



Sexual Harassment amongst Students
Student Party SAM
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Sexual harassment amongst students

Rape is defined as the act of non-consensual oral, anal, or vaginal penetration, sometimes obtained by force, threat of force, or when the victim is incapable of giving consent. The abominable act of rape, is only one of the things we can classify under sexual harassment.¹

Unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, catcalling, and other verbal or physical conduct of sexual nature; is something that has been around for millennia. Rape is thought to be as old as mankind itself, this we know from six millennia's worth of recorded history; there are even signs of rape existing in ancient tales and legends. Now, in 2022, 200,000 years later, it is still a topic to which we need to raise awareness, bring forward in protests, and even weapon ourselves against.²

We would like to present the following numbers:^{3 4 5}

- Research shows that the most rape acts and sexual assaults occur when the victim is between 18-24 years old.
- Of the students who have fallen victim to rape, only 20% reports this to the police.
- Student victims (12%) were more likely than non-student victims (5%) to state that the incident was not important enough to report.
- Research shows that fewer than 1 in 5 female students and non-students victims of rape and sexual assault received assistance from a victim services agency.
- One in five women in the Netherlands reports that they experienced a non-consensual sexual act.
- 11% of female students and 1% of male students in the Netherlands personally experienced rape during their time as a student.
- 67% of the female survivors suffer from psychological, physical and social problems.
- According to the manifesto of Amnesty, 65% of students do not know where to find the right information within their educational institution. Conversations with our constituency led to the same conclusion.
- Within four hours of standing on campus and talking to students about sexual harassment, we collected 131 signatures of students stating that they would want the university to sign the manifesto of Amnesty.

These numbers are without a doubt shocking. We believe that every victim is one too many. It hurts us to realize that the percentage of Dutch student victims would mean that there are approximately 2400 victims at Tilburg University and approximately 1600 students who suffer psychologically, physically and or socially.

¹ Hyde, J. S., & DeLamater J. D. (2017). *Understanding Human Sexuality*. New York, NY. McGraw-Hill education.

² Smith, C. J. (1974). History of Rape and Rape Laws. *Women Lawyers Journal*, 60(4), 188-207.

³ Sinozich, S., & Langton, L. (2014). *Rape and sexual assault victimization among college-age females, 1995-2013*. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

⁴ Let's Talk About Yes op onze onderwijsinstelling - een manifest.

https://www.amnesty.nl/content/uploads/2021/09/AMN_21_17_manifest_NL_fase2_A3_witrandje.pdf?x88229

⁵ Timmerman, G. (2003). Sexual harassment of adolescents perpetrated by teachers and by peers: An exploration of the dynamics of power, culture, and gender in secondary schools. *Sex roles*, 48(5), 231-244.

Prevention, not detection.

The perpetrators are often not being punished or even held responsible for their actions. Oftentimes, the victim does not report the crime, the perpetrator is not caught or the victim finds it difficult to classify the rape as such.⁴ The Dutch rape-law is outdated. Therefore, it is important that we take the matters into our own hands and take responsibility. We must act against sexual harassment. This responsibility does not stop with the improvement of the reporting process, it is also important to actively try to prevent the crime from happening.

The most common forms in which sexual harassment happens at universities are:

- Catcalling
- Whistling
- Inappropriate sexual comments
- Uninvited physical contact
- Sexual taunts or insults

Reports of sexual harassment within universities range from sexually suggestive comments to assault and rape.⁶

Universities are taking more and more action against sexual harassment. They do this by participating in research about sexual abuse and by signing the Amnesty manifesto. By signing the manifesto, they promise to offer their students better protection against -and in the event of sexual harassment. At several universities, pilots with ombudspersons for students have started.⁶

VU University Amsterdam, Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, Maastricht University & Inholland University of Applied Sciences have already signed the manifesto. Since last week also Fontys Hogescholen signed the manifesto and may be added to this list.

To our knowledge, Tilburg University has not complied in earlier research about sexual harassment amongst universities, nor did they sign the manifesto. The Executive Board has however responded that they are willing to invest more into student safety and stated this in their Strategy for 2027 as well. We are glad to see that Tilburg University has committed to look actively into the safety of the students. Because Party SAM is also taking a large interest in this topic, we want to encourage discussing this further in conversation. Besides that, we would like to make a couple suggestions about actions the university can take to further improve the safety of its students and to ensure a safer learning environment. We conducted these ideas by doing research, have conversations with our contacts from other universities and by discussing about this topic with Amnesty International.

⁶ Messelink, R. (2020). *Aantal meldingen seksuele intimidatie op universiteiten stijgt fors*. Een Vandaag, avrotros.nl. Geraadpleegd op: <https://eenvandaag.avrotros.nl/item/aantal-meldingen-seksuele-intimidatie-op-universiteiten-stijgt-fors/>

Party SAM would like to present the following ideas:

Our first suggestion would be to improve the reporting procedure. Currently, the only information you find after going through several pages on the website is who the confidential advisors are. After quite a search you will also find how you would report a complaint. Currently, it is quite difficult to find the right information if you do not know what you are searching for or where to start searching. We would like to refer to the website of Utrecht University. They have all the needed information on one [page](#).⁷

Our second suggestion would be to talk to associations about sexual harassment and unwanted behaviour. Research has shown that certain risk factors enlarge the possibility of experiencing sexual transgressive behaviour. These risk factors, such as the usage of alcohol, drugs, and going out, often have to do with an active student life. Therefore, it is important that associations are aware of the risks these factors bring with them. That being said, SAM believes that it is also important that associations are made aware that these are only factors and not causes. It is important not to fall into victim blaming behaviour. It should be stated that risk factors enlarge the possibilities, but the only thing that causes rape, are rapists.

Our third suggestion is to host an information evening for employees. Of the university staff, the students see their teachers and study coordinators most often. Therefore, the employees, teachers and coordinators, should be informed about sexual transgressive behaviour & consent. Sexual transgressive behaviour might also overcome employees. SAM believes that a university wide approach is therefore the best option.

To make sure every student is informed properly about sexual harassment & consent, SAM suggests that students are educated about this topic in their first year. In your first year as a student you enrol in classes with a mentor. This mentor can inform students about the risks, consent, frequency of incidents and what Tilburg University can do to help.

Another thing our university could do is hang posters about consent on campus. Other universities do this as well. In this way, students are reminded more often about the importance of consent.

SAM wants to suggest the topic of consent and sexual harassment to be discussed in support groups. For example the peer-to-peer support groups that are new as of this year. This way, students can talk to peers about their experiences and opinions on this topic. Survivors should feel supported when talking about this topic, and SAM believes that these groups can help with that.

Party SAM had contact with Amnesty throughout the last couple of months. We engaged in a conversation about actions that could be taken for the improvement of student safety. Together, we also spoke directly to some students on campus about this topic. We want to offer to use our collaboration with Amnesty for further campaigns on campus and possibly use the channels of Tilburg University to promote this topic on social media.

⁷ Website UU: <https://www.uu.nl/organisatie/profiel/gedragcodes/ongewenst-gedrag>

Lastly, we would like to be informed about the current role of the new ombudsperson. To our knowledge, the ombudsperson is currently appointed for employees of the university only. We would like to ask if there is any prospect of extending this function to students? Should this not be the case, then Party SAM would like propose to appoint an ombudsperson for students, or to make the current ombudsperson available for students to approach.

Party SAM hopes the Executive Board will take inspiration from our suggestions. SAM is open to discuss these suggestions further. As a party, SAM believes all students benefit from active actions against sexual transgressive behaviour amongst students. Even though it might happen off campus, the university is the place for students to grow and become responsible adults. What we learn in university, stays with us and shapes us into whom we become.

Sources

1. Hyde, J. S., & DeLamater J. D. (2017). *Understanding Human Sexuality*. New York, NY. McGraw-Hill education.
2. Smith, C. J. (1974). History of Rape and Rape Laws. *Women Lawyers Journal*, 60(4), 188-207.
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5. Timmerman, G. (2003). Sexual harassment of adolescents perpetrated by teachers and by peers: An exploration of the dynamics of power, culture, and gender in secondary schools. *Sex roles*, 48(5), 231-244.
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7. Website UU: <https://www.uu.nl/organisatie/profiel/gedragscodes/ongewenst-gedrag>