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*Article*

# Surveying 'Dating Violence' and Stalking Victimisation among Students at a UK University: Findings and Methodological Reflections on Using a US Survey Instrument

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**Abstract:** Domestic abuse and stalking in higher education (HE) have been overlooked in research in comparison to sexual harassment and sexual violence. This article reports on survey data from 725 students at a UK university using measures of 'dating violence' – physical and psychological violence from an intimate partner – and stalking from a US survey instrument (the Administrator Researcher Campus Climate Collaborative (ARC3) survey). According to this measure, 26% of respondents had been subjected to 'dating violence' and 16% to stalking behaviours. However, these findings need to be contextualised within a critical discussion of the use of the ARC3 survey tool in the UK context. The ARC3 questions on 'dating violence' focus on physical and 'psychological violence'; the questions therefore omit further types of domestic abuse under UK definitions. In relation to stalking, US definitions – as captured in the ARC3 survey instrument – define specific behaviours. By contrast, in the UK stalking involves behaviours that engender fear or distress in a pattern of behaviour over time. These differences mean that the ARC3 modules on stalking and 'dating violence' would need to be significantly adapted to be suitable for use in the UK context.

**Keywords:** higher education; students; domestic abuse; stalking; gender-based violence; survey

## 1. Introduction

While in the US, many higher education institutions (HEIs) have carried out 'campus climate surveys' to understand prevalence, patterns, and attitudes towards gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) among their student populations, such studies are not yet commonplace in many other national contexts. In the UK, amidst increasing public and policy imperatives for HEIs to do more to address GBVH (Office for Students, 2021; Universities UK, 2016; White, 2022; Women and Equalities Select Committee, 2022), there is a developing discussion of survey methods and tools in this area (removed for peer review; Lagdon et al. 2022; Steele et al. 2021). This article aims to contribute to discussions of data collection and analysis in this area by reporting on findings and methodological challenges from a survey carried out at one UK HEI in 2020. In particular, while other surveys in the UK in this area (Bristol SU, 2021; Brook, 2019; Imperial College Union, 2022; Lagdon et al., 2022; National Union of Students, 2010; Revolt Sexual Assault, 2018; Steele et al., 2021) have prioritised sexual violence and harassment, this article focuses on the data collection instruments and findings around stalking and domestic abuse, areas which have been under-explored in higher education (HE) (DeKeseredy et al., 2017; Khan, 2021). Stalking is defined here as 'a pattern of fixated and obsessive behaviour which is repeated, persistent, intrusive and causes fear of violence or engenders alarm and distress in the victim' (Suzy Lamplugh Trust, 2021, p. 3), and domestic abuse is defined as 'any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality' (Khan, 2021; The Crown Prosecution Service, 2017).

This article's contribution is therefore twofold: first to report on new data in the under-researched areas of stalking and domestic abuse in UK HE; and second, to contribute to

methodological debates around measuring domestic abuse and stalking in HE, in particular the cross-national applicability of survey tools in this area. As such, the article will be of interest to researchers and policymakers internationally who are concerned with data collection and analysis on GBVH in HE.

The article starts by outlining the gap in research around stalking and domestic abuse in HE and introducing methodological challenges in surveys on these issues. After describing the methods, the article focuses in turn on stalking and then on 'dating violence' (the term used in the survey tool), outlining challenges with adapting the survey modules to the UK context before outlining and discussing the findings in each area. The article argues that there are significant challenges to adapting these survey modules to the UK context.

## 2. Literature review and methods

### 2.1. Literature review

Both internationally and in the UK, surveys of gender-based violence victimisation have primarily focused on sexual violence and harassment. In Wood et al.'s (2017, p. 1260) overview of ten commonly-used survey tools for US-based surveys of GBVH and attitudes to violence among students, all ten include sexual violence, while only seven include 'intimate partner violence' and only five include stalking. In other international contexts, Heywood et al.'s (2022) national survey of university students in Australia focused on sexual violence and sexual harassment only. Similarly, MacNeela et al. (2022, p. 245) in their national survey of university students in Ireland include stalking within their broader definition of sexual harassment and violence, but do not ask any specific questions about it. Neither study mentions domestic abuse.

Within UK research, the same pattern can be seen. There exist relatively few survey-based studies examining GBVH in UK HE but recent studies including Steele et al. (2021) and Lagdon et al. (2022) focus on sexual harassment and violence. Non-academic surveys from students' unions and activist groups also focus on sexual harassment and violence (Bristol SU, 2021; Brook, 2019; Imperial College Union, 2022; Revolt Sexual Assault, 2018). There are only two published surveys, excepting the one reported here, that include findings on stalking and domestic abuse. First, the National Union of Students' Hidden Marks report included stalking as well as questions about coercive behaviours and physical violence, although not necessarily from current/former partners (National Union of Students, 2010). Second, McCarry et al. (2021) surveyed staff and students across four HEIs in Scotland and included questions on stalking as well as on 'emotional abuse' and 'physical abuse' (as discussed in more detail below).

The lack of focus in existing studies on domestic abuse and stalking is problematic for several reasons. Firstly, young people are more at risk of both domestic abuse and stalking than older people, and therefore university students are also more likely to experience these behaviours than the general population (Khan, 2021; Office for National Statistics, 2020). Second, both stalking and domestic abuse put victims at risk of femicide or suicide (Khan, 2021; Monckton-Smith, 2021). As Khan notes, 'the impact of domestic abuse on victims is often chronic, devastating, and may be life-threatening' (Khan, 2021, p. 13). Similarly, stalking can be extremely distressing, and in a recent survey the Suzy Lamplugh trust found the 94% of people who'd experienced stalking during lockdown said their mental health had been impacted by it (Suzy Lamplugh Trust, 2021, p. 12). Overall, then, the current focus on sexual violence and harassment means that the full spectrum of GBVH is not being captured in most existing UK surveys. As Khan has noted, this reflects a wider lack of attention to domestic abuse among prevention and response work within HE (Khan, 2021) despite recent steps outlining work to be done in this area (Universities UK, 2020a, 2020b).

There are significant methodological and conceptual challenges to surveying these behaviours. However, as the US has a relatively well-developed set of survey tools in this area (Wood et al., 2017), it makes sense to draw on this work in the UK. In particular, it is a strength of the Administrator Researcher Campus Climate Collaborative (ARC3) survey (introduced below) that it includes modules on stalking and 'dating violence'. Nevertheless, there are significant challenges to adapting

surveys across contexts. For example, in legal definitions of stalking, as Purcell et al. (2004b) describe, there is no consistency across jurisdictions. For example, in different jurisdictions stalking may or may not involve repeated events, and these events may or may not be required to bring about fear or distress. Some jurisdictions – notably in the US – codify specific behaviours that constitute stalking, while others do not. Precisely which behaviours should be included changes over time, for example, cyberstalking behaviours are now important to include (Henry et al., 2020).

In measuring domestic abuse there are even more significant methodological challenges for survey research (Myhill, 2015, 2017; Walby et al., 2017). A recent review of government data collection on domestic abuse in the UK has recommended significant changes in its measurement (Office for National Statistics, 2021), in particular distinguishing between different ‘abuse profiles’ in order to distinguish between ‘situational’ violence which is not part of a wider exertion of control, and forms of ‘intimate terror’ where violence occurs alongside, and in order to exert, control (Johnson, 2008; Myhill, 2017). Failing to distinguish between these different forms of domestic abuse can obscure the gendered patterns of domestic abuse (Myhill, 2017, Johnson, 2018). ‘Intimate terror’ has more recently been theorised as ‘coercive control’ which was in 2015 criminalised in the UK (The Crown Prosecution Service, 2017). However, as the Office for National Statistics (ONS) for England and Wales note, ‘there remain significant issues relating to measuring coercive control, and there is no agreed measurement instrument internationally’ (Office for National Statistics, 2021). Nevertheless, the Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW) includes questions that have been used as an indicator for coercive control (Myhill, 2015).

In presenting the findings of this study, this article will therefore assess the extent to which the ARC3 survey modules are appropriate to use in the UK context, given these competing definitions as well as ongoing debates on measurement.

## 2.2. Methods

A more detailed discussion of the methods as well as the governance and dissemination issues around this survey can be found in the description of ‘University C’ in Author A et al. (2022). To summarise, the study took place at a post-1992 university<sup>1</sup> in England through a partnership between the Students’ Union and members of academic staff. The survey was a cross sectional online survey administered via Qualtrics and it covered four modules from the ARC3 survey tool, as well as the updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance scale, and a module on professional boundaries between staff and students as well as selected demographic questions matching the study from National Union of Students (2018). The ARC3 survey is an open-access tool developed by a group of academic researchers and HE administrators in the US which has been used extensively in ‘campus climate surveys’ in the US (Swartout et al., 2019). It comprises 19 modules covering victimisation and perpetration, as well as further modules for example on consent, alcohol use, and peer norms that can be selected to fit the needs of specific institutions. For this study, four victimisation modules were used, on sexual violence; sexual harassment; ‘dating violence’; and stalking. The first two modules proved to be appropriate and helpful for the UK context, However, there were challenges in using the latter two modules, which are therefore discussed in this study.

### 2.2.1. Participants

The survey was sent to all students enrolled at the university (N = 31,059) in November 2020 via email from the Students’ Union Welfare Officer. 1303 students filled out the survey (response rate = 4.19%) students completing the survey over a three-week period, 725 of these consenting to their responses being analysed and reported on publicly.<sup>2</sup> All participants who completed the survey were offered the opportunity of entering into a raffle to win a £50 Amazon voucher. Of the 725 respondents whose data is reported here, 62% were female, 33% were male, 3% non-binary and 2% preferred not to disclose (see Table 1). The majority of respondents were between 18-24 (83%) years old, were UK-domiciled or ‘home’ students (84%) and were studying at undergraduate level (85%).

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of the sample.

Demographics of sample	n	% of sample
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	446	62
Male	238	33
Non-Binary	20	3
Prefer not to say	14	2
Other	5	0
<b>Age</b>		
18-24	601	83
25-29	58	8
30-39	41	6
40-49	15	2
50-59	5	1
60-65	1	0
Over 65	2	0
<b>UK-domiciled ('home') or international students</b>		
UK-domiciled ('home')	602	84
International	117	16
<b>Level of Study</b>		
First Years	300	42
Second Year	159	22
Third Year	121	17
Fourth Year	23	3
Placement Student	7	1
Masters Year	84	12
PhD	10	1
Other	17	2

### 2.2.2. Procedure

After initially being due to be rolled out in March 2020, the survey was delayed due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. In line with advice from US experts (Holland et al., 2020), rather than delaying till after the pandemic, the survey was eventually rolled out in November-December 2020, while a second national lockdown in England was in place (from 5th November onwards). This meant that the substantial number of first year undergraduate students who responded to the survey had only experienced around six weeks of university out of lockdown by the time they filled out this survey. As a result, it is possible that the findings would have been different if they had been carried out in a non-Covid year.

### 2.2.3. Instruments

Stalking victimization (discussed in more detail below) was captured with 10 items on a 5-point scale from none (0) to more than 8 (4) ( $\alpha = .83$ ). The 'dating violence' scale (also discussed below) contained 6 items measured on a 5-point scale from never (0) to many times (4) ( $\alpha = .74$ ) (see ARC3 'technical guidance' for more details). Each measure was followed by four items designed to capture perpetrator characteristics. The four items were: the gender of the perpetrator, whether the perpetrator was a student, the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim and whether the incident/s took place on campus.

### 2.2.4. Ethics

The project gained a favourable ethical opinion from the university's Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities ethics committee before the survey was distributed. While permission was given



from the ethics review panel to name the institution, subsequent difficulties in reporting the findings (as outlined in Author A et al., 2022) mean that here we have anonymised the institution as 'University of X'. Respondents were signposted to support services both inside and outside the university at the start and the end of the survey, and the survey team liaised with the university's Wellbeing Service to arrange proactive support.

### 2.2.5. Data Analysis

Analysis of the data reported on below aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What proportion of respondents had experienced 'dating violence' and stalking since enrolling at the University of X?
2. Which students were most likely to experience these harms?
3. What factors were associated with experiencing stalking and 'dating violence', in terms of likelihood of experiencing these harms and frequency of experience?

In order to assess the proportion of respondents who had experienced stalking and 'dating violence', we used percentages of individual items, means and medians from the sum score of the modules designed to capture stalking and 'dating violence' (calculating stalking prevalence is described in more detail below). We then used sum scores of these modules along with demographic factors (gender, level of study, and 'home' versus international students) to explore students who were most likely to experience these harms.

We used a logistic regression to explore how certain characteristics (gender, level of study, home vs international status) impacted the likelihood of experiencing stalking and 'dating violence'. We then used a negative binomial regression to explore whether those characteristics also predicted the frequency with which stalking victimisation and dating violence occurred. Negative binomial regressions were chosen given the right-skewed nature of the frequency distributions for 'dating violence' and stalking victimisation. This section may be divided by subheadings. It should provide a concise and precise description of the experimental results, their interpretation, as well as the experimental conclusions that can be drawn.

### 3.1. Findings and critical discussion of survey modules

An overview of the wider findings of the survey is forthcoming.<sup>3</sup> Below, we address the modules on stalking and on 'dating violence' in turn. For each module, we first critically discuss the appropriateness of the module to the UK context, before outlining the survey findings and discussing them.

#### 3.1.1. Stalking survey questions

While in the UK there is no strict legal definition of 'stalking' (Crown Prosecution Service, 2018), in order to be prosecuted as a criminal offence stalking needs to involve 'a course of conduct or pattern of behaviour which causes someone to fear that violence will be used against them on at least two occasions, or which causes them serious alarm or distress to the extent it has a substantial adverse effect on their day-to-day activities' (The Crown Prosecution Service, 2017). Stalking may also overlap with domestic abuse (as defined below), in which people who are in abusive relationships may also be subjected to stalking behaviours from their partners. Legal definitions may not, of course, be appropriate or helpful in a HE context; as Vera-Gray and Kelly note, 'crime and victimisation surveys and legal frameworks systematically exclude forms of violence and abuse that are more likely to be experienced by women than men', an issue that stems from using 'a male as norm understanding of what counts as crime' (Vera-Gray & Kelly, 2020, p. 268). Nevertheless, legal and socio-cultural understandings sometimes overlap or draw on each other. Indeed, anti-stalking charity The Suzy Lamplugh Trust define stalking 'a pattern of fixated and obsessive behaviour which is repeated, persistent, intrusive and causes fear of violence or engenders alarm and distress in the victim' (Suzy Lamplugh Trust, 2021, p. 3). In the discussion below, we therefore draw on points of similarity across both definitions.

The ARC3 module on stalking asks about specific behaviours that constitute stalking, following the US legal framework which aims to avoid 'vagueness' and thus tends to specify behaviours (Purcell et al., 2004: 161) rather than drawing on the broader definitions used in the UK. The wording of the ARC3 module therefore reflects this context by focusing on particular behaviours rather than the response of the person targeted, as follows:

Since you enrolled at the University of X, have you been in a situation when someone

1. Watched or followed you from a distance, or spied on you with a listening device, camera, or GPS (global positioning system)?
  2. Approached you or showed up in places, such as your home, workplace, or school when you didn't want them to be there?
  3. Left strange or potentially threatening items for you to find?
  4. Sneaked into your home or car and did things to scare you by letting you know they had been there?
  5. Left you unwanted messages, such as notes, text or voice messages?
  6. Made unwanted phone calls to you (including hang up calls)?
  7. Sent you unwanted emails, instant messages, or sent messages through social media apps?
  8. Left you cards, letters, flowers, or presents when they knew you didn't want them to?
  9. Made rude or mean comments to you online?
  10. Spread rumours about you online, whether they were true or not?
- Response categories were None; 1-2; 3-5; 6-8; or more than 8 times.

These questions do not fit the more victim-centred definitions used in the UK. Although questions three and four refer to 'threatening' items and doing things 'to scare you', the module focuses on the intentions and actions of the perpetrator rather than the response of the victim. By contrast, as noted above, in the UK stalking is defined as a pattern of behaviour causing distress, fear or alarm (Crown Prosecution Service, 2018; Suzy Lamplugh Trust, 2021, p. 3).

There were also other difficulties with analysing this module. First, it was not possible to ascertain whether multiple events were carried out by the same person or group of people (therefore constituting a course of conduct). Second, it was not possible to ascertain whether several events occurred within a specific time period. This is important because Purcell et al. found that stalking events that continue for more than a period of two weeks are 'associated with a more intrusive, threatening and psychologically damaging course of harassment' (2004: 571) so the period of time as well as number of events is relevant. Finally, these questions could be updated to reflect the increasingly digitally-mediated lives of students.

As a result of these issues, there were some difficult decisions to be made around how to analyse this data. A dichotomous approach of two categories, where one group has never experienced any of these behaviours, and a further group has experienced at least one, would be likely to lead to over-reporting as well as a mismatch with the UK context which requires a 'course of conduct'. In this study, we dealt with these issues by defining stalking victimisation as anyone who had experienced one stalking event 6-8 times, three stalking events happening 1-2 times, or a combination of one stalking event 1-2 times and one 3-5 times. This means that for someone to be defined as having experienced stalking, they had to have experienced at least three stalking behaviours. However, it is possible that someone experienced three different events, from different people, over three different years, and this would be defined as stalking within this survey, even though this would constitute a 'pattern of behaviour' as required by UK definitions. Furthermore, we were not able to look at the period of time within which these events happened, which is important for determining whether a pattern of intrusions can be considered as stalking (Purcell et al., 2004a).

### 3.1.2. Findings on stalking victimization

These limitations should be borne in mind in the reporting of these findings. First of all, we looked at whether people had ever experienced these behaviours since enrolling as a student. Using the threshold described above of experiencing at least three stalking events since enrolling at the university, 16% (119 out of 725) had experienced stalking. The three most common forms of stalking

victimisation experienced by students were receiving unwanted emails, instant messages or social media messages (17%), receiving rude/mean online comments (15%), and having been left unwanted notes, texts or voice messages (15%) (see Figure 6), all of which occurred at least one or more times. 12% reported at least one experience or more of being watched, followed, or spied upon from a distance or with listening device/camera or GPS. 12% also reported at least one experience of being approached at home, work or school when they did not wish the person to be there.

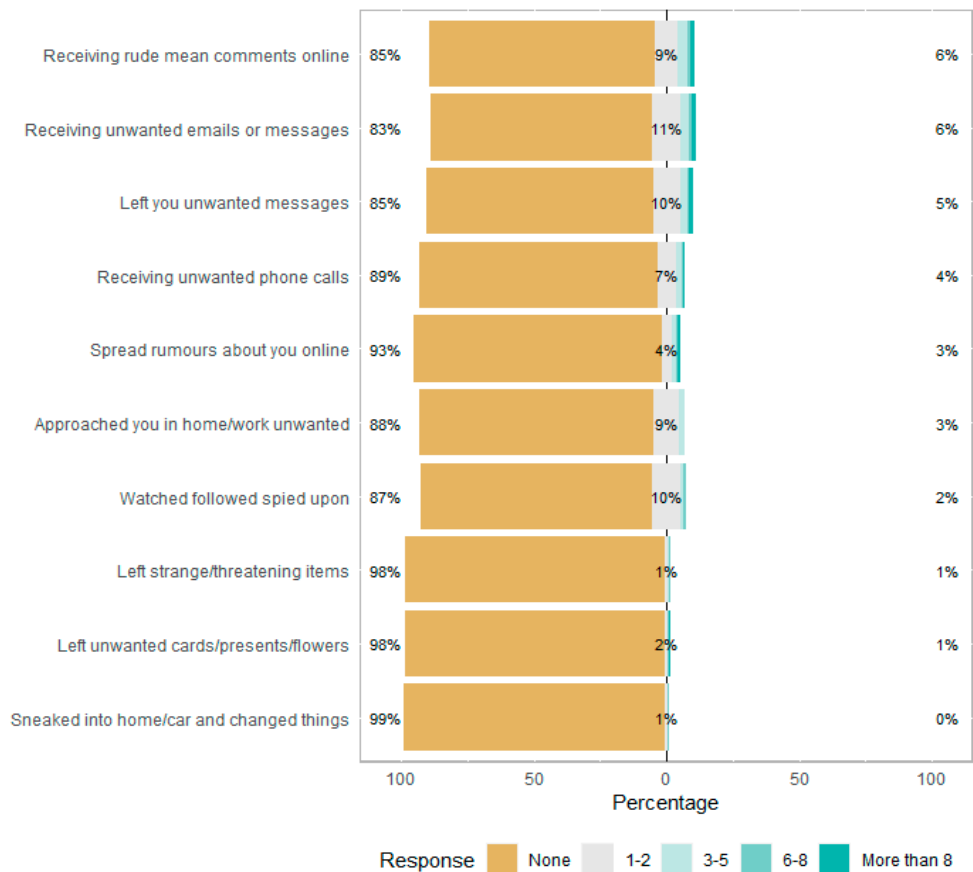


Figure 1. Frequency of the different types of stalking experienced by students.

Both logistic and negative binomial regression were performed to identify factors that a) increased students’ likelihood and frequency of having experienced stalking behaviours (see Table 2). Women were more likely than men to have higher likelihood and frequency of experienced the behaviours described (likelihood: odds ratio (OR) = 1.85, SE = 0.25,  $p < .05$ ; frequency: incidence rate ratio (IRR) = 1.53,  $p < .05$  ). Non-binary students were more likely to have experienced stalking compared to men (OR = 4.03, SE = 0.55,  $p < .05$ ), however, there was no difference in frequency (IRR = 1.88, SE = 0.51,  $p = .21$ ) of experiencing stalking. International students were less likely to have experienced stalking compared to home students (OR = 0.50, SE = 0.35,  $p < .05$ ) but there was no difference in frequency of stalking experienced (IRR = 0.76, SE = 0.24,  $p = .26$ ). Second year (OR = 2.52, SE = 0.27,  $p < .001$ ), third year (OR = 2.45, SE = 0.29,  $p < .01$ ) and PhD (OR = 4.31, SE = 0.73,  $p < .05$ ) students were more likely to have experienced stalking victimisation compared to first years, as well as to have experienced higher incidences of stalking victimisation (Second IRR = 2.29, SE = 0.22,  $p < .001$ ; Third IRR = 1.80, SE = 0.24,  $p < .05$ ; PhD IRR = 4.24, SE = 0.48,  $p < .05$ ). As the survey asked about all experiences since enrolling at this university, some of this increase is likely to be due to second year students having been at university for longer.

Table 2. Logistic Regression and negative binomial regression showing factors impacting likelihood and frequency of experiencing stalking victimisation.



<b>Logistic Regression</b>	<b>Odds Ratio</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>p</b>
Gender: Females	1.85	0.25	< .05*
Gender: Non-Binary	4.03	0.55	< .05*
Gender: Not disclosed	0.00	626.27	= .98
Gender: Other	5.22	1.02	= .10
Home/International	0.50	0.35	< .05*
Year 2	2.52	0.27	< .001***
Year 3	2.45	0.29	< .01**
Year 4	2.45	0.55	= .10
Placement	4.86	0.83	= .06
Masters	1.06	0.42	= .88
PhD	4.31	0.73	< .05*
Other Level Study	5.50	1.05	= .57
<b>Negative Binomial Regression</b>	<b>Incident Ratios</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>p</b>
Gender: Females	1.53	0.19	< .05*
Gender: Non-Binary	1.88	0.51	= .21
Gender: Not disclosed	0.07	1.23	< .05*
Gender: Other	1.52	1.00	= .67
Home/International	0.76	0.24	= .26
Year 2	2.29	0.22	< .001***
Year 3	1.80	0.24	< .05*
Year 4	2.44	0.48	= .06
Placement	3.80	0.81	= .10
Masters	1.02	0.30	= .94
PhD	4.24	0.68	< .05*
Other Level Study	0.69	0.60	= .53

Note 1. Logistic regression likelihood test  $\chi^2$  (12) = 45.99,  $p < .001$ .

### 3.1.3. Discussion of findings on stalking

In line with existing discussions of cyberstalking and online harassment among young people (Henry et al., 2020; Henry & Powell, 2016), digitally-mediated behaviours such as receiving unwanted messages were the most likely to be reported by respondents. The prevalence, at 16%, sits within the range of prevalence obtained in other studies of students' experiences of stalking. The Hidden Marks (National Union of Students, 2010) study, which also asked about experiences 'since enrolling at this institution', found that 12% of students self-reported as victims of stalking. However, Hidden Marks also included the term 'repeatedly' in the question, and referred to behaviours 'that seemed obsessive or made you afraid or concerned for your safety' (2010: 15). Therefore, a lower prevalence would be expected as Hidden Marks only included behaviours that engendered fear in the target. By comparison, the ONS (Office for National Statistics, 2020) and McCarry et al. (McCarry et al., 2021) both asked about victimisation experiences only within the last 12 months. These two studies reached very different figures: ONS found that 6.2% of students had experienced stalking, while McCarry et al. found 22.8% of their student sample had experienced stalking. Internationally, the range is even greater. DeKeseredy et al. (2014, p. 28; 2017) found 38% of their sample of over 5000 students had experienced at least one stalking behaviour, while a study of 4268 students at the University of Iowa (Speak Out Iowa, 2021) found that 18.8% of students reported experiencing at least one stalking behaviour that seemed obsessive or made them fearful, and 8.2% of students experienced repeated stalking behaviour.

These differences demonstrate the wide range of methods that are in use for conceptualising and measuring stalking in HE. They also show that asking about repeated behaviours or behaviours that lead to fear make a clear difference to findings. In light of this discussion, we would suggest that this module needs to be significantly adapted to be appropriate for use in UK HEIs in order to fit within the UK context of a 'pattern of behaviour' that leads to fear as well as to reflect students' increased

online engagement. First, a set of follow-up questions could ascertain whether the events reported caused 'alarm or distress' to the respondent. Surveys in both the UK and in the US already ask about whether events led to fear or distress (McCarry et al., 2021; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998, p. 17). Following such an approach would ensure that the module on stalking would fit definitions used in the UK. Other follow-up questions that could be tested are whether stalking events took place within a specific time period; and whether they were carried out by the same person/group of people (see methods in Purcell et al., 2004, p. 574). Alternatively, the ONS draws on the UK definition of events involving 'fear, alarm or distress' as well as repeated behaviours in order to assess stalking victimisation within six questions (Kantar Public & Office for National Statistics, 2015) and these questions could also be appropriate to HE. Second, questions could be updated to reflect students' increasingly digitally-based lives. Third, in order to work as a standardised tool across the UK context, we suggest that discussion of shared analysis frameworks around how many intrusions constitute victimisation (Purcell et al., 2004, p. 574).

### 3.1.4. Dating Violence' survey questions

As with the discussion of stalking, above, this section first critically assesses the ARC3 survey module questions on 'dating violence', before outlining the findings then discussing them. While the term 'domestic abuse' is commonly used in the UK, here we use the term 'dating violence' in order to reflect the wording of the ARC3 survey. This is because, as with the stalking questions, those on 'dating violence' do not translate smoothly to a UK context. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in England uses the following definition of domestic abuse, which is also recommended by Khan, (2021) in their guidance for universities:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional. This definition includes so-called 'honour'-based violence, forced marriage, and female genital mutilation (FGM). (Khan, 2021; The Crown Prosecution Service, 2017)

A further type of domestic abuse - 'controlling, coercive' behaviour between two people who are 'personally connected' – became a criminal offence in 2015. Universities UK, a lobby group for HE in the UK (Universities UK, 2020a, 2020b) also include 'tech-mediated abuse' in their definition of domestic abuse. As can be seen from the above definition, domestic abuse encompasses a range of behaviours that are challenging to capture in a short survey module. In the ARC3 module on 'dating violence', questions focus on psychological and physical dating violence, as follows:

This section asks about your experiences about behaviour in your relationships since you enrolled at the University of X. This includes any hook-up, boyfriend, girlfriend, husband or wife you have had, including exes, regardless the length of the relationship.

1. Not including joking around, the person threatened to hurt me and I thought I might get really hurt

2. Not including joking around, the person pushed, grabbed, or shook me

3. Not including joking around, the person hit me

4. Not including joking around, the person beat me up

5. Not including joking around, the person stole or destroyed my property

6. Not including joking around, the person can scare me without laying a hand on me

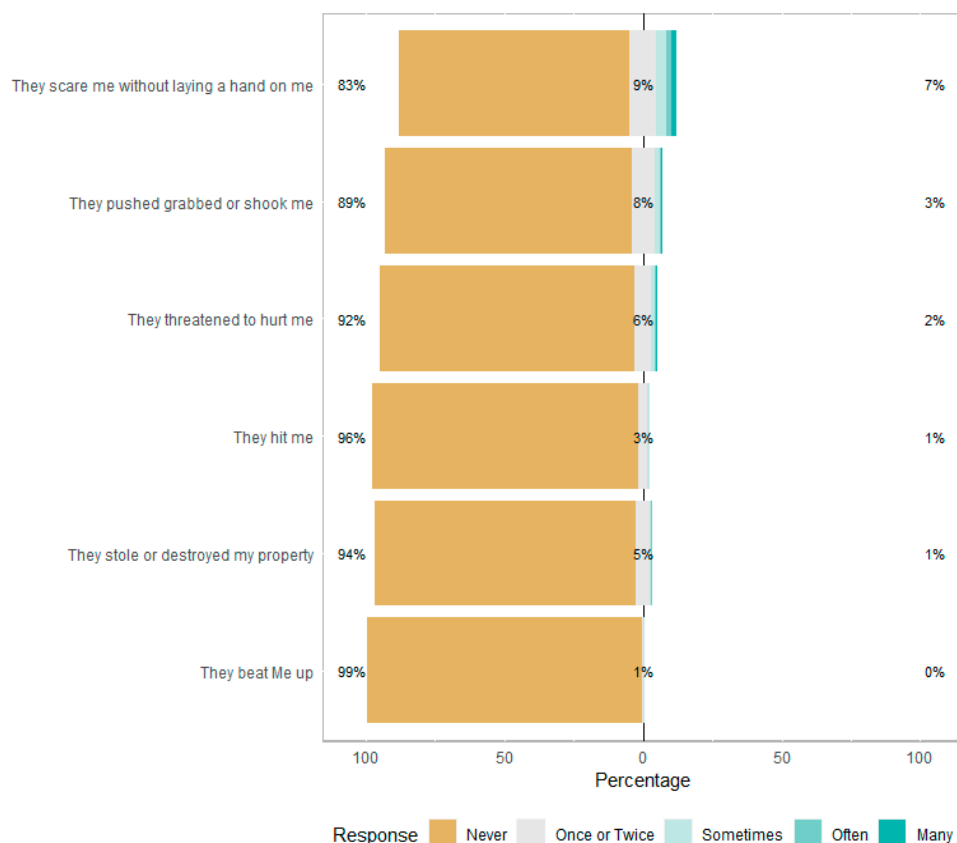
Responses included 'Never; Once or twice; Sometimes; Often; Many times'

A strength of these questions is that two of them capture fear. This fits in with the UK Crown Prosecution Service's (2017) guidance on coercive control which states that '[the behaviour] must have a 'serious effect' on someone and one way of proving this is that it causes someone to fear, on at least two occasions, that violence will be used against them'. However, they could go further in capturing a wider spectrum of coercive and controlling behaviour, including sexual and economic abuse, as covered in the UK CPS definition. Furthermore, half the questions focus on physical violence, which risks perpetuating the notion that abusive relationships are primarily about physical

violence, when abusive relationships may rarely or never include physical violence (Johnson, 2008). In addition, as outlined above (Myhill 2015; 2017; Johnson, 2008), there is a risk that by including such a strong focus on physical violence that the gendered patterns of domestic abuse are not captured.

### 3.1.5. Findings on 'dating violence'

Dating violence, as defined above, was experienced by a large minority of respondents (see Figure 7). Physical experiences of dating violence included 11% (n = 78) of respondents reporting experiencing at least one experience of being pushed, grabbed or shook by someone they had been in a relationship with during their time at the university; 4% (n = 29) reported one or more experiences of being hit; and 1% (n = 7) reported being physically beaten up one or more times. In relation to psychological experiences of dating violence, in response to the question 'Not including joking around, the person threatened to hurt me and I thought I might get really hurt', 16% (n = 118) of respondents reported at least one experience. 8% (n = 57) report being threatened. As Figure 2 shows, 'psychological' experiences of dating violence were more common on the whole than physical violence. Some students were subjected to these behaviours repeatedly. This included 2% (n = 15) of those who received threats of harm, and 1% (n = 7) of those who were hit.



**Figure 2.** Frequency of the different types of 'dating violence' experienced by students.

Female students were much more at risk of dating violence than male students. Overall, a quarter (26%) of students who completed the survey had experienced at least one behaviour associated with dating violence with 15% experiencing some form of physical dating violence and 23% experiencing some form of psychological dating violence. Women were 1.49 times more likely to have experienced dating violence compared to men (See Table 3; OR = 1.49, SE = 0.20,  $p < .05$ ) and experienced higher frequency of incidents compared to men (IRR = 2.01, SE = 0.24,  $p < .001$ ). Non-binary people were 4 times more likely to have experienced dating violence (OR = 4.08, SE = 0.48,  $p < .01$ ) and reported higher incidence of dating violence than men (IRR = 2.54, SE = 0.24,  $p < .01$ ). Second year students were more likely to have experienced dating violence compared to first years (OR =

1.67, SE = 0.22,  $p < .05$ ) although we do not see an effect on higher frequencies incidences (IRR = 1.23, SE = 0.27,  $p = .44$ ). As above this is likely to be due to second year students having been at university for longer. No other effects of year of study or international/home status were found.

**Table 3.** Logistic Regression and negative binomial regression showing factors impacting likelihood and frequency of experiencing dating violence.

<b>Logistic Regression</b>	<b>Odds Ratio</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b><i>p</i></b>
Gender: Females	1.49	0.20	< .05 *
Gender: Non-Binary	4.08	0.48	< .01 **
Gender: Not disclosed	0.65	0.79	= .58
Gender: Other	2.69	0.95	= .30
Home/International	0.80	0.25	= 0.37
Year 2	1.67	0.22	< .05*
Year 3	1.44	0.25	= .14
Year 4	1.99	0.46	= .14
Placement	1.21	0.87	= .82
Masters	1.17	0.30	= .60
PhD	1.63	0.71	= .49
Other Level Study	0.24	1.04	= .16
<b>Negative Binomial Regression</b>	<b>Incident Ratios</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b><i>p</i></b>
Gender: Females	2.01	0.24	< .001***
Gender: Non-Binary	2.54	0.24	< .01**
Gender: Not disclosed	0.89	0.63	= .13
Gender: Other	2.92	1.21	= .37
Home/International	0.80	0.30	= .44
Year 2	1.23	0.27	= .44
Year 3	0.93	0.30	= .80
Year 4	1.72	0.56	= .34
Placement	0.49	1.13	= .53
Masters	0.66	0.38	= .28
PhD	2.58	0.82	= .25
Other Level Study	0.33	0.82	= .18

Note 2: Logistic regression likelihood test  $\chi^2 (12) = 24.40$ ,  $p < .05$ .

### 3.1.6. Discussion of 'dating violence' findings

This study found a higher prevalence of 'dating violence' than national data on domestic abuse from the Crime Survey for England and Wales, wherein full time students have been found to be the most likely to experience domestic abuse compared to any other occupation at 7.7% of the population, with women students (11%) more than twice as likely than male students (5%) to be victimised (Khan, 2021, p. 24; Office for National Statistics, 2018). These differences may be due to these questions measuring 'dating violence' differently to existing survey tools for domestic abuse in the UK, most notably the CSEW, and due to the CSEW omitting students in university accommodation from its sampling (Tseloni and Tilley, 2016, p.83). Nevertheless, the ARC3 study includes a narrower range of questions than the CSEW, asking solely about physical and psychological violence, rather than other forms of domestic abuse such as financial or sexual abuse (Kantar Public & Office for National Statistics, 2015). There is also a discrepancy in the study whereby 18% of respondents named 'strangers' as the perpetrators of 'dating violence'. This could indicate that respondents have not followed the instruction to discuss 'experiences about behaviour in your relationships'. Alternatively, respondents could be referring to 'hook-ups', as mentioned in the question, where students have had a one-off sexual encounter with a stranger. Either way, these differences in victimisation rates across different studies require further exploration.

A limitation of the ARC3 module on 'dating violence' is that it does not capture coercive control, having been devised before coercive control was recognised as a significant aspect of domestic abuse. In the UK coercive control is now criminalised, and work is underway to devise appropriate survey questions to capture it (ONS, 2021). Nevertheless, questions one and six in the module could potentially capture 'generalized fear' (Myhill, 2015, p.370) which has been identified as a consequence of coercive control. By contrast, a potential weakness of the ARC3 'dating violence' module is the focus on physical violence. Myhill (2017) suggests that studies that foreground physical violence are likely to obscure gendered patterns of domestic abuse. While this study did find a gendered pattern with women and non-binary people more likely to report having been victimised than men, this may still be under-representing the gendered patterns.

Finally, in terms of specific behaviours that are included, it would make sense to include non-fatal strangulation, which as Edwards and Douglas (Edwards & Douglas, 2021) have outlined, this is both a prevalent, gendered, and highly risky behaviour associated with domestic abuse and is common among students (Herbenick et al., 2021). It has also recently become a crime in the UK.

To summarise, in the current iteration of the ARC3 survey, gendered patterns might be lost as respondents might report physical violence that is 'situational' rather than part of an ongoing context of fear and control with (Myhill, 2015; 2017). Some of these issues could be addressed in the analysis, for example by analysing the physical violence questions alongside the psychological violence questions. However, for future surveys, questions that 'focus on perpetrators' controlling tactics and behaviors' (Myhill, 2015: 360) are needed.

#### 4. Conclusions

This article has reported on findings from a survey of 725 students at a university in England using the ARC3 survey modules on stalking and 'dating violence' victimisation. These areas have both been neglected in comparison to studies of sexual violence and harassment among student populations. In response to the module on 'dating violence' victimisation, which includes questions on psychological and physical 'dating violence', 26% of respondents had experienced one or more of the behaviours surveyed since enrolling at this institution. 'Psychological' experiences of dating violence were more common than physical violence. The prevalence, at 26% of this sample, is much higher than the 7.7% among students that was found by the Crime Survey of England and Wales (ONS, 2020). This could be due to differences in sampling, even though the CSEW uses a broader range of questions encompassing financial, sexual, physical, and psychological abuse as well as controlling behaviours (Office for National Statistics, 2018, p.255-8). The module on stalking, using a threshold of experiencing at least three stalking events since enrolling at the university, found that 16% (119 out of 725) had experienced this. Other studies have found between 12% and 38% of students have been subjected to stalking behaviours so this finding sits within the existing range of prevalence. Cyberstalking behaviours such as receiving unwanted messages online were the most likely type of stalking behaviour to be reported by respondents. For both stalking and 'dating violence', women and non-binary students were more likely to be victimised than male students. In relation to year of study, second year undergraduate students were most likely to report having experienced stalking or 'dating violence' behaviours since enrolling at university.

The article has also critically assessed the appropriateness of the ARC3 modules on stalking and 'dating violence' victimisation for use in the UK context. While the modules on sexual harassment and sexual violence victimisation from ARC3 used for this study worked well in the UK context, there were significant difficulties in adapting the stalking and 'dating violence' modules to the UK. In relation to the module on stalking, the ARC3 questions focus on stalking behaviours, as fits the US legal definition of stalking. However, in the UK, both social and legal definitions require stalking to constitute a pattern of behaviour that engenders fear or distress in the victim. This means that survey instruments need to ask whether behaviours engender fear or distress, as well as capturing a pattern of behaviour over time. More generally, it is argued that a greater focus on cyberstalking is now needed in order to reflect the increasing digital mediation of students' lives.



In relation to the 'dating violence' module, the ARC3 questions focus on physical and 'psychological violence'. This focus does not capture the full spectrum of behaviours that constitute domestic abuse according to UK definitions. Furthermore, in the UK 'coercive control' was criminalised in 2015 and the concept is widely used by practitioners and researchers. Therefore it may be more appropriate to use survey instruments that cover the full spectrum of controlling behaviours (see for example Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2003). However, some of the experiences that constitute domestic abuse are covered in the ARC3 modules on stalking, sexual harassment and sexual violence. Therefore, in order to fully capture domestic abuse within the ARC3 survey, data analysis would need to be carried out across modules in order to include all forms of domestic abuse by a current or former partner.

This issue raises the question of whether a 'modular' approach is appropriate for studying gender-based violence and harassment. On a practical level, such an approach means that relevant responses might be included in two different modules, for example a respondent could report the same incident under both the 'harassment' module and the 'stalking' module which may lead to double counting or inclusion in the wrong category. On a conceptual level, as Kelly has outlined, sexual violence constitutes a 'continuum' where it is not necessarily possible to categorise events discretely, and there is a 'common character' to different types of events (Kelly, 1988, p.76). Such a conceptualisation is also possible for GBVH more generally. One way forward for such studies could be to include scales that explore the continuum of GBVH and then ask about the context in which these behaviours occur in order to define experiences as 'stalking', 'domestic abuse', etc at the analysis stage (rather than at the survey design and data collection stage, as ARC3 does).

This study has several limitations. First, data was collected during a Covid-19 lockdown in late 2020 which may have affected the findings. Second, as outlined above, the survey tool is not as well suited to the UK context as it could be. Third, further data collection, particularly on a wider range of demographic characteristics of students, would have allowed a more sophisticated analysis.

While this article has pointed out limitations for using the modules on stalking and 'dating violence' from the ARC3 survey instrument in the UK HE context, this critique is intended to build on the ground-breaking work of the ARC3 team in order to push forward debates in the UK and internationally on surveying GBVH in HE. It is important to emphasise that researchers and HEI leaders should not avoid gathering data on GBVH due to the absence of appropriate survey tools. In the short-term, survey questions from the CSEW could be used to assess stalking behaviours in HE, and once ongoing work has been completed on CSEW questions on coercive control, these may also be able to be adapted to a short-form version for use in HE. There could be more work done nationally using CSEW data, from which data on full-time students can be extracted, to understand prevalence of domestic abuse within this population. For individual institutions that are attempting to better understand their own populations to inform prevention and response efforts, a wider range of behaviours could be captured, as well as 'domestic abuse myth acceptance' (Fenton & Jones, 2017). However, as this article has outlined, there is still a significant amount of work to be done to generate appropriate data collection instruments in this area.

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## Notes

1. 'Post-1992' is a designation used to describe newer universities in the UK that were given university status through legislation in 1992. Many of these universities had previously been other types of HEI such as teacher training colleges or technical colleges.
2. In this study therefore we report on data from the 725 respondents who were happy for their data to be publicly reported on. Comparisons of the two datasets showed no significant differences between them. The full dataset was used for an initial report to the university.
3. The wider findings of the survey included sexual or gender harassment had been experienced by 55% of respondents since enrolling at the University of X. 30% of respondents had been subjected to sexual violence since enrolling at the university. Women and non-binary students were more likely than males to experience harassment or sexual violence and they also experienced this more often than men. 83% of sexual and gender harassment was carried out by another student studying at the university. Similarly, other students at the university were named as the person who carried out 82% of reported sexual violence incidents, 70% of all stalking victimisation and 65% of dating violence incidents reported. The survey also explored two attitudinal areas: rape myth acceptance and students' attitudes towards professional boundaries with staff.

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