



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHÉ
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

Ending Sexual Violence & Harassment in Higher Education: Overview of Survey Findings

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Implementation Plan 2022-24, Key actions:

Targeted Initiatives

- Awareness-raising, education and training for staff and students
- Pilot initiatives with high risk and hard-to-reach groups

Research-Based

- Integrate survey findings into initiatives
- Conduct further research

Framework-Based

- Review the national framework outcomes

Capacity Building, Shared Vision

- Develop shared terminology
- Good practice conference
- Explore the feasibility of a panel of investigators
- Explore the feasibility of standardised training



HEA Survey methodology

- Adaptation of ARC3 Campus Climate Surveys for Students and Staff.
- Online survey completed in April 2021.
- Follows SES (2020) which had 6,026 students at 14 HEIs.
- First time the staff survey has been used in Ireland.
- 3,516 staff and 7,901 students completed the survey, with options to skip particular sections.

Students: 77% female, 70% heterosexual, 84% Undergrad
84% 24 years or less, 92% White, 19% with a disability, 9% international.

Staff: 69% female, 88% heterosexual, 86% White, 6% with a disability
27% AHSS / Business & Law, 23% STEM / Medicine & Health, 5.3% Research, 38% Professional, managerial, technical.



Resources: Staff attitudes, willingness to act and to engage in training

- Most staff willing to be involved in training or roles that support consent / bystander intervention (62-82%).
- Less direct experience of engaging as bystanders or in receiving disclosures.
- Limited confidence in active bystander and disclosure skills.
- 55% felt responsibility to intervene in a case of SVH (37% 'don't know').
- 12% had made an intervention in the past 4 years.
- 17% felt 'fairly' or 'completely' informed about making an effective intervention.
- 20% felt 'fairly' or 'completely' informed about receiving a disclosure of SVH.



Resources: Student attitudes, willingness to act, and to engage in training

- Most students said they are well informed on consent and have the skills they need.
- Positive endorsement of **verbal consent**.
- However, nearly half agreed / neutral on 'I would keep moving forward until stopped' (**initiator consent**).
- Half agreed / neutral they would let their partner start sexual behaviour and not tell them to stop (**passive consent**).
- About half had heard consent discussed by other students.
- Nearly all students said they would respond positively to another person affected by SVH.
- 47% felt fairly / completely informed to respond to a disclosure.
- Vast majority said they would be likely to intervene in bystander intervention situation.
- 55% have not made an intervention in the past 4 years.
- 38% fairly / completely informed to make an effective intervention.



Student knowledge, perceptions of HEI responses, institutional trust

- **Trust:** Majority of students said their HEI would be supportive of a complaint of SVH, many were neutral.
- Males, First Years, heterosexuals more likely to view HEI as supportive.
- **Knowledge:** Most students did not know where to access supports or reporting.
- **Safety:** Half of women felt safe on campus / accommodation, particularly low perception of safety off campus.
- **Perceptions of SVH:** Less than half believed SVH is a problem on campus.



Student engagement in programming

- Increase in exposure over time in college.
- However, higher consent and active bystander engagement for First Years in 2020-21.
- Exposure to consent programming (and amount of consent programming) linked to more positive responses on knowledge, skills, practices.
- Lack of consistency in exposure to programming:
 - Social media / posters – Higher rate of engagement (50-60%).
 - Consent workshops (28%), orientation programme (34%), bystander programme (9%).
- 25% had not attended / been exposed to any programming.



Staff knowledge, perceptions of HEI responses, institutional trust

- **Perceptions of HEI:** One-third of staff saw their HEI as proactive on SVH.
- **Knowledge:** 20-40% of staff aware of reporting / support procedures.
- **Safety:** Most staff felt safe from SVH on campus, but only half were comfortable speaking up or voicing concerns in relation to SVH.
- **Perceptions of SVH:** A minority considered SVH a problem for staff or for students, a minority heard staff or students talking about consent.
- About half felt that the organisation would be supportive if a complaint was made and provide a safe environment – Many neutral or ‘don’t know’.



Staff Survey



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	Disagree	Neutral / Don't Know	Agree
Policies and procedures at my HEI which seek to tackle and eliminate sexual violence and harassment are clear and explicit	26	36	37
I am aware of ongoing messaging at my HEI that disseminates information around reporting and responding to incidents of sexual violence and harassment	47	27	27
My institution would actively support the person who makes a report of SVH and accommodate their needs	20	28	52
I would be willing to complete consent awareness training if it was made available by my institution	8	16	76
Sexual violence or harassment among students is a problem at my HEI	23	50	27

Student Survey



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	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
My higher education institution would handle the report fairly	12	32	56
My higher education institution would have a hard time supporting the person who made the report	54	27	19
I understand what happens when a student reports a claim of sexual violence and/or harassment at my higher education institution	78	11	11
I think sexual violence and harassment is a problem at my higher education institution	23	35	42

Students' experiences of sexual violence

- Higher rates for females, sexual minorities, growing incidence by year in college.
- Non-consensual experiences: 49% of females described sexual touching, 21% oral sex, 34% vaginal penetration, 30% said someone had tried to have sex with them against their will.
- Most common perpetrator tactic: Assaulting the person while they were incapacitated.
- *'Simply engaging in the behaviour without any indication from me that the behaviour was welcome'* – Recorded highest incidence figures.
- Most students knew the perpetrator, and said the person was a student at their HEI.
- Most students said the incident did not happen on campus.



Students: % who experienced sexual touching through coercion, incapacitation, force or threat of force



	Women	Men	Non-binary	Prefer not to say	Total
Coercion	33	13	31	23	29
Incapacitation, force, or threat of force	41	15	35	19	35
Total	49	20	43	27	43

Students: % of female and non-binary students who experienced non-consensual vaginal penetration



	Women	Non-binary
Coercion	19	17
Incapacitation, force, or threat of force	31	28
Total	34	31

Staff: % who experienced unwanted sexual contact in the past four years by someone related to their HEI



	Female	Male	Non-binary	Prefer not to say
Touched you in a way that made you feel uncomfortable	13	7	17	24
Made unwanted attempts to stroke or kiss you	5	3	8	8

Sexual harassment: % any experience



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	Students overall	Female	Male	Staff overall	Female	Male
Sexualised comments	59	62	47	27	27	23
Sexist hostility	79	85	55	59	69	36
Sexual hostility	74	78	57	31	36	21
Unwanted attention	59	66	35	11	12	8
Coercion	34	39	13	4	4	3
Electronic communication	60	65	43	18	20	13

Sexual harassment experiences of students and staff

- Higher rate of sexual harassment among female students, sexual minorities, growing incidence by year in college.
- Examples: 62% of female staff treated differently because of gender, 58% put down because of gender, 41% offensive sexist remarks.
- 25% of female staff experienced offensive stories / jokes, 20% offensive comments about appearance, body or sexual activities.
- Sexual harassment higher among female staff, younger age, sexual minorities, AHSS / Research work areas.



Illustrative written comments from students

- He should have thought of that before he committed a crime. Drunk people know not to go robbing banks. They should also be able to stop themselves from groping girls.
- They honestly believe they are doing nothing wrong and that is the biggest problem.
- 3 of the 4 sexual encounters I had during my time at University were non-consensual. It has totally upended my comfort with intimacy, and caused me a lot of hurt and frustration.
- I've had a woman force herself to kiss me and people including staff have laughed and joked about it.
- All HEIs should have a talk at the beginning of each year for all 1st year students as when my assault happened I didn't know what to do, where to go or who to talk to.
- Almost every girl I know has been harassed but don't even know it BC they have been conditioned to think being unclear about consent is "normal".
- As a straight cis white male I found this survey valuable. Some of the questions brought up issues that I rarely or haven't really considered.



Illustrative written comments from staff

- It is in the seemingly smaller and internalised misogynistic remarks that is the root issue ... There has to be a way to address the 'locker room' talk, promote mutual respect and training for how to shut down misogynistic remarks effectively.
- While taking this survey I realised I don't know what is being done at my HEI institution to tackle sexual harassment. I would like this information to be made more visible at my institution.
- I was ignored and victim blamed when I attempted to report sexual harassment to my line manager. Culture change is more than tickling a box exercise.
- I have completed a Bystander Intervention programme in our college. I think it should be compulsory for all staff & students. Also I would welcome the availability of a Consent programme being rolled out for all students & staff.



Conclusion – Secure our sector’s commitment to incremental, sustainable systems change

- ‘Consent literacy’ – Personal knowledge and attitudes, communication, capacity to support oneself and others, challenge negative behaviours.
- Positive attitudes co-existing with extensive experience of SVH.
- ‘No’, ‘Neutral’, and ‘Don’t know’ trend on knowledge of supports and procedures – Awareness raising needed.
- Willingness among staff to engage – Training opportunities needed.
- High levels of harassment and sexual violence – Related but separable issues.
- Higher levels of risk for some – e.g., younger staff, for female students / staff, gender and sexual minorities, students with a disability.
- Monitoring trends in a sustainable way – Practical, local assessment + National benchmark + Minority / hard to reach groups.

