

# **Sexual misconduct survey 2027**

**Advice for staff**

**October 2026**



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# Introduction to the sexual misconduct survey

## What is the 2027 sexual misconduct survey?

- Following the successful sexual misconduct survey in 2025, the survey will again be delivered nationally in 2027.
- The objective is to gain insight into the number and proportion of students who have experienced sexual misconduct, both within and outside of the university or college context and location.
- On behalf of the Office for Students (OfS), Ipsos will offer the sexual misconduct survey to all final year students across England once they have completed and submitted the National Student Survey (NSS).
- Sexual misconduct is any unwanted or attempted unwanted conduct of a sexual nature and includes, but is not limited to, sexual harassment; sexual assault; and rape.

## Why has the survey been introduced and why should students fill it in?

- **To help develop measures to prevent harassment and sexual misconduct:** Every student has the right to be safe from harassment and sexual misconduct. Better quality data will improve our understanding of the extent of sexual misconduct in higher education and could point to areas in which providers' approaches could be developed to better support students.
- **To address sexual misconduct effectively we must first understand it:** There is currently limited data at a national level on how sexual misconduct affects students in higher education in England. We want to know how many students experience sexual misconduct and, in doing so, gain an understanding of how and where interventions might be targeted to tackle this issue.
- **Build on the sexual misconduct survey 2025:** The 2027 questionnaire will be an updated version of the survey we ran in 2025. This survey aims to **continue** this research at a national level.
- **Supporting and listening to students:** Students have told us clearly that addressing harassment and sexual misconduct is a key priority for them. We've heard them, and an important part of our ongoing work in this area is understanding the prevalence of sexual misconduct. This survey will give students in England the opportunity to tell us about their experiences and, in future, could help universities and colleges better understand the issues affecting students enabling them to tailor their approaches accordingly. We want to ensure that the sector continues to address the issues students are facing in this area, and this survey will contribute to that work.

# The survey

## Who is the survey for?

- We want to hear from **all** eligible students in England, whether they have experienced sexual misconduct or not. Every perspective is valuable and contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of students' experiences.

## How can students fill in the survey?

- Before Christmas, students will receive an email about General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) from their university or college. This will notify them about the sexual misconduct survey and include the privacy notice explaining how their personal data will be used. This information will also explain how they can opt out from receiving the survey if they want to.
- The surveys will be available between 6 January and 30 April 2027.
- Students will be offered the opportunity to take part in the sexual misconduct survey immediately after they have completed the NSS. The survey is not part of the NSS (the two are entirely separate) but shares the same delivery platform.
- Students who choose not to complete the sexual misconduct survey immediately may return to it later using their original NSS invitation link, so long as the survey is still open and they have not opted out of the sexual misconduct survey. The link will return them to where they left off. Any NSS responses already submitted will have been saved.

## Is participation voluntary and confidential?

- Participation in the survey is **entirely optional** and **completely confidential**.
- Students who choose to participate can skip any questions if they wish to by selecting "prefer not to say".
- If students do not wish to take part, they can simply choose not to accept the survey when it is offered at the end of the NSS. This won't affect their NSS responses in any way.
- Students can opt out of being sent the sexual misconduct survey by contacting Ipsos using the link in the privacy notice, which will be sent to them as part of the GDPR pre-notification email message in December.
- Ipsos will securely share survey responses in a way that ensures that individuals cannot be identified in any results published or shared with universities or colleges. In all data processing we will take measures to protect student confidentiality.
- Full details are available in our [privacy notice](#), available under 'student surveys'.

## What are the plans regarding publication of survey data?

- As the sexual misconduct survey is a survey distinct from the NSS, the data will not appear as part of the 2027 OfS-published NSS dataset.
- We expect to publish the results of the sexual misconduct survey soon after publication of the NSS 2027 results.

**What will the survey ask?**

The survey questions are presented in six parts:

- Part 1 asks about experiences of sexual harassment.
- Part 2 asks about experiences of reporting sexual harassment.
- Part 3 asks about experiences of sexual assault and/or violence.
- Part 4 asks about experiences of reporting sexual assault and/or violence.
- Part 5 asks about relationships between staff and students.
- Part 6 asks about awareness of provider policies and support.

The survey questionnaire will be available on the OfS website at [2027 sexual misconduct survey - Office for Students](#).

# Key information

## Will students find the content distressing?

- Testing the survey with students has shown that participants were generally comfortable with the direct language used in the survey and appreciated the importance of the work.
- However, the survey content may be distressing for some students. We've therefore taken care to ensure that questions are designed to limit this as much as possible. We've carefully considered research ethics and consulted students to test the comprehension and readability of the questions, as well as their suitability for a wide audience.
- The survey will explore sensitive subjects and the language in some of the questions is deliberately explicit. It's important that the questions are asked in this way so that students are clear about what we mean and can identify the types of behaviours or incidents that may have affected them. These explicit questions are much more likely to provide an accurate picture of the prevalence of forms of sexual misconduct and so reduce the risk of understating the scale of the issue.
- Such questions will be clearly marked with content warnings throughout, and students will be able to skip any questions or sections that they don't wish to answer, select "prefer not to say", or stop at any time.
- Our [help and support page](#) lists national organisations and charities that may be able to provide support for those who have experienced or been impacted by harassment or sexual misconduct. The survey will also provide links to services that may be able to support those affected by sexual misconduct and details of any support available at your university or college.
- Students should be assured that their responses are entirely confidential.

## What are we asking from students' unions?

- To ensure the most robust data collection possible, we're asking students' unions to promote the survey by raising awareness of what it is, how to complete it, and its importance/objectives, whilst ensuring that those who may be impacted are signposted to the appropriate support services.
- We recommend students' unions develop communications on their social media and/or webpages about the sexual misconduct survey to inform their student community. To support this activity, the OfS will make a range of communications materials available on its website in January 2027.
- Ultimately, we want students' unions to encourage as many students as possible to complete the sexual misconduct survey.

## In summary

- The sexual misconduct survey will ask all final year undergraduate students across England about their experiences of sexual misconduct. The data is being gathered to gain insight into the number of students who have experienced sexual misconduct.
- Every voice and opinion is important for understanding and tackling sexual misconduct.
- Whilst participation is optional, higher response rates will strengthen understanding of students' experiences of sexual misconduct and its prevalence across higher education in England. The findings will help universities and colleges better understand the issue and inform action to address it.
- The survey is a completely confidential opportunity for all to contribute their experiences.
- With student wellbeing a priority:
  - The survey allows participants to skip sensitive questions should they wish.
  - If students prefer, they can opt out of receiving the invitation to participate in the sexual misconduct survey by contacting Ipsos. Details on how to do this can be found in the [privacy notice](#).
- Support services are available at universities or colleges should participants be impacted by any of the issues raised in this survey.