SPEAK OUT

ONLINE ANONYMOUS REPORTING TOOL

Speak Out National Report

1 September 2022 - 31 August 2024

For more information: SpeakOut@tcd.ie

© Speak Out National Office, Trinity College Dublin, The University of Dublin
Published: November 2025

ISBN: 978-1-911566-59-5

Extracts from this publication may be reproduced for non-commercial purposes without permission, provided full acknowledgement is given to Speak Out National Office, Trinity College Dublin, The University of Dublin.

An Roinn Breisoideachais agus Ardoideachais, Taighde, Nuálaíochta agus Eolaíochta
Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

HEA | An tÚdarás um Ard-Oideachas
The Higher Education Authority

Reference details: Speak Out National Office (2025) Speak Out National Report: 1 September 2022 - 31 August 2024, Trinity College Dublin, The University of Dublin

This report has been researched and written by the Speak Out National Office in Trinity College Dublin, with funding from the HEA. The Views expressed herein are those of the Speak Out National Office and can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the HEA. By virtue of preparing this paper or otherwise in connection with this research, Speak Out National Office or Trinity College Dublin will not assume any responsibility or have any liability to any third parties.

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTES USING SPEAK OUT

Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta an Atlantaigh
Atlantic Technological University

DUNDALK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA DHÚN DEALGAN

DCU
Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

SETU
Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta an Oirdheiscirt
South East Technological University

MTU
Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta na Mumhan
Munster Technological University

Ollscoil na Gaillimhe
University of Galway

Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta Bhaile Átha Cliath
TU DUBLIN
Technological University Dublin

NCI
Coláiste Náisiúnta na hÉireann | National College of Ireland

Institute of Art, Design + Technology Dún Laoghaire

Maynooth University
National University of Ireland Maynooth

COLÁISTE NÁISIÚNTA EALAÍNE IS DEARTHA
NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN

UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

UCC
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh
University College Cork, Ireland

TUS
Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta na Sionainne: Lár Tíre, An Iarthar Láir
Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest

MIC
Mary Immaculate College Limerick, Ireland

RCSI
University of Medicine and Health Sciences

CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD

The National Speak Out Office opened here at Trinity College Dublin in March 2025 with funding from the Higher Education Authority and support from the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. The ongoing work of the National Speak Out Office and publication of this report affirms Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) shared commitment to ending sexual violence, sexual harassment, bullying, and harassment in higher education.

Speak Out is supported by the strong collective voice of HEIs working together to create a culture of zero-tolerance for abuse and negative behaviours, a culture which encourages disclosure and provides trauma-sensitive responses to those impacted. A cross-institutional approach supported by senior leadership in each of our institutions ensures that our responses to negative behaviours are appropriate and effective.

Speak Out is one of several reporting options available to students, staff and others who interact with our higher education community. It provides an option to those who may wish to report abuse and remain anonymous, with the system offering signposting to institutional, local, and national support services. This National Speak Out Report captures and amplifies the collective voice of all those who took the time to report via Speak Out and provides a clear evidence-base for us to build forward from.

PROFESSOR
LORRAINE LEESON

Associate Vice Provost for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Trinity College Dublin
Chairperson, Speak Out Governance and Oversight Committee

CONTENTS

Executive Summary 7

Key findings include 9

About Speak Out 10

Speak Out National Consortium Model 10

Introduction 11

The key goals of Speak Out 12

Data 15

Total Reports 17

Timeline of Reports 18

Did the Incident Take Place While You Were a Member of the College? 19

When Did the Incident(s) Take Place? 20

Behaviours and Forms of Abuse 21

Perpetrator 24

Location 26

Formal Reporting 28

Witnesses to the Incident(s) 34

Seeking Support 36

Demographics 38

Gender Identity 38

Sex 39

Sexuality 39

Ethnicity 40

Disability 40

Marginalised Identities 42

Next Steps 45

Methodology 48

Background 49

Data Collection 49

Understanding the data 50

Bibliography 51

Definitions and Terminology 55

Which of the following best describes the situation you are reporting 56

Physical or non-physical forms of abuse 57

Where did the incident(s) take place? 57

Gender Identity 58

Ethnicity 58

01

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Higher education should provide a safe environment for students and staff, where there is zero tolerance for any form of abuse (Department of Education and Skills, 2020).

To inform a route to this goal, 17 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across Ireland are now implementing Speak Out, an anonymous online reporting tool for people to disclose their experiences of bullying, harassment, assault and sexual violence, which provides signposting to support services.

The intent is to tackle the culture of silence around these difficult and traumatising experiences and to make HEIs a safe place for students and staff to report them. Reporters to the online Speak Out tool can communicate their experience in a safe and completely anonymous manner. Their collective data is then analysed to inform responses to these experiences in HEIs and improve formal reporting procedures.

Anonymous reporting tools for incidents of harmful behaviours and sexual violence can be found across HEIs in Europe, the UK, the US, and Australia. They offer a well-established mechanism for providing staff and students with a space to safely disclose their experiences. Research from UK universities has shown that the provision of an anonymous reporting mechanism has led to an increase in formal reports (Universities UK, 2015).

This report is based on data from 16 HEIs who used the Speak Out tool in the two academic years from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2024. The topline figure for the number of reports made to the UCD Report and Support tool for the same period is also included and this is noted when included. The results should not be read as a direct reflection of the prevalence of these behaviours. The number of reports is expected to rise as the service becomes more established.

Trinity College Dublin

L to R: *Gillian Connolly, Speak Out National Administrator, Rachel Skelly, TCD Dignity, Respect & Consent Response Manager, Elaine Mears, Speak Out National Coordinator.*

KEY FINDINGS INCLUDE

01

Speak Out & UCD Report and Support

1,184 individuals at 17 HEIs in Ireland made anonymous reports through the Speak Out tool and the UCD Report and Support tool. Of these 1,184 individuals 894 (76%) reported on their own behalf and 290 (24%) on behalf of someone else.

02

Speak Out

1,011 individuals at 16 HEIs made anonymous reports through the Speak Out tool. Of these, 636 (63%) were students and 303 (30%) were staff. 784 (78%) reported on their own behalf and 227 (22%) on behalf of someone else.

03

Common Behaviours

The most common behaviours experienced were bullying (382 reports) and harassment (340).

04

Student Sexual Violence

Sexual violence and sexual harassment accounted for 25% of behaviours disclosed by students. Students made 55 disclosures of rape (5% of reports), 106 disclosures of sexual assault (10%) and 108 disclosures of sexual harassment (10%).

05

Physical Abuse

Students disclosed significantly higher levels of purely physical abuse (17%) while 4% of staff disclosures involved purely physical abuse.

06

Formal Complaints to HEI

20% of staff and 12% of students who disclosed to Speak Out made a formal complaint to their HEI about the abuse.

07

Formal Complaints to Gardaí

4% of students who disclosed to Speak Out made a formal complaint to An Garda Síochána about the abuse.

08

Reason for not Reporting to HEI

Common reasons for not reporting the incident to the HEI including a fear that nothing would be done or lack of proof that the behaviour took place.

09

Reason for not Reporting to Gardaí

Common reasons for not reporting to the Gardaí included a sense that the behaviour was not serious enough, or that proof was lacking.

ABOUT SPEAK OUT

The Speak Out online tool was developed by the Psychological Counsellors in Higher Education Ireland (PCHEI) and the pilot phase began in October 2021. The development of Speak Out was guided by the national policy framework for preventing and responding to sexual violence and harassment in higher education in Ireland.

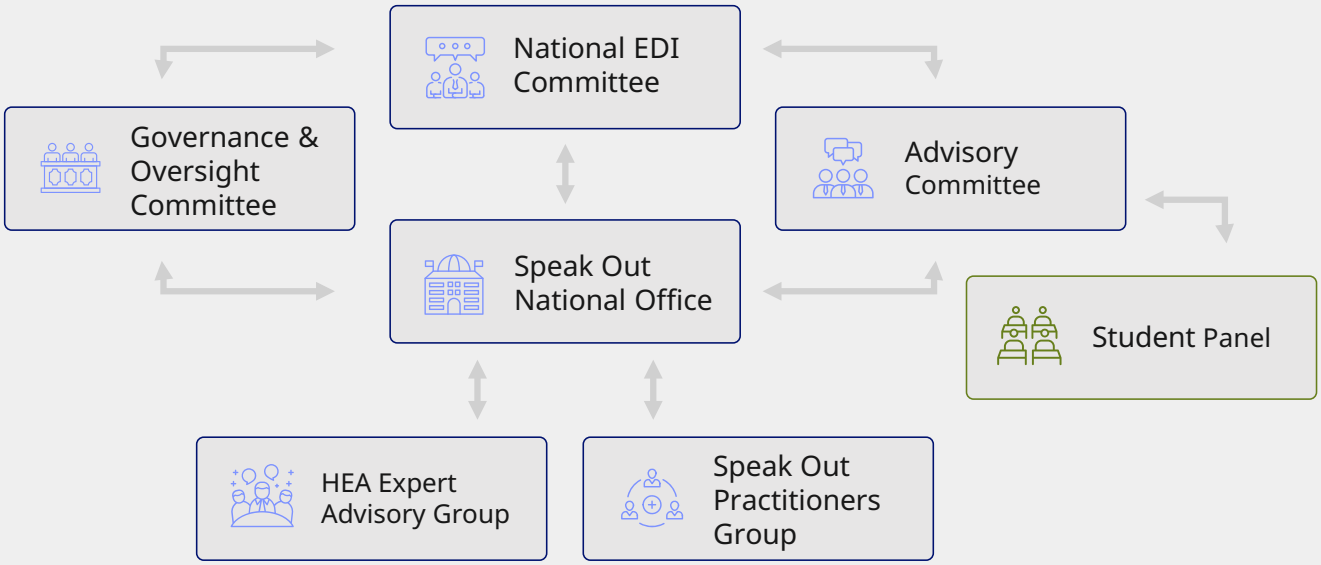
In 2023, the Higher Education Authority (HEA) commissioned an evaluation of Speak Out which was then operating as a pilot (Hand, 2023). The evaluation proposed a consortium model, hosted by an institution or representative body on behalf of implementing members. Trinity College Dublin was successful in applying to host the HEA-funded Speak Out National Office, which began operations in March 2025.

The Speak Out National Office is now working with a wide range of subject matter experts and stakeholders within the HEI sector and broader society, with the support of the HEA and Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

Speak Out is currently available for staff, students and visitors in the below institutions:

Atlantic Technological University, Dublin City University, Dundalk Institute of Technology, Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art and Design Technology, Maynooth University, Munster Technological University, National College of Art and Design, National College of Ireland, Royal College of Surgeons Ireland, South East Technological University, Trinity College Dublin, Technological University Dublin, Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest, University College Cork, University of Galway, University of Limerick, and Mary Immaculate College. Mary Immaculate College joined Speak Out in September 2025. University College Dublin uses Report and Support as its anonymous reporting tool.

SPEAK OUT NATIONAL CONSORTIUM MODEL



02

INTRODUCTION

Speak Out is an online anonymous reporting tool which offers a space for all members of HEI communities to speak out about their experiences of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, discrimination, hate crime, coercive behaviour/control, stalking, assault, sexual harassment, sexual assault, and rape. It provides signposting to a range of local and national support services. Speak Out is currently being implemented in 17 HEIs across the country. This report contains data from 16 HEIs who used the Speak Out tool in the two academic years from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2024. It also contains one headline data point from the UCD Report and Support tool which provides a similar function to Speak Out in UCD.

This report is possible thanks to the individuals who took the courageous step to make an anonymous report through Speak Out. Their collective experiences provide an insight into the types of behaviours that our Higher Education community experience. The new Speak Out National Office intends to utilise this data to help to drive meaningful change and to inform the improvement of both educational initiatives and formal reporting procedures.

THE KEY GOALS OF SPEAK OUT

- Provide a space for staff, students, and visitors to safely speak out about their experiences of harassment, discrimination and assault;
- Promote the visibility of the support services and other options available to staff, students, and visitors to the institution;
- Contribute to the sectoral efforts to monitor & report on trends of reported behaviours across HEIs;
- Ensure policy and procedures are informed by the experiences of HEI communities and are accessible to all members;
- Inform communications campaigns to positively influence respectful and supportive campus cultures;
- Develop evidence-informed, customised training programmes informed by analysis of the data reported.

University College Dublin (UCD) implements a bespoke but similar anonymous reporting tool called 'Report and Support' that was launched prior to Speak Out in February 2020. A representative from UCD participated in the original Speak Out Steering Group and contributed valuable learning from their experience. UCD is also represented on the Speak Out Advisory Committee and the Speak Out Practitioners group. See more details on **UCD's Report and Support tool and annual reports** (UCD, 2024). The Report and Support headline data on the types of people reporting to the tool within the time period 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2024 is also included in this report.

The development of Speak Out was influenced and guided by the **national policy Framework**, entitled 'Safe, Respectful, Supportive and Positive – Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions' (Department of Education and Skills, 2020). This Framework, published by the government in 2019, has guided and directed the work of Higher Education Institutions and includes the following outcomes related to the reporting of incidents:

Institutions shall record statistics on harassment, assault, and rape and report them in the context of their strategic dialogue with the HEA.

HEIs will create an easy-to-use system for students to disclose and report incidents, which would be reflected in a high level of awareness and understanding among both students and staff.

The reporting system for students is compatible with complainant/ survivor rights, cognisant of the needs of vulnerable groups, and has the confidence of the higher education community.

Speak Out helps us to bind wounds but it also helps us map that road. It highlights that transformation is always the deeper, and more necessary task. We commit to and affirm the wider road: to education that changes minds and habits, to policies that protect, and to leadership, not just leaders, that is steady and that is brave."

PROFESSOR
DERMOT NESTOR
President - Mary Immaculate College

Mary Immaculate College

L to R: *Gillian Connolly, Speak Out National Administrator, Kathleen Maher, MIC Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Manager, Elaine Mears, Speak Out National Coordinator.*

The Student Counselling and Wellbeing team welcomes students to access the counselling service. The service welcomes students who have concerns about any matter; academic or otherwise. No problem is too big or too small. If it matters to you, it matters to us."

DR LUCY SMITH

UL Student Counselling and Wellbeing Service

University of Limerick

L to R: *Gillian Connolly, Speak Out National Administrator, UL Maria Healy, Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Manager, Elaine Mears, Speak Out National Coordinator.*

South East Technological University Carlow

L to R: *Elaine Mears, Speak Out National Coordinator, Felix Sheridan, SETU Psychotherapist, Gillian Connolly, Speak Out National Administrator.*

The Speak Out reporting tool for staff and students in Irish HEI's is a valuable asset in addressing harmful behaviour. When exploring scenarios during Bystander Intervention training, various intervention strategies are explored by the participants. Emphasis is placed on interventions which support the person in need and / or reporting the incident, as being safe and effective. These interventions are within everybody's capacity, and a great starting point to developing skillset. Therefore, the Speak Out tool as an anonymous platform offers active bystanders the opportunity to make a report, implementing their intervention skills whilst feeling safe from repercussion due to its anonymity."

BYSTANDER INTERVENTION PROGRAMME

University College Cork

03

DATA

This report presents highlights from an initial analysis of the aggregated data collected across 16 participating Higher Educations Institutions from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2024.[1] One headline data point which details the number of reports made includes data from the UCD 'Report and Support' tool and where this occurs it is clearly indicated. More detailed UCD data is published in their **Dignity and Respect Annual Reports** (UCD, 2024).

In the two academic years from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2024, 1,011 reports were made to Speak Out. Every effort has been made to protect the anonymity of these individuals; no data containing fewer than 10 responses will be included in this report and these are denoted by '< 10'. It is further acknowledged that the experience of each individual is valued in this report, regardless of the perceived prevalence of the issue. It is important to note that the Speak Out tool was in its pilot phase during the time-period this report covers, and we expect the numbers of people using Speak Out to rise over the coming years as the new Speak Out National Office becomes embedded.

It is crucial that it is understood that the number of reports submitted via Speak Out are not a direct reflection of the prevalence of these behaviours, and that in reality the actual incidence is likely far higher than what is reported here. Many factors intersect to inhibit disclosures, some of which are reflected by the data below, not to mention that members of the college community may be unaware of the existence of Speak Out or the other options available to them. Higher levels of reporting have corresponded with awareness raising initiatives in the HEIs and point to a continued need to ensure Speak Out is visible and accessible to all members of our Higher Education community.

Speak Out is completely anonymous and it is not possible to identify any individual that has submitted a report nor is it possible to trace IP addresses. A comprehensive data protection risk assessment informed the development of the tool which has been regularly reviewed and updated, and data sharing agreements were signed with the developers and all implementing institutions. Only a limited number of trained individuals have access to institutional level data. It is not possible for the Speak Out administrator to link any of the aggregated data to specific institutions or individuals.

Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland

L to R: *Elaine Mears, Speak Out National Coordinator, Julia Morrow, RCSI Research & Policy Officer, Liz Hughes, RCSI Head of EDI, Gillian Connolly, Speak Out National Administrator.*

The data gathered through Speak Out is rich and nuanced. However, to gain a more comprehensive picture, it should be viewed alongside other data sources, such as national survey data and research. HEIs exist

1 The 16 HEIs included in this report include all of the HEIs included in last Speak Out National Data Report and one additional HEI. The lower HEI number reflects the amalgamation of multiple institutions into the newly created Atlantic Technological University and South East Technological University.

within the wider cultural and societal context, and as such many of the issues reported are reflective of the broader experiences of those living within Ireland. Within the timeframe of this snapshot of data, Ireland was still navigating its way out of Covid 19. It is important to acknowledge that for many it was a frightening and isolating experience, and we are still witnessing the lasting impacts of social restrictions placed on people as a result of this.

While this report captures two full years of data, it is important to note that many students and staff do not engage in university business during June, July, and August. The impact of this can be seen in Figure 2, as there is a clear drop in the number of reports across these months. We can also see in Figure 4 that most reports made to Speak Out were made within a year of the incident(s) taking place, with only a small number taking place over a year previous to reporting.

Speak Out Practitioners in each HEI, students, members of the Speak Out Governance and Oversight Committee and Speak Out Advisory Committee and key stakeholders across HEIs have been consulted on the data results presented in this report and have input into how the results have been interpreted and presented.

TOTAL REPORTS

In the two academic years from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2024 a total of 1,184 individuals at 17 HEIs in Ireland made anonymous reports through the Speak Out tool and the UCD Report and Support tool. Of these 1,184 individuals 894 (76%) reported on their own behalf and 290 (24%) on behalf of someone else. All the following data relates to Speak Out only.

1,011 of these individuals made anonymous reports to 16 Higher Education Institutions through the Speak Out tool. Of the 1,011 individuals, 784 (78%) reported on behalf of themselves, while 227 (22%) reported on behalf of someone else. There were no significant differences in the types of reports being made to Speak Out by those reporting behaviours that they had experienced themselves, and those who were reporting on behalf of someone else.

The majority of reports made to Speak Out were made by students (636 reports or 63%). 303 reports (30%) were made by staff, and 72 reports (7%) were made by others.

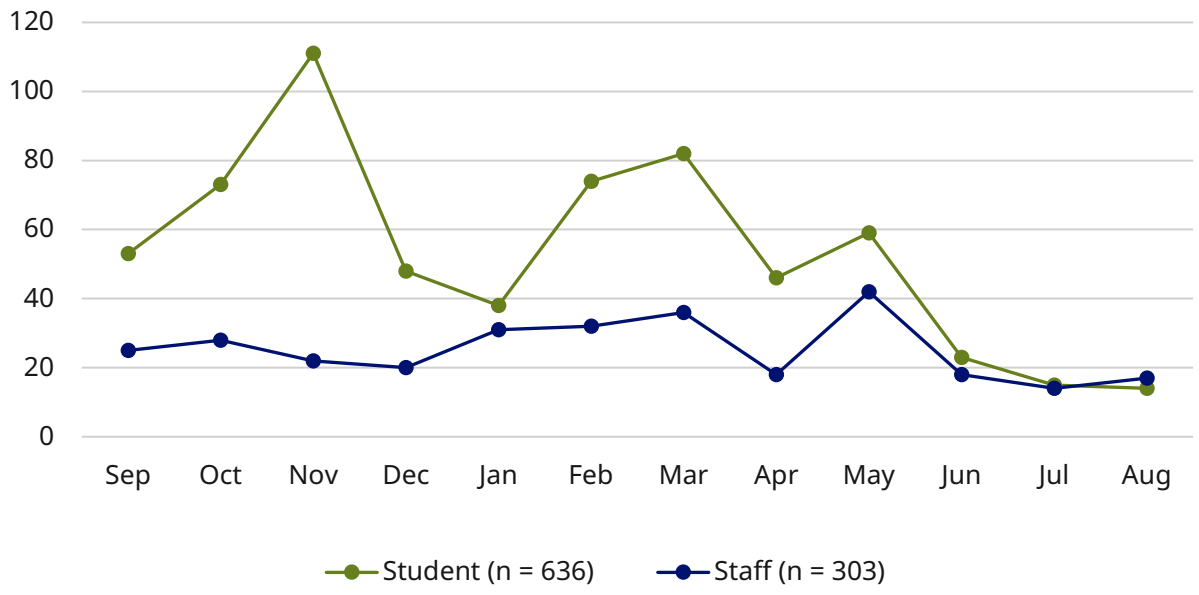
Figure 1: Total Number of Reports made to Speak Out

Reporter Type	Number of Reports (% of total)
Student (Undergraduate, Postgraduate)	636 (63%)
Staff (Academic, Professional Managerial and Support Staff, Third Party, All Other)	303 (30%)
Other (Visitor, Alumni, Other)	72 (7%)
Total	**1,011**

TIMELINE OF REPORTS

Figure 2 provides a clear picture of the timeline in which reports were made by students and staff during the two academic years from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2024. There are clear spikes in the number of reports made by students in November (111) and February-March (74 and 82 respectively). These peaks correlate with awareness raising events and campaigns taking place in HEIs where Speak Out is promoted. There is also a slight peak in reports by students in May (59). Staff have a different pattern of reporting with a peak in staff reports in May (42 reports). Reporting at the end of the academic year by both staff and students may be reflective of them feeling that it is a safe time to report as they or the perpetrator(s) may not be physically present on campus once the academic year ends or that they have time to reflect on the incident when the academic year has ended. As noted previously, report numbers dip during the summer months, however it is noted that reports were received every month.

Figure 2: Timeline of reports



At RCSI, our commitment to fostering a safe, respectful and inclusive environment is at the heart of everything we do. The Speak Out tool empowers our students, staff and visitors to share their experiences anonymously. By amplifying these voices, we are not only informing policy and shaping targeted initiatives, but also building a culture of trust, awareness and intervention."

LIZ HUGHES

Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland

DID THE INCIDENT TAKE PLACE WHILE YOU WERE A MEMBER OF THE COLLEGE?

Figure 3 highlights the answers to the questions "did the incident take place while you were a member of the college". The vast majority of incidents being reported occurred while the reporter was a member of the university, with a minority of reporters using Speak Out to report incidents that took place while they were not members of the university.

Figure 3: Did the incident take place while you were a member of the college?

Reporter Type	Yes	No
Staff (Academic, Professional Managerial and Support Staff, Third Party, All Other)	156	< 10
Student (Undergraduate, Postgraduate)	580	40
Other (Visitor, Alumni, Other)	10	< 10
Total	**746**	**< 60**

Accessing counselling support is a responsible and courageous decision. The University's Counselling Service is committed to providing a confidential and supportive space to help you navigate personal, emotional, or academic challenges. You are not alone — support is available."

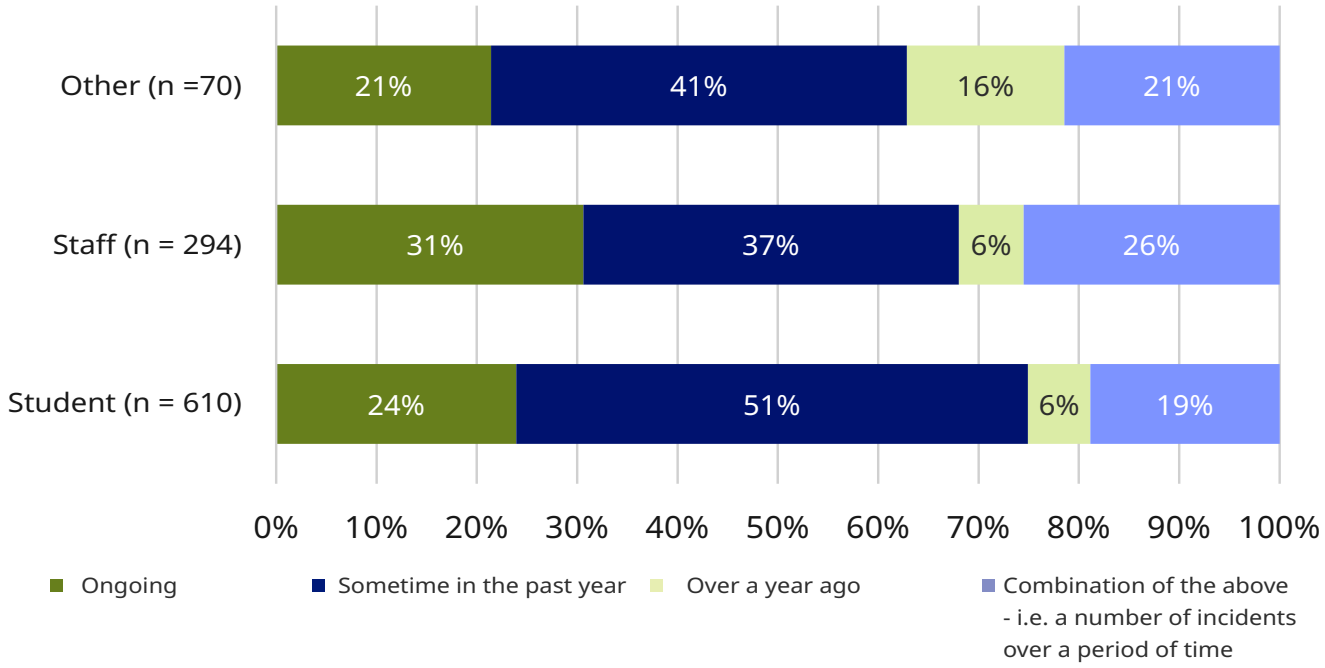
GEMMA MAC NALLY

Clinical and Therapeutic Lead for Active Consent, University of Galway*

WHEN DID THE INCIDENT(S) TAKE PLACE?

Figure 4 illustrates how long ago the incident(s) being reported to Speak Out took place. Most reports made to Speak Out related to abuse that happened sometime within the past year. A small number reported abuse that was perpetrated over a year ago (6% of students, 6% of staff and 16% of Others). For some the abuse was ongoing, and some reported abuse that had been perpetrated over a combination of time periods.

Figure 4: When did the incident(s) take place?



At SETU, we're all about creating a space where students feel comfortable to learn, connect, and get involved in every part of student life. Speak Out helps keep that space safe by giving students and staff a way to share their experiences of harmful behaviours and find support through a range of tailored services, both on and off campus."

HELENA FITZGERALD

Head of Learner Support and Student Services - South East Technological University

BEHAVIOURS AND FORMS OF ABUSE

Those speaking out were asked "Which of the following best describes the situation you are reporting?". These individuals were invited to select as many options as they felt related to their experience. The options here included; Bullying, Cyberbullying, Harassment, Discrimination, Hate Crime, Coercive behaviour/control, Stalking, Assault, Sexual harassment, Sexual assault, Rape, Other, and Prefer not to say. Due to the option to select multiple answers, the total sample number of behaviours is greater than the total number of respondents.

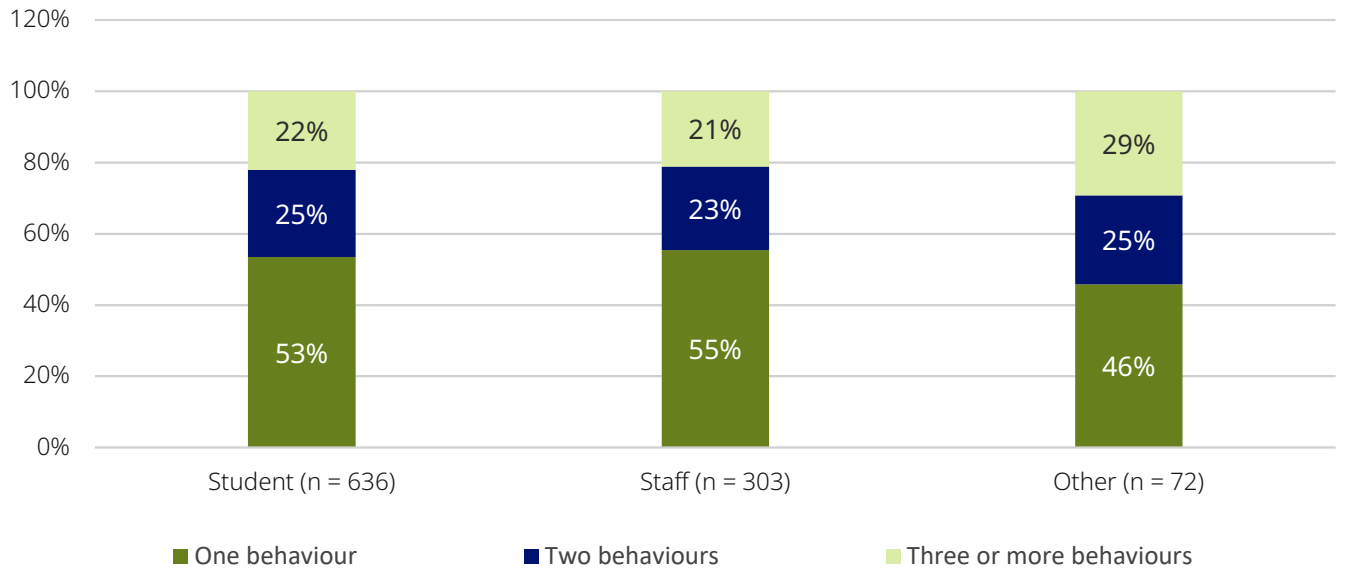
636
Students reported a total of 1,172 behaviours.

303
Staff reported a total of 534 behaviours.

72
Others reported a total of 161 behaviours.

As illustrated in Figure 5 over half of those making reports to Speak Out reported one behaviour. Approximately one quarter reported two behaviours and another quarter reported three or more behaviours.

Figure 5: Number of behaviours reported



On a closer examination of the different types of behaviours that people disclosed we see some notable similarities and differences. Figure 6 illustrates that the most common behaviours disclosed by both students and staff are Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination. Staff also disclosed quite significant levels of Coercive Behaviour with 12% of reports including this type of behaviour. Students disclosed more significant levels of sexual violence than staff with 10% of reports including Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment, and 5% of reports including Rape.

Figure 6: Which of the following best describes the situation you are reporting

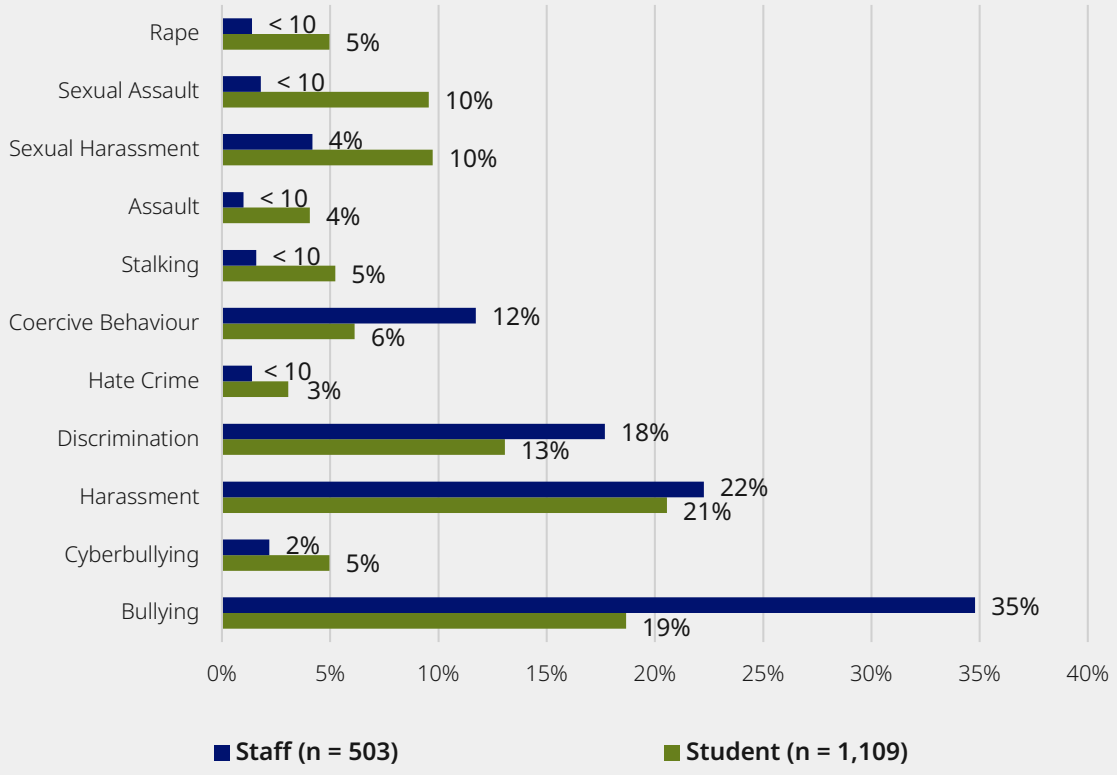
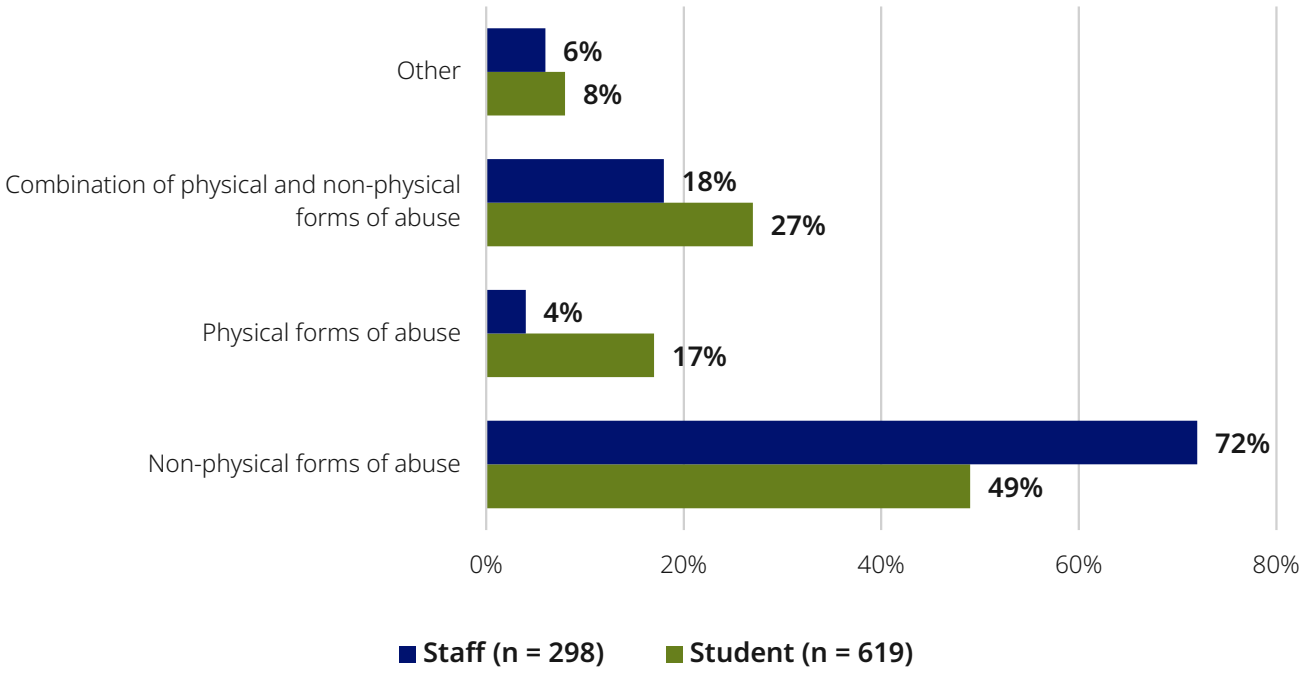


Figure 7: Total Behaviours Experienced

Type of Behaviour	Student	Staff	Total students and staff
Bullying	207	175	382
Harassment	228	112	340
Discrimination	145	89	234
Sexual Harassment	108	21	129
Coercive Behaviour	68	59	127
Sexual Assault	106	< 10	< 116
Other	63	31	94
Stalking	58	< 10	< 68
Cyberbullying	55	11	66
Rape	55	< 10	< 65
Assault	45	< 10	< 55
Hate Crime	34	< 10	< 44
Prefer not to say	13	< 10	< 23

Students and staff reported significantly different forms of abuse. As illustrated in Figure 8 students disclosed significantly higher levels of purely physical forms of abuse (17%) compared to staff (4%). Students also disclosed higher levels of abuse that included a combination of physical and non-physical behaviour (27%) than staff (18%). Staff reported significantly higher levels of behaviours that were solely non-physical in nature (72%) than students (49%).

Figure 8: Physical or non-physical forms of abuse



> *The Speak Out anonymous reporting tool provides a pathway for those who may not yet feel ready or confident to come to us directly. It ensures that everyone has a safe, confidential way to share their experiences and concerns. Each anonymous report helps us better understand what is happening across our campuses and informs how we respond, support our community, and continue to strengthen ATU's approach to preventing and addressing gender-based violence."*
>
> CAITRÍONA GLEESON
>
> *Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Manager, Atlantic Technological University*

PERPETRATOR

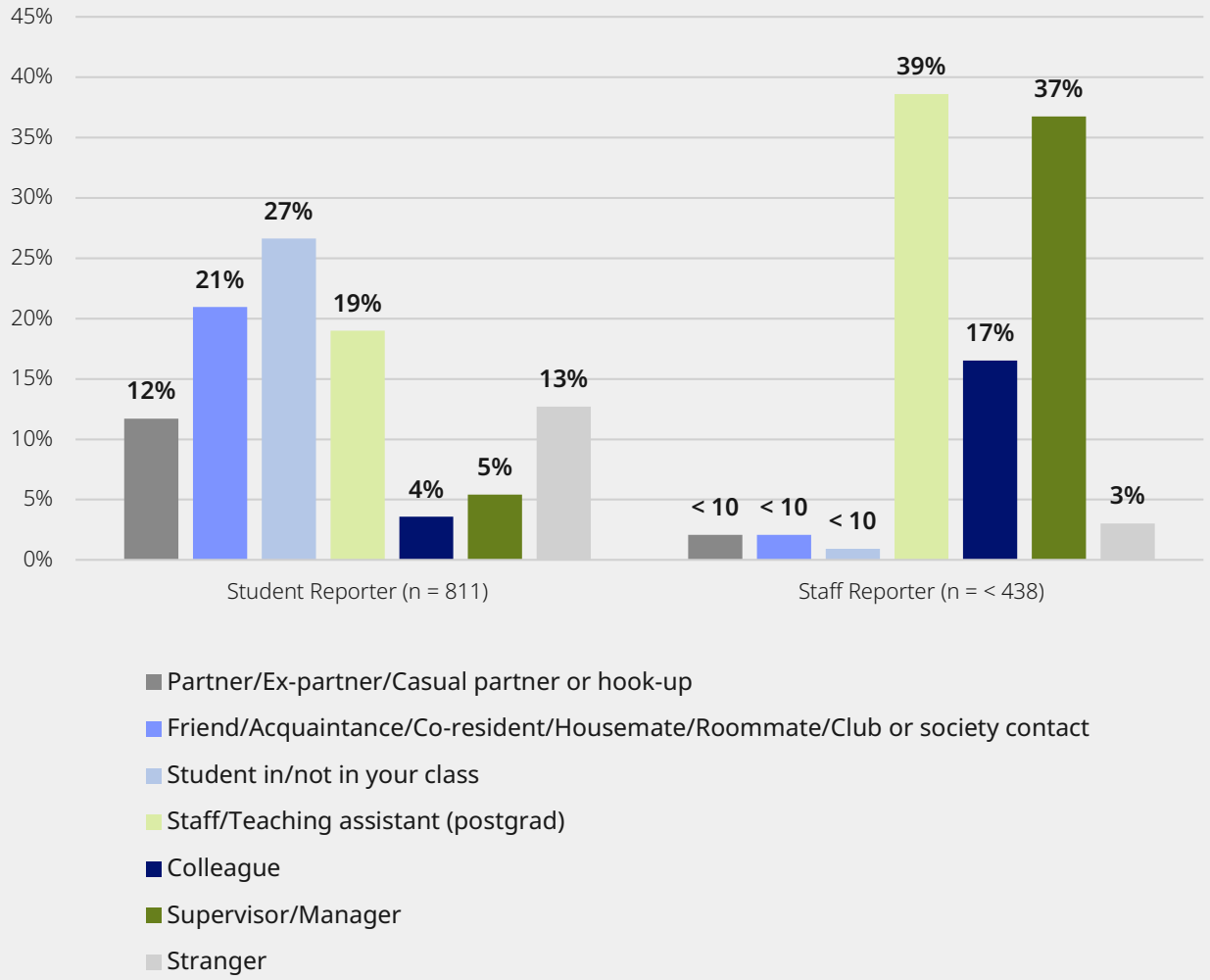
Figure 9 illustrates the significant differences in the relationships to perpetrators described by people reporting to Speak Out. Multiple answers were allowed in this question as behaviours can be perpetrated by more than one perpetrator, hence the number of perpetrators is greater than the number of people reporting.

Students most commonly reported behaviours that were perpetrated by a student in/not in their class (27%), Friend/Acquaintance/Co-resident/Housemate/Roommate/Club or society contact (21%), and Staff/Teaching assistant (19%). There are also significant reports of abuse perpetrated by a Partner/Ex-partner/Casual partner or hook-up (12%).

Staff predominantly reported behaviours that were perpetrated by other staff (39%), Supervisors/Managers (37%), and Colleagues (17%).

Others reporting to Speak Out most commonly named a Friend/Acquaintance/Co-resident/Housemate/Roommate/Club or society contact as the perpetrator. The figures were too low to present an accurate analysis of the relationship of perpetrator(s) to Others reporting to Speak Out.

Figure 9: Relationship of Perpetrator



IADT is committed to a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and harassment, as outlined in our Dignity and Respect Policy for Sexual Misconduct. We actively promote this commitment by establishing new policies, providing staff training, and displaying Speak Out digital banners and posters across the campus. We are also launching online modules for students on key topics: Consent, ESVH, Bystander Intervention, and responding to Disclosure. We are dedicated to providing responses that are trauma-informed."

HWAYOUNG LEE

IADT Administrative Lead Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment, Institute of Art Design and Technology

Institute of Art, Design and Technology

L to R: *Gillian Connolly, Speak Out National Administrator, Hwayoung Lee, IADT Administrative Lead Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment, Elaine Mears, Speak Out National Coordinator.*

University College Cork

L to R: *Avril Hutch, UCC Director of EDI, Kasia Pyrz, UCC Data Analyst EDI, Elaine Mears, Speak Out National Coordinator.*

The Speak Out anonymous online reporting tool is an important resource for University College Cork (UCC) students and staff. It provides an opportunity to direct students and staff to helpful supports and information relating to incidents of discrimination, bullying, harassment and/or sexual misconduct. It also helps to inform related policies and procedures in the University."

DR AVRIL HUTCH

Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - University College Cork

LOCATION

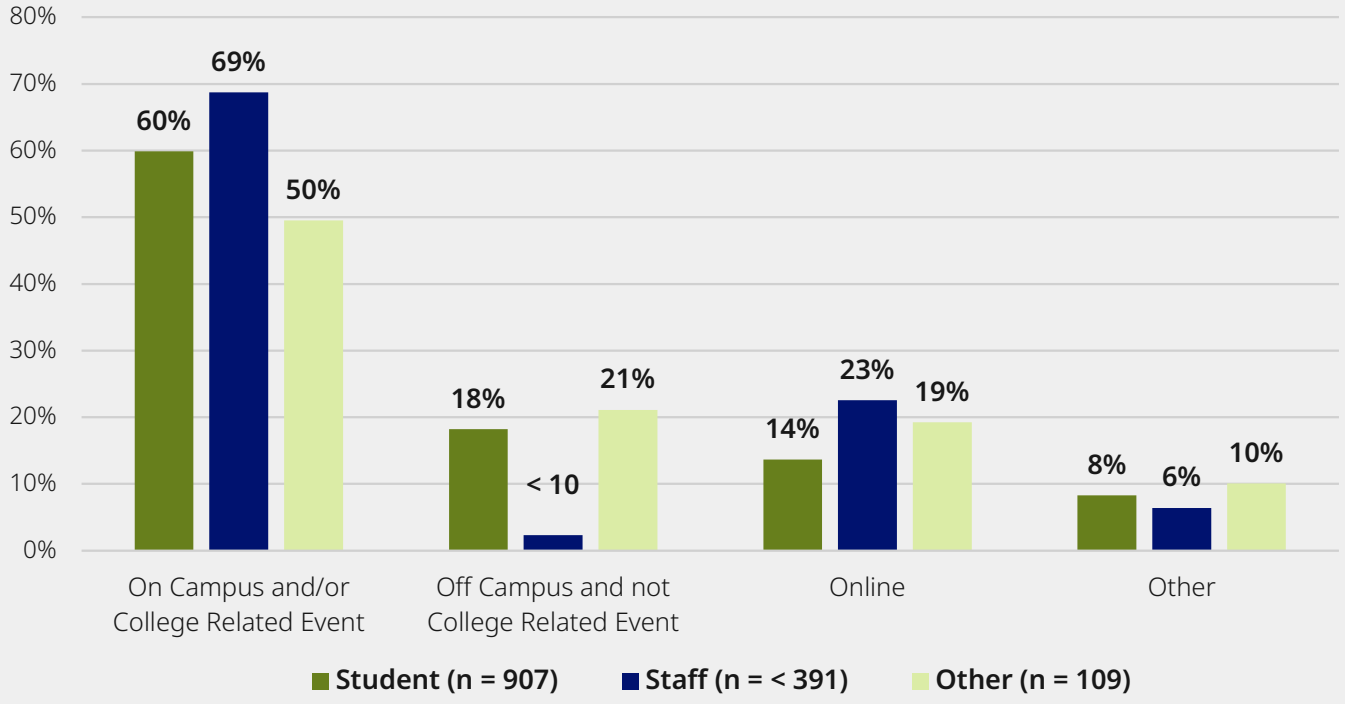
Those speaking out were asked "Where did the incident(s) take place?". Individuals were invited to select multiple answers to this question, as a recognition that they may be reporting a series of related incidences which may have taken place across multiple locations.

Figure 10 highlights the locations reported through Speak Out. In order to protect the anonymity of those speaking out, the specific locations were combined into the categories "On Campus and/or College Related", "Off Campus and not College Related", "Online" and "Other". 69% of staff and 60% of students noted that they experienced the negative behaviour in an "On Campus and/or College Related" location, while 23% of staff and 14% of students experienced the negative behaviour online. 18% of students experienced the negative behaviour off campus or at a non-college related event.

Dundalk Institute of Technology

L to R: *Gillian Connolly, Speak Out National Administrator, Siobhan Molloy, DkIT Sexual Violence and Harassment Prevention and Response Manager, Elaine Mears, Speak Out National Coordinator.*

Figure 10: Location



DkIT is committed to creating an educational community which is a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. We endeavour to create a culture of courtesy, fairness, and dignity at all times. We value diversity and actively work to create an environment where people of all backgrounds and identities feel welcome, safe, and supported."

CAROLINE PIGGOTT

Vice President for Finance, Corporate Affairs and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - Dundalk Institute of Technology

"As a professional counsellor I see Speak Out as a step towards a student or staff member feeling heard. Entering a process that feels formal yet safe enough to call out a harmful behaviour they've experienced. It guides a person towards possible next steps or options they may not have felt were available to them. It accepts and acknowledges their experience because each experience counts and is counted. It captures the HEI's data nationally and has the potential to identify trends that inform policy and initiatives towards ending sexual violence and harassment in HEI's."

DEIRDRE MCDONAGH

Head of Counselling - Maynooth University

Maynooth University

L to R: *Gillian Connolly, Speak Out National Administrator, Deirdre McDonagh, MU Head of counselling, Elaine Mears, Speak Out National Coordinator.*

FORMAL REPORTING

Those speaking out were asked "Have you (or the person affected) made a complaint/ report through college policy (This includes both formal and informal procedures but does not include disclosures to staff)" and "Have you (or the person affected) made a formal report to the Gardaí?". The graphs below highlight the responses to these questions; clearly showing that the majority of those speaking out have not made formal reports to either the HEI or the Gardaí.

As illustrated in the Figure 11, 20% of staff and 12% of students made a formal report to their HEI about the abuse. In Figure 12 we see that less than 10 staff and 4% of students made a formal report to An Garda Síochána.

Figures 13 and 14 highlight the top five reasons students and staff felt enabled/motivated to make a formal report to the HEI. Figures 15 and 16 give breakdowns of the top reasons people gave for not making a formal complaint to the HEI. The majority relate to a lack of knowledge of HEI policies and procedures, and low levels of institutional trust.

Figure 11: Formal Reports to HEI

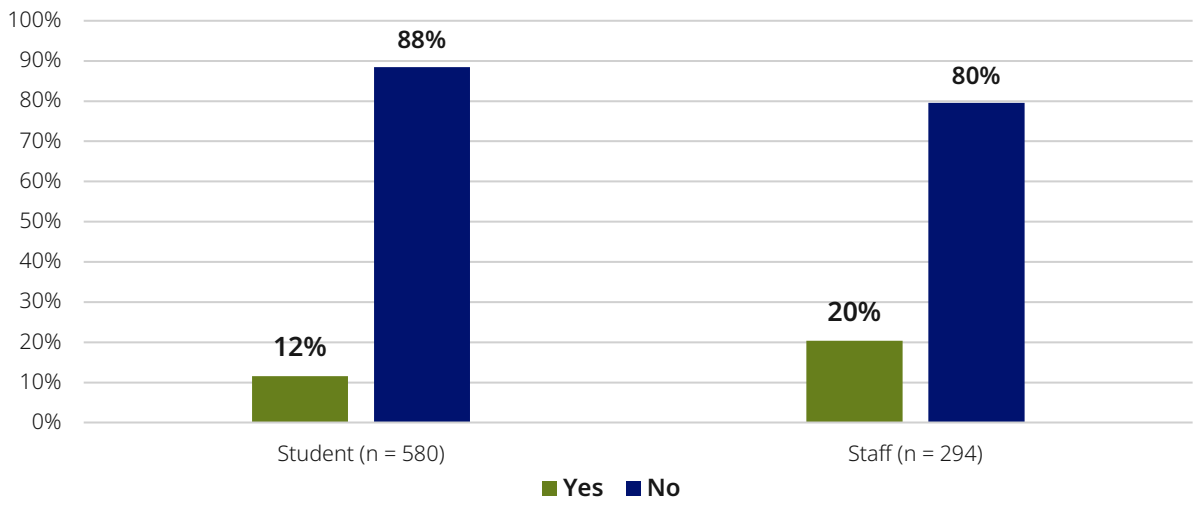
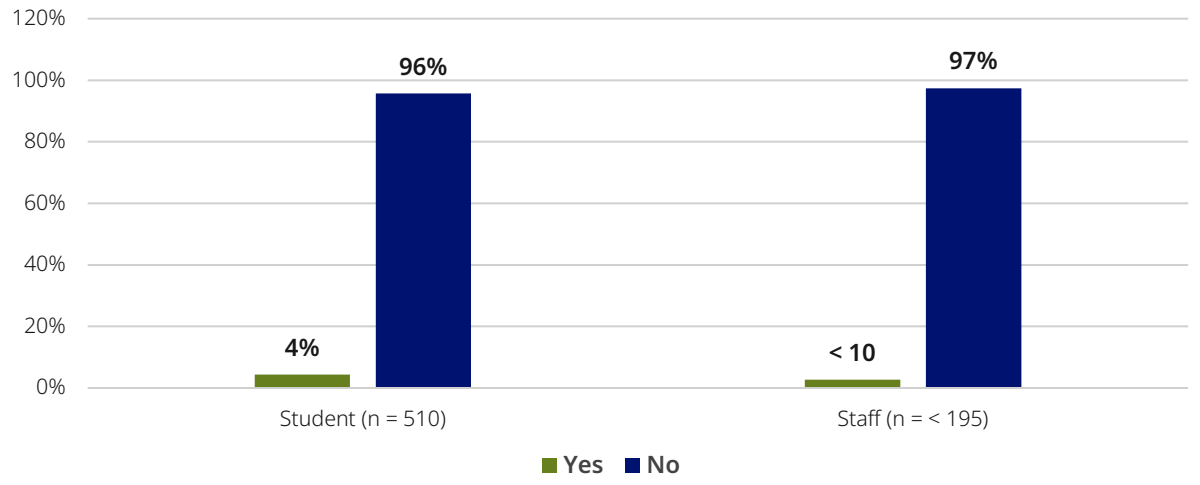


Figure 12: Formal Reports to Gardaí



Those who answered "yes" to the above questions on whether they had made a formal report to their HEI or the Gardaí were also asked to provide further detail on what enabled this decision. The figures were quite low for both answers so only the top five reasons that students and staff gave when asked what enabled/motivated their decision to make a report to the HEI are outlined below in Figures 13 and 14. The answers for both students and staff were very similar, with the majority wanting the behaviour to stop, and wanting accountability and recognition of wrongdoing on the part of the perpetrator. Not wanting the same thing to happen to someone else was also noted as a common reason by those who made formal reports to the HEI. The figures relating to what enabled a report to the Gardaí were too low to include here.

Figure 13: What enabled/motivated students to make the report to HEI

What enabled/motivated you to make the report to HEI	Student
Want the behaviour to stop	46
Other	39
Want the person(s) to understand that their behaviour is wrong	37
Want to prevent the same happening to other people	37
Want the person(s) to be held accountable	36

Figure 14: What enabled/motivated staff to make the report to HEI

What enabled/motivated you to make the report to HEI	Staff
Want the behaviour to stop	48
Other	48
Want to prevent the same happening to other people	46
Want the person(s) to be held accountable	38
Want the person(s) to understand that their behaviour is wrong	37

Figure 11 above illustrates that 88% of students and 80% of staff chose to not make a formal report to their HEI about the negative behaviour they experienced. Figure 12 illustrates that 96% of students and 97% of staff did not make a formal report to An Garda Síochána. These individuals were also asked to provide further detail on what impacted this decision. Figures 15 and 16 highlight the responses given to the questions "What impacted your (or the person affected's) decision not to make a complaint/ report through college policy at this time?" and "What impacted your (or the person affected's) decision not to report to the Gardaí at this time?". Those speaking out were invited to select as many response options which felt relevant to their experience.

The most common reason for students and staff gave for not making a formal report to the HEI was that they feared that nothing would be done if they make a complaint. This fear speaks to a lack of trust in the formal reporting processes in their HEIs.

Figure 15: Reasons not Reported to the HEI

NOT REPORTED TO THE HEI		
Knowledge of College Policy/Procedures	**Staff**	**Student**
I didn't realise it was an option	21	**172**
I do not have time to make a complaint	13	34
I don't know how to make a complaint	20	**158**
I cannot prove the behaviour took place	**61**	**174**
I don't want the involvement of the Gardaí or the courts	< 10	91
Institutional Trust	**Staff**	**Student**
I fear that nothing would be done if I make a complaint	**131**	**221**
I feel it's not serious enough to make a complaint	24	**131**
I reported to someone in the college and they didn't take it seriously	32	31
I want to make the college aware of the incident but don't want to come forward or pursue it formally	55	**151**
I was dissuaded from making a complaint	12	20
I have concerns it might affect my college results	< 10	103
I have concerns it might affect my current/future career	**114**	115
I am worried about being called a troublemaker	76	112
Relationship with the perpetrator(s)	**Staff**	**Student**
I don't to get the other person(s) in trouble	< 10	57
I don't want to damage my relationship with the perpetrator(s)	34	39
I'm worried the perpetrator(s)would retaliate	**113**	**162**
Public Perception	**Staff**	**Student**
I don't want anyone to know it took place	< 10	52
I fear that it will become public knowledge	16	**99**
I'm worried there would be repercussions in my social circle	20	72
Personal Impact	**Staff**	**Student**
I want to move on from it	14	**105**
I'm not ready to make a report	12	32
I handled it myself	< 10	24
I feel embarrassed or ashamed	30	**119**
I feel partly to blame for what happened	10	66
I'm worried I won't be believed	33	**115**
Making a complaint would have a negative effect on my health	40	50
Other	**Staff**	**Student**
The person affected did not want to report it themselves	13	34
Other	25	80
I don't know	< 10	< 10
Prefer not to say	< 10	< 10

'< 10' indicates that there are less than 10 reports in a category

Figure 16: Reasons not Reported to the Gardaí

NOT REPORTED TO THE GARDAÍ		
Knowledge of Legislation/Legal System	**Staff**	**Student**
I didn't realise it was an option	32	67
I do not have time to make a complaint	< 10	21
I don't know how to make a complaint	< 10	46
I cannot prove the behaviour took place	31	**140**
Trust in the Legal System	**Staff**	**Student**
I fear that nothing would be done if I make a complaint	26	**112**
I feel it's not serious enough to make a complaint	**39**	**156**
I reported to someone in the college and they didn't take it seriously	10	20
I was dissuaded from making a complaint	< 10	18
I have concerns it might affect my college results	< 10	32
I have concerns it might affect my current/future career	**37**	51
Relationship with Perpetrator(s)	**Staff**	**Student**
I don't to get the other person(s) in trouble	< 10	32
I don't want to damage my relationship with the perpetrator(s)	10	13
I'm worried the perpetrator(s)would retaliate	31	78
Public Perception	**Staff**	**Student**
I don't want the involvement of the Gardaí or the courts	26	**99**
I'm worried there would be repercussions in my social circle	< 10	43
I'm worried I won't be believed	14	72
I am worried about being called a troublemaker	22	56
I don't want anyone to know it took place	< 10	30
I fear that it will become public knowledge	11	56
Personal Impact	**Staff**	**Student**
I feel embarrassed or ashamed	15	77
I feel partly to blame for what happened	< 10	43
I handled it myself	< 10	23
I want to move on from it	17	56
I'm not ready to make a report	< 10	38
Making a complaint would have a negative effect on my health	16	37
Other	**Staff**	**Student**
The person affected did not want to report it themselves	< 10	19
Other	**35**	66
I don't know	< 10	27
Prefer not to say	< 10	16

'< 10' indicates that there are less than 10 reports in a category

Figures 17: Most Common Reasons students did not make a formal report to HEI

Reasons not Reported to College	Student
I fear that nothing would be done if I make a complaint	221
I cannot prove the behaviour took place	174
I didn't realise it was an option	172
I'm worried that the perpetrator(s) would retaliate	162
I don't know how to make a complaint	158

Figures 18: Most Common Reasons staff did not make a formal report to HEI

Reasons not Reported to College	Staff
I fear that nothing would be done if I make a complaint	131
I have concerns it might affect my current/future career	114
I'm worried that the perpetrator(s) would retaliate	113
I'm worried about being called a troublemaker	76
I cannot prove the behaviour took place	61

Figures 19: Most Common Reasons students did not make a formal report to Gardaí

Reasons not Reported to Gardaí	Student
I feel it's not serious enough to make a complaint	156
I cannot prove the behaviour took place	140
I fear that nothing would be done if I make a complaint	122
I don't want the involvement of the Gardaí or the courts	99
I'm worried the perpetrator(s) would retaliate	78
I feel embarrassed or ashamed	77

Figures 20: Most Common Reasons students did not make a formal report to Gardaí

Reasons not Reported to Gardaí	Staff
I feel it's not serious enough to make a complaint	39
I have concerns it might affect my current/future career	37
Other	35
I didn't realise it was an option	32
I cannot prove the behaviour took place	31
I'm worried the perpetrator(s) would retaliate	31

Speak Out has grown to be an essential tool for giving students the confidence to safely and effectively report their experiences. As a VP for Welfare in MTU Cork Students' Union, I take pride in supporting a platform that fosters change and reinforces a respectful campus culture."

PATRYCJA ZBIKOWSKA

Vice President for Welfare - Munster Technological University

Munster Technological University

L to R: *Gillian Connolly, Speak Out National Administrator, Ciara Mulcahy Linehan, MTU Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Manager, Elaine Mears, Speak Out National Coordinator.*

At MTU, across all campuses, we're continually developing our policies, processes, and culture to prevent sexual violence and harassment; upholding our commitment to a zero-tolerance approach and endeavouring to enhance our capacity to respond to any incidents with care that is trauma-informed and person-centred. Speak Out helps us understand the challenges faced by our staff and students, highlighting where change or challenge is needed so that MTU becomes a safer place to work and study."

CIARA MULCAHY LINEHAN

Sexual Violence and Harassment Prevention Officer - Munster Technological University

Coming to university can feel overwhelming, especially if you're far from home or starting fresh and you don't know anyone. Many students don't realise how many services are available until they need them. Being aware of all the resources available and reaching out early, even just for advice or to meet someone you can talk to, can make our university journey so much smoother. UCD offers so many support services that genuinely care about students' wellbeing like academic help, mental health support and support when faced with bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct. It's reassuring to know there's always someone ready to listen and guide you when you're feeling troubled."

TANISSHA SHANKAR

Dignity & Respect Student Ambassador, University College Dublin

WITNESSES TO THE INCIDENT(S)

Figures 21 and 22 highlight the number of incidents reported to Speak Out that were witnessed by other people, and whether or not the witness intervened in the incident being reported.

76% of students and 81% of staff reported that someone witnessed, to some degree, the incident they were reporting. 24% of students and 19% of staff noted that the witness(es) did not intervene.

It is unclear whether this relatively low level of intervention highlighted by people making reports to Speak Out is the result of different understandings of what an intervention is, or if it's a reflection of an unwillingness of bystanders to intervene in unfolding situations. Intervention can take many forms, from intervening in a situation whilst it is unfolding, to checking in with a person who you have witnessed being involved in a situation after the event. Following this, assisting a person to make a report or upon their request, making a report on their behalf is a safe and effective intervention. It is not always safe or appropriate to intervene during an incident taking place. The **Bystander Intervention Programme** developed by UCC provides guidance and information on how to intervene safely.

Figure 21: Did anyone witness the incident(s)?

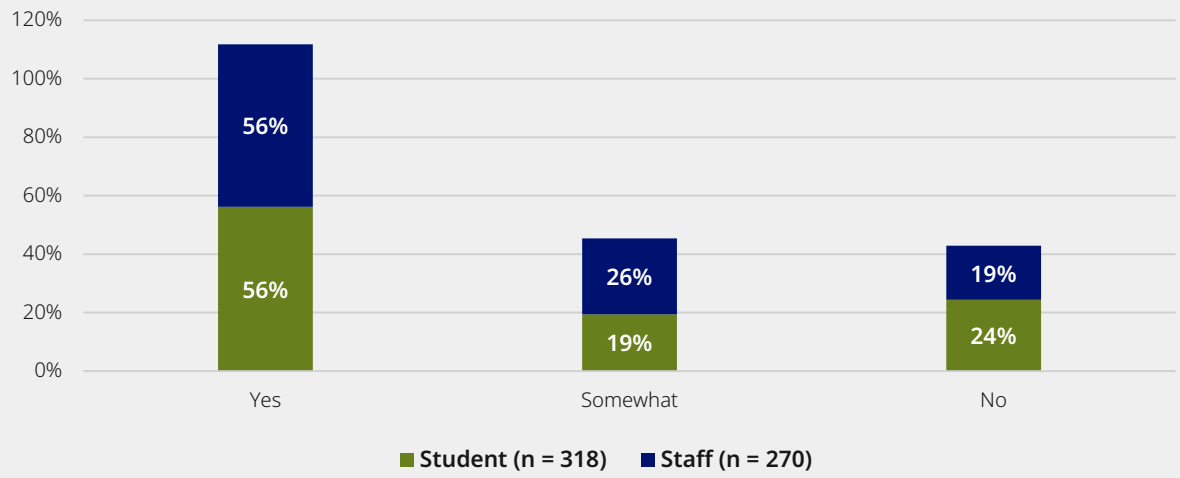
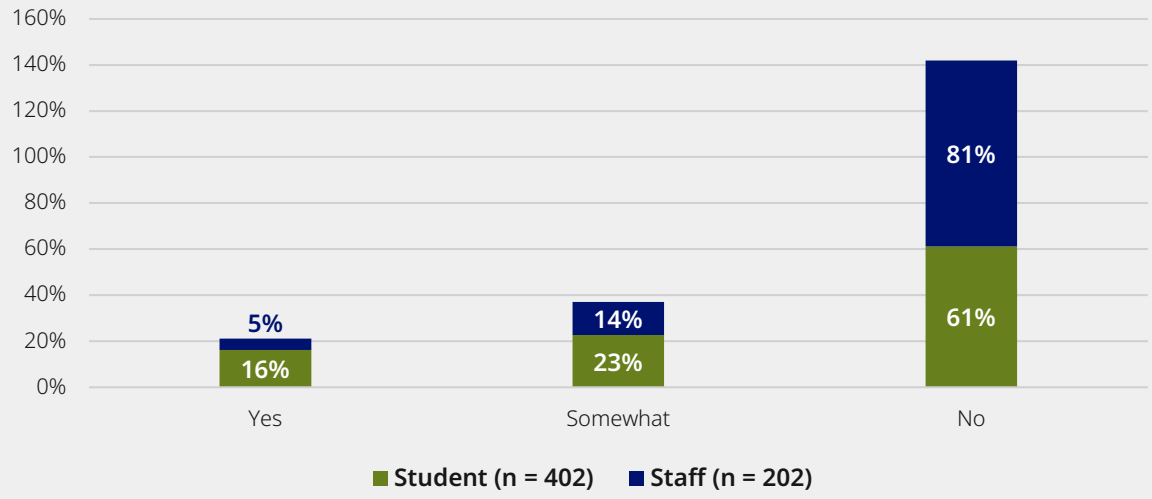


Figure 22: Did the witness intervene?



"The Speak Out tool is a powerful resource that enables the RCSI community to disclose experiences anonymously, helping us to listen, learn and act. We encourage everyone - students, staff and visitors - to use this platform to help shape a culture where dignity and respect are not just values, but everyday realities."

PROFESSOR
CATHAL KELLY

Vice Chancellor, Chief Executive Officer and Registrar - Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland

South East Technological University Waterford

L to R: *Allison Keneally, SETU VP of EDI, Ann Marie Quigley, SETU Head of Student Counselling, Elaine Mears, Speak Out National Coordinator, Róisín Shanahan, SETU Sexual Violence and Harassment Prevention and Response Manager, Gillian Connolly, Speak Out National Administrator David Denieffe, SETU VP of Student Experience.*

University of Galway

L to R: *Gillian Connolly, Speak Out National Administrator, Rebecca Connolly, University of Galway Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Officer, Niamh Kavanagh, University of Galway Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Manager, Elaine Mears, Speak Out National Coordinator.*

The University is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and inclusive working environment for all staff. We encourage any staff member who has experienced or witnessed inappropriate behaviour to come forward and make a formal report. Your voice matters, and by speaking out, you are helping to create a healthier, more respectful community for everyone. HR is here to support you at every step of the process."

SINEAD WYNNE

Deputy Director of Human Resources - University of Galway

SEEKING SUPPORT

Figure 23 highlights that the majority of all people making reports to Speak Out sought support from a person or an organisation after the incident of abuse. 64% of students, 63% of staff and 66% of Others reached out for support.

Figure 23: Have you sought support?

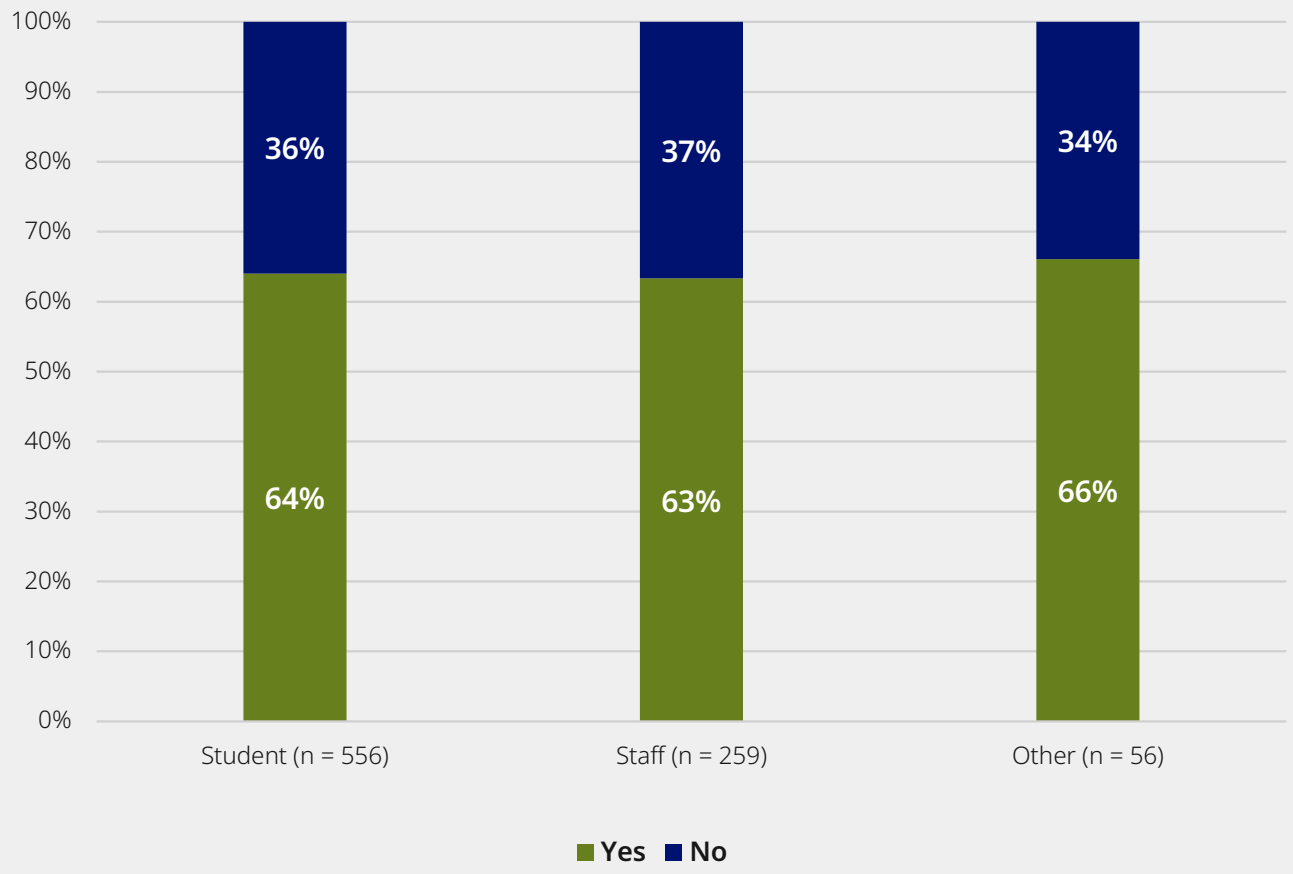


Figure 24 highlights the responses of those who have sought support, and those who have not sought support yet. The question allowed for multiple response options to be selected, and as such the number of reports of seeking support are greater than the total number of individuals who spoke out.

Friends and family members are the most significant source of support for staff and students reporting to Speak Out. This highlights the importance of a broad societal understanding of safe and supportive responses to disclosures of abuse which can positively impact outcomes for survivors/victims, and in turn help to create a culture of disclosure. This is consistent with the findings of the HEA national research on staff and student experiences of sexual violence and harassment in HEIs (MacNeela, et al, 2022).

Figure 24: Who did you seek support from?

	Staff (n = < 410)	Student (n = < 799)
Yes, I have sought support from a friend/family member	109	285
Yes, I have sought support from the college Counselling Service	22	86
Yes, I have sought support from the college Health Service	< 10	26
Yes, I have sought support from the Students' Union	< 10	25
Yes, I have sought support from my Employee Assistance Programme	31	< 10
Yes, I have sought support from elsewhere in college	62	67
Yes, I have sought support from an external organisation	62	63
No, but having been made aware of the supports available through this tool I will seek support soon	12	60
No, but I will seek support soon	22	101
No, I do not intend to seek support right now	70	76

Speak Out is such an important piece of the cultural puzzle in HEIs in Ireland; the tool is part of a suite of options for raising concerns of abuse within and outside of our institutions. Not only does this provide our community members with more choices for how they wish to address their experiences, but it allows for cross-institutional collaboration in ensuring that we have a whole of community approach to promoting a positive safe and inclusive University."

RACHEL SKELLY

Dignity, Respect and Consent Response Manager - Trinity College Dublin, The University of Dublin

DEMOGRAPHICS

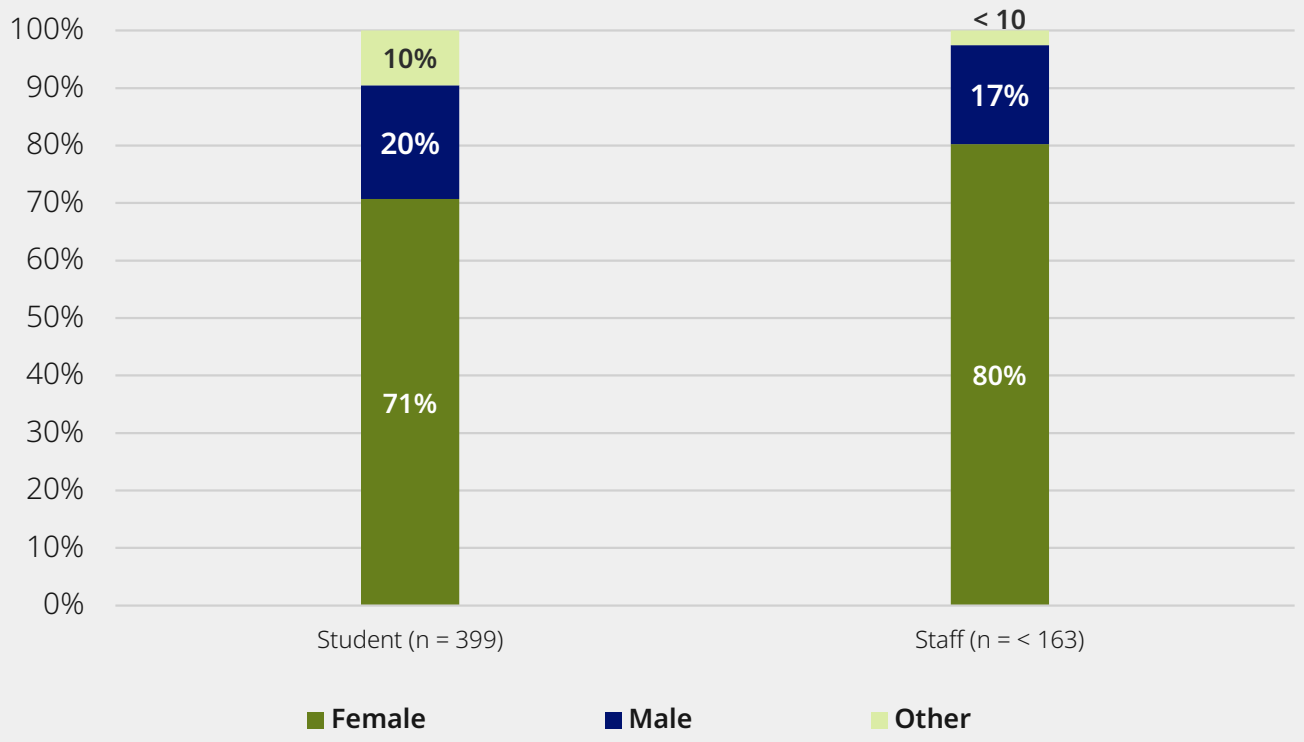
Of the 1,011 people who made a report to Speak Out 60% chose to complete demographic information about themselves. This section on demographics refers to that 60%. It is important to note that the following data does not represent prevalence in experiences of abuse by people with different demographic identities; it represents the demographic breakdown of those speaking out through this tool who chose to share this information with us.

GENDER IDENTITY

Figure 25 highlights the gender breakdown of those who have spoken out. The list of options provided has been condensed in the below figure to protect the anonymity of those speaking out, and therefore the categories Gender Fluid, Gender Non-Conforming/Queer, Non-Binary, Trans-Female, Trans-Male, and Other are collated within the category "Other".

The majority of Students (71%), Staff (80%) and Others (73%) reporting to Speak Out were female. 20% of students identified as male and 10% of students identified as another gender identity. 17% of staff were male and the number of staff identifying as other gender identities was too low to provide a further breakdown. The HEA Equal Access Survey results indicates that 0.5% of Irish Higher Education students are either non-binary or do not declare their gender (HEA, 2024).

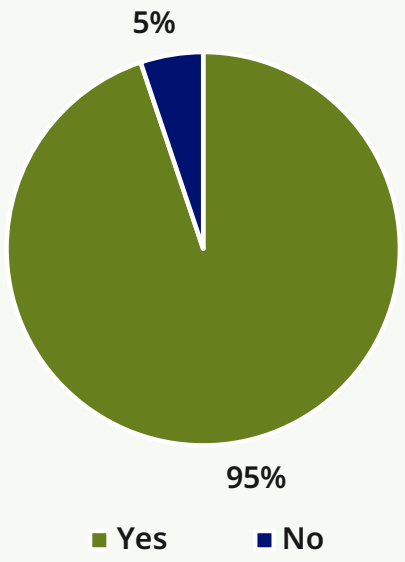
Figure 25: Gender Identity



SEX

Figure 26 illustrates that the majority of people making a report to Speak Out disclosed that their gender is the same as the sex assigned to them at birth (95%). 5% reported that the sex assigned to them at birth does not correlate with their gender identity. Due to the small numbers and need to protect anonymity, it was not possible to provide any additional analysis on this.

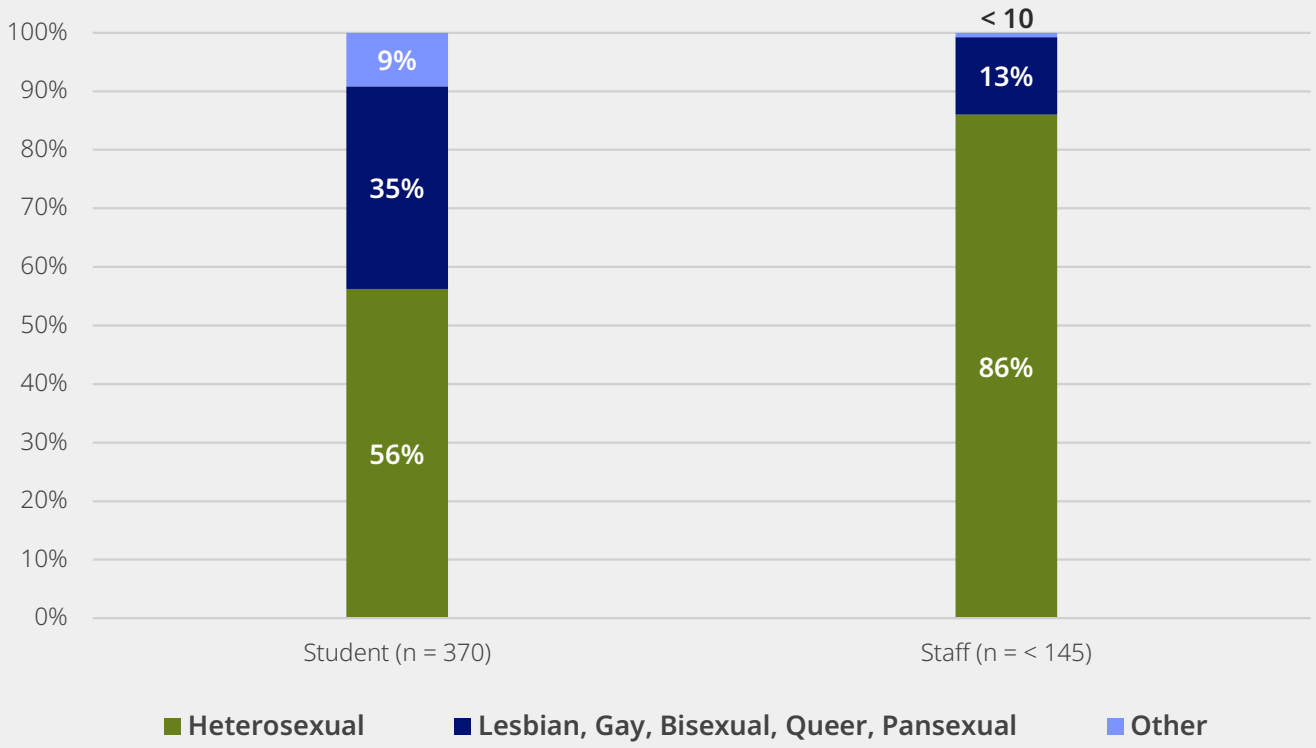
Figure 26: Is your gender the same as the sex that was assigned at birth? (n = 582)



SEXUALITY

Figure 27 illustrates the sexuality that students and staff disclosed to Speak Out. A significantly larger proportion of students were lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, pansexual (35%) compared to staff using Speak Out (13%). The majority of both students and staff reported their sexuality as heterosexual (56% and 86% respectively).

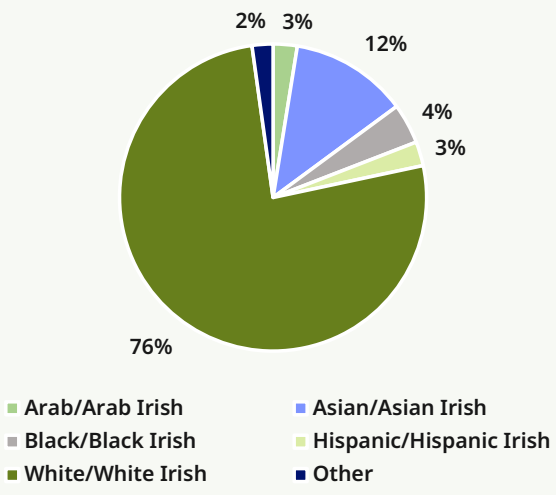
Figure 27: Sexuality



ETHNICITY

Figure 28 shows that the majority of people reporting to Speak Out between 1 September 2022 and 31 August 2024 identified their ethnic group or background as white or white Irish (76%). This includes a small number of Irish Travellers and Roma people. The second largest ethnic identity was Asian or Asian Irish (12%). The breakdown of ethnicities of people using Speak Out who entered their demographic data is generally in line with the 2022 CSO Census figures on ethnicity and the Race Equality in the Higher Education Sector analysis commissioned by the HEA (CSO, 2023; Kempny, et al, 2021). However, Asian/Asian Irish ethnicities feature more prominently in the Speak Out data than what is recorded in the CSO Census figures and the HEA commissioned analysis in Higher Education.

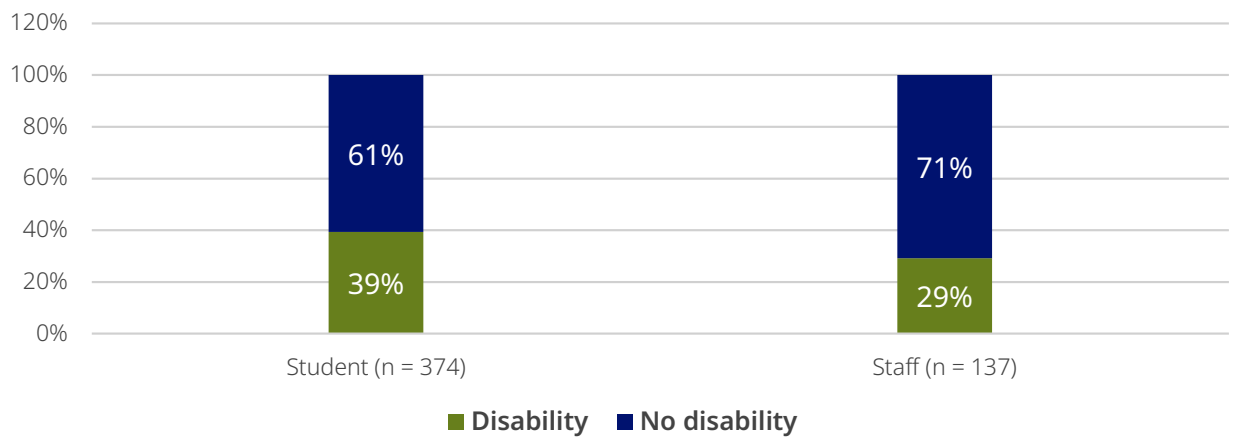
Figure 28: Ethnicity (n = 591)



DISABILITY

Those who completed the demographic questions were asked if they had any of the following long-lasting conditions: Blindness, deafness or severe vision or hearing impairment; A condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities such as walking, climbing stairs, reaching, lifting or carrying; A learning or intellectual disability; A psychological or emotional condition; and Other, including chronic illness. Multiple responses were possible. 37% of people who completed demographic information on Speak Out indicated having a disability of some kind. As illustrated by Figure 29 students reporting to Speak Out were more likely to have a disability than staff (39% of students compared to 29% of staff). A psychological or emotional condition was the most common form of disability disclosed by students, followed by other disabilities or combinations of multiple disabilities, and learning or intellectual disabilities. Staff disclosed other disabilities or combinations of multiple disabilities as the most common form of disability, followed by a psychological or emotional condition. The most recent HEA Equal Access Survey Results indicates that 20.2% of new entrants to Higher Education in Ireland have a disability. (HEA, 2024).

Figure 29: Disability



TUS's aim is to provide a safe and empathetic environment that supports students experiencing difficult personal circumstances, such as incidences of sexual harassment or violence, and to report such incidences through appropriate channels. TUS fosters a culture of collective empowerment and awareness and institutional responsibility. TUS's institutional responsibility is in creating an environment where any disclosure is met with care, confidentiality and action, as evidenced in its policies and procedures."

FRANCES O'CONNELL

Vice President for Student Education and Experience - Technological University of the Shannon

As Vice President of EDI, I reaffirm the University of Galway's unwavering commitment to ensuring a culture of respect, equality, trust and empathy, and supporting the wellbeing and equitable treatment of students and staff. To translate these values into daily practice, we have established a comprehensive set of policies, procedures, and reporting mechanisms — all designed to safeguard our integrity and culture. I strongly encourage you to engage with Speak Out (or related processes) whenever concerns arise. Transparent reporting is essential — it enables us to gather meaningful data, address issues effectively, and continuously improve our culture and systems."

DR HELEN MAHER

Vice President for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, University of Galway

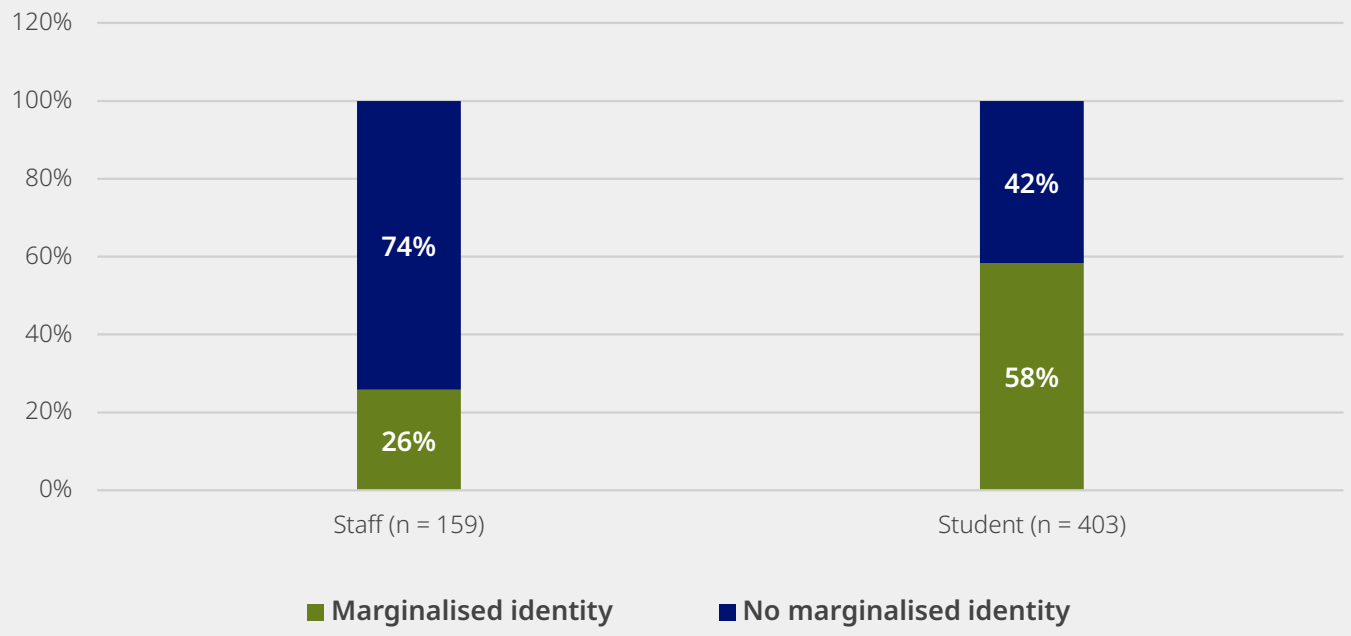
MARGINALISED IDENTITIES

In order to understand the impact of demographic indicators on those reporting to Speak Out, an analysis of marginalised identities was conducted. There is a large body of existing research which demonstrates that structural inequalities and inequitable power structures in society cause those with particular identities to experience higher levels of inequality and marginalisation (Burke, et al, 2020; CSO, 2023; EIGE, 2025; Flynn, et al, 2024; FRA, 2024; FRA, EIGE, Eurostat, 2024; HEA, 2024; Kempny, et al, 2021; MacNeela, et al, 2022). To examine this in detail a count of marginalised demographic indicators was conducted. 49% of people who completed the demographic questions on Speak Out indicated that they had one or more marginalised identities. This included people who indicated that:

- Their Gender Identity was neither male nor female
- Their Sex assigned at birth did not match their Gender Identity
- Their sexual orientation was LGBTQI+
- Their ethnicity was non-white (excluding White Traveller and White Roma)
- They had some form of disability, and
- Their religion was anything other than Christian, Atheist or Agnostic.

Figure 30 illustrates that students using Speak Out report reported significantly higher levels of marginalised identities than staff, with 58% of students and 26% of staff having a marginalised identity.

Figure 30: Marginalised Identity



To understand how having one or more marginalised identities impacted experiences of abuse, the data was examined further. As illustrated in Figure 31, those with marginalised identities reported higher levels of multiple forms of abuse (54%) than those with no marginalised identity (44%).

This was more prevalent among staff that shared their demographic data with Speak Out, with Figure 31 showing that 59% of staff with one or more marginalised identities reported multiple forms of abuse compared with staff with no marginalised identity (38%).

Figure 31: Marginalised identity by number of forms of abuse (n = 609)

	Marginalised identity	No marginalised identity
One form of abuse	46%	56%
Multiple different forms of abuse	54%	44%

Figure 32: Staff only - Marginalised identity by number of forms of abuse (n = 158)

	marginalised identity	No marginalised identity
One form of abuse	41%	62%
Multiple different forms of abuse	59%	38%

DCU People welcome the National Speak Out Data Report and recognise the importance of having clear, accessible reporting mechanisms in place for people who have experienced or witnessed any form of inappropriate behaviour. We welcome and encourage reports of behaviour that do not align with our core values of dignity and respect. Staff who report unacceptable behaviour to DCU People can expect to be treated with respect and to have their report taken seriously."

JEN O'HARA

Deputy Head of DCU People, Dublin City University

AMLÉ believes that the Speak Out tool provides valuable data that can be used in tackling a range of issues faced by students and staff across our HEIs. AMLÉ will continue to work alongside the Speak Out team in order to raise awareness and engagement with the tool among the student population."

EMMA MONAHAN

Vice President for Welfare, Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn (AMLÉ)

Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn

L to R: *Gillian Connolly, Speak Out National Administrator, Emma Monahan, AMLÉ Vice President for Welfare, Elaine Mears, Speak Out National Coordinator.*

National College of Art and Design

L to R: *Elaine Mears, Speak Out National Coordinator, Dean O'Reilly, NCAD, EDI & Sexual Violence Prevention Manager, National College of Art and Design, Gillian Connolly, Speak Out National Administrator.*

We welcome the publication of Speak Out's national report, which highlights the bravery and courage of victim-survivors across the country - staff and students alike. The report contributes to an expanding evidence- base on the experiences of staff and students with harmful behaviours in Higher Education. It reaffirms what we know: victim-survivors of sexual violence are disproportionately women, gender minorities, and people with disabilities. At NCAD, trauma-informed practice is a core foundation of our culture. We challenge norms, expand ideas, and continually strive to create a community grounded in care and respect. I encourage any member of staff or student who experiences bullying, harassment, discrimination, or sexual violence to reach out and seek support."

DEAN O'REILLY

EDI & Sexual Violence Prevention Manager, National College of Art and Design

04

NEXT STEPS

The Speak Out National Office team which began operating in March 2025 have championed Speak Out by focusing on relationship building, cross-institutional engagement, and using the data to drive messaging and engagement. Strong and enduring collaboration with HEIs and other relevant stakeholders is key to the continued success and accessibility of Speak Out. The new Speak Out National Office team are Elaine Mears (Coordinator) and Gillian Connolly (Administrator).

Governance

The Higher Education Authority and Department of Further and Higher Education, Innovation and Science support for Speak Out has enabled the Speak Out National Office to be established, and the continued development of Speak Out and work to increase awareness of the tool can now progress. The consortium model Speak Out governance structure has been developed and includes a broad range of expertise from across the higher education sector and civil society. Continued and longer-term funding for Speak Out is essential to sustainability of the tool.

Stakeholders

The behaviours that Speak Out captures encompass issues that are dealt with by multiple areas within each HEI and therefore require cross-institutional engagement and response. The Speak Out National Office have begun working with a broad range of stakeholders across HEIs to ensure that key functions who have a role in preventing and responding to negative behaviours and abuse are engaged with Speak Out. These relationships not only raise the profile and awareness of the tool, but they help to build community and strengthen relationships of mutual support between HEIs.

Responding to individual HEI needs

Throughout 2025, the new Speak Out National Office conducted a needs assessment and site visit to all HEIs using Speak Out to determine their specific learning and support needs. This informed a clear direction for a long-term Speak Out National Action Plan which is now in development and responds to the unique characteristics and realities of each HEI.

Broadening understanding

Speak Out has a unique function within the range of HEI reporting options and responses to negative behaviours and abuse. Speak Out allows the individual to remain anonymous whilst still enabling them to have their story inform HEI policy and responses to abuse. It offers a platform to express and name the behaviour in a safe manner and be signposted to support services. For some it may be the first step in exploring other HEI reporting options available to them such as informal or formal reporting processes. Broadening the awareness and understanding of Speak Out as one of a range of options available is key to ensuring those impacted by abuse have choice in how they process and vocalise their experience, and that pathways to support are more accessible.

Review of data collection

The Speak Out National Office have begun a comprehensive review of Speak Out data collection to assess gaps in how we collect data, review language and terminology used in the tool, determine synergies in comparative data collection tools and research, review accessibility of the tool, and enhance the overall data entry experience of those using Speak Out.

Take the time to make a report, to ensure we know what is going on and we can seek to promote a culture of disclosure, challenging secrecy and bad behaviour."

MARY CONNELLY

Director of Human Resources - National College of Ireland

National College of Ireland

L to R: *Gillian Connolly, Speak Out National Administrator, Naomi Nolan, NCI Student Counsellor, Deirdre Mc Carthy, NCI Equality, Diversity and Inclusion & Training Manager, Elaine Mears, Speak Out National Coordinator.*

Dublin City University

L to R: *Elaine Mears, Speak Out National Coordinator, Lorna Greene, DCU Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Manager, Gillian Connolly, Speak Out National Administrator.*

DCU continues to build and maintain a safe, supportive and positive environment for all our University community. The data from the DCU Speak Out Tool helps to inform our work on dignity, respect and ending sexual violence. I wish to thank all those who have submitted reports to date. As VP for EDI I encourage all DCU staff and students to report any instances of inappropriate behaviour that they experience or witness."

GARETH YORE

Vice President for People, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Dublin City University

05

METHODOLOGY

BACKGROUND

Speak Out is an online anonymous reporting tool developed by the Psychological Counsellors in Higher Education Ireland (PCHEI). HEI Counsellors were in a unique position to develop an anonymous reporting tool due to their therapeutic perspective and insight into the experience of survivors of sexual harassment and violence and decided to build a bespoke anonymous reporting tool which addresses the specific needs of the Irish higher education community.

This bespoke tool was developed in consultation with representatives from each participating Higher Education Institution and guided by a Steering Committee composed of sectoral representatives and subject matter experts. This pilot phase was hosted by DkIT led by Rachel Skelly. The Speak Out tool was developed in collaboration with implementing institutions and with financial support from the Department of Education and the Higher Education Authority, in addition to the support of the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. The tool is a direct response to the publication of 'Safe, Respectful, Supportive and Positive: Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions', by Department of Education in 2019, which outlines how institutions should provide safe, accessible and trusted mechanisms for disclosing and reporting experiences of sexual violence and harassment.

DATA COLLECTION

The data in this report is compiled from 16 HEIs using Speak Out in the two academic years in the period between 1 September 2022 and 31 August 2024. The data represents students, staff, and others such as alumni and visitors to HEIs who interacted with these 16 HEIs within this time-period. Speak Out is advertised in HEIs through a range of physical and digital mediums, as well as in training and orientation. The headline figure which indicates the reporter type also includes data from the UCD Report and Support Tool. This is clearly indicated. It is important to note that the Speak Out tool was in its pilot phase during the time-period this report covers, and we expect the numbers of people using Speak Out to rise over the coming years as the new Speak Out National Office becomes embedded.

Speak Out is completely anonymous and it is not possible to identify any individual that has submitted a report nor is it possible to trace IP addresses. A comprehensive data protection risk assessment informed the development of the tool which has been regularly reviewed and updated, and data sharing agreements were signed with the developers and all implementing institutions. Only a limited number of trained individuals have access to institutional level data. It is not possible for the Speak Out administrator to link any of the aggregated data to specific institutions or individuals. To ensure anonymity no data categories containing fewer than 10 responses are included in this report. In instances where there are less than 10 responses it is noted with '< 10'. The n value for these categories is then calculated using the maximum possible value of 10 and denoted with a 'n = < x'.

The tool contains a series of tick-box questions which give the opportunity to those speaking out to provide details of their experience in a safe and anonymous way. Some questions allow for multiple responses and for this reason 'n' values vary between tables and graphs. A number of the response options provided throughout the tool also include definitions and seek to increase awareness about different forms of behaviour. It is intended that the process of working through the set of questions will help staff and students to come to terms with their experience. This report was compiled by Speak Out National Coordinator Elaine Mears.

UNDERSTANDING THE DATA

Speak Out is an anonymous reporting tool available to anyone who interacts with the HEI communities who have implemented the tool. The Speak Out data is not a prevalence study and should not be interpreted as such. It is a snapshot of the types of negative behaviours experienced by people in our HEI community. It offers people who may not feel ready or simply may not want to make a formal report or explore any other informal processes for dealing with the behaviour they are reporting the opportunity to communicate their experience. The tool allows the reporter to communicate their experience in a safe and anonymous manner, where their collective data is then analysed for significant patterns which can be used to inform responses to these experiences within HEIs.

Speak Out is one of a suite of resources available within HEIs for students, staff and others to report negative experiences and abuse. HEIs are working to create safe and accessible environments for everyone in our HEI community, and to encourage a culture of disclosure and zero-tolerance for all forms of abuse.

Atlantic Technological University

Front L to R: *Michele Glacken, ATU Registrar and VP for Students and Teaching and Learning, Elaine Mears, Speak Out National Coordinator, Caitríona Gleeson, ATU Sexual Violence and Harassment Prevention and Response Manager, Billy Bennett, ATU Registrar and Chief Academic Officer, Dr. Orla Flynn, ATU President, Julia Morrow, ATU Gender Based Violence Prevention & Response Officer, Gillian Connolly, Speak Out National Administrator, Kate McCarthy, ATU Respect Administrator.*

Middle L to R: *Thomas Gallagher, President ATU Galway-Mayo Students' Union, Jesus Quaye Saya, VP for Academic Life ATU Sligo Students' Union, Joseph Sweeney, President ATU Donegal Students' Union.*

Back L to R: *Conor Southby, VP for Welfare ATU Galway-Mayo Students; Union, Patrik Berger, VP for Wellbeing and Engagement ATU Sligo Students' Union.*

06

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Burke, L., O'Higgins, S., McIvor, C., Dawson, K., O'Donovan, R., MacNeela, P. (2020) Sexual Experiences Survey 2020, Active* Consent, USI.

Central Statistics Office (2023) Census of Population 2022, CSO. Available at: **Census of Population 2022 - CSO - Central Statistics Office**

Central Statistics Office (2023) Sexual Violence Survey, CSO. Available at: **Sexual Violence Survey - CSO - Central Statistics Office**

Department of Education and Skills (2020) Safe, Respectful, Supportive and Positive – Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions, Department of Education and Skills

EIGE (2025) Gender Equality Index 2024 - Tackling Violence Against Women, Tackling Gender Inequalities, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Flynn, S., Lakkshme Sundaresan, S., Holt, S., Price, A. & O'Neill, G. (2024) Disabled women's experiences of intimate partner abuse in Ireland: Research project report, Ireland: Women's Aid.

FRA (2024), LGBTIQ equality at a crossroads – Progress and challenges, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

FRA, EIGE, Eurostat (2024) EU gender-based violence survey – Key results. Experiences of women in the EU-27, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

Hand, K. (2023) Evaluation of Speak Out Anonymous Reporting Tool Pilot, HEA.

HEA (2024) Equal Access Survey, HEA. Available here: **https://hea.ie/statistics/data-for-download-and-visualisations/students/widening-participation-for-equity-of-access/**

Kempny, Dr. M., Michael, Dr. L. (2021) Race Equality in the Higher Education Sector – Analysis commissioned by the Higher Education Authority, HEA.

MacNeela, P., Dawson, K., O'Rourke, T., Healy-Cullen, S., Burke, L., Flack, W.F. (2022) Report on the National Survey of Staff Experiences of Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish HEIs, HEA.

MacNeela, P., Dawson, K., O'Rourke, T., Healy-Cullen, S., Burke, L., Flack, W.F. (2022) Report on the National Survey of Student Experiences of Sexual Violence and Harassment in Irish Higher Education Institutions, HEA.

Psychological Counsellors in Higher Education (2023), Speak Out National Report Oct '21-Oct '22, PCHEI.

University College Dublin (2024) UCD Dignity & Respect Annual Report 2023/24, UCD.

Universities UK (2015) Changing the Culture - The report of the Universities UK Taskforce examining violence against women, harassment and hate crime affecting university students, Changing the culture.

At TU Dublin, Inclusion and Respect are central to our community. The Speak Out Tool plays a vital role in maintaining a safe and supportive environment by enabling staff and students to report concerning behaviours, such as bullying, harassment, discrimination, or sexual violence, confidentially and securely."

DR DEIRDRE LILLIS

President, Technological University Dublin

Technological University Dublin

L to R: *Elaine Mears, Speak Out National Coordinator, Catherine Bolger, TUDublin Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Manager, Gillian Connolly, Speak Out National Administrator*

IADT is committed to a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and harassment, as outlined in our Dignity and Respect Policy for Sexual Misconduct. We actively promote this commitment by establishing new policies, providing staff training, and displaying Speak Out digital banners and posters across the campus. We are also launching online modules for students on key topics: Consent, ESVH, Bystander Intervention, and responding to Disclosure. We are dedicated to providing responses that are trauma-informed."

HWAYOUNG LEE

IADT Administrative Lead Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment, Institute of Art Design and Technology

As one of the early adopters of the Speak Out tool, TUS has found it to be very helpful in gauging staff and student concerns, and using that information in developing and implementing preventative strategies and tailoring our training and messaging to make TUS' commitment to a safe and supportive campus clear to all of our community."

MARIAN DUGGAN

Vice President for People and Organisation - Technological University of the Shannon

Technological University of the Shannon

L to R: *Elaine Mears, Speak Out National Coordinator, Rabiya Ali, TUS Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Manager, Carol Wrenn, TUS EDI Manager, Gillian Connolly, Speak Out National Administrator.*

08

DEFINITIONS AND TERMINOLOGY

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES THE SITUATION YOU ARE REPORTING

- **Bullying:** Bullying is repeated inappropriate behaviour that undermines your right to dignity at work. It usually takes place over a period of time. It can be done by one or more persons and it is aimed at an individual or a group to make them feel inferior to other people.
- **Cyberbullying:** Is when the act of bullying is carried out online, including via text.
- **Harassment:** Harassment is unwanted behaviour which you find offensive or which makes you feel intimidated or humiliated. It can happen on its own or alongside other forms of discrimination.
- **Discrimination:** Discrimination is defined as occurring where a person is treated less favourably than another person is, has been or would be treated in a comparable situation based on any one of the following grounds: age, civil status, disability, family status, gender, membership of the Traveller community, race, religion, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status. Discrimination can be direct or indirect.
- **Hate Crime:** A hate crime is a prejudice-motivated crime which occurs when a perpetrator targets a victim because of their membership (or perceived membership) of any of the protected grounds; age, civil status, disability, family status, gender, membership of the Traveller community, race, religion, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status.
- **Coercive Behaviour:** This controlling behaviour is designed to make a person dependent by isolating them from support, exploiting them, depriving them of independence and regulating their everyday behaviour.
- **Stalking:** Stalking is a pattern of repeated, unwanted behaviour that occurs as a result of fixation. This creates fear, sadness, anxiety and threatens the safety of the other person. Stalking can happen with or without a fear of violence.
- **Assault:** An assault is when someone directly or indirectly applies force to or causes an impact on the body of another, or causes another to believe that they are likely immediately to be subjected to any such force or impact.
- **Sexual Harassment:** Sexual harassment includes any act of physical intimacy, request for sexual favours, other act or conduct including spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of written words, picture or other material that is unwelcome and could reasonably be regarded as sexually offensive, humiliating or intimidating.
- **Sexual Assault:** Sexual assault includes any sexual touching without consent, fear, or threat of an assault. Aggravated sexual assault includes serious violence or the threat of serious violence or is such as to cause injury, humiliation, or degradation of a grave nature to the person assaulted.
- **Rape:** Rape is the penetration of the anus, mouth, or vagina, however slight, by a penis or any object held or manipulated by another person, with the absence of consent. The absence of consent includes when a person knows that the other person does not consent or is reckless as to whether they have consented or not.

- **Other**
- **Prefer not to say**

PHYSICAL OR NON-PHYSICAL FORMS OF ABUSE

- **Physical**
  - Physical
- **Non-Physical**
  - Verbal
  - Verbal Online e.g. videocall
  - Direct online written communication e.g. email, text, direct message on social media
  - Direct written communication e.g. notes, letters, drawings, etc.
  - Public online written communication e.g. via social media site including posting videos, comments, memes etc
  - Public offline written communication e.g. graffiti, posters etc.
  - The unwanted display of pornographic or sexually suggestive pictures, objects, written materials including posters
- **Other**
- **Prefer not to say**

WHERE DID THE INCIDENT(S) TAKE PLACE?

- **On Campus and/or College Related:**
  - On college campus
  - In official college accommodation (Lease signed with Institution)
  - In another college property
  - At an academic event (field trip, conference, etc.)
  - Placement/Rotation
  - Professional Internship
  - At a society/club/SU event
  - RAG week event Orientation event
  - Freshers week event
  - Trip away organised by SU/Club/ Society
  - Sports event organised by College
  - Overseas college campus/Erasmus programme
- **Off Campus and not College Related**
  - Non college related event
  - Non college related accommodation
  - Non college related
  - Work-related social setting or event

- **Online**
- **Other**
- **Prefer not to say**

GENDER IDENTITY

- **Female**
- **Male**
- **Other:**
  - Gender fluid
  - Gender non-conforming/Queer
  - Non-binary
  - Trans female
  - Trans male
  - Other
  - My identity is not represented
- **Prefer not to say**

ETHNICITY

- **Arab/Arab Irish**
  - Arab
  - Arab-Irish
  - Arab - mixed/multiple
  - Any other Arab background
- **Asian/Asian Irish**
  - Asian
  - Asian - Irish
  - Asian - Bangladeshi
  - Asian - Indian
  - Asian - Pakistani
  - Asian - Chinese
  - Asian - Mixed/multiple
  - Any other Asian background
- **Black/Black Irish**
  - Black
  - Black - Irish
  - Black – African
  - Black – Caribbean
  - Black - mixed/multiple
  - Any other mixed or multiple background
- **Hispanic/Hispanic Irish**
  - Hispanic
  - Hispanic - Irish
  - Hispanic - mixed/multiple
  - Any other Hispanic background

- **White/White Irish**
  - White
  - White Irish
  - White - Roma
  - White - Irish Traveller
  - White - mixed/multiple
  - Any other White background
- **Other**
  - Any other ethnic background
  - Any other mixed/multiple background
  - Other
- **My identity is not represented**
- **Prefer not to say**

NATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Rape Crisis Centres

- Dublin Rape Crisis Centre 24 Hour National Helpline: 1800 77 8888
- Find your nearest Rape Crisis Centre: **https://www.rapecrisisireland.ie/find-help/rape-crisis-centres/**

Sexual Assault Treatment Units: **https://www.rapecrisisireland.ie/find-help/satus/**

Domestic Violence and Coercive Control

- Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline: 1800 341 900
- Find your nearest Domestic Violence service: **https://www.safeireland.ie/get-help/where-to-find-help/**
- MOVE Ireland (Men Overcoming Violence): **https://moveireland.ie/**

Male Survivors/Victims of Domestic Violence and Coercive Control

- Men's Aid: **https://www.mensaid.ie/** Helpline 01-5543811

LGBTQIA+ Support

- BelongTo: **https://www.belongto.org/**
- TENI: **https://teni.ie/**

Disability Support

- Disability Federation of Ireland: **https://www.disability-federation.ie/**
- National Disability Authority: **https://nda.ie/**

Race Equality

- Irish Network Against Racism: **https://inar.ie/**
- Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre: **https://www.paveepoint.ie/**

Mental Health Supports

- Pieta: **https://www.pieta.ie/** 24 Hour Helpline: 1800 247 247 Text: 51444
- Samaritans: **https://www.samaritans.org/ireland/samaritans-ireland/** 24 Hour Helpline: 116 123

An Garda Síochána: **https://www.garda.ie/en/**

SPEAK OUT

ONLINE ANONYMOUS REPORTING TOOL

Designed by **www.igimedia.eu**