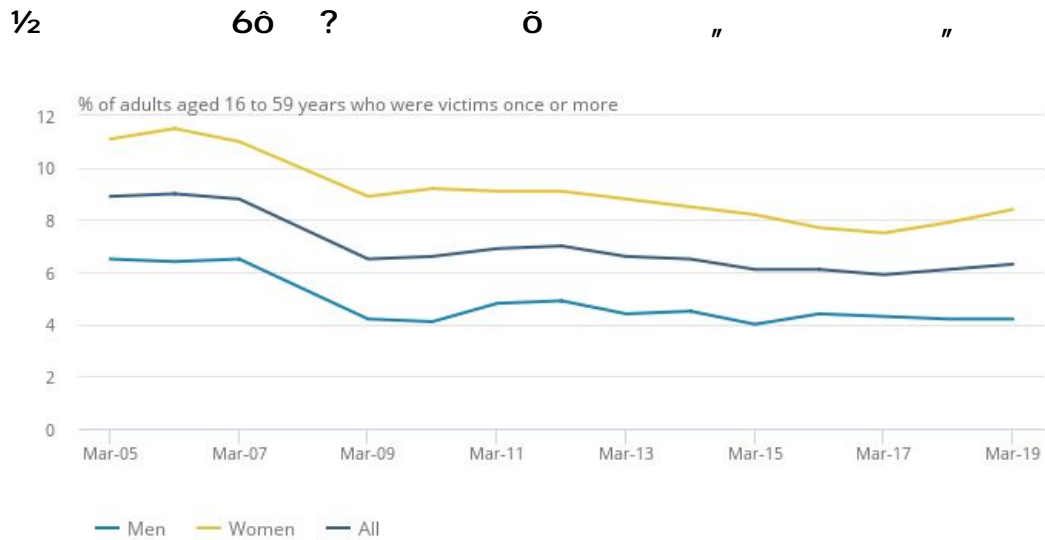
As with all BTV programmes the first step of the process is to conduct research in order to establish the extent of the issue and what resources are lacking or need improving. This was done through open source research, discussions with student groups who have an interest in student safety and/or gender-based issues, discussions with local sexual violence prevention providers and a student survey. In summary the results showed two main issues:

1. Lack of conversation initiated by the University on the matter, so they felt unable to discuss and report the issue.
2. Lack of an easy to access, comprehensive list of services and support available.

## The situation – Statistics from the UK, Devon & Exeter

As the Office for National Statistics shows, in the last year, there was no change in the prevalence of domestic violence (DV) in England and Wales. In March 2019, 8,4% of women and 4,2% of men between 16 and 59 years were victims of DV once or more, a figure that shows a steady increase in comparison with the numbers from March 2018 and March 2017.

However, given a significant decrease of this kind of violence in the year ending March 2009, the prevalence of DV is significantly lower than that reported for the year ending March 2005, when 11,1% of women and 6,5% of men between 16 and 59 years suffered from it.



Source: Office for National Statistics - Crime Survey for England and Wales

In Devon (UK) one of the main services that offers confidential, professional support to survivors of rape, sexual assault and childhood sexual abuse is the Devon Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Services (DRCSAS). They aim to help survivors of rape and/or sexual abuse aged 13 and over, whilst also offering limited support to the families, friends and partners of those affected by sexual violence.

On their 2018-2019 Annual Report, DRCSAS showed that from the total amount of their users, 93% were female (Figure 2); 85% were heterosexual (Figure 3), and 49% sought support for childhood sexual abuse, while 17% did due to a recent rape and 14% due to a historic rape (Figure 4).

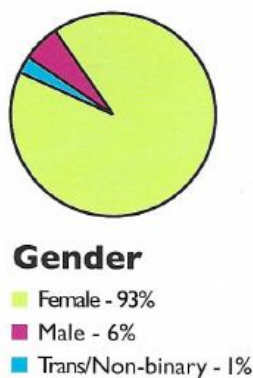


Figure 3

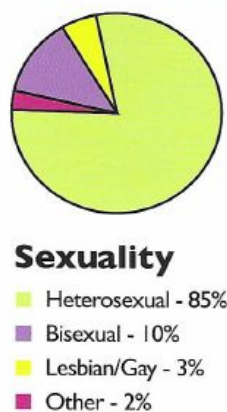


Figure 3

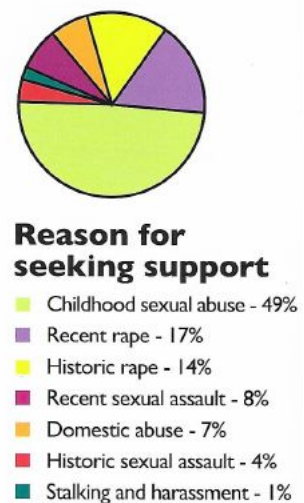


Figure 4



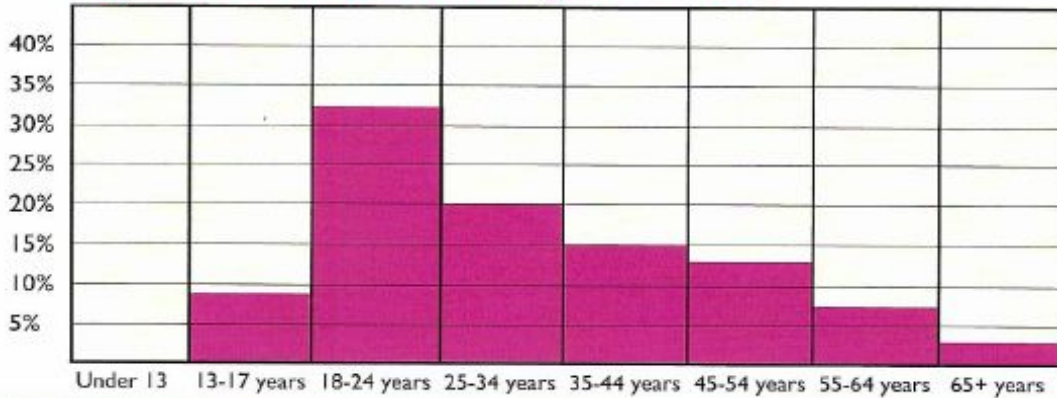
Report

Source: Devon Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Services 2018-2019 Annual

The DRCSAS report also signals that among people contacting their services, between 32-33% of people are between 18-24 years.

Male rape is also an issue that exists and that does not get the visibility it requires, often leaving the survivors of sexual abuse helpless by the police and the judicial system. According to Survivors UK, around 12,000 men are raped in the UK every year, and up to 70,000 men are expected to suffer a sexual assault per year.

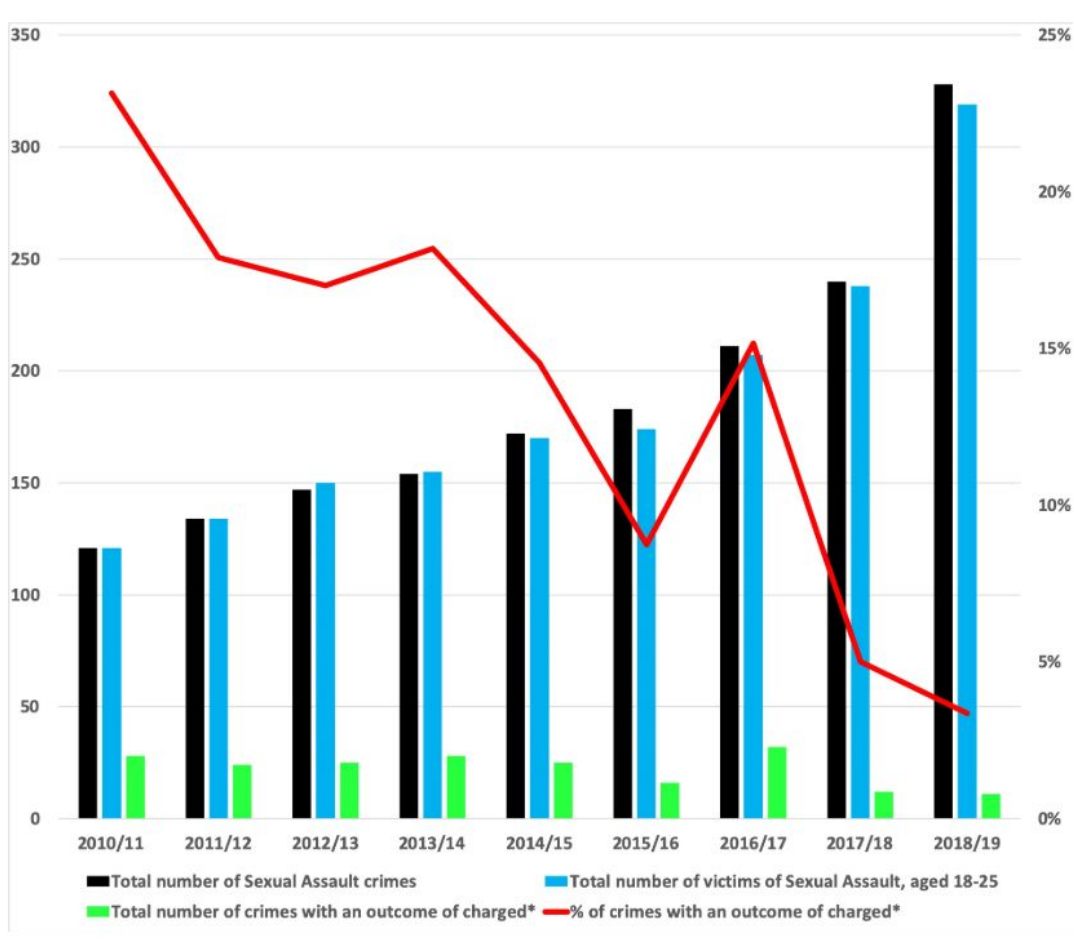
### Age When Contacting DRCSAS



Source: Devon Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Services 2018-2019 Annual Report

According to the Devon & Cornwall Police records, out of all sexual assault crimes reported in the last ten years, 98% of all victims were aged between 18 and 25, which reinforces the data previously exposed by the DRCSAS. The University of Exeter Independent Student Newspaper points out, although the age-range converges directly with undergraduate student’s age, no reports of sexual assaults were submitted to the University of Exeter between 2010 and 2015. From 2015 the total number of reports of sexual assault made to the university stayed under 5 per year. In a similar vein, in Devon, only 2,000 sexual offences are reported to the police in a year, however, approximately 84,000 women have suffered some form of sexual violence or discrimination.

In terms of sexual harassment, according to the Devon & Cornwall Police, the reports have increased from 188 in 2016 to 620 in 2018.



Source: Exposé: The University of Exeter Independent Student Newspaper

As demonstrated above, from the academic course 2010/2011 to the 2018/2019, the number of sexual assaults has linearly increased, from around 125 to more than 300, but at the same time, the percentage of crimes with an outcome of ‘charged’ has been decreasing since 2010/2011. What this proves is that

, either because they have not received enough information on how to properly do so, or because they do not feel that they are going to get a helpful and supportive response.

Freedom of Information (Fol) requests sent to 120 universities around the UK found out that students had made at least 169 allegations of misconduct against academic and non-academic staff between the years 2011/2012 and 2016/2017. However, many of the alleged victims were dissuaded from making official complaints, and either withdrew their allegations or settled for an informal resolution. Others said that they never reported their harassment, fearful of the impact on their education or careers, both of which suggest that the true scale of the problem is far greater than the Fol numbers reveal.

In February 2020, BBC exposed that since 2016, 300 students from 45 out of the 136 institutions represented by UK Universities (approximately 1/3 of them) used non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) after complaints.



## Available services in Devon & Exeter

At the University of Exeter, the Wellbeing Centre and welfare services work on offering support to students that have suffered from or witnessed a sexual assault. Their main target is to work on the possible impact that this kind of aggression can have on the students' life and progress in their courses. They also work in close contact with the DRCSAS, whose workers, as has been mentioned, offer support to victims of gender and sexuality-based violence.

Currently, the university is trying to get an Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA), as a central point of call for students to contact in the event that they experience any kind of sexual harassment. Recently, the university held sexual violence and harassment bystander intervention training for all students to participate in.

On the university webpage, in the 'Exeter Speaks Out' section, there is the Sexual misconduct policy, with information regarding:

½ A PDF document that explains the Sexual Misconduct Policy and the Sexual Misconduct Procedure, as well as two different diagrams in the form of PDFs for the Student Pathways and the Staff Pathways to report. For both students and staff there is the option to report formally -through the submission of a complaint using the University's grievance procedure- or anonymously. The latter establishes that, since the victim does not reveal her/his identity, the information provided is only used to feed the university's overarching reports, hence being unable to act on the information or respond to the victim in person. This is obviously a problem, since a lot of victims do not feel comfortable revealing their identity, and as a consequence, no serious action gets done.

? They provide the estate patrol; police and the ambulance number. Also, the webpage offers the Exeter Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) contact details. Exeter SARC is based at The Oak Centre, a safe location in Exeter. All its staff are specially trained to support anyone who experienced rape or sexual assault, either recently or in the past. The Exeter SARC provides support and services to males and females of any age.

^ The numbers of the Student Health Centre; the Student Wellbeing Centre, mentioned above, and the Exeter Students Nightline. There are some indications on how to support an affected friend or a member of staff,

There is also available the Domestic Abuse Workplace Guidance, to provide support to employees impacted by domestic abuse. The page points out that the University is a member of the Employer's Initiative on Domestic Abuse (EIDA), a leading National charity in this field. It is explained that the university has worked with the EIDA on the development of this guidance and associated training for internal stakeholders and line managers.

On the Students' Guild 'Get support' page there are the contact numbers of a wide range of support groups:



The **Exeter Women's Union**, to provide free, independent and confidential advice and information on a range of issues affecting students, including housing, money, academic related matters, and harassment and bullying.

Call: 01392 723520

Email: [advice@exeterguild.com](mailto:advice@exeterguild.com)

The **Devon Rape Crisis** offers support and information about rape, childhood sexual abuse or sexual violence. They are a professional and confidential service that support sexual assault victims through coping with and recovering from what has happened.

Website: <http://www.devonrapecrisis.org.uk/>

The **Galop**, and emotional and practical support for LGBT people experiencing domestic abuse.

Website: <http://www.galop.org.uk/domesticabuse/>

The **National Domestic Helpline**, a service for women experiencing relationship violence.

Website: <https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/>

The **Mens Advice Line**, that provide support for heterosexual, gay and bisexual males via a free confidential helpline for men experiencing relationship violence from a partner or ex-partner (or from other family members). They offer practical support and advice.

Website: [https://mensadvice.org.uk/mens\\_advice.php.html](https://mensadvice.org.uk/mens_advice.php.html)

**Survivors UK**, a service that offers support for men who have been sexually violated at any time in their lives. They offer a national web-based helpline and both individual counselling and group therapy at their base in London.

Website: <https://www.survivorsuk.org/>

**The Mix**, an online guide to life for 16-25-year-olds in the UK. They provide non-judgmental support and information on everything from sex and exam stress to debt and drugs. They have a straight-forward emotional support available 24 hours a day.

Website: <https://www.themix.org.uk/>

**Supportline**, to provide a confidential telephone helpline and website offering emotional support information and advice to any individual on any issue, from mental health problems and abuse to volunteering and internet safety.

Website: <https://www.supportline.org.uk/problems/a-z/>

**Get Connected**, UK's free, confidential helpline service for young people under 25 who need help, but do not know where to turn. They offer support around many areas from abuse and violence to employment and gender identity.

Website: <https://www.getconnected.org.uk/>

The **Exeter Equality and Dignity Advisors** are members of staff from across the University who are trained to provide a confidential and informal service for anyone involved in cases of harassment or bullying. Advisors can listen, talk through the options available and, if appropriate, signpost to other sources of support and advice.

Website: <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/equality/dignity/advisors/>

The **Exeter Sexual Assault Referral Centre**, a sexual assault referral centre in Exeter (and Devon-wide) available to anyone who has experienced rape and/or sexual assault. The





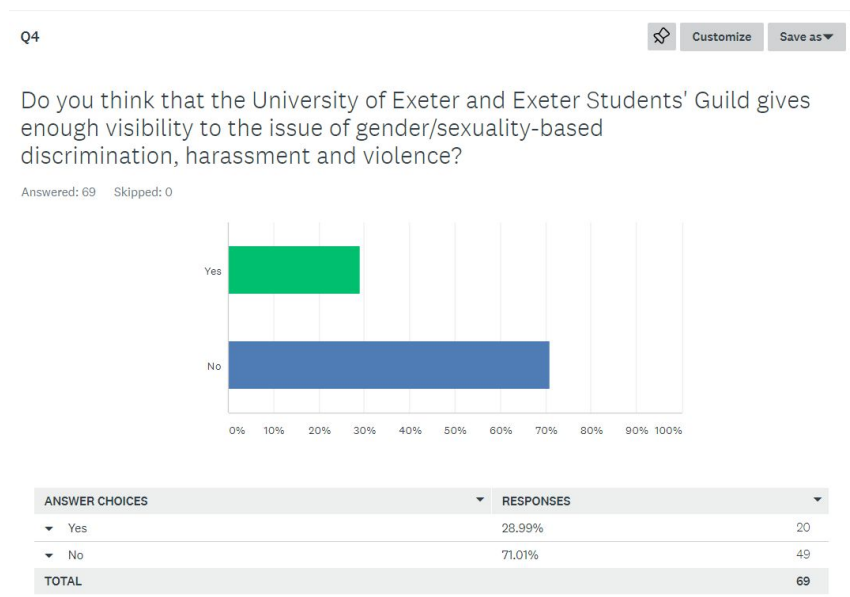
service provides a safe and confidential space to access practical and emotional support.

Website: <https://www.northdevonhealth.nhs.uk/services/sexual-assault-centre/>

Other services available around the community are First Light, which supports victims of any gender affected by rape or sexual assault in Cornwall, Devon and Wiltshire, as well as Samaritans, a non-judgemental listening service offering support to anyone that has experienced form a sexual assault.

## Student Survey results

Out of the 69 people that took the survey, 70% stated that the University of Exeter and Exeter Students' Guild does not give enough visibility to the issue of gender and sexuality-based discrimination, harassment and violence. Some of them specified that they had not even seen signings or any kind of trace of initiatives taken by the universities, while others assured that, despite being familiarized with some of the campaigns, they thought that they were too broad and generic.



Source: BTV Exeter survey. In Appendix

Similarly, 84,06% of the participants stated that there is not enough signposting from the university and the Guild on how to report and receive support after suffering from an aggression or an assault of that nature.

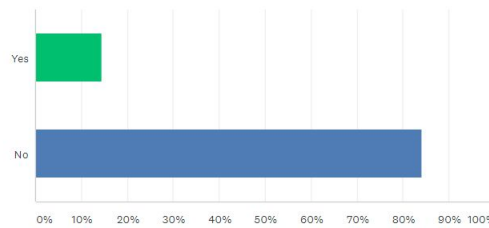


Q5

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Do you think that there is enough signposting from the University of Exeter and Exeter Students' Guild on how to report and receive support after gender/sexuality-based discrimination, harassment and violence?

Answered: 69 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	14.49% 10
No	84.06% 58
TOTAL	69

Source: BTV Exeter survey. In Appendix

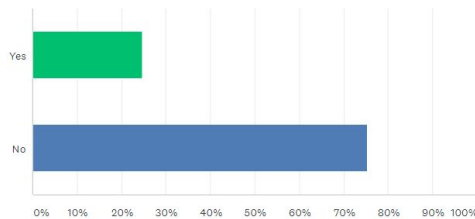
Furthermore, 75,3% answered that they did not think that the university or the Guild provided enough, easy to find information and advice on how to proceed and who to contact when facing these kinds of aggressions.

Q6

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Do you think that the University of Exeter and Exeter Students' Guild provides enough, easy to find information and advice on how to proceed and who to contact when facing or witnessing gender/sexuality-based discrimination, harassment and/or violence?

Answered: 69 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	24.64% 17
No	75.36% 52
TOTAL	69

Source: BTV Exeter survey. In Appendix

It is precisely this lack of guidance and support that victims from gender and sexuality-based discrimination have to endure when having experienced an assault or an aggression what BTV wants to address and change, in order to provide them a safe path to safely report and be protected in such a sensitive and difficult moment.



## The BTV 'Good Relationship Guide'

'The Good Relationship Guide' will be a series of measures rolled out at the University of Exeter designed to raise awareness of and help to combat sexual and gender-based violence.

The BTV student Exeter team has begun work with like-minded and already active students societies to develop Exeter's 'Good Relationship Guide.' Responding to the need to instigate discussion around the issue and organise and highlight support services in an easy and accessible manner, BTV's Good Relationship Guide will:

### Erase the Grey

Introduce the 'Erase The Grey' campaign to campus to foster discussions about gender-based violence and discrimination. Erase the Grey is a campaign that originated at Glasgow Caledonian University, set up to "challenge stereotypical attitudes and behaviours and reiterates a zero-tolerance policy towards gender-based violence." The campaign has physical materials, such as large posters and flag-like advertising that can be distributed across campus, as well as an online campaign that covers a range of issues that relate to gender-based violence. After our research revealed that students felt that the University and the students' Guild were not doing enough to initiate conversations about gender-based violence, Exeter's Become the Voice team felt like the Erase the Grey campaign was a really good fit for Exeter and wanted to join the other universities that have implemented the campaign.

Head of Student Relations Laura Pain reached out to Erase the Grey, enquiring how to go about launching the campaign at Exeter. This involved working with Exeter's student experience team (officers at the students' Guild) and the University's legal team, who agreed to sign the Erase The Grey licence agreement in order to use the physical and online materials to launch the campaign at Exeter University.

*Note:* Since the outbreak of Covid-19 and the university's closure, the implementation of the Erase the Grey campaign has been postponed until the academic year 2020/2021, however the university and the students' Guild are committed to working with BTV on this campaign, having signed the licence agreement to use Erase the Grey materials.

### Comprehensive Support Catalogue

Work with the student experience officers and university services to compile a comprehensive list of all available support and signposting in one, easy to find webpage for interested or affected students to access.



## Dedicated Welfare Officers

Support the introduction of a dedicated welfare officer into every sport club and society.

## Consent Workshop

Develop a consent workshop by students to be conducted for new and existing students, particularly those in positions of responsibility (for example, committee members for clubs or societies).



# Appendix

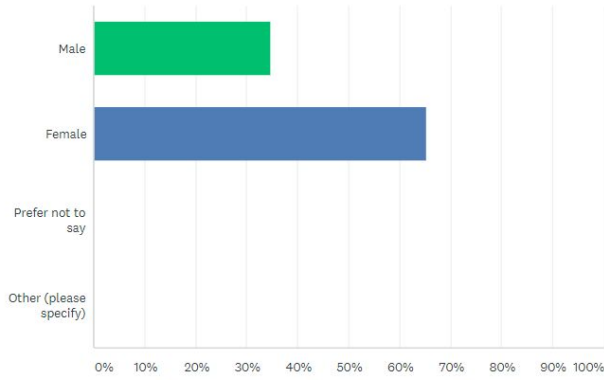
Survey about gender and sexuality-based violence and discrimination conducted by BTV Exeter among University of Exeter students

Q1

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How do you define your gender?

Answered: 69 Skipped: 0



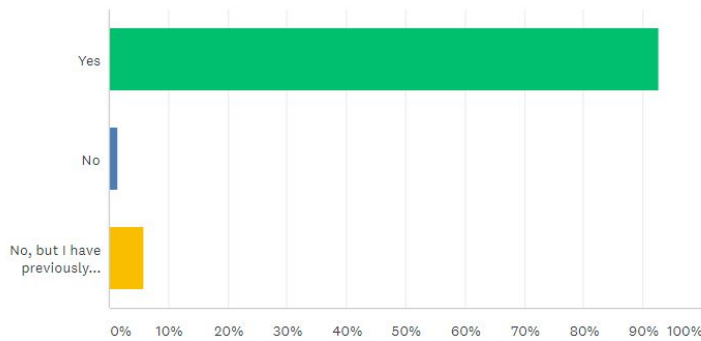
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Male	34.78%	24
Female	65.22%	45
Prefer not to say	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	Responses 0.00%	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>69</b>

Q2

Customize Save as

Are you a current student at the University of Exeter?

Answered: 69 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	92.75%	64
No	1.45%	1
No, but I have previously attended the University (please specify when you attended the University)	Responses 5.80%	4
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>69</b>

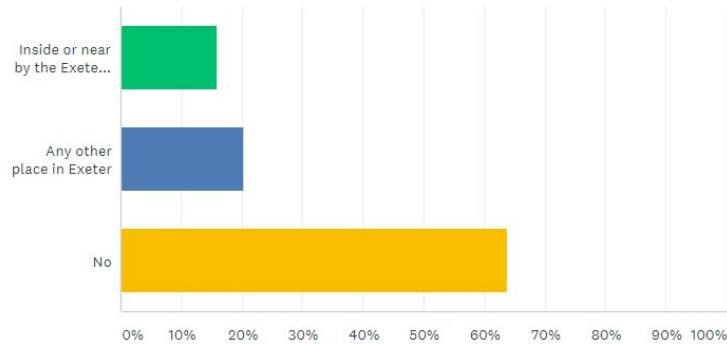


Q3

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Do you believe that you have you experienced gender/sexuality-based discrimination, harassment or violence while residing in Exeter? If so, where did this occur?

Answered: 69 Skipped: 0



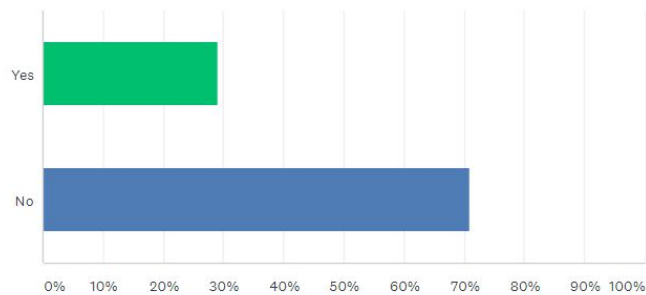
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Inside or near by the Exeter University campus	15.94% 11
Any other place in Exeter	20.29% 14
No	63.77% 44
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>69</b>

Q4

Customize Save as

Do you think that the University of Exeter and Exeter Students' Guild gives enough visibility to the issue of gender/sexuality-based discrimination, harassment and violence?

Answered: 69 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	28.99% 20
No	71.01% 49
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>69</b>



Q5

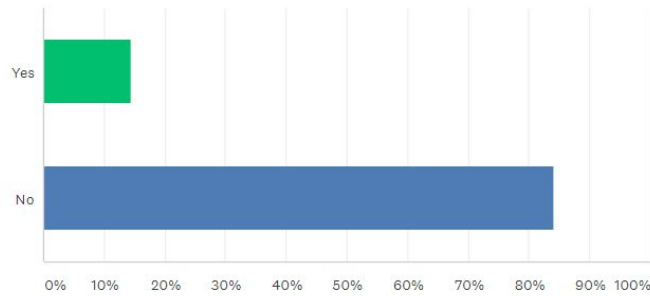


Customize

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Do you think that there is enough signposting from the University of Exeter and Exeter Students' Guild on how to report and receive support after gender/sexuality-based discrimination, harassment and violence?

Answered: 69 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	14.49%	10
No	84.06%	58
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>69</b>

Q6

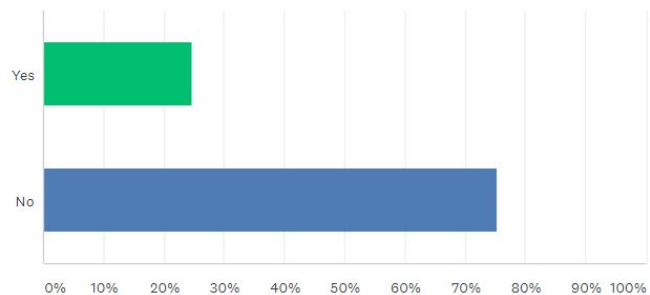


Customize

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Do you think that the University of Exeter and Exeter Students' Guild provides enough, easy to find information and advice on how to proceed and who to contact when facing or witnessing gender/sexuality-based discrimination, harassment and/or violence?

Answered: 69 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	24.64%	17
No	75.36%	52
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>69</b>



Q7 Save as ▾

What measures do you think could be implemented on campus to increase feelings of safety?

Answered: 55 Skipped: 14

**RESPONSES (55)** WORD CLOUD TAGS (0) Sentiments: OFF

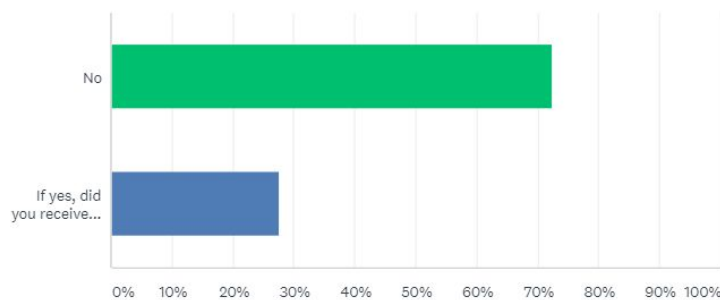
Among the 55 responses provided, the most common measures proposed involve:

- Facilitate a 'safe-space' open at all times.
- The university should give more visibility to the issue.
- Improve the lightning conditions in certain paths around university campus.
- More signposting and visibility.
- Design a more clear and direct channel to report an aggression or any other kind of misconduct.

Q8 Customize Save as ▾

Are you a committee member for any University of Exeter societies or sports teams?

Answered: 69 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
No	72.46% 50
If yes, did you receive any/adequate training or guidance regarding gender and sexuality-based discrimination, harassment and violence, including signposting?	<a href="#">Responses</a> 27.54% 19

Within the 19 people (27,54%) that answered that they are a committee member for ant University of Exeter societies or sports teams, mostly all the respondents stated that they were not given any training.



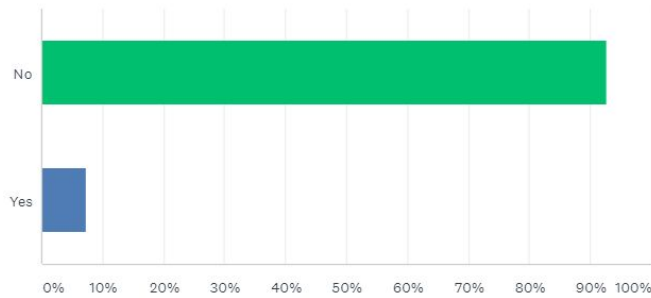


Q9

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Have you ever experienced gender/sexuality-based discrimination, harassment and/or violence within or from a society or sports club? As a member or otherwise

Answered: 69 Skipped: 0



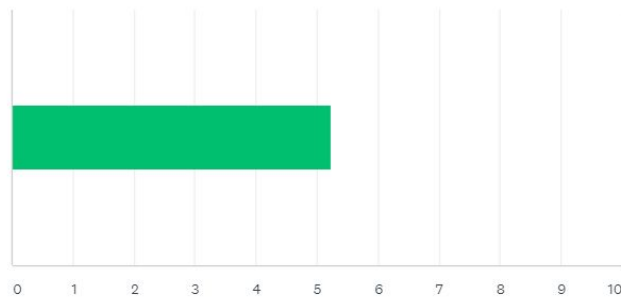
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
No	92.75% 64
Yes	7.25% 5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>69</b>

Q10

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On a scale from [0] -meaning 'doing nothing at all'- to [10] -meaning 'doing everything possible'-, to what extent do you think that the University of Exeter and Exeter Students' Guild is making enough effort to generate awareness and tackle gender/sexuality-based discrimination, harassment and violence?

Answered: 68 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
Responses	5	356	68
<b>Total Respondents: 68</b>			