

## YUSU to tackle 'worrying' lad culture

A Nouse survey revealed that over three-quarters of participants feel 'lad culture' exists at York



By [Amy Wong](#), Deputy Editor (2015)  
Tuesday 30 September 2014

YUSU are launching a campaign to tackle lad culture at the University, including an evaluation of its harassment policy.

The news comes after a recent *Nouse* survey found 76 per cent of respondents thought lad culture exists at the University of York, while 60 per cent thought the University could do more to tackle the problem.



Photo Credit: YUSU

The survey also found that 70 per cent of female respondents experienced unwelcome sexual advances, and that 69 per cent had had overtly sexual comments directed at them.

In comparison, a survey commissioned by the National Union of Students (NUS) found that 25 per cent of respondents has experienced unwelcome sexual advances, while a third of respondents had overtly sexual comments directed at them. Toni Pearce, President of the NUS, accused universities of ignoring the problem.

The results of the Nouse survey suggested several students thought lad culture "mainly exists" within sports societies, with one respondent saying the rugby teams are "notorious" for it.

Another respondent said: "The mentality encouraged amongst teammates can be worrying."

Izzy Welby, President of Women's Rugby Club, told Nouse: "On the day we won our league and earned a promotion we all went out to celebrate. Our president was told that evening by a male member of a prominent sports club that not only our club, but also our sport and her personally were 'fat and insignificant'. Despite our incredible performance in our chosen sport, it feels we will always be deemed insignificant in the eyes of our male counterparts."

She said that the Women's Rugby Club do not face the "sexualisation and harassment in the way other female teams do because [they] are not seen as feminine". Instead, they are often called "dykes".

According to Welby, her friends who play sports such as lacrosse, hockey and netball "have either been verbally harassed or physically harassed in club night situations" and "had male teams hang around to watch and heckle" when they train and play.

She went on to say: "Traditionally 'female' sports are expected to conform to the lad culture hierarchy and make themselves present at Salvation on a Wednesday night for the men to choose who they will take home that night."

Research conducted by the YUSU Welfare team and Women's Network in 2012 suggested that many students didn't report their experiences of sexual harassment because they were not sure about whether or not a crime had been committed.

Emily Inglis and Peggy Lock-wood-Lord, who share the role of Women's Officer, told *Nouse*: "We know that harassment is a serious problem at most universities, and we're trying our best to tackle it."

They went on to say: "This year we are working closely with Sam [Maguire, YUSU President], Dr Vanita Sundaram from the Department of Education and colleges to start confronting lad culture. From aggressive pack behaviour on nights out to the seminar room, it affects all aspects of the uni experience and we want to make sure the actions of [a] few don't alienate the many!"

As part of the University's campaign to tackle lad culture, Maguire has already talked to heads of sports teams. Anna Cook, Development and Wellbeing Officer for York Sport, told *Nouse*: "Lad culture is often associated with sports clubs, and we all know what it's like on a Wednesday night!"

However, she also praised the "positive interest from clubs [and] their willingness to tackle these issues" and said she is "really excited to help out with this campaign to make a more inclusive and welcoming atmosphere for sport at York".

Ellie Whittaker, President of Women's Football Club, similarly said that lad culture was an issue in sport, although she suggested it was "not so much" a problem at York.

Speaking of her experiences of lad culture and those of her peers, she said: "Playing for a women's football team ... you do get all the stereotypes and quite a lot of criticism.

"One of [the girls in my club] was excluded from GCSE/A Level PE assessment for football ... They weren't allowed to do it because they were a girl. Another one [who's now a second year] said she found that when she said she played football at [university], they were like, 'Oh, women have a team.'

"The year before we'd got Roses Team of the Year and we'd won our league really easily. We did really well but people don't really know. They know the men's club exists [though]. Luckily, we're working a lot more closely with the men's club so we're getting a lot more publicity now."

Whittaker went on to say: "I don't think, to be perfectly honest, you'll get a uni that's putting in more effort into trying to combat it than here. It's amazing the level of work they're putting in.

"I think the Sport Union has definitely improved over the last couple of years to try and combat."

As part of the University's plans to address lad culture, sexual consent workshops will be introduced. Last weekend, James College became the first college to discuss the issue of consent to hundreds of freshers at their welcome talk. Other colleges have similar plans.

Maguire told *Nouse*: "Lad culture has been shown to be a real issue within Higher Education all over the UK. We need to make a concerted effort to tackle it in order to ensure that everyone feels welcome, safe and able to be involved with any activity at this university.

"YUSU want to work with our student leaders among sports teams, societies and colleges as well as the University to develop a plan to tackle the issue here at York."

One student told Nouse "one of the things that ruined Fresher's [sic] week" and that it "makes going out in town and troublesome and off-putting."

Another respondent said: "Lad culture seems to be inherently present in a lot of the Freshers' week events which pressure everyone to get drunk. Gendered language is used around a lot of these events telling [people] to act in different ways or to dress according to their sex."

However, others believe the issue is not specific to university: "The issue does not begin at universities. To tackle it seriously, it must be tackled earlier. Banning activity will not change how they think. The issue should be raised in schools and in upbringing."



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## 9 comments

Smeg Grakes

30 Sep '14 at 9:52 pm

Jeals that the rugby club gets a mention when us lacrosse lads are probs pulling 10x the birds they are.  
HONK HONK

[Report](#)

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Anonymous

4 Oct '14 at 3:07 pm

Lad culture is NOT something to be proud of.

[Report](#)

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yep

27 Oct '14 at 5:22 pm

hmmm yeah. A real accomplishment identifying as (I'm guessing) a straight man what with all the societal stigma and oppression mechanisms you guys face in such context. Well done.

[Report](#)

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Palex Wakenham-Grolsh

30 Sep '14 at 10:02 pm

I wish girls would give me attention but I'm really fat and greasy

[Report](#)

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Anonymous

30 Sep '14 at 11:01 pm

I like how they interviewed sports captains of both genders, in order to get a gender neutral perspective of the issue.

[Report](#)

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spenny

30 Sep '14 at 11:30 pm

yawn x

[Report](#)

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Rnh

1 Oct '14 at 12:06 am

“69 per cent had had overtly sexual comments directed at them.”

69.

Lads

[Report](#)

Wilem

10 Oct '14 at 10:51 am

The use of the term 'lad' and 'lad culture' should not be being used, it is desensitising the issue - this is not a 'lad culture' it is a misogyny, sexist and rape culture. Let's not beat around the bush.

[Report](#)

York 2014

16 Oct '14 at 1:23 pm

'Rape Culture'? What a silly phrase. Rape - even where you count unreported cases - is a very uncommon occurrence and the chances of a person being raped at university are tiny. There is no culture (certainly not in the western world) that condones rape and the occurrence of rape in a society is certainly not enough to justify defining the very culture of that society on the basis of a certain criminal act (we wouldn't do it with any other crime, so why rape?).

Why the Tumblr RadFem crowd are being given a such free pass to import this manufactured rape culture hysteria from the US/Canada on to UK campuses is beyond me. Especially since in another article of this sort I read in Nouse, the term 'rape' was stretched outside its legal limits to include drunken sex between consenting adults - not rape. The big problems with sexual assault/rape go much deeper than what rowdy rugby lads do on 'socials', and can only be solved by a new focus on how people express their sexual intentions so that we not only refuse to beat around the bush when it comes to rape, but also when it comes to sex.

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