



Report on the prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual assault among university students in 2021.

**NATIONAL  
STUDENT  
SAFETY  
SURVEY**



Soci 1  
Research  
Centre

# NATIONAL STUDENT SAFETY SURVEY

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## Caution to the reader

Please note this report contains accounts of sexual harassment and sexual assault which some readers may find distressing.

If you feel you would like to speak to someone for support or information in relation to these issues, you can contact these free support services:

- 1800RESPECT  
(1800 737 732 or 1800RESPECT.org.au)
- Lifeline  
(lifeline.org.au or 13 11 14)
- QLife  
(1800 184 527 or qlife.org.au)
- Relationships Australia  
(1300 364 277 or relationships.org.au)
- Mensline Australia  
(1300 789 978 or mensline.org.au)

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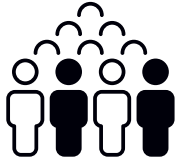
# National Snapshot

NATIONAL  
STUDENT  
SAFETY  
SURVEY



43,819 students  
participated in the survey

## PREVALENCE IN A UNIVERSITY CONTEXT



### Sexual harassment

**1 in 6**

(16.1%)

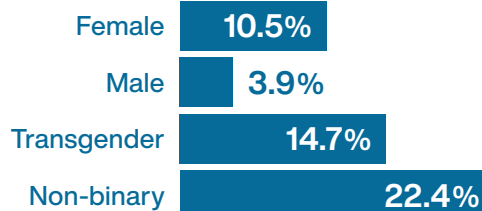
since starting university

**1 in 12**

(8.1%)

in the past 12 months

Experiences of sexual harassment  
in the past 12 months:



### Sexual assault

**1 in 20**

(4.5%)

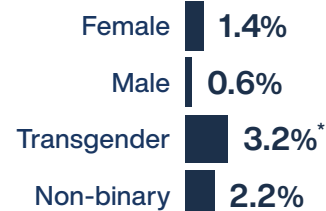
since starting university

**1 in 90**

(1.1%)

in the past 12 months

Experiences of sexual assault  
in the past 12 months:



## CONTEXT OF MOST IMPACTFUL INCIDENT

### Location



General campus areas

43.3%

Lecture theatres/labs

17.5%

University library

15.6%

Clubs and societies, events and spaces

25.8%

Student accommodation or residences

25.3%

Private home or residence

18.4%

### Perpetrator



**1 in 2**

(50.7%)

knew some or all of the  
perpetrators involved

**2 in 3**

(65.7%)

knew some or all of the  
perpetrators involved

Asked of students who experienced sexual harassment or sexual assault in an Australian university context

## REPORTING AND SUPPORT SEEKING

### Formal complaints made to university



**1 in 30**  
(3.0%)

of students who were sexually harassed made a formal complaint

**1 in 20**  
(5.6%)

of students who were sexually assaulted made a formal complaint

Asked of students who experienced sexual harassment or sexual assault in an Australian university context

### Seeking support from the university



**1 in 6**  
(16.8%)

of students who were sexually harassed sought support or assistance

**1 in 4**  
(25.5%)

of students who were sexually assaulted sought support or assistance

Asked of students who experienced sexual harassment or sexual assault in an Australian university context

### Knowledge of university support and reporting channels



**1 in 2**  
(51.0%)

know nothing or very little about the formal reporting process for harassment

**1 in 2**  
(53.6%)

know nothing or very little about the formal reporting process for assault

**1 in 2**  
(46.7%)

know nothing or very little about where to seek support or assistance for harassment

**2 in 5**  
(43.5%)

know nothing or very little about where to seek support or assistance for assault

Asked of all students

# Executive Summary

The 2021 National Student Safety Survey (NSSS) was funded by Universities Australia (UA) through its *Respect. Now. Always.* initiative – a sector-wide program that aims to prevent sexual violence in university communities and support those who have been affected. It builds on an important legacy of previous research and advocacy – Informing the ongoing efforts of Australian universities in building equitable, safe and inclusive learning experiences for their students.

The development, implementation and analysis of the NSSS was undertaken between August 2019 and January 2022. The NSSS was initially planned to be piloted in March-April 2020. However, due to the rapid introduction of restrictions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the pilot was delayed until March-April 2021. Fieldwork for the NSSS was undertaken online in September-October 2021 with students from 38 UA member institutions. A total of 43,819 students participated in the survey during this period. One member institution conducted the survey in November 2022; however, the data from that undertaking are not included in this report.

## Prevalence of sexual harassment

The NSSS found many university students had experienced sexual harassment in their lifetime. One in two (48.0%) students had experienced sexual harassment at least once in their lifetime. Female students (62.9%), transgender students (62.8%) and students who were non-binary or identified as another gender (76.8%) were more likely to have experienced sexual harassment in their lifetime than male students (26.0%).

In an Australian university context, one in six (16.1%) students had been sexually harassed since starting at university and one in twelve (8.1%) had been sexually harassed in the past 12 months. Female students (10.5%), transgender students (14.7%) and non-binary students (22.4%) were more likely to have had these experiences in a university context in the past 12 months when compared with male students (3.9%).

In addition to gender, the prevalence of sexual harassment in a university context in the past 12 months varied by a range of other student demographic characteristics:

- Sexuality diverse students including pansexual (21.5%), bisexual (17.7%), and gay or lesbian students (12.3%) were more likely to have experienced sexual harassment in an Australian university context in the past 12 months than heterosexual students (6.4%).
- Younger students aged 18 to 21 years (11.7%) were more likely to have experienced sexual harassment in an Australian university context in the past 12 months compared with those aged 22 to 24 years (8.4%), 25 to 34 years (5.5%) or older.
- Students with a disability (13.7%) were more likely to have these experiences than other students (7.0%), as were students who mainly speak English at home (9.3%) when compared with those who speak other languages (4.7%).

Further key findings from the NSSS related to other (non-demographic) characteristics of victim/survivors include:

- **Students who lived in student accommodation or residences (19.0%) were more likely to have experienced sexual harassment in the past 12 months, as were those who undertook some or all of their classes on campus in their current semester (12.0%), and those who were on work experience (9.8%).**
- **One in ten (9.4%) undergraduate students had been sexually harassed in an Australian university context in the past 12 months, compared with 8.8% of honours students, 6.7% postgraduate research students and 4.2% postgraduate coursework students. However, after adjusting for age and other factors in a multivariate logistic regression model, postgraduate research students were more likely to have been sexually harassed in a university context than undergraduate students.<sup>1</sup>**

## Perpetrators and settings of sexual harassment

Students were asked a series of questions about the most impactful (or significant) incident of sexual harassment they had experienced in a university context. The majority of students reported the most impactful incident they had experienced involved male perpetrator/s (84.0%); three in five (60.7%) said the incident was perpetrated by other students from their own university; and one in two (50.7%) said they knew some or all of the perpetrators.

The most common locations students reported experiencing their most impactful incident of sexual harassment in an Australian university context were on campus, such as general campus areas (43.3%), university lecture theatres or computer labs (17.5%), university libraries (15.6%), clubs and societies events or spaces (13.9%) and student accommodation or residences (10.6%). However, postgraduate students were more likely than undergraduates to report experiences of sexual harassment in the past 12 months on work experience or professional placements (11.1% compared with 4.9%), or in academic or administrative staff offices (10.9% compared with 1.4%).

## Prevalence of sexual assault

The NSSS found one in three university students (30.6%) had experienced sexual assault at least once. Female students (41.8%), transgender students (42.9%) and students who were non-binary or identified as another gender (56.1%) were more likely to have experienced sexual assault in their lifetime than male students (14.1%).

In an Australian university context, one in twenty (4.5%) students had been sexually assaulted since starting at university and 1.1% had been sexually assaulted in the past 12 months. Female students were more likely to have had these experiences than males. In the past 12 months, 1.4% of female students had been sexually assaulted in a university context compared with 0.6% of male students.

In addition to gender, the prevalence of sexual assault in the past 12 months varied by a range of other student demographic characteristics:

- **Sexuality diverse students including bisexual (3.0%), and gay or lesbian students (2.0%) were more likely to have experienced sexual assault in a university context in the past 12 months than heterosexual students (0.8%).**
- **Younger students aged 18 to 21 years (1.9%) were more likely to have experienced sexual assault in a university context in the past 12 months compared with those aged 22 to 24 years (1.1%), 25 to 34 years (0.5%) or older.**
- **Students with a disability (2.4%) were more likely to have these experiences than other students (0.9%).**

Key findings of the NSSS also relate to the non-demographic characteristics of victim/survivors of sexual assault. Students most likely to have experienced sexual assault in a university context in the past 12 months included those who lived in student accommodation or a university residence (6.0%) and those who undertook some or all of their classes on campus in their current semester (1.8%).

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<sup>1</sup> The model suggests other characteristics and enrolment details impact the apparent relationship between course type and experiences of sexual harassment.

Students who had experienced sexual harassment in a university context were more likely to also experience sexual assault in a university context. One in ten (9.3%) students who had been sexually harassed in an Australian university context in the past 12 months had also been sexually assaulted in a university context in the same time period.

## Perpetrators and settings of sexual assault

For students who had experienced sexual assault in an Australian university context, the majority reported the most impactful incident they had experienced involved male perpetrator/s (85.7%); most commonly, students from their own university (58.8%); and two in three (65.7%) said that they knew some or all of the people involved. One in twenty (4.7%) who had been sexually assaulted in an Australian university context reported that their most impactful incident had been perpetrated by a university staff member (including lecturers, tutors, research, or academic supervisors and / or non-academic staff), with postgraduate research students (14.5%) more likely than other students to report that the perpetrator was a university staff member.

The most common locations students reported experiencing their most impactful incident of sexual assault in an Australian university context were clubs and societies events and spaces (25.8%), university student accommodation or residences (25.3%); as well as private homes or residences (18.4%).

## Reporting experiences and support seeking

Few students who had experienced sexual harassment or sexual assault in a university context had made a formal report or complaint to their university. In total, 3.0% of students who had experienced sexual harassment and 5.6% of students who had experienced sexual assault had made a formal report about their most impactful incident to their university. Most of these formal reports or complaints were not referred to the police. Fewer than one in five (18.9%) of those who made a formal report or complaint about sexual harassment to the university said the incident had been reported to police. Of students who had made a formal report or complaint to their university about sexual assault, two in five (40.2%) indicated the incident was reported to police.

The most common reasons students did not make a formal complaint or report to their experience to their university, included thinking they did not need help, that others would not think it was serious enough and that it would be too hard to prove.

Students who did make a formal complaint to their university had mixed experiences in terms of the information provided to them and their overall satisfaction with the process. Of those who reported sexual harassment, 56.1% said their university had explained the reporting or complaints process to them, and two in five (41.3%) were satisfied with the process.

Students were less satisfied with the university's reporting or complaint processes relating to sexual assault. One in two (47.5%) who had experienced sexual assault in a university context and formally reported it said their university had explained the reporting or complaints process to them, while fewer than one in three (29.7%) were satisfied with the process.

Students more commonly sought support for sexual harassment and sexual assault from outside their university. Almost two-thirds (61.5%) of students who had experienced sexual harassment in a university context sought support outside of the university, while one in six (16.8%) students had sought support or assistance from within their university. Among students who had been sexually assaulted in a university context, two-thirds (66.2%) sought support from outside of their university, while one in four (25.5%) sought support or assistance within their university.

## Knowledge of university processes and supports

Students had limited knowledge of the formal report or complaints process or where to seek support or assistance within their university.

One in two students indicated that they knew very little or nothing about their university's formal report or complaint process for sexual harassment (51.0%) or sexual assault (53.6%). Almost half of those surveyed also said they knew nothing or very little about where they could seek support or assistance within the university for sexual harassment (46.7%) or sexual assault (43.5%).



## Bystander experiences

Few students had witnessed or observed sexual harassment or sexual assault in an Australian university context in the past 12 months. In total, 2.9% of students had directly observed another student being sexually harassed, while one in twenty (4.0%) students said they had been told or suspected another student had been sexually assaulted in a university context in the past 12 months.

One in two (54.8%) students who witnessed sexual harassment said they had done something about the most recent incident they witnessed. Slightly fewer (47.8%) students who had been told or suspected another student had been sexually assaulted said they had done something when they became aware of it.

## Perceptions and attitudes

Attitudes that minimise or excuse sexual harassment and sexual assault have been found in previous research to be directly related to engagement in sexually violent behaviours, the willingness and capacity of bystanders to recognise and respond to sexual violence incidents or disclosures, and support-seeking actions taken by victim/survivors themselves (McMahon, 2010; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010; Trottier et al., 2021).

The NSSS found an association between witnessing or observing sexual harassment and attitudes towards sexual violence. Higher levels of attitudinal support towards sexual violence were found among those who had not observed or witnessed another student from their university being sexually harassed and among those who witnessed an incident but did not do anything. A similar trend was found among students who had been told or suspected another student had been sexually assaulted in a university context in the past 12 months.

## How does the NSSS compare to the 2016 National university student survey?

It is not possible to directly compare the results from the *2016 National university student survey on sexual assault and sexual harassment* (the 2016 National Survey) and the NSSS, however, some trends can be observed. The NSSS found a somewhat lower prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual assault in the 12 months preceding the survey as compared to prevalence in the 2016 calendar year. Similarly, fewer students had witnessed or observed sexual harassment or sexual assault in an Australian university context in the past 12 months when compared with the 2016 calendar year.

There are several factors that complicate this finding.

First and foremost, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in many students either being required, or opting into, studying wholly, or partially online over the last two years. This reduced the opportunities for in-person perpetration or witnessing of sexual harassment and sexual assault in university settings.

At the time of the survey, 58.5% of students who participated were undertaking all of their classes online, while one in three (33.6%) reported undertaking some or all of their classes on campus.

Second, there have been important changes made to the wording of the survey items and the sampling method used to distribute the survey since 2016. To align with current international best practice, behavioural questions have been used to measure prevalence of sexual assault in the NSSS. In addition, changes were made to other questions relating to observing or witnessing sexual harassment and being told or suspecting another student had been sexually assaulted. The NSSS also measured prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual assault over the previous 12-month period rather than a calendar year.

Universities have also been undertaking measures to drive change across their campuses since UA commissioned the 2016 National Survey.

As discussed below, the NSSS lifetime prevalence findings are consistent with the lifetime prevalence of sexual harassment (53% of women and 25% of men) and sexual assault including child sexual abuse and/or sexual assault since the age of 15 (23% of women and 8% of men) as reported in the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2016 Personal Safety Survey. This could suggest the lower 12-month prevalence in the NSSS as compared to the 2016 National Survey might have been impacted by COVID-19 related factors including the increase in remote learning and physical distancing regulations.

The overall trends as to which students are most at risk of sexual harassment are consistent between the two surveys. The 2016 National Survey found that gender and sexuality diverse students, as well as young women, were among those most likely to have experienced sexual harassment in an Australian university setting (Australian Human Rights Commission, AHRC, 2017). Few Australian surveys report on the sexual violence experiences of gender and sexuality diverse groups (Mortimer et al, 2019),

however the ABS Personal Safety Survey shows that women (one in two, 53%) are more than twice as likely as men (one in four, 25%) to have experienced sexual harassment in their lifetime (ABS, 2017). The Personal Safety Survey also shows that it is young women aged 18 to 24 years who are more likely to have experienced sexual harassment overall in the last 12 months (38%). The findings of the NSSS reflect the overall national trends in sexual harassment, further demonstrating that these harms differ by both gender and age. The additional finding here is the substantially higher rates of sexual harassment of gender and sexuality diverse students.

The gendered nature of perpetration of sexual harassment, with males over-represented as those engaged in harassing behaviours, reflects national trends as well as existing Australian and international research. The NSSS suggests that there may be some settings within university contexts that are more conducive to sexual harassment, whether among students or in the dynamic of staff and student supervisory arrangements. This is consistent with previous international research which has demonstrated the extent and impacts of sexual harassment particularly on female postgraduates who in many disciplines are predominantly supervised by male academics (Oman & Bull, 2021; Whitely & Page, 2015). International evidence also suggests that localised university contexts, such as student residential colleges, sporting or social clubs for example, can be more – or less – conducive to sexual violence depending on the culture, attitudes and peer environment within the setting (DeKeseredy et al., 2017; DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2013; Jackson & Sundaram, 2020).

As with the overall trends in sexual harassment, the NSSS findings indicate that risk of sexual assault among Australian university students is broadly consistent with national data. Gender and age significantly determine the risk of sexual assault, such that young women are among those more likely to have such experiences, both generally and within university contexts. The NSSS findings suggest somewhat higher rates of sexual assault for both females and males than other national studies, with the Personal Safety Survey reporting one in five women and one in twenty men have experienced sexual assault since the age of 15 (ABS, 2017). Importantly, as was the case for sexual harassment, the disproportionate experiences of gender and sexuality diverse students highlights the need to focus both on university responses and prevention for these student communities as well as the need for more inclusive national data and policy.

The NSSS findings demonstrate the gendered and relational nature of perpetration of sexual assault, consistent with national trends as well as existing Australian and international research. Sexual assault is overwhelmingly perpetrated by known males, and often in a private setting rather than by strangers or in public spaces. An important finding of the NSSS is the high occurrence of sexual assault by students at the same university, as well as by university staff. This has significant implications for victim/survivors' safety and wellbeing in continuing in their studies, regardless of whether they choose to make a formal report to their university or not. Since the 2016 National Survey, many Australian universities have engaged with programs of professional development for staff in identifying and responding to sexual assault and sexual harassment, and UA has released guidance for respectful supervisory relationships (Universities Australia, 2018). This guidance makes a clear statement that sexual or romantic relationships between a supervisor and their student is never appropriate.

## Implications and Conclusion

Sexual harassment and sexual assault are common experiences for Australian university students. While not all of these experiences occur in university contexts, the combined findings of the NSSS and accompanying qualitative research demonstrate the profound impacts of sexual harassment and sexual assault on students. Sexual violence impacts the educational outcomes and mental wellbeing of victim/survivors, with some describing detrimental impacts on their learning and some being forced to disengage from their studies entirely (Nisbet et al., 2022). University contexts should be safe and inclusive spaces that not only provide learning opportunities but the development of life-long professional networks and friendships.

The disproportionate rates of sexual harassment and sexual assault particularly for gender and sexuality diverse students, as well as young women and students with a disability, directly affects both the wellbeing and the equitable learning outcomes for these students. As such, universities have a particular responsibility to ensure a safe and equitable learning environment for their diverse student communities.

The NSSS indicates that key avenues for continued action could include but are not limited to:

- **acknowledging the role of gender as well as intersecting discrimination and marginalisation in driving sexual harassment and sexual assault**
- **taking proactive measures to improve inclusivity and safe learning environments for gender and sexuality diverse students and those with a disability**
- **promoting safety and respect within residential student accommodation settings**
- **preventing sexual harassment and sexual assault from university staff including in the context of postgraduate supervision**
- **raising awareness among students and staff of the reporting processes within the university and the avenues of support available**
- **improving reporting and support pathways for students who have both university context and other experiences of sexual harassment and/or sexual assault**
- **addressing attitudes that minimise, excuse, or blame the victim/survivors of sexual harassment and sexual assault, particularly in higher-risk settings, and**
- **adequately resourcing sexual harassment and sexual assault response and prevention strategies.**

There is little doubt of the importance of ongoing work within the Australian university sector to both respond to, and take measures to prevent, sexual harassment and sexual assault. International human rights instruments as well as Australian national policy frameworks, including the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children*, clearly identify the role of educational institutions in actively shaping an equal society and building a future free of violence and abuse.



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Sexual harassment and sexual assault

Sexual violence is widely recognised as a human rights issue. Globally, governments and independent agencies have increasingly recognised the importance of action to both respond to and prevent sexual violence. For instance, the World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations (UN), the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) have endorsed frameworks that seek to improve support services and justice outcomes for victim/survivors of sexual violence, as well as strategies that seek to prevent such violence before it occurs through the promotion of gender equality, respect, and inclusion (Our Watch, 2021a). Achieving this goal requires a coordinated effort across all parts of society.

In Australia, one in five women and one in twenty men over the age of 15 have experienced at least one incident of sexual violence, with one in two women and one in four men experiencing sexual harassment (ABS, 2017). Available data also indicates that it is young adults who are most likely to be represented among both victim/survivors and perpetrators of sexual violence. For example, the Personal Safety Survey found that young women aged 18 to 24 years were among those most likely to report experiencing a sexual assault in the previous 12 months. Although women and girls are at particular risk of sexual victimisation, these harms also intersect with marginalised populations, such as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women (Guggisberg, 2019; Kerry, 2018), women with a disability (Dowse et al., 2016), and gender and sexuality diverse people (Leonard et al., 2012). Furthermore, criminal justice data shows most victim/survivors of sexual assault are targeted by a male perpetrator known to them (such as a partner, date, friend, or acquaintance) and that many such assaults occur in private dwellings, with public spaces being less common sites for sexual assault (Australian Institute of Health & Welfare, 2020). Sexual harassment, meanwhile, commonly occurs in organisations and institutions, such as workplaces, educational settings, as well as in public spaces (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2018).

Universities are key institutional settings for responding to and preventing sexual violence. This is in part because university students are over-representative of the age profile of a majority of victim/survivors and perpetrators of sexual violence, and as such warrant direct action to reduce the risk of sexual assault and harassment and to provide appropriate responses when it occurs. The importance of university settings for preventing sexual violence has been recognised by advocacy organisations, such as the National Union of Students (NUS), End Rape on Campus (EROC), and The Hunting Ground Australia Project, but also by the university sector itself with Universities Australia (UA) commissioning the Australian Human Rights Commission to undertake the *2016 National university student survey on sexual assault and sexual harassment* (the 2016 National Survey). This study was the first of its kind to be undertaken across an entire university sector in Australia or internationally.

The 2016 National Survey found that sexual violence was prevalent, with one in five (21%) students reporting they had experienced sexual harassment in a university teaching or social setting in 2016; with women almost twice as likely as men to do so. Meanwhile, 6.9% of students had experienced sexual assault in either 2015 or 2016; with 1.6% reporting that it occurred in a university teaching or social setting. Women (10.0%) were much more likely than men (2.9%) to have experienced this form of sexual violence. Importantly, the survey also found that students identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB), as well as those who identified as transgender or gender diverse, were almost twice as likely to have experienced sexual harassment than either heterosexual students, or cisgender<sup>2</sup> students.

Following the release of the report, the sector committed to an ongoing program of action to improve responses to and prevention of sexual violence in the lives of Australian university students. This included a commitment to undertake further research into the extent and nature of sexual violence in Australian university settings among UA member universities.

The 2021 National Student Safety Survey (NSSS) was funded by UA through its *Respect. Now. Always.* initiative – a sector-wide program that aims to prevent sexual violence in university communities and better support those who have been affected. Like the 2016 National Survey, the NSSS collected data on the scale and nature of university student experiences of sexual harassment and sexual assault. Accompanying the survey was a qualitative research component, which enabled victim/survivors to disclose their experiences of sexual violence in their own words and make their own suggestions for change.

The main objective of the NSSS was to establish the current prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual assault experiences among university students at Australian universities. More specifically, the objectives included:

- **determining the current prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual assault among students at Australian universities**
- **exploring the context within which sexual harassment and sexual assault occurs, including the setting, connection to the perpetrator and pattern of abusive behaviour**
- **examining awareness and behaviours towards help seeking and reporting in relation to sexual harassment and sexual assault, and**
- **identifying key socio-demographic correlates of sexual harassment and sexual assault, as well as help seeking and reporting.**

Ultimately, the findings from the NSSS will help to contextualise how these behaviours occur, understand help-seeking and reporting behaviours, and inform universities' services.

## 1.2. Definitions of sexual harassment and sexual assault

Sexual violence encompasses a wide range of unwanted acts (including sexual harassment, sexual assault and/or rape) and can take place in a variety of relational circumstances and settings. The World Health Organisation (2002, p.149) defines sexual violence as:

*any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim.*

While such a definition usefully sets out the broad scope of sexual violence, sexual harassment and assault, specific definitions vary across Australian states and territories and in the scholarly literature. For the purposes of this research, whilst we acknowledge that sexual violence can encompass any unwanted or unwelcome sexual act, comments or advances, the NSSS instrument has been designed to measure prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual assault specifically. In so doing, we are guided by the following definitions.

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<sup>2</sup> Cisgender refers to a person whose personal gender identity corresponds with their assigned sex at birth.

**Sexual harassment**, we define as per the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)*, as:

*any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favours or conduct of a sexual nature in relation to the person harassed in circumstances where a reasonable person would have anticipated the possibility that the person harassed would be offended, humiliated or intimidated.*

This includes behaviours such as unwelcome touching, staring, following, sexually explicit communications (whether in-person or via technologies), as well as nude or sexual images taken or shared with others without permission.

**Sexual assault**, we define as:

*any unwanted sexual acts or sexual contact that happened in circumstances where a person was either forced, threatened, pressured, tricked, or no effort was made to check whether there was agreement to the act, including in circumstances where a person was asleep or affected by drugs or alcohol.<sup>3</sup>*

Sexual acts and contact included here were those that may constitute either sexual assault and/or rape in Australian states and territories such as pinching, grabbing or fondling of a person's sexual body parts, sexual kissing, and/or any sexual penetration (whether oral, vaginal or anal).

The NSSS gathers prevalence data on university students' lifetime experience of any sexual harassment and/or sexual assault, as well as their lifetime and 12-month experiences in an Australian university context.

By **Australian university context**, we mean any kind of event, place, or social occasion that was arranged or supported by an Australian university, or where students or staff from a person's university were present. This includes both on and off campus.

This scope for the NSSS was informed by the student representative consultations, the Expert Advisory Committee, and the UA NSSS Steering Committee. The outcomes reached through these consultations were based on two main considerations. First, that in defining the scope of 'university context' the NSSS should be led by Australian sexual harassment legislation and case law, which indicates for instance, that the workplace extends beyond the physical premises of work and can include any setting which is either a work arranged or supported event (whether formal or informal), or in which several employees are gathered. Second, and of importance, is that the patterns of sexual assault are such that regardless of where an assault occurs, if the victim and perpetrator attend the same university then that institution may need to take steps to ensure the victim/survivor is able to continue to study in safety and with their wellbeing protected.

### 1.3. Why university settings matter

University settings are not immune to the prevalence of sexual violence that is experienced among young adults in the wider community. Previous research has indicated that many young adults who are studying at Australian universities have experienced sexual assault and/or sexual harassment; including on-campus or at university-related events and spaces (AHRC, 2017; NUS, 2016; University of Sydney, 2016). Regardless of whether an incident of sexual violence happens specifically in a university setting, the harmful impacts of a victimisation experience have been shown to substantially affect a student's wellbeing, academic performance, and continuation of their university studies (Jordan et al., 2014; Mengo & Black, 2016; Molstad et al., 2021). Furthermore, the gendered nature of sexual violence, whereby women, as well as sexuality and gender diverse people, are over-represented as victim/survivors, in turn means that it is these students who are at greater risk of interruption or cessation of their university studies as a result. Ensuring equity of access to higher education thus requires both appropriate and trauma-informed responses to sexual violence, as well as proactive measures to prevent it within the university community.

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<sup>3</sup> See e.g. *Crimes Act 1990* (NSW), S.61HE; *Crimes Act 1985* (VIC), S.36; and Commonwealth of Australia (2019). Fourth Action Plan—National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022. Canberra: Department of Social Services.

International research evidence suggests that certain university cultures and environments can be more, or less, conducive to abusive conduct among students. Many studies have highlighted for instance, that 'pro-abuse peer support' (DeKeseredy et al., 2017; Dekeseredy & Schwartz, 2013; Schwartz & Dekeseredy, 1997) is closely connected with higher prevalence of sexual violence in college campus settings. Cultures within educational settings that have higher levels of hostility and sexist attitudes towards women, or that have high 'rape myth' adherence, tend to see higher rates of sexual violence (Suarez & Gadalla, 2010; Trottier et al., 2021) as well as poorer staff responses to sexual victimisation (Holland et al., 2020). The concept of 'rape myths' refers to attitudes and false beliefs that minimise or excuse sexual violence, or that blame victim/survivors for their own victimisation (Burt, 1980; McMahon & Farmer, 2011; Payne et al., 1994; Powell & Webster, 2018). Localised peer environments within education settings may also help to explain how rates of sexual violence victimisation can differ across different university contexts; including across some sporting or social club contexts (Crosset, 2015; Young et al., 2017), as well as in some residential college or student accommodation settings (Armstrong et al., 2006; Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security, 2012; Stotzer & MacCartney, 2016). These peer norms have been further shown to impact on bystander intervention – reducing the likelihood that other students present at or observing sexual harassment or a potential sexual assault situation will take any active steps to intervene (McMahon, 2010).

Sexual violence impacts upon educational outcomes, and their associated benefits, for victim/survivors. There is also evidence that sexual assault and sexual harassment have wider effects throughout university communities. In particular, it is friends and roommates who are often the first point of disclosure and potential support for many student victim/survivors – the majority of whom do not report to police or their university (AHRC, 2017).

Universities are not only sites of study and career preparedness but also key cultural and social pillars in the lives of many young adults, providing a basis for often life-long friendships and professional networks. Universities play a crucial role both in the development of young adults and in providing opportunities for their futures. Alongside primary and secondary education, as well as workplaces and media, sport, religious and other organisations, universities are important institutions that actively shape Australian society; environments in which attitudes and practices that normalise or tolerate sexual violence can be challenged in order to prevent future harm (Our Watch, 2021a). Such is the position of Australian national policy, such as the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children (2010-2022)* (the National Plan), as well as the national framework for the prevention of violence against women – *Change the Story* (Our Watch et al., 2015; 2021a). *Change the Story* has informed the National Plan and outlines a nation-wide approach to preventing sexual violence and other forms of violence against women before they occur. The framework identifies priority settings and strategies for addressing the underlying drivers of such violence at a population level. Among these, *Change the Story* identifies universities and other tertiary education institutions as a key setting through which primary prevention activities promoting gender equity and respect can be delivered.

Finally, Australia has obligations under the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* to act against discrimination, including gender-based forms of violence, in education and other settings (United Nations, 1979). This is in addition to having ratified several international human rights treaties and conventions which enshrine fundamental rights such as to personal security, freedom from violence, and the right to education (AHRC, 2017). As such there is arguably an obligation for Australian universities as public institutions, and indeed for Australian governments, to not only respond appropriately to sexual assault and sexual harassment as forms of gender-based violence, but to proactively seek to prevent these harms.



## 1.4. Interpreting the NSSS findings

The NSSS seeks to provide an understanding of the current student safety environment in an effort to inform responding to, and preventing, sexual violence within and through universities. This is enabled by including a range of measures such as student feelings of safety, attitudes towards sexual violence and gender equality and satisfaction with university responses to sexual violence, as well as overall prevalence.

While reducing the prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual assault is an overarching goal for universities, and indeed Australian society more broadly, it is important to recognise this is a long-term objective that will be achieved through whole-of-community change. In order to ultimately achieve reductions in the prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual assault, progress should be monitored on the associated short-term objectives, such as improvements in student feelings of safety, endorsement of gender equality and respect, satisfaction with university responses, and awareness of available avenues to address sexual violence.

Monitoring the prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual assault among students enrolled in Australian universities also presents several challenges. Among these, is the recent context of the COVID-19 pandemic, in which many university students engaged in online or hybrid learning due to the many public health restrictions imposed throughout much of 2020 and 2021. Engagement in on-campus learning, as well as many off-campus social events, was restricted for hundreds of thousands of students, particularly in Victoria and New South Wales, as well as for many international students who were studying off-shore. While sexual harassment and some forms of sexual abuse and coercion can still occur in online learning and peer environments, it may be that reduced student participation in on-campus learning and in-person university events, could be associated with the resulting prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual assault in these contexts.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic likely presents a key challenge to any comparisons being made between the 2016 National Survey (as reported in the Change the Course report, AHRC, 2017), and the NSSS. However, there are also other factors that limit the ability to compare and make inferences about changes over time between the two surveys. The NSSS instrument was reviewed and revised with advice from an Expert Advisory Group to ensure it reflected current best practice in measuring sexual harassment and sexual assault. In particular, a substantial body of research indicates that specific surveys that measure prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual assault through a series of behaviourally specific questions<sup>4</sup> demonstrate greater sensitivity than more general measures (de Heer & Jones, 2017; Fisher, 2009; Krebs et al., 2016; Moylan et al, 2021). Given the changes made to the instrument questions, the NSSS is not directly comparable with the 2016 National Survey. To enable comparisons between students' experiences with national and international data (such as the Personal Safety Survey), prevalence rates for sexual assault and sexual harassment were also measured over a 12-month period rather than a calendar year.

Further, a range of influences and high-profile cases of reported sexual violence may have led to an increased tendency for victim/survivors to speak out and report their own experiences. Whilst the #MeToo social media campaign and associated advocacy by many survivors and advocates has been associated with broader disclosures of sexual violence victimisation, Australia has also seen a renewed focus on sexual violence in the public domain. Victim/survivor advocates such as Grace Tame, Brittany Higgins and Saxon Mullins, among others, have drawn attention to failures to respond to and prevent sexual violence. This broader national conversation about sexual violence has the potential to encourage other victim/survivors to participate in opportunities to disclose their experiences and to advocate for change.

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<sup>4</sup> Behaviourally specific questions do not ask simply 'have you experienced sexual assault', or provide a general definition of sexual assault and ask if respondents have had that experience. Rather, such questions include a series of statements that describe in simple language specific incidents or behaviours that can constitute a sexual offense (Fisher & Cullen, 2000; Fisher, 2009; Koss et al., 2007).

## 1.5. Methodology overview

The NSSS was undertaken online from 6 September 2021 to 3 October 2021. Students from UA universities across Australia participated in the survey.

The in-scope population for the survey was students studying at Australian universities aged 18 years and over. A total of 43,819 student participated in the survey for a completion rate of 11.6%. The average survey length for those completing the survey was 9.5 minutes.

Several points should be kept in mind when considering the findings:

- Firstly, unless otherwise noted, all estimates are based on weighted survey estimates. This applies to all results expressed as percentages and means, but not to the bases (n) shown in the tables and graphs.
- In some cases 'don't know' and 'prefer not to say' responses have been included in the base for questions, so as to maintain a consistent base for population and sub-population estimates throughout the report.
- Where figures have been rounded, discrepancies may occur between sums of the component items and totals. Net percentages (where results for two categories have been added together) are calculated prior to rounding of the figures and therefore some slight discrepancy may exist between these percentages and those that could be calculated from the rounded figures shown in the tables or charts.
- Relative standard errors (RSE) were calculated for survey estimates. RSE's between 25% and 50% indicates caution should be used with the associated estimate while a RSE above 50% generally means the estimate is unreliable. Survey estimates with a RSE above 50% have not been reported.
- As the results presented are based on a sample rather than a census of Australian university students aged 18 years and over, some variation between sub-groups within the survey will occur by chance. To help decide whether differences are meaningful (that is, whether they represent genuine differences rather than just random variation), testing of the statistical significance of these differences has been carried out. Where results are reported as "different", it implies that a statistically significant difference at a 99 per cent confidence level has been established.
- The bulk of the analysis in the report rely on descriptive statistics, such as means, frequencies and distributions based on univariate analysis and bivariate analysis, in the latter case comparing two or more variables via cross tabulations of the survey data.
- For the key prevalence measures, more complex statistical methods were used to explore relationships in the data. Logistic regressions were employed to examine which characteristics (such as gender identity, age, sexual orientation) were independently associated with experiences of sexual harassment and sexual assault.

More detailed information about the methodology of the NSSS can be found in Appendix 2.

## 2. Sexual harassment

This section of the report explores the prevalence of sexual harassment among students in an Australian university context. The NSSS sought to capture three prevalence measures of sexual harassment:

- **lifetime**
- **Australian university context since starting at university**
- **Australian university context in the past 12 months.**

In the NSSS, experiences of sexual harassment were measured by providing students with a list of ten behaviours and asking them if anyone had made them feel uncomfortable, harassed or upset in these ways. Where students indicated that they had experienced the behaviour(s), follow-up questions were asked to determine if these behaviours happened in an Australian university context and if so, whether they occurred in the past 12 months.

The following sections focus on experiences of sexual harassment in a university context. Further information on lifetime prevalence of sexual harassment can be found in Appendix 5.

### 2.1. How many students have experienced sexual harassment?

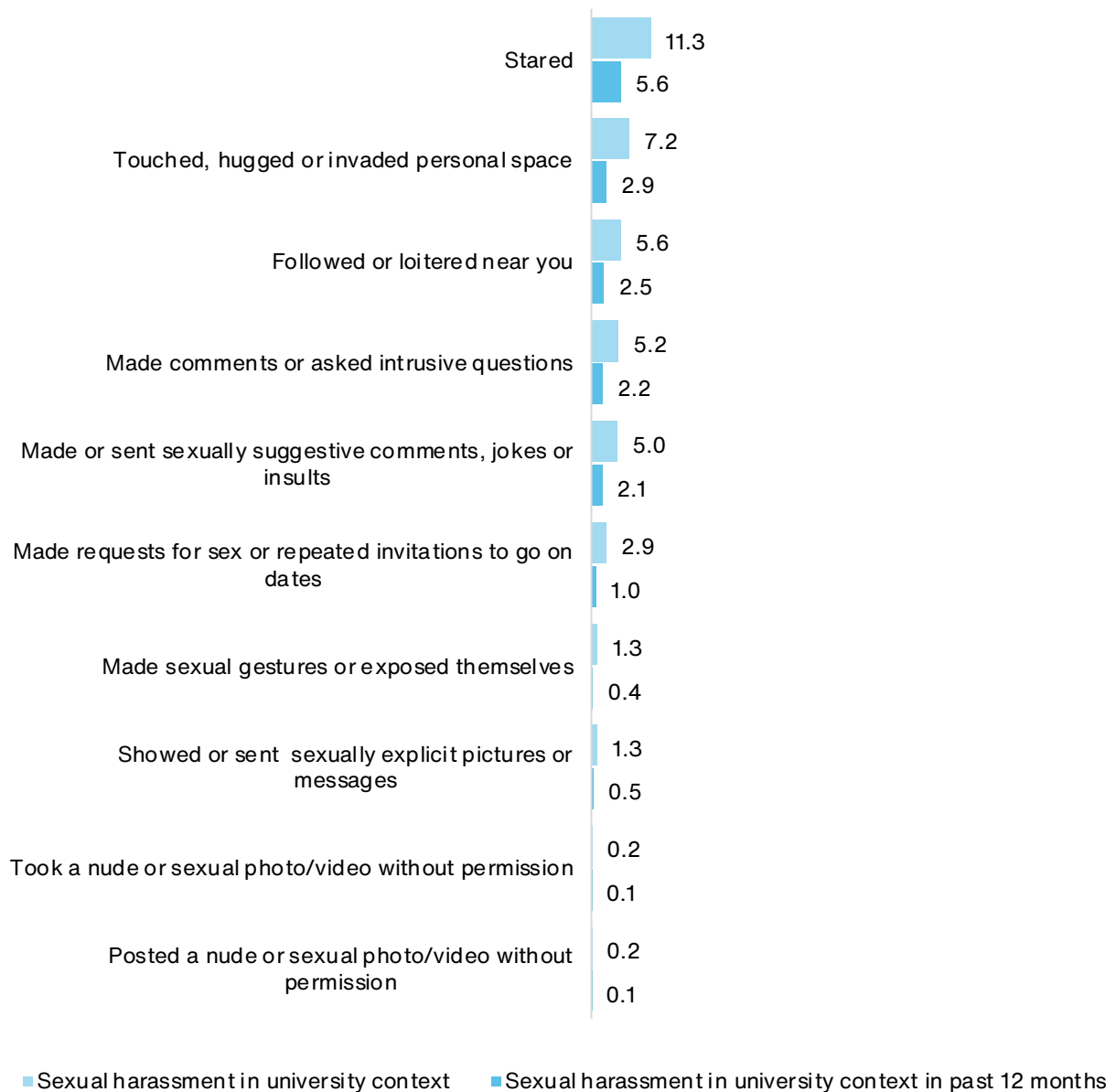
Many Australian university students had experienced sexual harassment:

- **one in two (48.0%) had been sexually harassed at least once in their lifetime**
- **one in six (16.1%) had been sexually harassed in an Australian university context**
- **one in twelve (8.1%) had been sexually harassed in an Australian university context in the past 12 months.**

The lifetime and 12-month prevalence of each behaviour in an Australian university context is shown in Figure 1. Of the ten behaviours measured in the NSSS, the most common forms of sexual harassment reported in an Australian university context in the past 12 months were:

- **staring (5.6%)**
- **touching, hugging, or invading personal space (2.9%)**
- **following or loitering nearby (2.5%)**
- **comments or intrusive questions about their private life, body or physical appearance (2.2%)**
- **sexually suggestive comments, jokes or insults (2.1%).**

Figure 1: Types of sexual harassment experienced in an Australian university context (%)



Base: All students (n=43,819). Question: B2 and B3.

## 2.2. Where did sexual harassment occur in a university context?

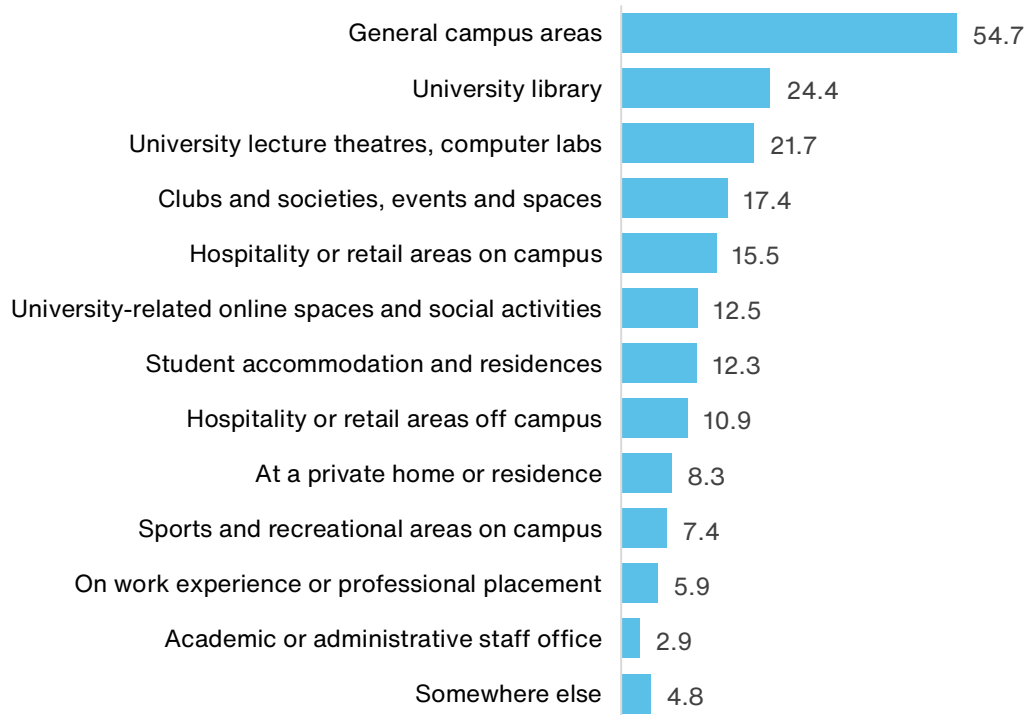
Students who had experienced sexual harassment in a university context in the past 12 months were asked where these incidents had occurred. Figure 2 shows the locations, both on and off campus, and in a digital environment where students had experienced sexual harassment in the past 12 months.

Students typically experience sexual harassment on campus in publicly accessible areas. The most common locations reported included:

- general campus areas (54.7%)
- university library (24.4%)
- university lecture theatres, computer labs (21.7%)
- clubs and societies, events and spaces (17.4%)
- hospitality and retail on campus (15.5%).

Slightly more than one in ten (12.5%) students who had been sexually harassed in a university context in the past 12 months reported that it had occurred in a university online space. A similar proportion, one in ten (12.3%), reported that the sexual harassment occurred in student accommodation or residences.

**Figure 2: Location of sexual harassment in an Australian university context in past 12 months (%)**



Base: Experienced sexual harassment in an Australian university context in the past 12 months (n=4,140). Question: B3a.

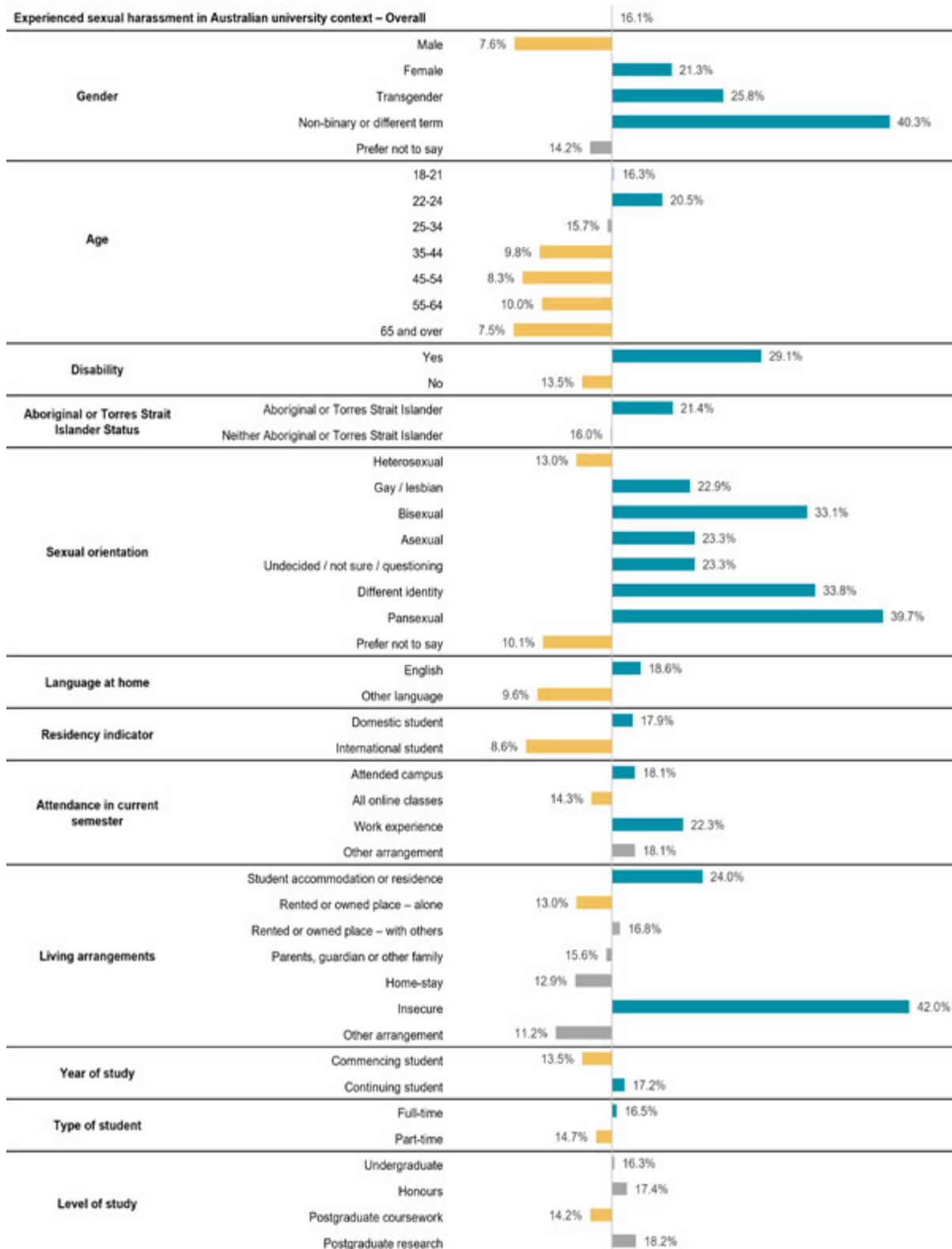
## 2.3. Who experienced sexual harassment in a university context?

The prevalence of sexual harassment in an Australian university context varies according to students' demographic characteristics and enrolment details. In the following section, students' personal characteristics, current learning environment and living arrangements are based on their self-reported survey responses. Other non-demographic characteristics are from administrative data provided by each university to aid with sampling, weighting and analysis.

Figures 3 and 4 summarise the prevalence of sexual harassment among Australian university students and how it varies according to these characteristics.

The following sections describe key differences.

Figure 3: Prevalence of sexual harassment in an Australian university context



Base: All students (n=43,819). Question: DVB2.

Light blue bar = significantly higher than overall (p<0.01). Light yellow = significantly lower than overall (p<0.01).

Figure 4: Prevalence of sexual harassment in an Australian university context in past 12 months



Base: All students (n=43,819). Question: DVB3.  
 One asterisk \* and lighter grey bar = RSE >25%. Bar excluded for measures where RSE >50% and two \*s.  
 Light blue bar = significantly higher than overall (p<0.01). Light yellow = significantly lower than overall (p<0.01).

## Gender identity

Female students, transgender students and non-binary students are more likely to have been sexually harassed in a university context than male students.

The NSSS asked students about their sex recorded at birth and current gender. Students' gender identity was then derived using the 'two-step method' of cross-classifying responses to these question as outlined in the Australian Bureau of Statistics Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables, 2020 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, ABS, 2020).

Female students experienced substantially higher rates of sexual harassment than male students:

- **One in five (21.3%) females had experienced sexual harassment in a university context compared with 7.6% of males.**
- **One in ten (10.5%) females had experienced sexual harassment in a university context in the past 12 months compared with 3.9% of males.**

Students who identified as transgender or non-binary reported the highest rates of sexual harassment:

- **Two in five (40.3%) non-binary students and one in four (25.8%) transgender students had been sexually harassed in a university context.**
- **One in five (22.4%) non-binary students and one in seven (14.7%) transgender students had been sexually harassed in a university context in the past 12 months.**

## Age

Experiences of sexual harassment in a university context appear to be related to age.

Sexual harassment in a university context was most common among students aged 35 years or younger, with prevalence since starting at university highest among students in their early 20s:

- **One in five (20.5%) students aged 22-24 years had been sexually harassed in a university context, followed by 16.3% of those aged 18-21 years and 15.7% of students aged 25-34 years.**

The prevalence of sexual harassment in a university context in the past 12 months was highest among the youngest students, aged 18-21 years. Prevalence in the past 12 months then decreased with age:

- **One in ten (11.7%) students aged 18-21 years had experienced sexual harassment in a university context in the past 12 months, followed by 8.4% of students aged 22-24 years and 5.5% of students aged 25-34 years.**

The locations where students had experienced sexual harassment in a university context in the past 12 months also varied according to age. Younger students aged 18-21 were more likely than other students to report sexual harassment in student accommodation or residences (16.0%). In comparison, students aged 25-34 years were more likely than other students to report sexual harassment on work experience or professional placement (12.0%) or in an academic or administrative staff office (6.3%).

## Disability

Students with a disability were more likely to experience sexual harassment in a university context than other students:

- **One in three (29.1%) students with a disability had been sexually harassed in a university context compared with 13.5% of other students.**
- **One in seven (13.7%) students with a disability had been sexually harassed in a university context in the past 12 months compared with 7.0% of other students.**



## Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students were more likely to be sexually harassed in a university context than other students:

- One in five (21.4%) Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students had been sexually harassed in a university context compared with 16.0% of other students.
- One in eight (12.0%) Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students had been sexually harassed in a university context in the past 12 months compared with 8.0% of other students.

## Sexual orientation

Students who identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, unsure or questioning their sexuality or pansexual were more likely to experience sexual harassment than students who identify as heterosexual:

- In a university context, 39.7% of pansexual students, 33.1% of bisexual students, 23.3% of students who were unsure or questioning their sexuality and 22.9% of gay or lesbian students had been sexually harassed compared with 13.0% of heterosexual students.
- In a university context in the past 12 months, 21.5% of pansexual students, 17.7% of bisexual students, 12.3% of gay or lesbian students and 11.6% of students who were unsure or questioning their sexuality had been sexually harassed compared with 6.4% of heterosexual students.

## International students and those who speak languages other than English at home

International students were less likely to have been sexually harassed than domestic students:

- One in five (17.9%) domestic students had been sexually harassed in a university context compared with one in ten (8.6%) international students.
- One in ten (9.0%) domestic students had been sexually harassed in a university context in the past 12 months compared with one in twenty (4.4%) international students.

Students who mainly speak English at home were more likely to experience sexual harassment than those who speak a language other than English at home:

- In a university context, 18.6% of students who mainly speak English at home had been sexually harassed compared with 9.6% of students who speak a language other than English at home.
- In a university context in the past 12 months, 9.3% of students who mainly speak English at home had been sexually harassed compared with 4.7% of students who speak a language other than English at home.

## Studying on campus

Experiences of sexual harassment in a university context were more common among students undertaking classes on campus.

At the time of the NSSS, 58.5% of students were undertaking all of their classes online, while one in three (33.6%) reported undertaking some or all of their classes on campus. Fewer than one in twenty were on work experience (4.4%) or had some other arrangement (3.6%).

- One in five undertaking some or all of their classes on campus (18.1%) or who were on work experience (22.3%) at the time of the survey had been sexually harassed in a university context compared with 14.3% of students undertaking all of their classes online.
- One in eight (12.0%) students undertaking some or all of their classes on campus at the time of the survey had been sexually harassed in a university context in the past 12 months when compared with 5.7% of students undertaking all of their classes online. One in ten (9.8%) students on work experience at the time of the survey had been sexually harassed in a university context in the past 12 months.

## Living arrangements

Experiences of sexual harassment differed according to students' living arrangements. Those living in student accommodation or residences were more likely to have been sexually harassed in a university context:

- Since starting at university, one quarter (24.0%) of students living in student accommodation or residences had experienced sexual harassment compared with 13.0% of students living on their own.
- One in five (19%) students living in student accommodation or residences had experienced sexual harassment in a university context in the past 12 months, as had 8.6% of students living with their parents or other family.
- In comparison, approximately one in twenty students living in their own place either by themselves (5.1%) or with others (6.7%) had experienced sexual harassment in a university context in the past 12 months.

The locations where students were likely to experience sexual harassment in a university context in the past 12 months also varied according to their current living arrangements. Among students living in student accommodation or residences, half (53.6%) of those who had been harassed in the past 12 months reported this as a location of sexual harassment.

## First year and continuing students

Continuing students are more likely than first year commencing students to have been sexually harassed in a university context:

- One in six (17.2%) continuing students had been sexually harassed in a university context compared with 13.5% of first year commencing students.
- However, experiences of sexual harassment in a university context in the past 12 months were similar among continuing (7.9%) and commencing students (8.5%).

## Full-time and part-time students

Students studying full-time were more likely to have been sexually harassed in a university context than those studying part-time:

- 16.5% of students studying full-time had been sexually harassed in a university context compared with 14.7% of students studying part-time.
- 9.1% of students studying full-time had been sexually harassed in a university context in the past 12 months compared with 4.6% of students studying part-time.

The locations where students were likely to experience sexual harassment in a university context in the past 12 months also varied according to whether they were studying full-time or part-time. Students who were studying full-time were more likely than those studying part-time to report being sexually harassed in student accommodation or residences (13.4% compared with 5.7%).

## Undergraduate and postgraduate students

Undergraduate (16.3%), honours (17.4%) and postgraduate research students (18.2%) reported similar rates of sexual harassment in a university context since starting at university. Prevalence among postgraduate coursework students was 14.2%.

One in ten (9.4%) undergraduate students had been sexually harassed in a university context in the past 12 months, compared with 8.8% of honours students, 6.7% postgraduate research students and 4.2% postgraduate coursework students.

There were differences in the locations where undergraduate and postgraduate students had experienced sexual harassment in a university context in the past 12 months.

- Undergraduate students (13.6%) were more likely than postgraduate students (6.1%) to report sexual harassment in student accommodation or residences.
- Postgraduate students were more likely than undergraduate students to report sexual harassment on work experience or professional placement (11.1% compared with 4.9%) or academic or administrative staff offices (10.9% compared with 1.4%).

## Multivariate analysis

The previous section describes prevalence of sexual harassment in a university context according to students' personal characteristics and enrolment details. These bivariate analyses examine the relationship between two variables without taking other factors into account.

Survey-weighted logistic regression modelling has also been undertaken to examine which characteristics are independently associated with experiences of sexual harassment, after adjusting or controlling for other factors. Separate models have been constructed for each prevalence measure. Further details together with the final models can be found in Appendices 2 and 6.

### *Sexual harassment in a university context*

After adjusting for other factors, most of the student characteristics and enrolment details were still found to be associated with sexual harassment in a university context.

The model however suggested other characteristics and enrolment details impact the apparent relationship between course type and experience of sexual harassment in a university context. When adjusting for other factors, the model found honours students, postgraduate coursework and postgraduate research students were more likely to have been sexually harassed in a university context compared with undergraduate students.

The model also found that after controlling for other characteristics, students studying full-time were approximately as likely to be sexually harassed in a university context as were students studying part-time.

This report focuses on statistically significant difference at a 99% confidence level. After controlling for other characteristics, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students were more likely to have been sexually harassed in a university context at the 95% but not the 99% level of statistical significance. It is probable that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students are more likely to have been sexually harassed in a university context when compared with other students.

### *Sexual harassment in a university context in the past 12 months*

A similar pattern was found for sexual harassment in a university context in the past 12 months.

After adjusting for other factors, most of the students' characteristics and enrolment details reported previously continued to be associated with sexual harassment in the past 12 months. Yet, the model also suggested other characteristics and enrolment details impact the apparent relationship between course type and experience of sexual harassment in the past 12 months. When adjusting for other factors, the model found postgraduate research students were more likely to have been sexually harassed in a university context in the past 12 months compared with undergraduate students.

After controlling for other characteristics, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students were more likely to have been sexually harassed in a university context in the past 12 months at the 95% but not the 99% level of statistical significance. It is probable that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students are more likely to have been sexually harassed in a university context in the past 12 months when compared with other students.

## 2.4. What was the context of the most impactful incident of sexual harassment?

This section of the report further explores experiences of sexual harassment in a university context.

Students were asked a series of questions about the most impactful (or significant) incident of sexual harassment they had experienced in a university context. This included how long ago the incident happened, where the incident occurred, the number of people involved, and the identity and gender of the perpetrator(s).

### Recency and location

Almost half (44.8%) of students who had been sexually harassed in a university context reported they had experienced their most impactful incident in the past 12 months:

- 5.8% reported the incident occurred in the last month
- 39.0% reporting the incident occurred in the last 12 months but not in the last month
- 52.6% reported the incident occurred more than 12 months ago.

The proportion of students who reported their most impactful incident occurred in the past 12 months varied to some extent across sociodemographic subgroups. Students who were undertaking some or all of their classes on campus at the time of the survey (60.7%) were more likely to report their most impactful incident of sexual harassment had occurred in the past 12 months when compared with those undertaking all of their classes online (35.4%) or who were on work experience placements (35.5%).

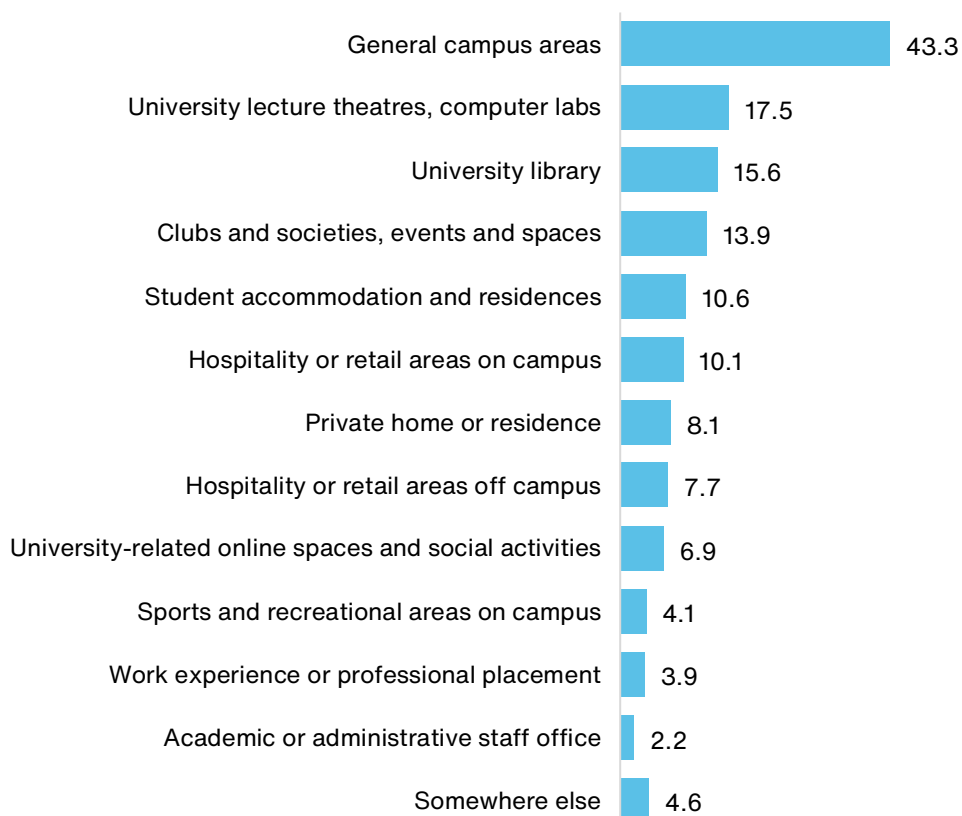
Other groups more likely to report their most impactful incident of sexual harassment had occurred in the past 12 months include:

- students aged 18-21 years (65.6%), compared with those aged 22-24 years (35.2%), 25-34 years (30.6%) and 35+ years (20.9%)
- students without a disability (46.5%) compared with other students (40.8%)
- students living in student accommodation or residences (74.4%) or with parents, guardian or other family (49.9%) compared with those living in their own place either alone (36.1%) or with others (33.6%)
- commencing students (60.5%) compared with continuing students (39.6%)
- students studying full-time (49.7%) compared with those studying part-time (25.7%)
- undergraduate students (50.7%) compared with postgraduate students (27.4%).

Consistent with the location of experiences of sexual harassment in past 12 months, many students reported that their most impactful sexual harassment incident occurred on campus in publicly accessible locations (see Figure 5). The most common locations included:

- general campus areas (43.3%)
- university lecture theatres, computer labs (17.5%)
- university library (15.6%)
- clubs and societies, events and spaces (13.9%)
- student accommodation or residences (10.6%).

Figure 5: Location of most impactful incident of sexual harassment in an Australian university context (%)



Base: Experienced sexual harassment in an Australian university context (n=7,717). Question: B6.

Some sociodemographic differences were found in relation to the location of the most impactful incident of sexual harassment in a university context.

Students living in student accommodation or residences (38.5%), commencing students (13.7%) and students who mainly speak English at home (11.7%) were more likely than other students to have experienced their most impactful incident of sexual harassment at a student accommodation site or residence. Students who lived with their parents or other family were more likely than other students to experience their most impactful incident of sexual harassment in general campus areas (48.1%) or at a university library (19.3%).

Students aged 25-34 years (6.6%), postgraduate coursework students (7.2%), those who speak a language other than English at home (6.3%) and international students (7.8%) were all more likely than other students to have experienced their most impactful incident of sexual harassment on work experience or professional placement.

Students aged 35-44 years (9.8%) and postgraduate research students (15.3%) were more likely than other students to report that their most impactful incident of sexual harassment occurred in academic or administrative staff offices.

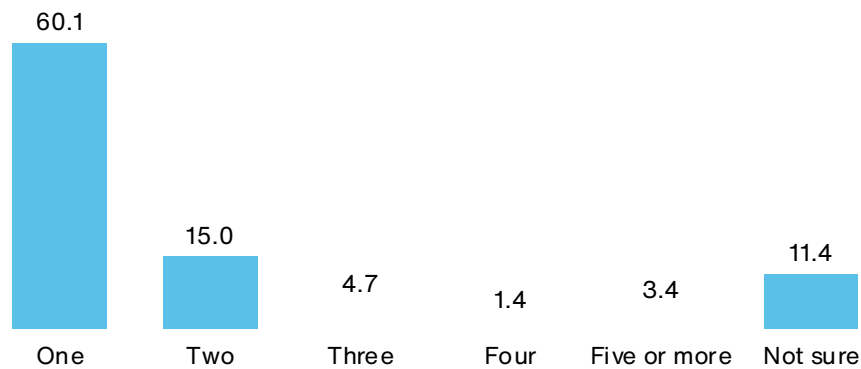
### Number of perpetrators

Sexual harassment in a university context typically involved a single perpetrator.

Three in five (60.1%) students who had experienced sexual harassment in a university context reported one person was directly involved in the most impactful incident, while one in four (24.5%) students reported two or more people were involved.

Incidents that took place on university related online spaces were more likely than other locations to involve two or more people (36.5%).

Figure 6: Number of perpetrators involved in most impactful incident of sexual harassment (%)



Base: Experienced sexual harassment in an Australian university context (n=7,717). Question: B7.

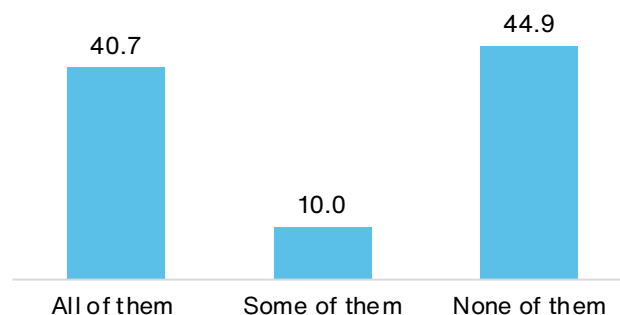
### Number of perpetrators known

Sexual harassment in an Australian university context was perpetrated by both known and unknown people.

One in two (50.7%) students knew some or all of the people involved in the most impactful incident:

- 40.7% knew all of the people involved
- 10.0% knew some of the people involved
- 44.9% did not know any of the people involved.

Figure 7: Number of perpetrators known in most impactful incident of sexual harassment (%)



Base: Experienced sexual harassment in an Australian university context (n=7,717). Question: B8.

Whether students knew the perpetrator(s) varied according to their sociodemographic profile and the nature of the incident:

- Females (47.6%) were more likely than males (35.8%) to not know those involved. In comparison, male students (47.7%) were more likely than female students (39.0%) to know all those involved.
- Students aged 18-21 years were more likely than other students to not know those involved (50.6%). In comparison, those aged 35 years or older were more likely to know all of those involved (49.6%).
- Undergraduate students (47.4%) were more likely than postgraduate students (37.7%) to not know those involved. In comparison, postgraduate students (48.8%) were more likely than undergraduate students (37.9%) to know all the people involved.
- Students who speak English at home (41.9%) were more likely to know all of those involved compared with those who speak a language other than English at home (34.4%).
- Where one person was involved, 50.6% knew this person, while 48.4% did not know the person.
- Where two or more perpetrators were involved, 35.6% knew all the people involved, 26.2% knew some of the people and 38.0% knew none of the people involved.

Students were more likely to know all the people involved if the incident happened in a private location including:

- private home or residence (69.1%)
- academic or administrative staff office (68.3%)
- student accommodation or residences (63.8%).

In comparison, students were more likely to know none of the people involved when they occurred in more public areas, including:

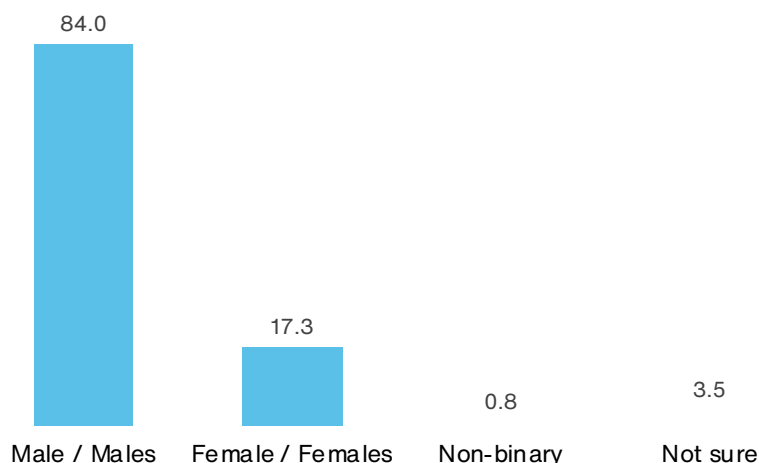
- university library (58.8%)
- general campus areas (57.2%).

## Gender of perpetrators

Incidents of sexual harassment in Australian university contexts involved male perpetrators.

In total, 84.0% students reported their most impactful incident of sexual harassment in a university context involved a male or male(s). Fewer than one in five (17.3%) students said a female or female(s) were involved, while only 0.8% students said their most impactful incident of sexual harassment involved a non-binary person or persons.

Figure 8: Gender of perpetrator(s) involved in most impactful incident of sexual harassment (%)



Base: Experienced sexual harassment in an Australian university context (n=7,717). Question: B10.

The gender of the perpetrator(s) varied according to the students own gender. Nearly all female students were harassed by male perpetrator(s) (92.9%). In comparison, male students were equally likely to be harassed by male (52.1%) and / or female perpetrators (48.3%).

International students were more likely than domestic students to report their most impactful incident involved female perpetrators (24.1% compared with 16.5%).

The gender of the perpetrator(s) was also related to the nature or context of the most impactful incident of sexual harassment. Where one person was involved, 86.5% of incidents involved a male perpetrator. Where two or more people were involved 88.1% of incidents involved male perpetrator(s) and 30.9% of incidents involved female perpetrators.

The following locations were most likely to involve male perpetrator(s):

- work experience or professional placement (92.1%)
- hospitality or retail areas off campus (91.2%)
- general campus areas (86.9%).

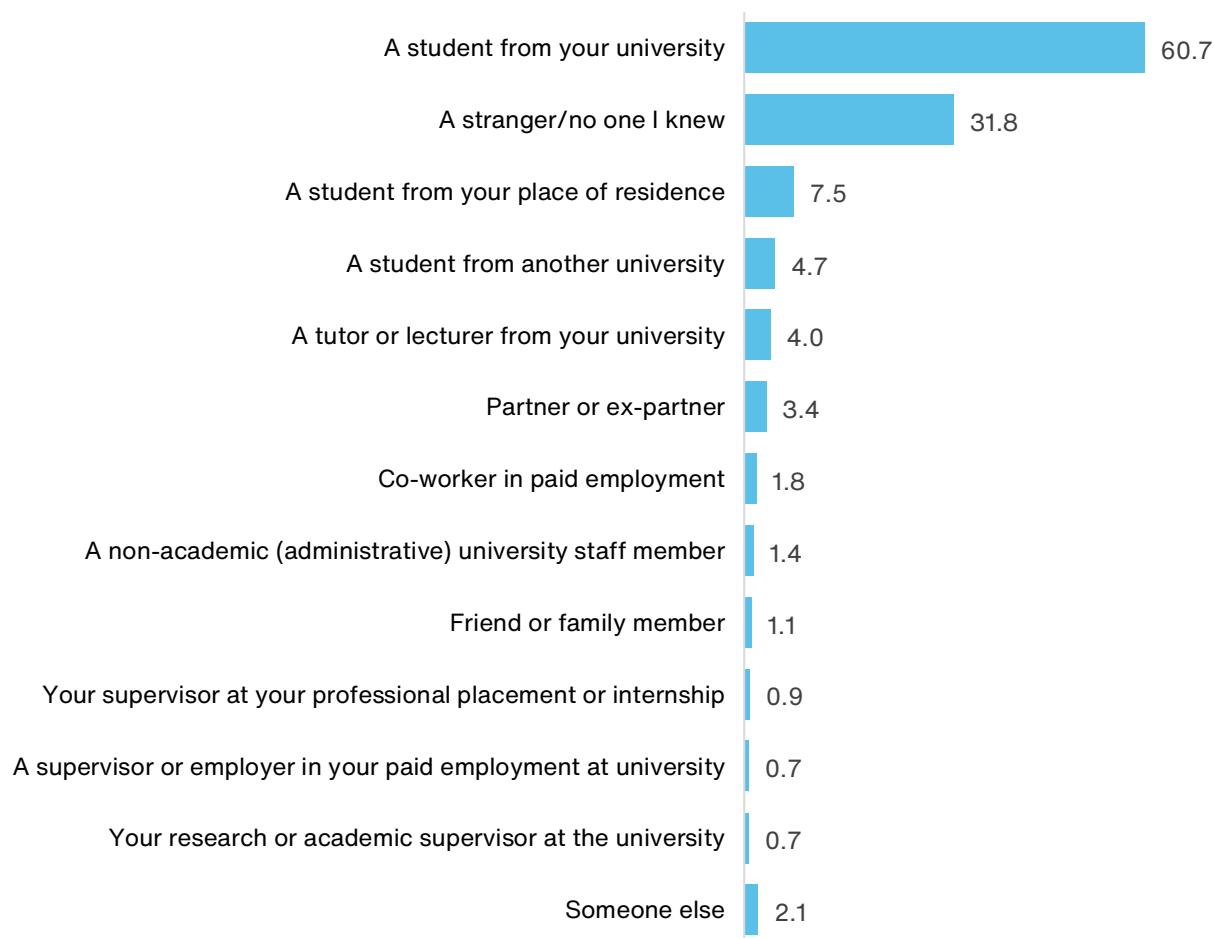
## Identity of perpetrators

Sexual harassment in Australian university contexts was commonly perpetrated by other students.

Among students who had experienced sexual harassment in an Australian university context, three in five (60.7%) reported a student from their university had perpetrated the most impactful incident. Other people commonly involved included:

- a stranger (31.8%)
- a student from place of residence (7.5%)
- a student from another university (4.7%).

Figure 9: Identity of perpetrator(s) involved in most impactful incident of sexual harassment (%)



Base: Experienced sexual harassment in an Australian university context (n=7,717). Question: B9.



Some notable sociodemographic differences were found in relation to the identity of the perpetrator of the most impactful incident of sexual harassment in a university context:

- Female students (33.9%) were more likely than male students (24.6%) to have been sexually harassed by a stranger.
- Students aged 18-21 years were more likely than other students to have been sexually harassed by a stranger (34.8%) or a student from their place of residence (9.3%).
- In comparison, older students were more likely to have been harassed by a university staff member (25-34 years 10.6%, 35+ years 18.4%, including lecturers, tutors, research or academic supervisors and / or non-academic staff) or co-worker in their paid employment either at the university or outside of the university (25-34 years 3.5%, 35+ years 3.8%).
- Undergraduate students (62.2%) were also more likely than postgraduate students (56.2%) to have been sexually harassed by a student from their university. In comparison, postgraduate research students were more likely to be harassed by a university staff member (22.3%, including lecturers, tutors, research or academic supervisors and / or non-academic staff) or co-workers at their employer at or outside of the university (6.8%).
- Domestic students (62.3%) were more likely international students (47.1%) to have been sexually harassed by a student from their university at the most impactful incident. Similarly, students who mainly speak English at home (62.7%) were also more likely to have been sexually harassed by a student from their university than students who speak a language other than English at home (50.4%).



## 3. Sexual assault

This section of the report explores the prevalence of sexual assault among students in an Australian university context. The NSSS sought to capture three prevalence measures of sexual assault:

- **lifetime**
- **Australian university context since starting at university**
- **Australian university context in the past 12 months.**

In the NSSS, sexual assault was measured in a similar way to sexual harassment; by providing students with a list of seven behaviours and asking them to indicate if anyone had ever done these things to them when they did not want them to. Where students indicated yes, follow-up questions were asked to determine if these behaviours occurred in an Australian university context, and if so whether they occurred in the past 12 months.

The following sections focus on experiences of sexual assault in a university context. Further information on lifetime prevalence of sexual assault can be found in Appendix 5.

### 3.1. How many students have experienced sexual assault?

The NSSS found the prevalence of sexual assault among Australian university students to be:

- **one in three (30.6%) had been sexually assaulted at least once in their lifetime**
- **one in twenty (4.5%) had been sexually assaulted in an Australian university context**
- **in total, 1.1% of students had been sexually assaulted in an Australian university context in the past 12 months.**

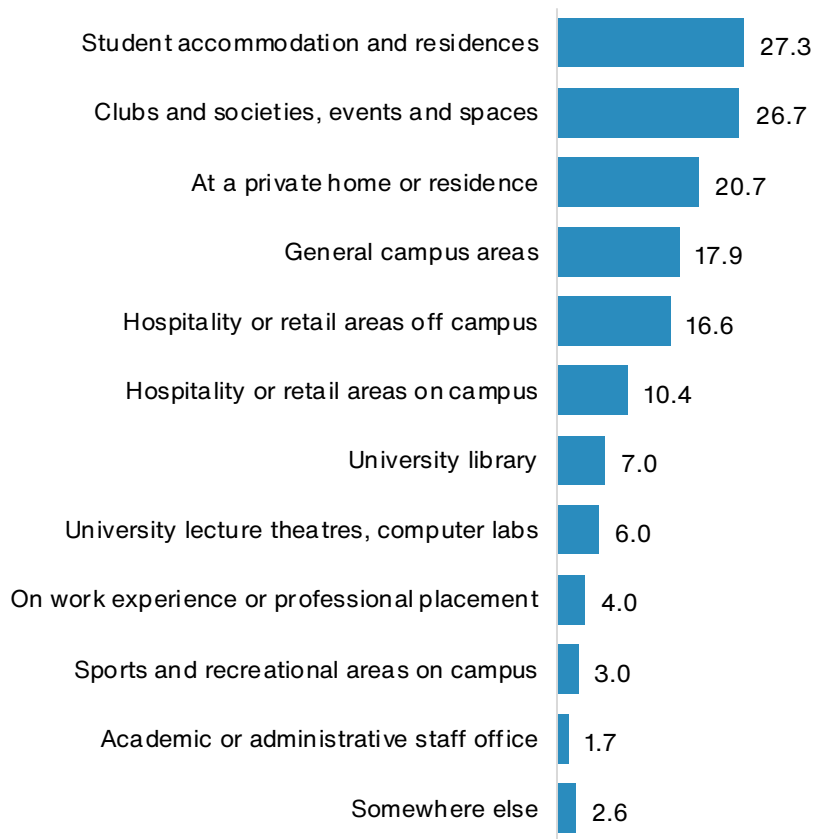
### 3.2. Where did sexual assault occur in a university context?

The NSSS asked students where incidents of sexual assault had occurred. Figure 10 shows the university context locations, both on and off campus, where students had experienced sexual assault in the past 12 months.

Students most commonly experienced sexual assault in private or less publicly accessible areas. The most common locations reported included:

- **student accommodation or residences (27.3%)**
- **clubs and societies, events and spaces (26.7%)**
- **at a private home or residence (20.7%)**
- **general campus areas (17.9%)**
- **hospitality or retail areas off campus (16.6%).**

Figure 10: Location of sexual assault in an Australian university context in past 12 months (%)



Base: Experienced sexual assault in an Australian university context in the past 12 months (n=648). Question: F3a.

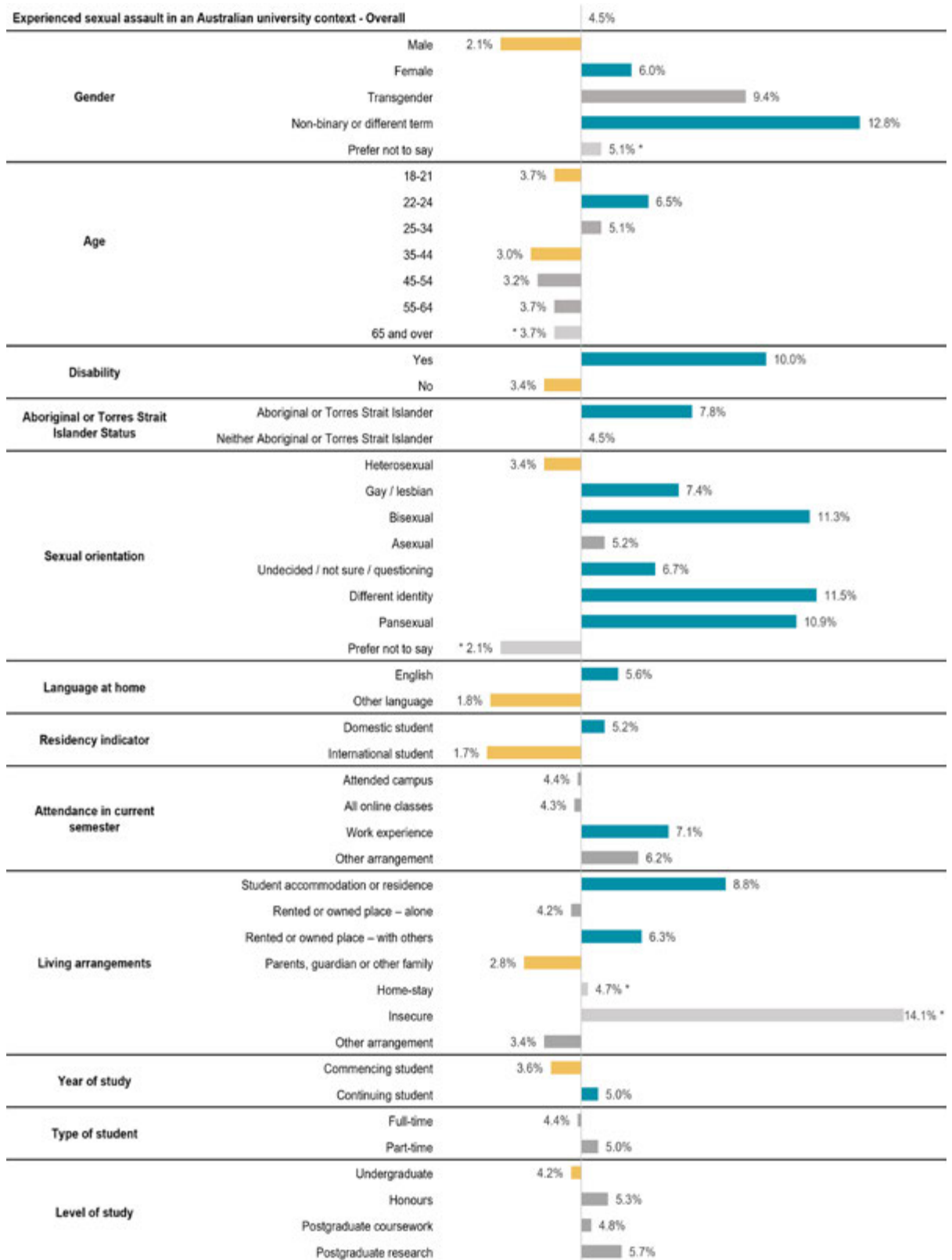
### 3.3. Who experienced sexual assault in a university context?

The prevalence of sexual assault in an Australian university context varies according to students' demographic characteristics and enrolment details.

Figures 11 and 12 summarise the prevalence of sexual assault in a university context and how it varies according to these characteristics.

The following sections describe key differences. In many cases, students who experience sexual harassment in a university context are more likely to also experience sexual assault in a university context.

Figure 11: Prevalence of sexual assault in an Australian university context

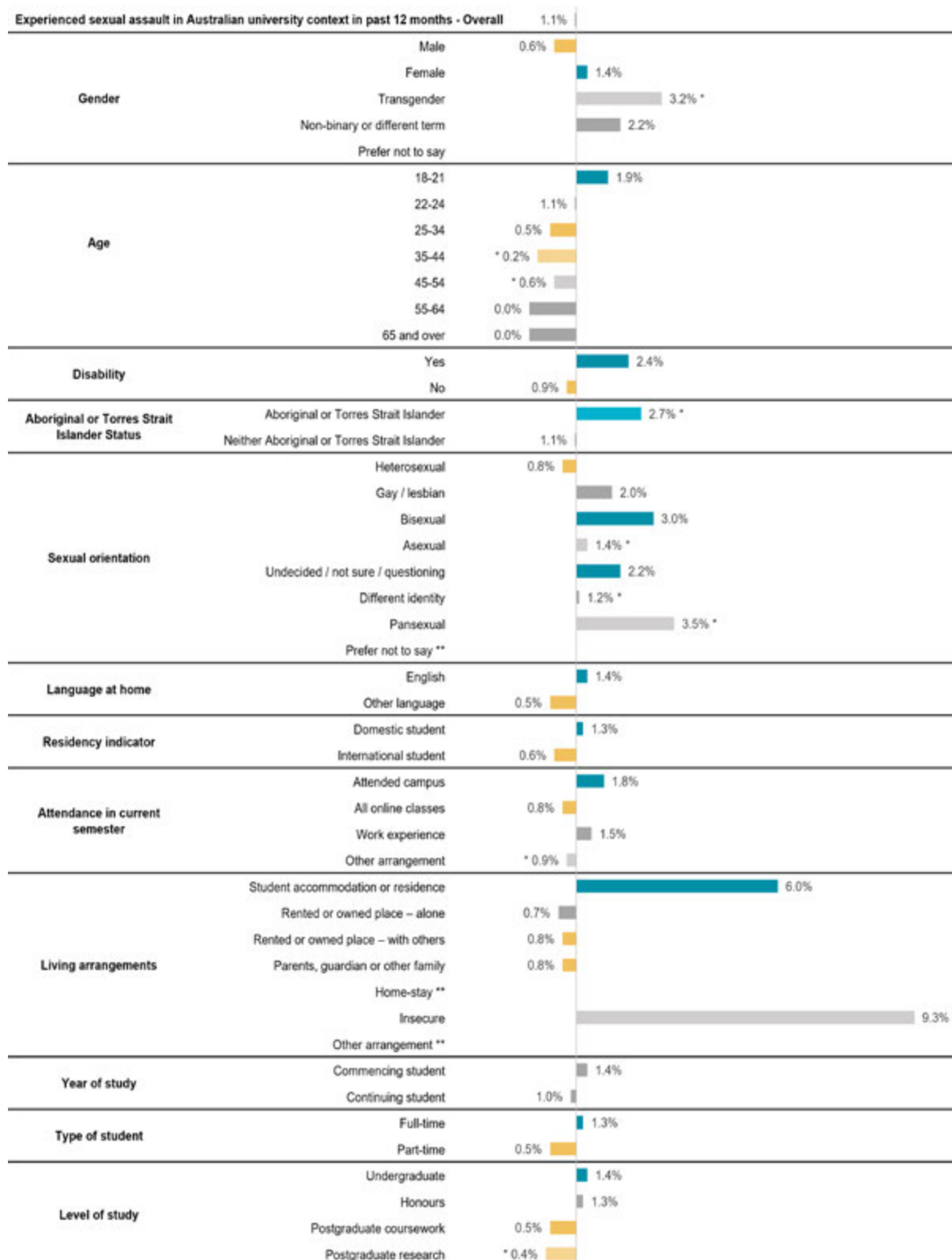


Base: All students (n=43,819). Question: DVF2

One asterisk \* and lighter grey bar = RSE >25%. Bar excluded for measures where RSE >50% and two \*s.

Light blue bar = significantly higher than overall (p<0.01). Light yellow = significantly lower than overall (p<0.01).

Figure 12: Prevalence of sexual assault in an Australian university context in the past 12 months



Base: All students (n=43,819). Question: DVF3  
 One asterisk \* and lighter grey bar = RSE >25%. Bar excluded for measures where RSE >50% and two \*s.  
 Light blue bar = significantly higher than overall (p<0.01). Light yellow = significantly lower than overall (p<0.01).

## Gender identity

Female students were more likely to have been sexually assaulted in a university context than male students.

- 6.0% of females had been sexually assaulted in university context compared with 2.1% of males.
- In total, 1.4% of females had experienced sexual assault in a university context in the past 12 months compared with 0.6% of males.

The highest rate of sexual assault in a university context were reported by students who identify as non-binary or a different term:

- One in ten (12.8%) students who identified as non-binary or used a different term (12.8%) had been sexually assaulted in a university context. A similar proportion of transgender students (9.4%) had been sexually assaulted in a university context.

## Age

Experiences of sexual assault were associated with age.

- Students aged in their early 20s (22-24 years, 6.5%) were more likely to have been sexually assaulted in a university context than other students.
- In comparison, lower rates of sexual assault in a university context were reported among students aged 18-21 years (3.7%). These students, however, were most likely to have been sexually assaulted in a university context in the past 12 months.

## Disability

Students with a disability were more likely to experience sexual assault than other students:

- One in ten (10.0%) students with a disability had been sexually assaulted in a university context compared with 3.4% of other students.
- In total, 2.4% students with a disability had been sexually assaulted in a university context in the past 12 months compared with 0.9% of other students.

## Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students were more likely to be sexually assaulted than other students:

- In total, 7.8% of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students had been sexually assaulted in a university context compared with 4.5% of other students.

## Sexual orientation

Students who identify as gay or lesbian, pansexual, bisexual, were undecided or questioning their sexuality were more likely to experience sexual assault than students who identify as heterosexual:

- In a university context, 11.3% of bisexual students, 10.9% of pansexual students, 7.4% of gay or lesbian students and 6.7% of students who were unsure or questioning their sexuality and had been sexually assaulted compared with 3.4% of heterosexual students.
- In a university context in the past 12 months, 3.0% of bisexual students, 2.2% of students who were unsure or questioning their sexuality had been sexually assaulted compared with 0.8% of heterosexual students.

## International students and those who speak languages other than English at home

International students were less likely to report experiencing sexual assault than domestic students:

- One in twenty (5.2%) domestic students had been sexually assaulted in a university context compared with 1.7% of international students
- In total, 1.3% of domestic students had been sexually assaulted in a university context in the past 12 months compared with 0.6% of international students.

Students who mainly speak English at home were more likely to experience sexual assault than those who speak a language other than English at home:

- In a university context, 5.6% of students who mainly speak English at home had been sexually assaulted compared with 1.8% of students who speak a language other than English at home
- In a university context in the past 12 months, 1.4% of students who mainly speak English at home had been sexually assaulted compared with 0.5% of students who speak a language other than English at home.

## Studying on campus

Students undertaking some or all of their classes on campus at the time of the survey were more likely to have been sexually assaulted in the past 12 months than those studying online only.

- In total, 1.8% of students undertaking some or all of their classes on campus had been sexually harassed in a university context in the past 12 months compared with 0.8% of students undertaking classes online only.

## Living arrangements

The prevalence of sexual assault varied according to a student's living arrangements. Those living in student accommodation or residences at the time of the NSSS were more likely than other students to experience sexual assault in a university context:

- In total, 8.8% of students currently living in student accommodation or residences had experienced sexual assault in a university context, followed by 6.3% of students living in their own place with others, 4.2% of students living by themselves and 2.8% of students living with their parents, guardian or other family
- One in twenty (6.0%) students living in student accommodation or residences had experienced sexual assault in a university context in the past 12 months, compared with 0.8% of students living on their own with others, 0.8% of students living with their parents, guardian or other family and 0.7% living by themselves.

Of students living in student accommodation or residences who had been sexually assaulted in a university context in the past 12 months, over half (56.4%) reported student accommodation or residences as the location of sexual assault.

## First year and continuing students

Continuing students were more likely than first year commencing students to have been sexually assaulted in a university context:

- One in twenty (5.0%) continuing students had been sexually assaulted in a university context compared with 3.6% of commencing students
- However, experiences of sexual assault in a university context in the past 12 months were similar among continuing (1.0%) and commencing students (1.4%).



## Full-time and part-time students

Experiences of sexual assault in a university context since starting at university were similar among those studying full-time (4.4%) and part-time (5.0%).

Students studying full-time were more likely to have been sexually assaulted in a university context in the past 12 months than those studying part-time:

- 1.3% of students studying full-time had been sexually assaulted in a university context in the past 12 months compared with 0.5% of students studying part-time.

## Undergraduate and postgraduate students

Undergraduate students were less likely than other students to have been sexually assaulted since starting at university:

- Since starting at university, 4.2% of undergraduate students had been sexually assaulted compared with 5.3% of honours students, 4.8% of postgraduate coursework students and 5.7% of postgraduate research students.
- In the past 12 months, 1.4% of undergraduate students had been sexually assaulted, compared with 1.3% of honours students and 0.5% of postgraduate coursework or research students.

## Multivariate analysis

The previous section describes prevalence of sexual assault in a university context according to students' personal characteristics and enrolment details. These bivariate analyses examined the relationship between variables without taking into account other factors.

Survey-weighted logistic regression modelling has also been undertaken to examine which characteristics are independently associated with experiences of sexual assault in a university context, after adjusting or controlling for other factors<sup>5</sup>. Separate models have been constructed for each prevalence measure. Further details together with the final models can be found in Appendices 2 and 6.

### *Sexual assault in a university context*

The model found key differences in experiences of sexual assault in a university context remained unchanged when adjusting for other factors.

### *Sexual assault in a university context in the past 12 months*

A similar pattern was found in the model for sexual assault in a university context in the past 12 months. After adjusting for other factors, most key differences according to students' characteristics and enrolment details remained unchanged. However, the model found that after controlling for other characteristics, honours students, postgraduate coursework students and postgraduate research students were approximately as likely to have been sexually assaulted in a university context in the past 12 months compared with undergraduate students.

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<sup>5</sup> Some categories were collapsed to create a more parsimonious model

### 3.4. What was the context of the most impactful incident of sexual assault?

Students were asked a series of questions about the most impactful (or significant) incident of sexual assault they had experienced in a university context. This included how long ago the incident happened, where the incident occurred, the number of people involved, and the identity and gender of the perpetrator(s).

The findings suggest the context of the most impactful incident of sexual assault in a university context is different to sexual harassment.

#### Recency and location

One in four (23.2%) students who had been sexually assaulted in a university context reported they had experienced their most impactful incident in the past 12 months:

- 1.6% reported the incident occurred in the last month
- 21.5% reported the incident occurred in the last 12 months but not in the last month
- 74.9% reported the incident occurred more than 12 months ago.

Students who were undertaking some or all of their classes on campus at the time of the survey (35.9%) were more likely to report their most impactful incident of sexual assault had occurred in the past 12 month compared with those undertaking all of their classes online (17.2%).

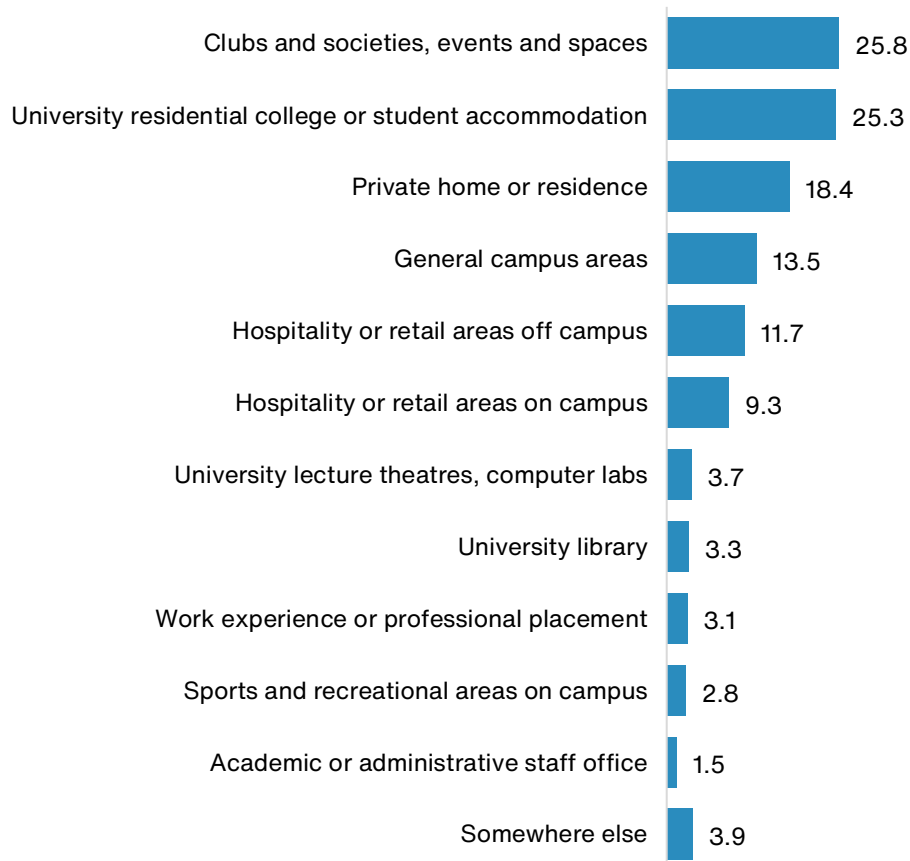
Other groups more likely to report their most impactful incident of sexual assault had occurred in the past 12 months included:

- younger students, aged 18-21 years (47.9%), compared with those aged 22-24 years (15.7%), 25-34 years (9.6%) and 35+ years (7.2%)
- students living in student accommodation or residences (62.4%) or with parents, guardian or other family (29.4%) compared with those living in their own place with others (12.5%)
- commencing/first year students (37.5%) compared with continuing students (18.8%)
- students studying full-time (26.9%) compared with those studying part-time (11.4%)
- undergraduate students (28.6%) compared with postgraduate students (10.3%).

Figure 13 shows the location of students' most impactful incident of sexual assault in a university context. Consistent with the locations of experiences of sexual assault in past 12 months, students reported their most impactful incident had occurred in a variety of private or less publicly accessible location, including:

- clubs and societies, events, and spaces (25.8%)
- student accommodation or residences (25.3%)
- at a private home or residence (18.4%)
- general campus areas (13.5%)
- hospitality and retail off campus (11.7%).

Figure 13: Location of most impactful incident of sexual assault in an Australian university context (%)



Base: Experienced sexual assault in an Australian university context (n=2,235). Question: F6.

Some sociodemographic differences were found in relation to the location of the most impactful incident of sexual assault in a university context.

Students living in student accommodation or residences were more likely than other students to report this as the location of their most impactful incident. Among these students, one in two (45.5%) who had been sexually assaulted in a university context reported student accommodation or residences as a location for their most impactful incident.

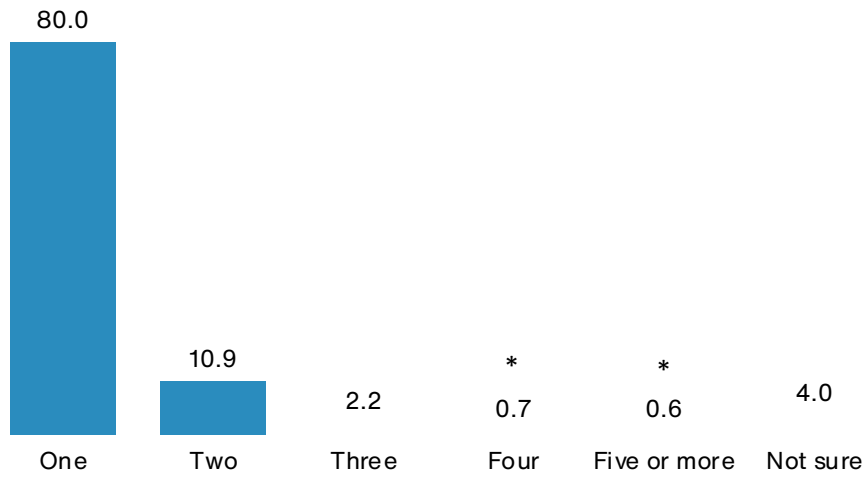
In addition, students with a disability (18.8%) were more likely than other students (10.4%) to report their most impactful incident of sexual assault occurred in a general campus area.

### Number of perpetrators

Sexual assault in an Australian university context typically involved a single perpetrator.

Four in five (80.0%) students who had experienced sexual assault in an Australian university context reported one person was directly involved in the most impactful incident, while one in seven (14.3%) students reported two or more people were involved.

Figure 14: Number of perpetrators involved in most impactful incident of sexual assault (%)



Base: Experienced sexual assault in an Australian university context (n=2,235). Question: F7.  
 \* indicates RSE > 25%

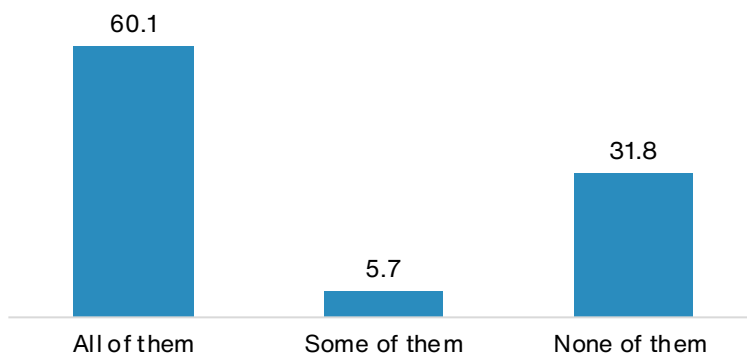
### Number of perpetrators known

Sexual assault in an Australian university context was commonly perpetrated by a person or people known to the student.

Two thirds (65.7%) of students knew some or all of the people involved in the most impactful incident:

- 60.1% knew all of the people involved
- 5.7% knew some of the people involved
- 31.8% did not know any of the people involved.

Figure 15: Number of perpetrators known in most impactful incident of sexual assault (%)



Base: Experienced sexual assault in an Australian university context (n=2,235). Question: F8.

Postgraduate students (72.8%) were more likely than undergraduate students (62.8%) to know all or some of the people involved. Domestic students were more likely to know all of the people involved (61.8%) compared with international students (36.9%). Similarly, students who mainly speak English at home (61.9%) were also more likely to know all of the people involved than students who speak a language other than English at home (44.9%).

Students were more likely to know all of the people involved if the incident happened in a private residence (85.8%). In comparison, students were more likely to not know the perpetrator(s) when the incident happened in clubs and society events and spaces (47.2%) or hospitality or retail areas off campus (47.1%).

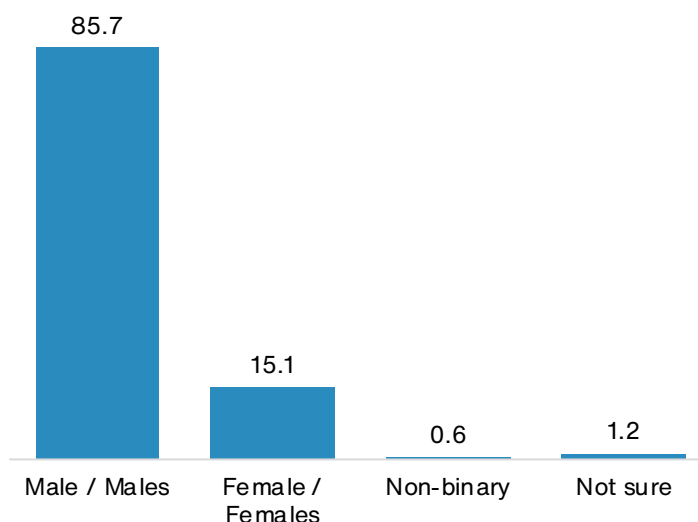
## Gender of perpetrators

Most incidents of sexual assault in Australian university contexts involved male perpetrators.

Overall, 85.7% of students who had been sexually assaulted in a university context reported the most impactful incident they had experienced involved a male or male(s). Less than one in seven (15.1%) said a female or female(s) were involved, while only 0.6% of students said their most impactful incident of sexual assault involved a non-binary person or persons.

Females were more likely than male students to be assaulted by males (96.7% compared with 44.4%), while male students were equally likely to have been assaulted by males (44.4%) or females (57.4%).

Figure 16: Gender of perpetrator(s) in most impactful incident of sexual assault (%)



Base: Experienced sexual assault in an Australian university context (n=2,235). Question: F10.

## Identity of perpetrators

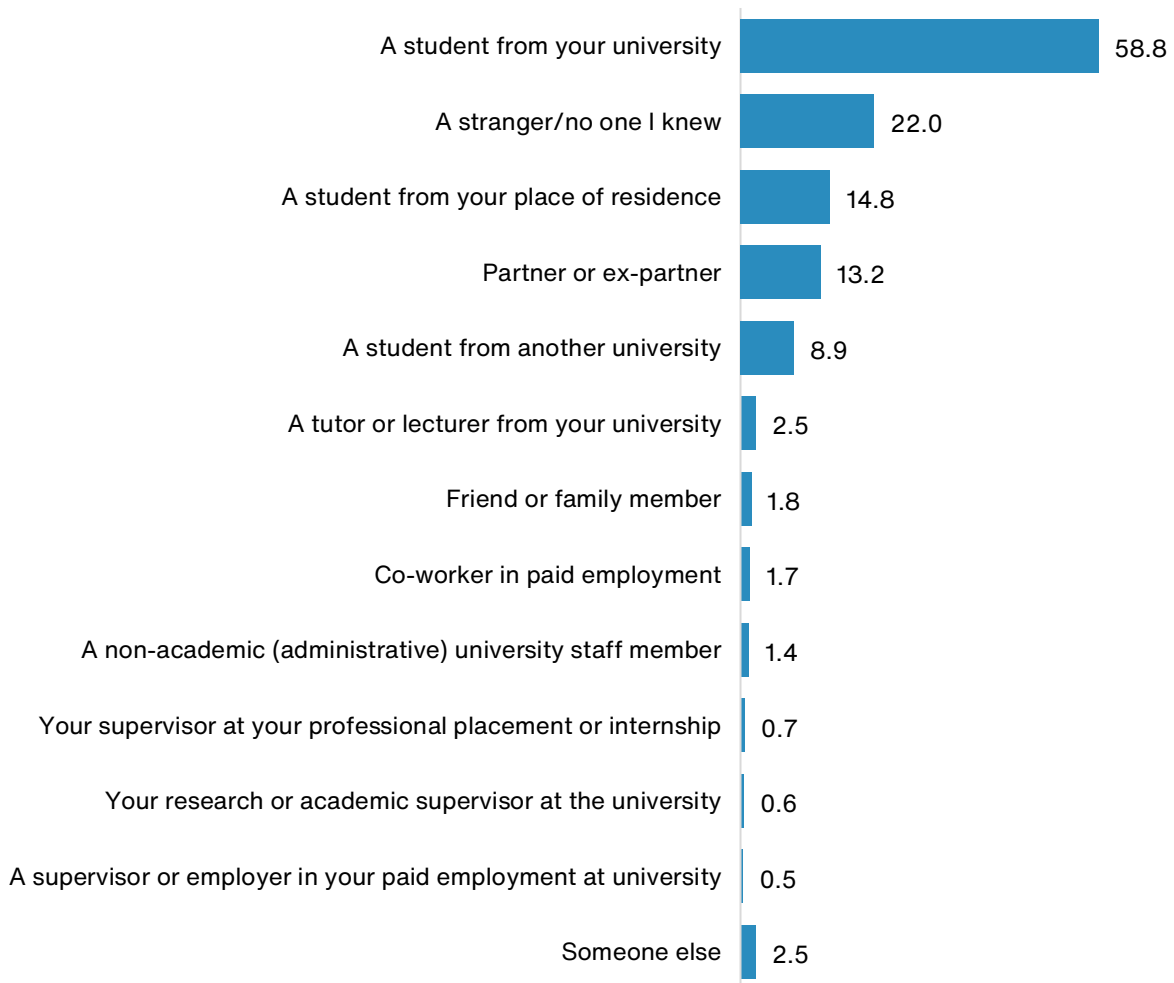
Sexual assault in Australian university contexts was commonly perpetrated by other students.

Among students who had been sexually assaulted in an Australian university context, 71.2% reported a student had perpetrated the most impactful incident they had experienced. Most commonly this was a student from their university (58.8%). Other people commonly involved included a stranger (22.0%), a student from their place of residence (14.8%) and partner or ex-partner (13.2%). One in twenty (4.7%) reported their most impactful incident had been perpetrated by a university staff member (including lecturers, tutors, research or academic supervisors or non-academic staff).

Limited sociodemographic differences were found in relation to the perpetrator of the most impactful incident of sexual assault in a university context:

- Postgraduate research students (14.5%) were more likely than other students to report the perpetrator was a university staff member, as were students aged 35+ years (16.1%)
- One in three (36.1%) students living in student accommodation or residences reported another student from their residence perpetrated their most impactful incident of sexual assault.

Figure 17: Identity of perpetrator(s) in most impactful incident of sexual assault (%)



Base: Experienced sexual assault in an Australian university context (n=2,235). Question: F9.



## 4. Reporting experiences

This section of the report explores the formal reporting of incidents of sexual harassment and sexual assault in a university context by victim/survivors. It explores whether students formally reported their most impactful incident of sexual harassment and sexual assault to their university, their experience with the process and the barriers to making a report or complaint.

### 4.1. Did students formally report experiences of sexual harassment and sexual assault?

Students who had experienced sexual harassment or sexual assault in a university context were asked if they had made a formal report or complaint to someone within their university in relation to the most impactful incident.

Overall, few students who experienced sexual harassment or sexual assault in an Australian university context made a formal report or complaint to their university. Further, most formal reports or complaints were not referred to the police.

#### Sexual harassment

Among students who had experienced sexual harassment in an Australian university context, fewer than one in twenty (3.0%) had made a formal report or complaint to someone within the university in response to the most impactful incident they had experienced.

Making a formal report or complaint to someone within the university varied across some sociodemographic sub-groups (see Figure 18):

- **Students aged 18-21 years (1.8%) were less likely than older students to make a formal report or complaint to their university**
- **Students with a disability (4.2%) were more likely than other students (2.4%) to make a formal report or complaint**
- **International students (6.6%) were more likely than domestic students (2.5%) to make a formal report or complaint**
- **Postgraduate students (4.7%), and especially postgraduate research students (6.2%) were more likely than undergraduate students (2.4%) to make a formal report or complaint.**

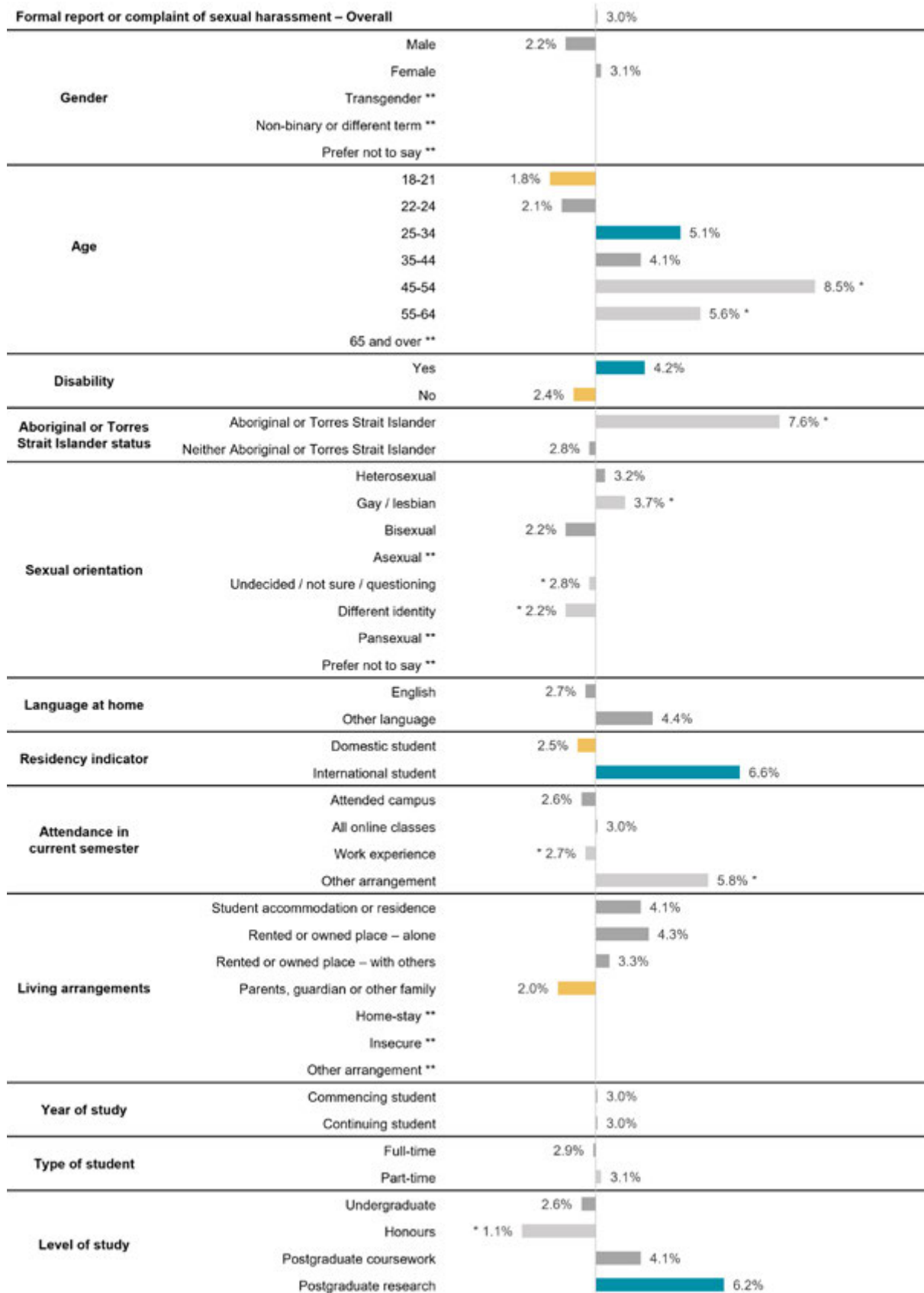
Making a formal report or complaint to someone within the university also related to the nature or context of the most impactful incident of sexual harassment. Results showed that students who reported the most impactful incident to someone within the university were more likely than those who had not reported the incident to say:

- **they had experienced multiple forms of sexual harassment**
- **multiple perpetrators were involved**
- **they knew some or all of the perpetrators**
- **perpetrator(s) included a university staff member (including a tutor or lecturer, non-academic staff member, or supervisor or employer).**

Fewer than one in five (18.9%) of those who made a formal report or complaint about sexual harassment to the university said the incident had been reported to police.



Figure 18: Formal report or complaint about most impactful incident of sexual harassment



Base: Experienced sexual harassment in Australian university context (n=7,717). Question: C7.  
 One asterisk \* and lighter grey bar = RSE >25%. Bar excluded for measures where RSE >50% and two \*s.  
 Light blue bar = significantly higher than overall (p<0.01). Light yellow = significantly lower than overall (p<0.01).

## Sexual assault

Students were slightly more likely to make a formal report or complaint to the university about incidents of sexual assault than sexual harassment. Approximately one in twenty (5.6%) students who had experienced sexual assault in a university context had made a formal report or complaint to their university.

The proportion of students who made a formal report or complaint to their university varied to some extent across sociodemographic subgroups. However, due to small sample sizes the differences are not considered reliable enough to report or develop conclusions.

Among students who had made a formal report or complaint to their university about sexual assault, 40.2% indicated the incident was reported to police.

## 4.2. What were students' experiences when making formal reports to their university?

Students who had made a formal report or complaint to their university were asked whether the university had explained their formal reporting or complaint processes to them, including any involvement with or processes for reporting to the police.

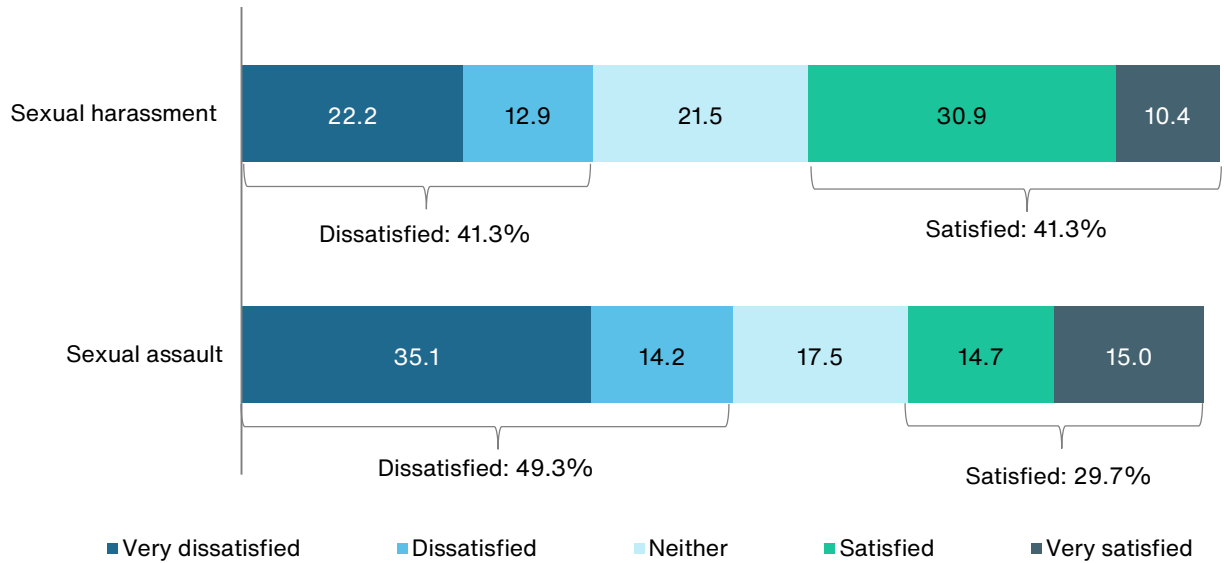
Students who made formal complaints to the university had mixed experiences in terms of information provided to them and overall satisfaction with the process (see Figure 19). Further, students were less satisfied with the university's reporting or complaint processes relating to sexual assault compared to sexual harassment:

- Of those who were sexually harassed in an Australian university context and made a formal report, 56.1% said the university had explained the reporting or complaint process to them, 37.3% said the university had not explained the process to them and 5.9% were unsure
- Of those who were sexually assaulted in an Australian university context and made a formal report, 47.5% said the university had explained the reporting or complaint process to them, 43.7% said the university had not explained the process to them and 5.2% were unsure.

Students who had made a formal report were also asked how satisfied they were with the process.

- Of those who were sexually harassed and made a formal report to the university, two-fifths (41.3%) were satisfied (either satisfied or very satisfied) with the process, while one in three (35.2%) were dissatisfied (either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied)
- Of those who were sexually assaulted and made a formal report to the university, one in three (29.7%) were satisfied with the formal reporting or complaints process, while half (49.3%) said they were dissatisfied.

Figure 19 Satisfaction with formal report or complaint processes (%)



Base: Experienced sexual assault / harassment in Australian university context and formally reported incident to university (n=130, n=252). Questions: G9 and C9. Prefer not to say % not shown on chart.

### 4.3. What were the barriers to reporting experiences of sexual harassment and sexual assault?

Students who had not made a formal report or complaint to their university were asked about their reasons for deciding not to do so. The reasons for not making a formal report or complaint were similar for incidents of sexual harassment and sexual assault.

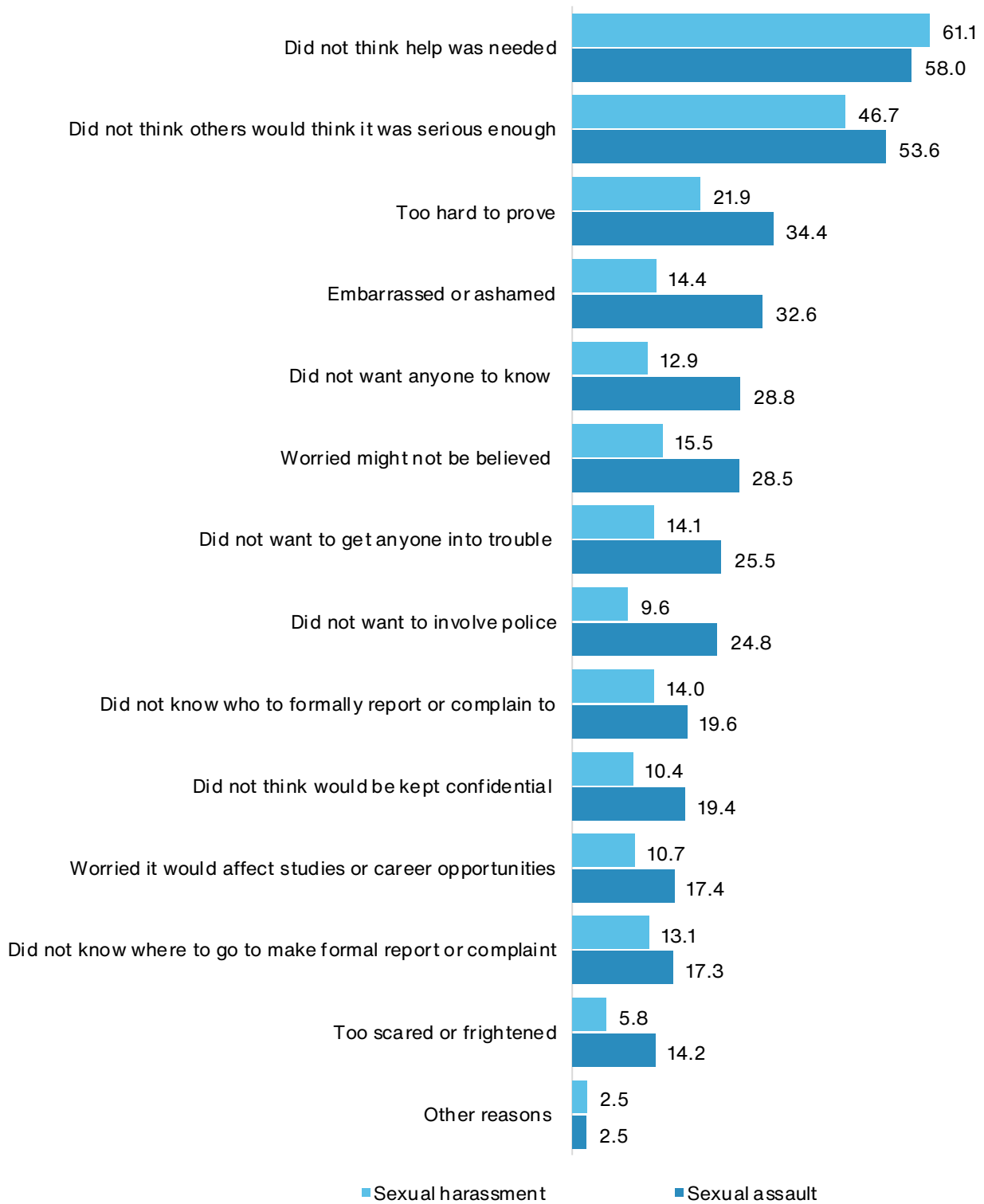
Students provided many reasons for deciding not to formally report or complain to their university (see Figure 20). The most common barriers to formally reporting incidents of sexual harassment and sexual assault related to students:

- thinking they did not need help
- thinking others would think it was not serious enough, and
- it would be too hard to prove.

Other barriers to reporting incidents of sexual harassment and sexual assault included feeling embarrassed or frightened, not wanting other people to know about the incident, being worried they would not be believed, wanting to avoid getting into trouble, wanting to avoid involving the police, limited knowledge about how to make a complaint within their university (either who to approach or where to report) and being worried about the impact on their studies or career opportunities.

With the expectation of not thinking that help was needed, students who had experienced sexual assault were more likely than students who had experienced sexual harassment to mention each barrier to reporting. The barriers with the largest difference in frequency of mentions between those who had experienced sexual harassment and those who had experienced sexual assault related to feeling embarrassed or ashamed, not wanting other people to know about the incident, being worried they would not be believed, wanting to avoid getting into trouble and wanting to avoid involving the police.

Figure 20: Reasons for not making a formal report or complaint (%)



Base: Experienced sexual harassment / assault in Australian university context and did not formally report incident to university (n=7,389, n=2,082). Questions: C11 and G11.

Some sociodemographic differences were seen relating to reasons for not reporting sexual harassment to their university.

- Female students were more likely than other students to indicate they thought others would think it was not serious enough (49.8%) and they did not know to whom (15.6%) or where to make a formal report or complaint (14.5%)
- Non-binary students were more likely than other students to indicate they had not made a formal report due to thinking it would be too hard to prove (31.9%) and being worried they may not be believed (26.6%)
- Students aged 18-21 years were less likely than older students to report 'I thought it would be too hard to prove' (19.2%) or 'I was worried I might not be believed' (13.0%), 'I was worried it would affect my studies or career opportunities' (7.7%) and 'I did not think the incident would be kept confidential' (7.5%), but more likely to report 'I did not know who I could make a formal report or complaint to' (66.1%)
- Students with a disability were less likely to report 'I did not think I needed help' (56.8% when compared with other students 62.9%) but more likely to report all other reasons except for 'I did not want to get anyone into trouble'
- Bisexual or asexual students were more likely than other students to report 'I did not think others would think it was serious enough (53.2% and 68.3%, respectively). Bisexual students were also more likely than other students to report 'I was worried I might not be believed' (20.1%)
- International students were more likely than domestic students to report 'I didn't want to get anyone into trouble' (21.0% compared with 13.3%) or 'I was worried it would affect my studies or career opportunities' (17.2% compared with 10.1%), but less likely to report 'I did not think I needed help' (51.3% compared with 62.1%)
- Postgraduate research students were more likely than other students to report 'I was worried it would affect my studies or career opportunities' (22.1%), 'I did not want to get anyone into trouble' (21.7%) and 'I did not think the incident would be kept confidential' (18.2%).

Some differences related to gender, sexuality and disability were also seen in reasons for not reporting sexual assault to their university.

- Female students were more likely than other students to report 'I did not think others would think it was serious enough' (57.3%)
- Non-binary students more likely than other students to indicate 'I thought it would be too hard to prove' (59.7%), 'I was worried I might not be believed' (55.6%), 'I did not want to involve the police' (45.4%) and 'I was too scared or frightened' (30.5%)
- Male students were more likely than other students to report 'I did not need help' (70.2%)
- Students with a disability were more likely than other students to report a large number of barriers including: 'I thought it would be too hard to prove' (45.4%), 'I was worried I might not be believed' (36.4%), 'I did not want to involve the police' (30.8%), 'I was worried it would affect my studies or career opportunities' (22.5%), 'I did not know where to go to make a formal report or complaint' (22.2%) or 'too scared or frightened' (18.6%)
- Bisexual students were more likely than other students to report 'I was worried I might not be believed' (37.7%), while pansexual students were more likely than other students to report 'I thought it would be too hard to prove' (67.5%).



## 5. Seeking support

This section of the report explores the types of support or assistance students who experienced sexual harassment and sexual assault sought from both within and outside the university. It also explores their experiences with accessing support or assistance within the university and barriers to seeking support or assistance within the university.

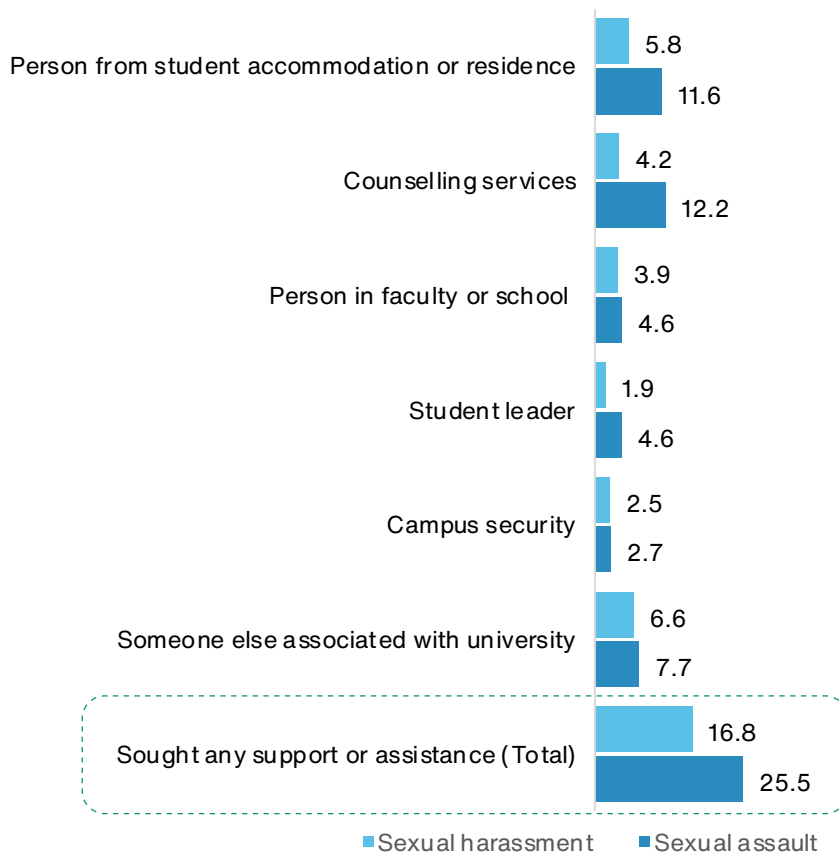
### 5.1. Where did students seek support for sexual harassment and sexual assault within the university?

Students who had experienced sexual harassment or sexual assault in a university context were asked if they had sought support or assistance from within the university. Students were presented with a list of six possible sources of support or assistance.

Overall, one in six (16.8%) students who had experienced sexual harassment in a university context had sought support or assistance from at least one source within their university. The most common sources of support from within universities were (see Figure 21):

- **Someone from a student accommodation or residences (5.8%)**
- **Counselling services (4.2%), and**
- **Someone else – excluding someone in the faculty, campus security or a student leader – associated with the university (6.6%).**

Figure 21 Seeking support or assistance from within the university (%)



Base: Experienced sexual harassment / assault in Australian university context (n=7,717, n=2,235). Questions: C2 and G2.

Seeking support or assistance within the university for sexual harassment was related to age, with students aged 18-21 years (14.2%) and those studying an undergraduate degree (15.5%) less likely than others to access any form of support, as well as each prompted source of support or assistance, with the exception of student accommodation or residences.

Other notable sociodemographic differences indicated:

- International students (13.7%) and students living in student accommodation or residences (20.1%) were more likely than others to seek support or assistance from someone from within their student accommodation or residence.
- Postgraduate research students (10.5%) and international students (6.9%) were more likely than others to seek support or assistance from someone in their faculty.
- Students with a disability (6.2%) and international students (9.8%) were more likely than others to seek support or assistance from university counselling services.
- Students with a disability (2.9%) were more likely than other students to seek support or assistance from student leader.

One in four (25.5%) students who had experienced sexual assault in a university context had sought support or assistance from at least one source within the university. The most common were:

- Counselling services (12.2%)
- Someone from a student accommodation or residence (11.6%), and
- Someone else – excluding someone in the faculty, campus security or a student leader – associated with the university (7.7%).

Very few reliable sociodemographic differences were observed relating to seeking support or assistance for sexual assault within the university. The exception being that students aged 18-21 years (18.2%), those studying an undergraduate degree (13.8%) and students living in student accommodation or residences (32.0%) were more likely than other students to seek support from someone at their student accommodation or residence.

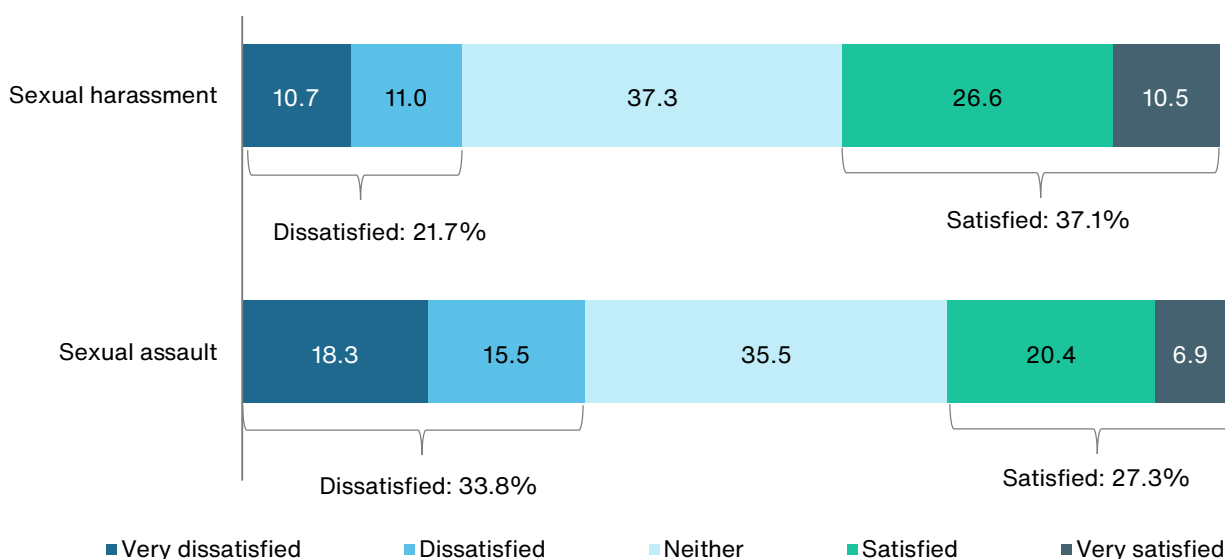


## 5.2. How satisfied were students with the support provided within the university?

Students who had sought support from within their university were asked how satisfied they were with the support or assistance from within the university (see Figure 22).

- Of students who were sexually harassed, over one-third (37.1%) were satisfied (either satisfied or very satisfied) with the support or assistance provided, while one in five (21.7%) were dissatisfied (either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied)
- Of students who were sexually assaulted, one in four (27.3%) were satisfied with the support or assistance, while one in three (33.8%) said they were dissatisfied.

Figure 22: Satisfaction with support and assistance from within the university (%)



(n=1,346, n=593) Questions: C3 and G3.

## 5.3. What were the barriers to seeking support within the university?

Students who had not sought support or assistance from within their university were asked about their reasons for deciding not to do so. Reasons for not seeking support were similar for sexual harassment and sexual assault. They also aligned with the reasons for not reporting incidents (see Figure 23).

Students provided many reasons for not seeking support or assistance from within their university for sexual harassment. However, by far the most common reasons were:

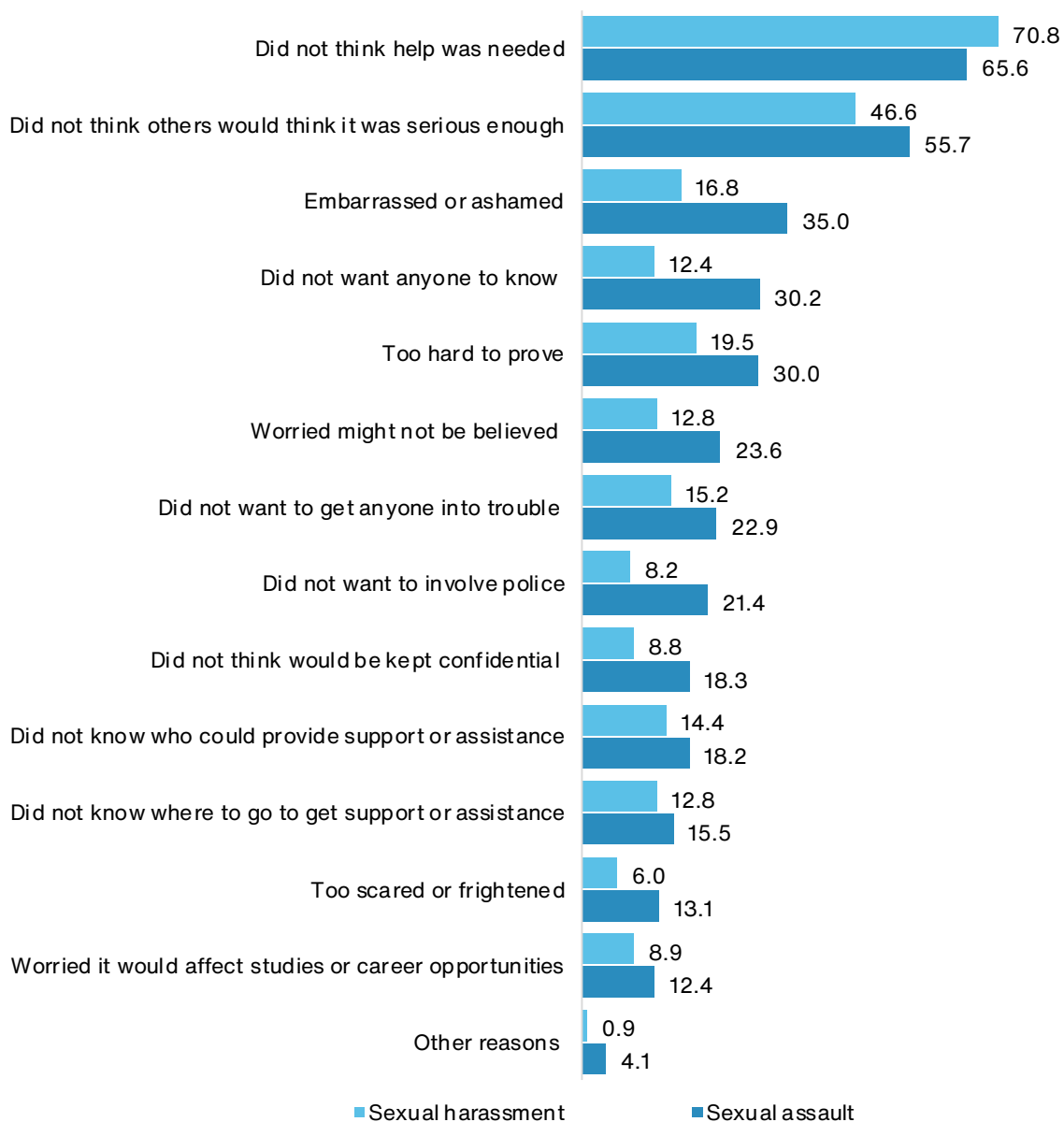
- **thinking they did not need help (70.8%), and**
- **thinking others would think it was not serious enough (46.6%).**

Further, one in five (19.5%) students had not sought support or assistance because they thought it would be too hard to prove, while approximately one in six said they had not sought support because they felt embarrassed or ashamed, did not want to get anyone into trouble (15.2%) or did not know who could provide support or assistance (14.4%). Approximately one in ten said they had been worried they would not be believed (12.8%), did not know where to go to get support or assistance (12.8%), did not want anyone to know (12.4%), were worried it would affect their studies or career opportunities (8.9%), had concerns about confidentiality (8.8%) or did not want to involve the police (8.2%).

The reasons for not seeking support or assistance within their university for sexual harassment varied by gender, age, sexual orientation and living arrangements.

- Female students were more likely than others to not seek support because they thought others would not think it was serious enough (50.0%) and did not know who could provide support (16.1%) or where to go for support (14.5%).
- Non-binary students were more likely than others to say they did not seek support because they thought it would be too hard to prove (30.3%).
- Students aged 18-21 years were more likely than older students to say they thought they did not need help (75.3%).
- Bisexual students were more likely than others to say they thought others would not think it was serious enough (53.0%), while bisexual (17.8%) and pansexual students (30.0%) were more likely to say they were worried they may not be believed.
- Students with a disability were less likely to report they did not need help (66.0%) and were more likely to report all other reasons except for not wanting to get anyone into trouble.
- International students were more likely than domestic students to not seek support from within their university because they did not want to get anyone into trouble (23.1%).

Figure 23: Reasons for not seeking support from within the university (%)



Base: Experienced sexual harassment / assault in Australian university context and did not seek support from within the university (n=6,261, n=1,622). Questions: C4 and G4.

The most common reasons for not seeking support or assistance from within their university for sexual assault were similar to sexual harassment and included:

- **thinking they did not need help (65.6%), and**
- **thinking others would think it was not serious enough (55.7%).**

Further, one in three (35.0%) students had not sought support or assistance from within their university because they felt embarrassed or ashamed, did not want anyone to know (30.2%) or thought it would be too hard to prove (30.0%). Approximately one in four had not sought support or assistance because they had been worried that they would not be believed (23.6%) or not wanting to get anyone into trouble (22.9%), while one in five said they did not want to involve the police (21.4%), had concerns about confidentiality (18.3%) or did not know who could provide support or assistance (18.2%).

Gender and disability status were the main drivers of differences in reported barriers to seeking support or assistance for sexual assault from within the university.

- **Male students were more likely than others to have not sought support because they thought they did not need help (78.3%), while female students were more likely to say they did not think others would think it was serious enough (59.8%).**
- **Non-binary students were more likely than others to have not sought support because they thought it would be too hard to prove (63.5%), were worried they may not be believed (51.5%), did not want to involve the police (42.9%), did not know who could provide support (36.2%) or where to go for support (36.7%) and were too scared or frightened (30.2%).**
- **Students with a disability were more likely than other students to have not sought support because they thought it would be too hard to prove (38.4%), were worried they might not be believed (31.3%), did not want to involve the police (28.5%), were too scared or frightened (18.4%) and were worried it would affect their studies or career opportunities (18.3%).**

## 5.4. Where else did students seek support?

Students who had experienced sexual harassment or sexual assault in a university context were asked if they had sought support or assistance from somewhere or someone outside of the university. Students were presented with a list of ten possible sources of support or assistance.

Overall, students who had experienced sexual harassment and sexual assault were more likely to seek support from someone outside their university than within their university.

In total, slightly less than two-thirds (61.5%) of students who had experienced sexual harassment reported seeking support from at least one person or source outside of the university (see Figure 24). The most common sources of support from outside the university included:

- **Friends (54.5%)**
- **Family (19.5%), and**
- **Mental health professionals (10.8%).**

All other sources of external support or assistance were mentioned by less than one in twenty (5.0%) students who had been sexually harassed in a university context.

Seeking support or assistance for sexual harassment from different sources outside the university varied across the student population.

- **Female students were more likely than other students to seek help from informal supports, including family (58.1%) and friends (21.7%), while non-binary students were more likely to seek support from mental health professionals (21.7%)**
- **Students aged 18-21 years were less likely than older students to seek support from some formal supports including mental health professionals (7.5%), doctors (1.9%) and the police (0.8%)**
- **Students with a disability were more likely than other students to seek support through formal supports including mental health professionals (19.4%), doctors (6.6%), telephone or online counselling services (4.5%) and local sexual assault service/rape crisis centres (1.9%)**

- Bisexual students were more likely than other students to seek support from friends (61.3%), while bisexual (17.3%) and asexual (21.5%) students were more likely than other students to seek support from mental health professionals
- International students were more likely than domestic students to seek support from telephone or online counselling service (6.9%), the workplace (4.6%) and religious leaders (4.9%).

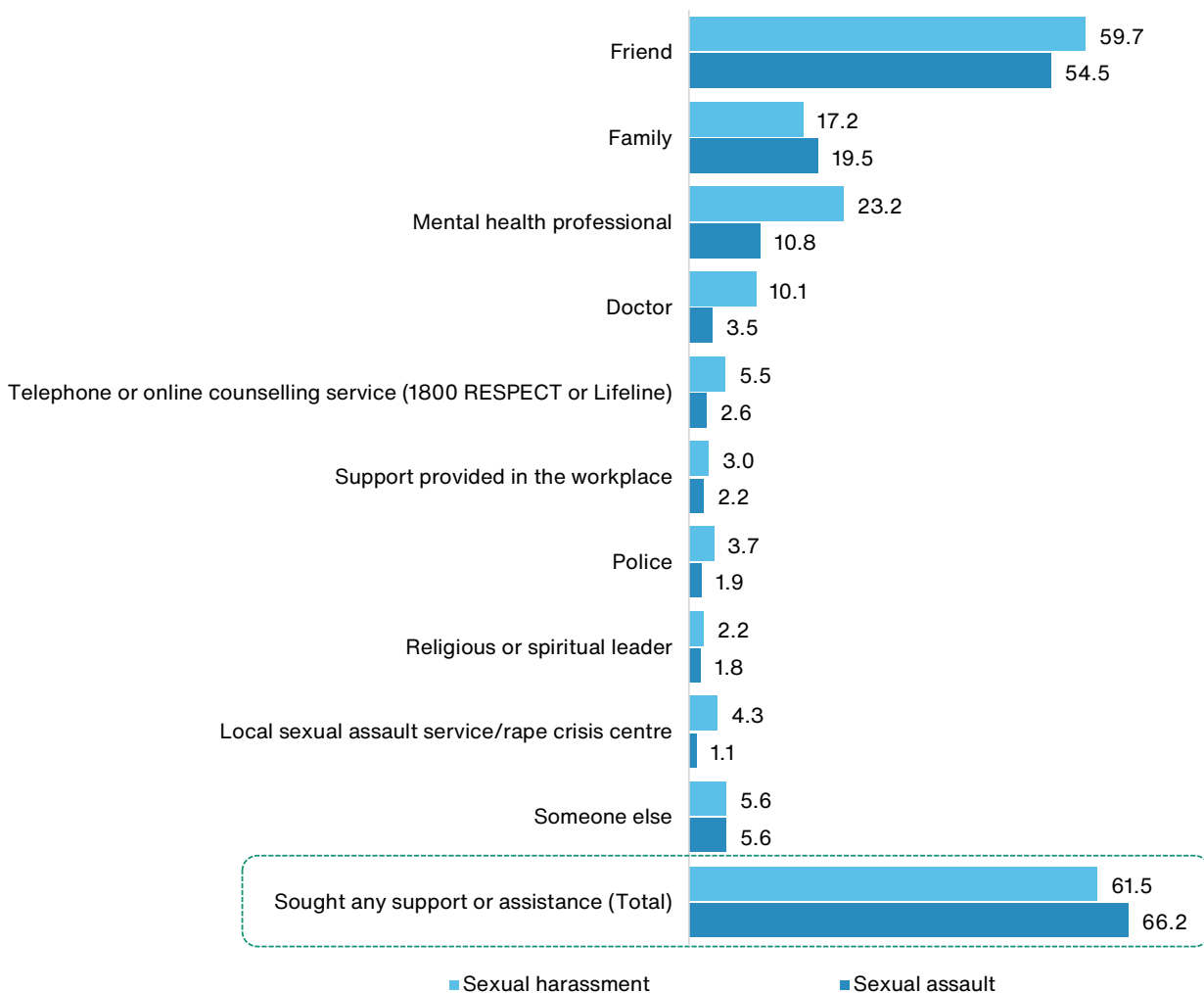
Two-thirds (66.2%) of students who had experienced sexual assault reported seeking support from at least one person or source outside of their university. The most common external sources of support were the same as reported for sexual harassment, although the rank order did vary, and included:

- Friends (59.7%)
- Mental health professionals (23.2%), and
- Family (17.2%).

Limited sociodemographic differences were seen in relation to the types of external supports or assistance accessed by students who had experienced sexual assault.

Results indicated female students were more likely than others to seek support from friends (63.4%), while non-binary (45.9%), bisexual (33.0%) and students with a disability (35.7%) were more likely than other students to seek support or assistance from mental health professionals. Students with a disability were also more likely to seek support or assistance from a doctor (16.6%).

Figure 24: Sources of support from outside of universities (%)



Base: Experienced sexual harassment / assault in Australian university context (n=7,717, n=2,235). Questions: C6 and G6.



# 6. Knowledge of university processes and supports

This section of the report looks at the knowledge students had of their university’s reporting processes and support services and explores their confidence in these institutional processes. It explores the suggestions offered by students when asked what else can be done at a university level to reduce incidents of sexual harassment and sexual assault.

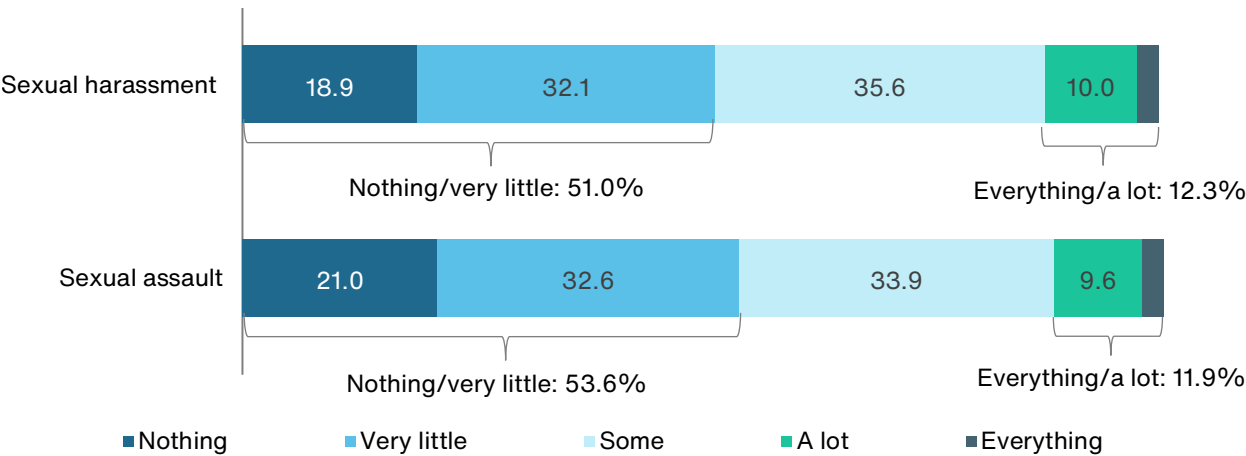
## 6.1. How aware were students of reporting processes within the university?

All students were asked how much they knew about where to go within their university to formally report or make a complaint about an experience of sexual harassment or assault.

In relation to sexual harassment, the most common response was some (35.6%) followed by very little (32.1%). Fewer students indicated they knew everything or a lot (12.3%) or nothing (18.9%).

Similar levels of knowledge were reported for sexual assault. Students commonly reported knowing some (33.9%) or very little (32.6%) about where to go within their university to make a formal report or complaint. Fewer students reported they knew everything or a lot (11.9%) or nothing (21.0%).

Figure 25: Knowledge of formal report or complaint processes within university (%)



Base: All students (n=43,819). Questions: E2 and I2. Prefer not to say % not shown on chart.

One in two students indicated that they knew very little or nothing about the university's formal report or complaint process for sexual harassment (51.0%) and sexual assault (53.6%).

Notable sociodemographic subgroups more likely to report they knew nothing or very little about the reporting and complaint processes for sexual harassment included:

- female (56.4%) and non-binary students (59.8%) compared with male students (43.2%)
- students aged 18-21 years (54.3%) compared with older students
- students with a disability (54.8%) compared with other students (50.2%)
- domestic students (53.4%) compared with international students (41.0%)
- students who speak English at home (53.1%) compared with those who speak a language other than English at home (45.4%)
- gay or lesbian students (57.1%), bisexual students (57.6%), or students who were undecided or questioning their sexuality (59.1%) compared with heterosexual students (49.5%)
- students living with their parents, guardian or other family members (55.6%) compared with those living in student accommodation or residences (37.6%) or living on their own (45.5%)
- undergraduate students (52.6%) compared with postgraduate students (46.6%).

Students who were more likely to know nothing or very little about the reporting and complaint processes for sexual assault followed a similar pattern. Notable sociodemographic subgroups more likely to report they knew nothing or very little about the reporting and complaint processes for sexual assault included:

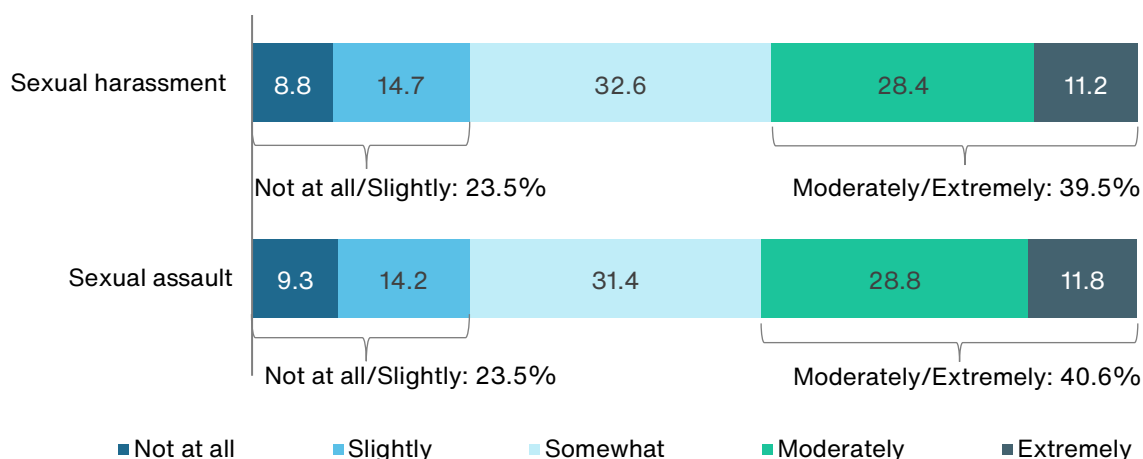
- female students (58.9%) and non-binary students (60.9%) compared with male students (46.1%)
- students aged 18-21 years (57.4%) compared with older students
- students with a disability (56.8%) compared with other students (53.0%)
- domestic students (55.8%) compared with international students (44.6%)
- students who speak English at home (55.7%) compared with those who speak a language other than English at home (48.2%)
- gay or lesbian students (59.2%), bisexual students (59.6%), or students who were undecided or questioning their sexuality (61.9%) compared with heterosexual students (52.3%)
- students living with their parents, guardian or other family members (58.4%) compared with those living in student accommodation or residences (40.8%) or living in their own places with others (52.0%) or by themselves (48.6%).

## 6.2. How confident were students in reporting processes within the university?

Students were asked about their confidence in the reporting process for incidents of sexual harassment and sexual assault.

In relation to sexual harassment, the most common response was somewhat confident (32.6%) followed by moderately (28.4%) and slightly confident (14.7%). Fewer students said they were extremely confident (11.2%) or not at all confident (8.8%).

Figure 26: Confidence in formal report or complaint processes within university (%)



Base: All students (n=43,819). Questions: E4 and I4. Prefer not to say % not shown on chart.

One in four (23.5%) students indicated that they were not at all or only slightly confident in their university's reporting processes for sexual harassment.

Notable sociodemographic subgroups more likely to indicate they were not at all or slightly confident in the processes included:

- female students (27.1%) and students that are non-binary or describe their gender differently (43.6%) compared with male students (17.5%)
- students aged 18-21 (25.6%) and 22-24 (26.4%) compared with older students
- students with a disability (30.5%) compared with other students (22.1%)
- students who speak English at home (24.8%) compared with students who speak a language other than English at home (20.1%)
- domestic students (25.1%) compared with international students (16.9%)
- students undertaking some or all of their classes campus (25.1%) or who were on work experience (30.1%) compared with students undertaking all of their classes online (22.0%)
- students living with a parent, guardian or other family member (24.7%) compared with students living on their own (20.8%) or in other living arrangements
- continuing students (24.4%) compared with commencing students (21.4%)
- gay or lesbian students (31.9%), bisexual students (34.1%), asexual students (31.8%), pansexual students (37.1%) and students questioning or undecided about their sexuality (37.3%) compared with heterosexual students (21.2%)
- full-time students (24.1%) compared with part-time students (21.4%)
- undergraduate students (24.5%) and honours students (26.0%) compared with postgraduate coursework students (20.0%) and postgraduate research students (20.2%).



Students had similar levels of confidence in the reporting process for sexual assault. The most common response was somewhat confident (31.4%) followed by moderately (28.8%) and slightly confident (14.2%). Fewer students said they were extremely confident (11.8%) or not at all confident (9.3%).

Overall, 23.5% of students surveyed indicated that they were not at all or slightly confident in their university’s reporting processes for sexual assault. Subgroups that were more likely to indicate they were not at all or only slightly confident in the processes were similar to those for sexual harassment and included:

- female students (27.1%) and non-binary students (41.7%) compared with male students (17.5%)
- students aged 18-21 (25.9%) and 22-24 (26.7%) compared with older students
- students with a disability (29.7%) compared with other students (22.3%)
- those who speak English at home (24.7%) compared with students who speak a language other than English at home (20.4%)
- domestic students (25.0%) compared with international students (17.3%)
- students undertaking some or all of their classes on campus (24.7%) or who were on work experience (30.9%) compared with students undertaking all of their classes online (22.2%)
- students who live with a parent, guardian or family member (24.5%) compared with students with other living arrangements
- continuing students (24.3%) compared with commencing students (21.6%)
- full-time students (24.2%) compared with part-time students (21.1%)
- undergraduate students (24.6%) and honours students (26.2%) compared with postgraduate coursework students (20.2%) and postgraduate research students (19.3%)
- gay or lesbian students (31.1%), bisexual students (33.6%), asexual students (31.2%), pansexual students (38%) as well as students questioning their sexuality (29.6%) and students with a different sexual identity (36.4%) compared with heterosexual students (21.3%).

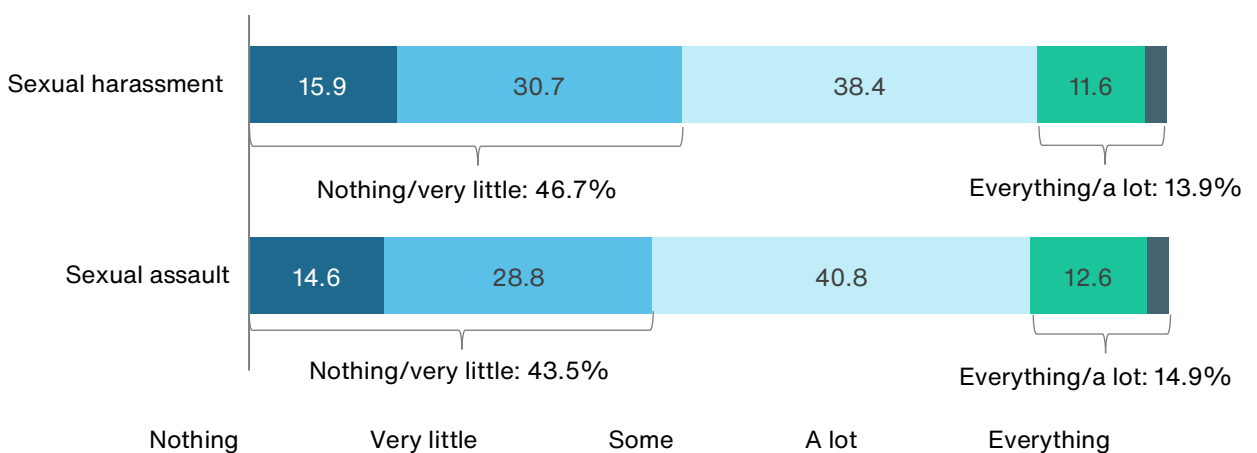
### 6.3. How aware were students of support services within the university?

Students were asked how much they knew about where to seek support or assistance within the university about an experience of sexual harassment or sexual assault.

In relation to sexual harassment, the most common response was some (38.4%) followed by very little (30.7%). Fewer students indicated they knew everything or a lot (13.9%) or nothing (15.9%).

Similar levels of knowledge were reported for sexual assault. Students commonly reported knowing some (40.8%) or very little (28.8%) about where to seek support or assistance within the university. Fewer reported knowing everything or a lot (14.9%) or nothing (14.6%).

Figure 27: Knowledge of support services within university (%)



Base: All students (n=43,819). Questions: E1 and I1. Prefer not to say % not shown on chart.

The proportion of students who reported knowing nothing or very little about where they can seek support or assistance within the university were similar for sexual harassment (46.7%) and sexual assault (43.5%). Notable sociodemographic subgroups more likely to indicate they know nothing or very little about where to seek support or assistance with their university for sexual harassment included:

- female students (50.9%) and students who are non-binary or use a different term to describe their gender (55.0%) compared with male students (40.7%)
- students aged 18-21 (49.1%) compared with older students
- students with a disability (49.0%) compared with other students (46.2%)
- students who speak English at home (48.4%) compared with students who speak a language other than English at home (42.2%)
- domestic students (48.8%) compared with international students (37.7%)
- students undertaking all of their classes online (47.6%) compared with other students
- students living with a parent guardian or other family (50.7%) compared with students in student accommodation or residences (32.4%) and students living on their own (42.9%)
- part-time students (48.5%) compared with full-time students (46.1%)
- undergraduate students (48.2%) compared with postgraduate research students (36.9%).

Notable sociodemographic subgroups more likely to indicate they know nothing or very little about where to seek support or assistance within their university for sexual assault included:

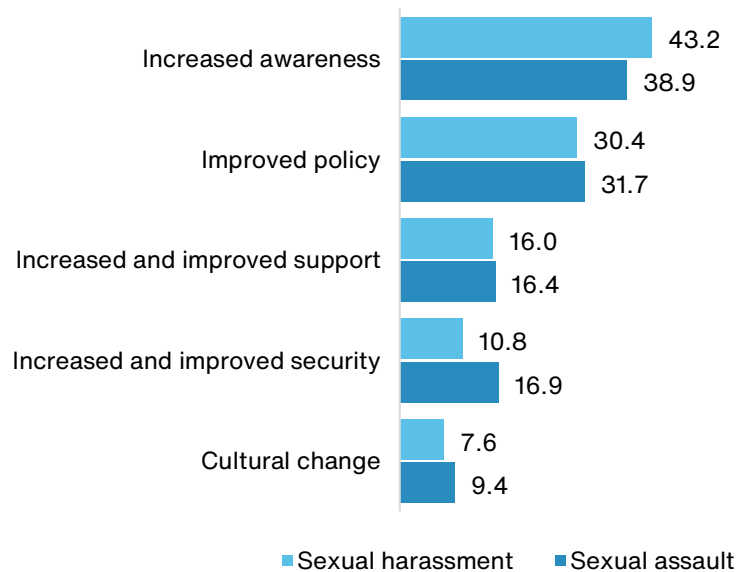
- female students (46.5%) compared with male students (39.2%)
- students who speak English at home (44.3%) compared with students who speak a language other than English at home (41.3%)
- domestic students (44.9%) compared with international students (37.6%)
- students undertaking all of their classes online (44.8%) compared with students undertaking some or all of their classes on campus (41.7%)
- students who live with a parent, guardian or family member (46.7%) compared with students in student accommodation and residences (28.7%)
- part-time students (45.9%) compared with full-time students (42.8%)
- undergraduate students (44.4%) compared with postgraduate research students (34.4%).

## 6.4. What could universities do to reduce incidents of sexual harassment and sexual assault?

Students were asked two open-ended questions on what else their university could do to reduce incidents of sexual harassment and sexual assault. In total, 12.1% of students provided a suggestion relating to sexual harassment and 21.1% provided a suggestion relating to sexual assault. These responses were reviewed and subsequently coded into one of five key themes broadly relating to: security, support, policy, awareness and cultural change.

The two most commonly mentioned themes for what universities could do to reduce incidents of sexual harassment and sexual assault related to increasing awareness and improving university policies and procedures (see Figure 28).

**Figure 28: Suggestions of what universities can do to reduce incidents of sexual harassment and sexual assault (%)**



Base: Students who provided a suggestion to reduce sexual harassment (n=9,913) or sexual assault (n=5,792). Questions: E5 and 15.

Of students who provided a response for what universities could do to reduce incidents of sexual harassment, 43.2% mentioned the need to increase awareness of the issue.

The need to increase awareness of sexual harassment was more likely to be suggested by students who had not experienced sexual harassment in a university context in the past 12 months (43.9%) compared with those who had (39.0%). The most common suggestions made by students included educating students about sexual harassment and consent (21.6% of responses), advertising, campaigns and posters around campus (6.6%) and open discussion or acknowledging the problem (3.3%).

The need for policy change was mentioned by 30.4% of students who provided a suggestion to reduce sexual harassment in their university. Comments related to the need for decisive action and clear consequences for perpetrators, staff and students inclusive (10.2% of responses), clearer or simpler processes for reporting sexual harassment (6.3% of responses) and universities taking a clear stance against sexual harassment (4.2%).

Suggestions related to improving support for students accounted for 16.0% of all responses provided by students to reduce sexual harassment. Female students (18.1%) were more likely than others to recommend increased support. The most common suggestion in this area related to raising awareness of support services available at the university (9.7% of those who provided a response). Female students (11.6%) were more likely than male students (6.5%) to make this suggestion. Other common suggestions for providing support to students included more or improved counselling or specialist psychological services (1.1% of responses) and easy to access online support or information (0.9%).

Recommendations for security improvements accounted for 10.8% of responses provided by students to reduce sexual harassment. Students aged 18-21 (14.2%) were more likely to recommend improving security when compared with students aged over 35 (6.7%). The top suggestions included additional or 24-hour security (4.6% of responses), cameras on campus (2.5%) and better lighting at night (2.0%).

Fewer than one in ten (7.6%) responses provided by students related to cultural change at the university. The most common suggestions for reducing sexual harassment through cultural change were improving staff behaviour (1.9%), gender equality or equal treatment of women (1.0%) and addressing misogynistic cultures (0.3%).

There were some notable differences in the recommendations provided by students who had experienced sexual harassment in a university context in the past 12 months. These included:

- **general improvements to security, recommended by 15.7% of students who have experienced sexual harassment in a university context the past 12 months compared with 10% of students who have not. This included more specific suggestions such as:**
  - additional campus security and 24-hour security (6.9% compared with 4.2%)
  - better lighting at night (3.4% compared with 1.8%)
  - security or supervision at university events, parties and trips (1.4% compared with 0.4%)
- **victim/survivor-centred approaches to reporting and dealing with sexual harassment was more likely to be suggested by those who had experienced sexual harassment in a university context in the past 12 months (3.2%) compared with those who had not (1.7%)**
- **the need for decisive action and clear consequences for perpetrators who are staff or students was more likely to be suggested by students who have experienced sexual harassment in a university context in the past 12 months (13.6%) when compared with those who have not (9.7%)**
- **suggestions that related to broader cultural change were more likely to be recommended by students who had experienced sexual harassment in a university context in the past 12 months (13.4%) when compared with those who had not (6.7%). More specific suggestions included:**
  - improving staff behaviour (3.5% compared with 1.7%)
  - improved gender equality or more equal treatment of women (2.0% compared with 0.8%)
  - addressing toxic masculinity on campus (0.9% compared with 0.2%).

Suggestions made by students to reduce incidences of sexual assault at universities followed a similar pattern to those made for sexual harassment. Two in five (38.9%) responses were related to awareness of the issue. Students aged over 35 years (32.6%) were less likely than younger students to suggest increasing awareness of sexual assault as a means of reducing its incidence. Students who mainly speak English at home (37.1%) were less likely than students who speak a language other than English at home (45.3%) to suggest raising awareness, as were domestic students (38.0%) when compared with international students (45.2%). The most recommended action was educating students about sexual assault and consent which accounted for 19.7% of responses. The next most common suggestion related to awareness included advertising, campaigns, and posters about sexual assault around campus (7.2% of responses) and open discussion or acknowledgement of the problem (4.0%).

One in three (31.7%) responses provided by students to reduce sexual assault at universities related to policy. Students aged over 35 (23.8%) were less likely than younger students to recommend policy change, as were students studying postgraduate coursework degrees (26.6%) compared with students studying other types of degrees. Bisexual students (40.4%) were more likely than heterosexual students (29.6%) to recommend policy change. The most common suggestion for universities to improve their policies was to have clearer or simpler processes for reporting sexual assault, accounting for 11.3% of all suggestions. Male students (8.8%) were less likely than other genders to suggest clearer reporting processes. The next most common suggestions included decisive action and clear consequences for perpetrators who were staff or students (8.8%) and suggestions for universities to take a clear stance against sexual assault (5.4%).

Suggestions related to improving university security accounted for 16.9% of student's responses. Female students (19.2%) were more likely than male students (13.3%) to suggest improving security to reduce sexual assault. Students who were undertaking some or all of their classes on campus (22.9%) were more likely than students undertaking all of their classes online (14.1%) to suggest improved security, as were full-time students (18.0%) compared with part-time students (13.9%). The most common suggestions for improved security included additional or 24-hour security (6.2%), better lighting at night (4.2%) and cameras on campus (3.0%).

Improved support for students was recommended as a strategy for reducing sexual assault by 16.4% of students. Students aged 18-21 (19.0%) were more likely to suggest increased support for students compared with students over 35 (10.5%). Undergraduate students (17.6%) were more likely to suggest improved support compared with postgraduate students (13.2%). More specifically, raising awareness of support services available was suggested by 10.3% of students who provided a response. Students aged 18-21 (12.9%) were more likely than students aged over 35 (5.9%) to suggest raising awareness of support services available. The next most common suggestions included easy to access online support and information (1.4%) and more or improved counselling or specialist psychological services (1.3%).

One in ten (9.4%) students who provided a recommendation for reducing sexual assault related to cultural change. Heterosexual students (8.6%) were less likely to suggest cultural change. Postgraduate research students (16.0%) were more likely than students studying other types of degrees to suggest cultural change. The most common suggestions by students relating to cultural change included improving staff behaviour (3.1%), gender equality or equal treatment of women (1.2%) and addressing misogynistic cultures (0.8%).

There were some notable differences in the recommendations provided by students who had experienced sexual assault in a university context in the past 12 months. These included:

- **suggestions relating to policy accounted for 49.3% of victim/survivor's suggestions compared with 31.4% for those who have not experienced sexual assault. More specifically, they were more likely to recommend:**
  - decisive action and clear consequences for perpetrators, including staff and students (21.7% compared with 8.6%)
  - listen to, believe and support victim/survivors (13.0% compared with 3.3%)
  - victim/survivor-centred approaches to reporting or dealing with sexual assault (7.3% compared with 1.5%)
  - protection and confidentiality for people who have experienced sexual assault (5.5% compared with 1.8%)
- **improved safety at student accommodation or residences was more likely to be recommended by students who have experienced sexual assault in a university context in the past 12 months (7.1%) compared with those who have not (1.8%)**
- **more or improved counselling and specialist psychological services was more likely to be recommended by students who have experienced sexual assault in a university context in the past 12 months (4.9%) compared with those who have not (1.3%)**
- **more female or diverse staff members at the university was more likely to be recommended by students who have experienced sexual assault in a university context in the past 12 months (1.9%) compared with those who have not (0.4%).**



## 7. Bystander experiences

This section of the report explores students' experiences of witnessing or observing incidents of sexual harassment and sexual assault in a university context. It explores whether students take an action in response to witnessing the incidents of sexual harassment and sexual assault and barriers that might prevent them from doing so.

### 7.1. What was the prevalence of witnessing sexual harassment and sexual assault?

Students were asked if they had directly observed or witnessed another student from their university being sexually harassed in a university context in the past 12 months and if another student from their university had told them, or they suspected they may have been sexually assaulted in a university setting in the past 12 months.

Overall, very few students had witnessed or observed these behaviours in the past 12 months.

#### Sexual harassment

In total, 2.9% of students had directly observed another student being sexually harassed in a university context in the past 12 months.

Witnessing another student being sexually harassed within a university context varied across some sociodemographic subgroups (See Figure 29). In most cases, these students were also more likely to have been sexually harassed in a university context themselves as shown in Section 2.

Figure 29: Witnessed another student being sexually harassed in university context in the past 12 months



Base: All students (n=43,819). Question: D1.  
 One asterisk \* and lighter grey bar = RSE >25%. Bar excluded for measures where RSE >50% and two \*s.  
 Light blue bar = significantly higher than overall (p<0.01). Light yellow = significantly lower than overall (p<0.01).

Notable subgroup differences included:

- non-binary students (8.2%) were more likely than other students to witness another student being sexually harassed within a university context
- students aged 18-21 years (3.9%) and 22-24 years (3.7%) were more likely than older students to witness another student being sexually harassed
- students with a disability (5.7%) were more likely than other students (2.4%) to witness another student being sexually harassed
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students (6.7%) were more likely than other students (2.9%) to witness another student being sexually harassed



- gay or lesbian students (4.7%), bisexual students (6.2%), asexual students (6.5%) and pansexual students (8.7%) were more likely than heterosexual students (2.3%) to witness another student being sexually harassed
- domestic students (3.5%) and those who mainly speak English at home (3.3%) were more likely to witness another student being sexually harassed
- undergraduate students (3.4%) were more likely than postgraduate students (1.8%), and particularly postgraduate coursework students (1.7%) to witness another student being sexually harassed
- students undertaking some or all of their classes on campus at the time of the survey (3.8%) were more likely than students undertaking all of their classes online (2.4%) to witness another student being sexually harassed
- students enrolled full-time (3.2%) were more likely than those enrolled part-time (1.9%) to witness another student being sexually harassed
- students currently living in student accommodation or residences (9.6%) were more likely than students living elsewhere to witness another student being sexually harassed.

## Sexual assault

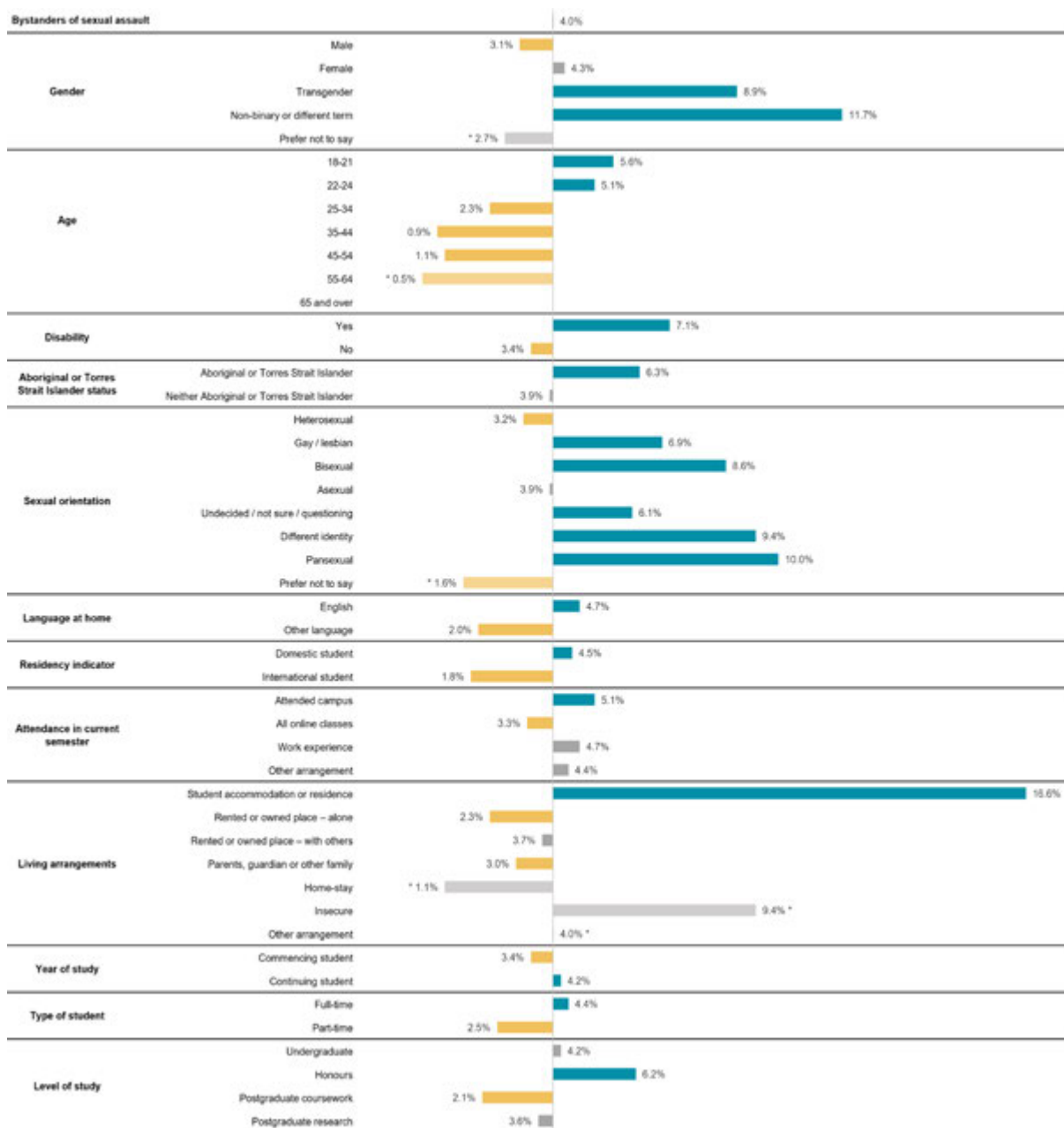
Students were slightly more likely to report they had been told or suspected another student had been sexually assaulted in a university context. Approximately one in twenty (4.0%) students said they had been told or suspected another student had been sexually assaulted in a university context in the past 12 months.

Sociodemographic subgroups more likely to have been told or suspecting another student had been sexually assaulted were similar to those who had observed sexual harassment, see Figure 30.

These included:

- transgender students (8.9%) and non-binary students (11.7%) students were more likely than other students to be told or suspect another student had been sexually assaulted within a university context
- students aged 18-21 years (5.6%) and 22-24 years (5.1%) were more likely than older students to be told or suspect another student had been sexually assaulted
- students with a disability (7.1%) were more likely than other students (3.4%) to be told or suspect another student had been sexually assaulted
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students (6.3%) were more likely than other students (3.9%) to be told or suspect another student had been sexually assaulted
- gay or lesbian students (6.9%), bisexual students (8.6%), students who are unsure or questioning their sexuality (6.1%) and pansexual students (10.0%) were more likely than heterosexual students (3.2%) to be told or suspect another student had been sexually assaulted
- domestic students (4.5%) and those who mainly speak English at home (4.7%) were more likely than other students to be told or suspect another student had been sexually assaulted
- undergraduate students (4.5%), and particularly honours students (6.2%), were more likely than postgraduate students (2.5%) to be told or suspect another student had been sexually assaulted
- continuing students (4.2%) were more likely than commencing students (3.4%) to be told or suspect another student had been sexually assaulted
- students enrolled full-time (4.4%) were more likely than students enrolled part-time (2.5%) to be told or suspect another student had been sexually assaulted
- students undertaking some or all of their classes on campus at the time of the survey (5.1%) were more likely than students undertaking all of their classes online (3.3%) to be told or suspect another student had been sexually assaulted
- students currently living in student accommodation or residences (16.6%) were more likely than students living elsewhere to be told or suspect another student had been sexually assaulted.

Figure 30: Told or suspected another student had been sexually assaulted in university context in the past 12 months



Base: All students (n=43,819). Question: H1.  
 One asterisk \* and lighter grey bar = RSE > 25%. Bar excluded for measures where RSE > 50% and two \*s.  
 Light blue bar = significantly higher than overall (p < 0.01). Light yellow = significantly lower than overall (p < 0.01).

## 7.2. How did students respond to bystander experiences?

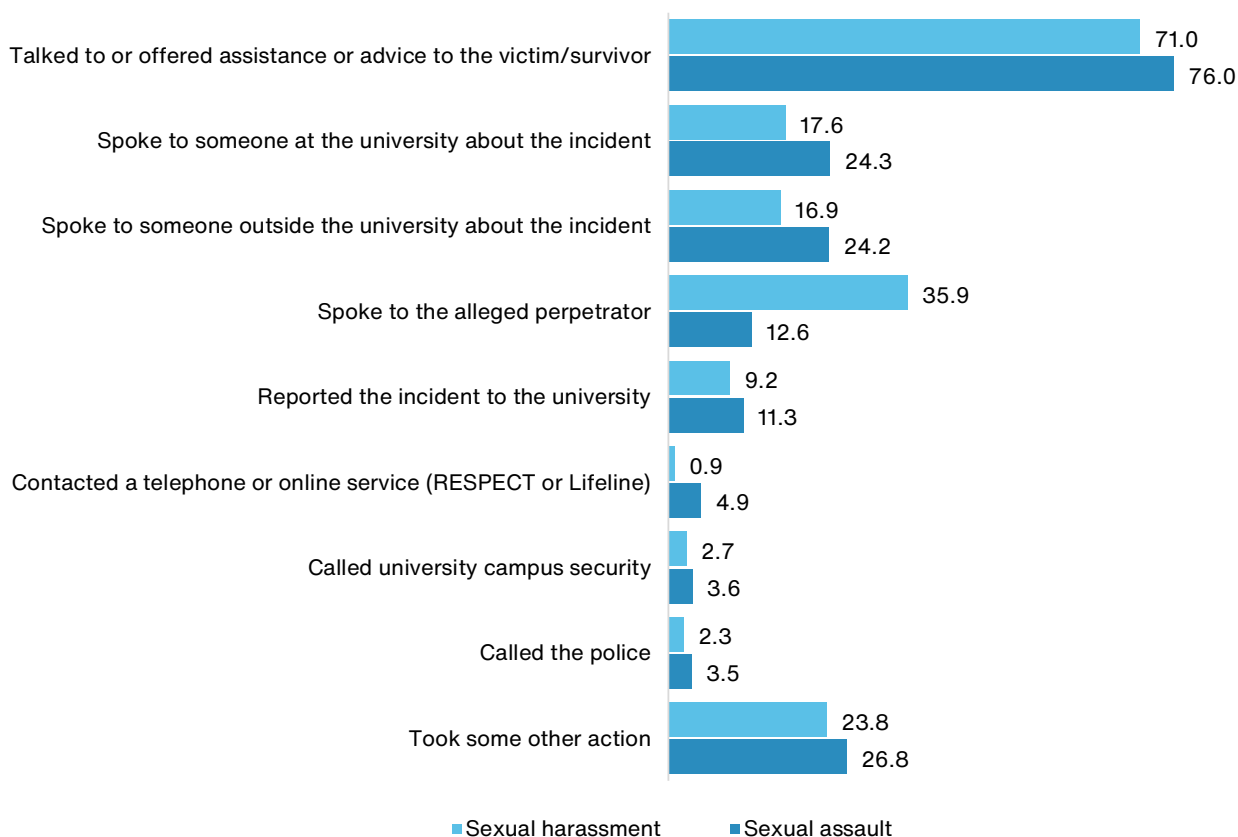
Students who had witnessed another student being sexually harassed, or had been told or suspected another student had been sexually assaulted, in the past 12 months were asked if they had done something about the most recent incident.

Many students reported they had done something about the incident(s) of sexual harassment or sexual assault they had witnessed or been told about or suspected.

One in two (54.8%) students who witnessed sexual harassment said they had done something about the most recent incident they witnessed. Slightly fewer (47.8%) students who had been told or suspected another student had been sexually assaulted said they had done something when they became aware of it.

The most common actions taken in relation to observing another student be sexually harassed or being told or suspecting another student had been sexually harassed in a university context are displayed in Figure 31.

**Figure 31: Actions taken by those who observed sexual harassment or sexual assault in a university context (%)**



Base: Observed sexual harassment / assault in Australian university context and took action (n=832, n=986). Questions D3 and H3.

In both cases, the most common action was to talk to or offer assistance or advice to the victim/ survivor. For both sexual harassment and sexual assault, twice as many people took this action compared with the next most common action. The next most common actions were to speak to the alleged perpetrator, or someone at the university or someone outside the university about the incident. One in ten (9.2%) students who did something about a sexual harassment incident they witnessed in a university context said they had reported it to the university. A similar proportion (11.3%) of students who did something about an incident of sexual assault reported the incident to the university.

Students who did not take any action in relation to the incidents of sexual harassment they had witnessed or the incident of sexual assault they had been told about or suspected were asked why they had not done anything (see Figure 32).

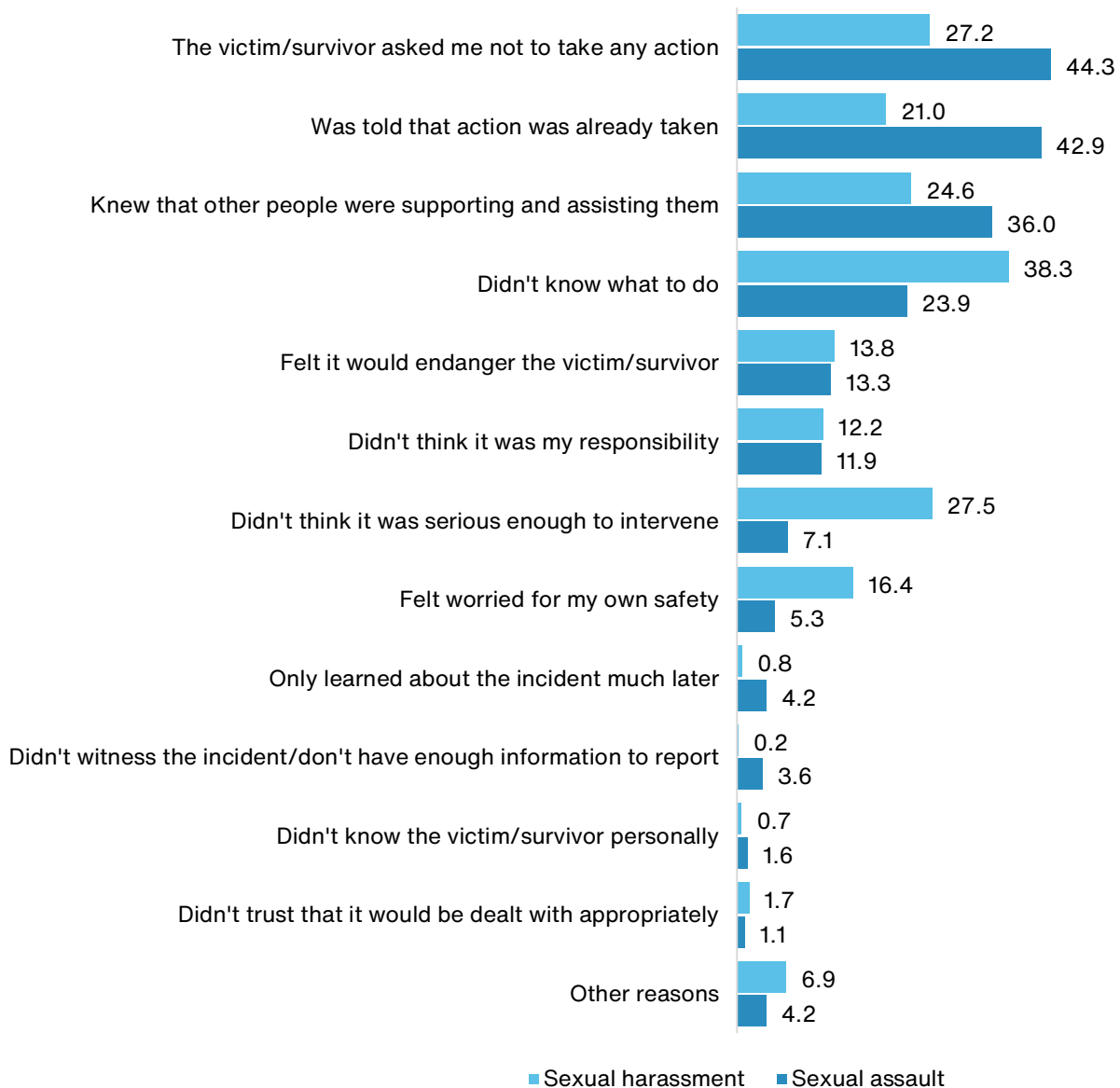
The most common reasons were different for sexual harassment and sexual assault. Among students who had witnessed sexual harassment, the most common reasons for not doing anything related to students:

- not knowing what to do
- not thinking it was serious enough to intervene
- being asked by the victim/survivor not to take an action
- knowing other people were supporting and assisting the victim/survivor
- being told an action had already been taken.

Among students who had been told or suspected another student had been sexually assaulted, the most common barriers to taking an action included:

- the victim/survivor told them not to take an action
- being told an action had already been taken
- knowing that other people were supporting and assisting the victim/survivor
- not knowing what to do
- feeling it would endanger the victim/survivor.

Figure 32: Reasons for not taking action after being made aware of sexual harassment or sexual assault (%)



Base: Observed sexual harassment / assault in Australian university context and did not take action (n=550, n=952). Questions: D4 and H4.



## 8. Perceptions and attitudes

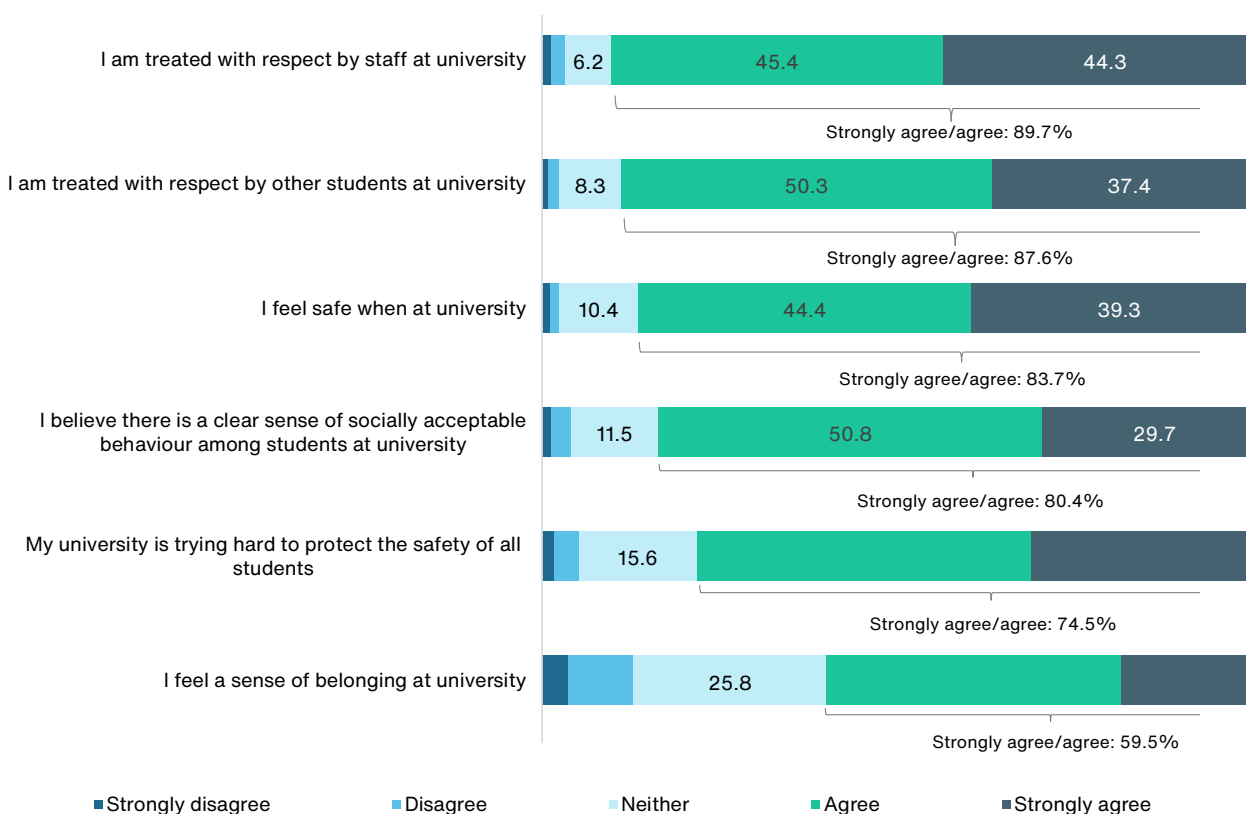
This section of the report explores students' perceptions of the culture at their university and their knowledge and attitudes relating to sexual harassment and sexual assault. Students' perceptions and attitudes were measured by asking them to agree or disagree with a series of statements in each area.

### 8.1. What were students' perceptions of university culture?

Figure 33 displays the percentage of students who agreed or disagreed with each statement related to perceptions of culture at universities. The majority of students felt respected by staff (89.7%) and other students (87.6%). Four in five students felt safe when at their university (83.7%) and believed there was a clear sense of socially acceptable behaviour at their university (80.4%).

Slightly fewer students agreed their university was trying hard to protect the safety of all students (74.5%). The lowest level of agreement was in relation to there being a sense of belonging at their university (59.5%).

Figure 33: Student perceptions of university culture (%)



Base: All students (n=43,819). Question A1. 'Not sure' and 'Prefer not to say' % not shown.

Perceptions of university culture varied across the student population:

- female students were more likely than other students to agree they felt a sense of belonging (60.7%) and that they are treated with respect by other students (88.3%) and staff (90.4%) at their institution. Despite this, female students were slightly less likely than male students to agree that they felt safe at their university (83.0% compared with 85.9%)
- non-binary students were less likely to agree with all statements about the culture at their university compared with other students
- students aged 18-21 years were more likely than older students to agree they are treated with respect by staff (91.3%) and students (89.6%) and that they feel safe (87.7%). They also agreed that there is a clear sense of socially acceptable behaviour among students at their university (83.4%)
- students with a disability were less likely to agree with all culture statements compared with other students
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students were less likely than other students to agree they felt safe (76.2%) and that they felt respected by staff (83.9%) or other students (81.2%)
- heterosexual students were more likely than other students to agree with all statements. In comparison, bisexual students (52.9%) or students who were unsure or questioning their sexuality (52.9%) were less likely to agree they felt a sense of belonging at their university. Bisexual students (81.4%) were also less likely to agree they felt safe at their university. Pansexual (68.2%), asexual (72.3%) and bisexual students (76.8%) were less likely to believe there is a clear sense of socially acceptable behaviour at their university, while pansexual students (61.0%), bisexual students (65.8%), students who were unsure or questioning their sexuality (67.4%) and gay or lesbian students (69.6%) were less likely to agree their university is trying hard to protect the safety of all students

- domestic students were more likely than international students to report feeling safe at their university (84.4% compared with 81.0%) and respected by staff (90.2% compared with 85.0%) and other students (88.1% compared with 85.0%). In comparison, international students were more likely than domestic students to say they felt a sense of belonging at their university (64.3% compared with 58.3%) and agree their university is trying hard to protect the safety of all students (79.4% compared with 73.3%)
- commencing students were more likely than continuing students to agree they felt respected by staff at their university (91.0% compared with 89.1%) but were less likely to agree they felt safe at their university (81.1% compared with 84.8%)
- students enrolled full-time were more likely than those enrolled part-time to agree they felt safe (86.0%) and that their university is trying hard to protect the safety of all students (75.2%). They were also more likely to agree there is a sense of belonging (60.5%) and of what is socially acceptable behaviour among students at their university (83.4%) and that they felt treated with respect by other students (88.4%)
- undergraduate students were more likely than postgraduate students to agree they felt safe when at their university (85.4%) and that there is a clear sense of socially acceptable behaviour among students at their university (81.6%) but were less likely to agree they felt a sense of belonging at their university (58.7%)
- those living in student accommodation or residences were more likely than others to agree they felt safe when at their university (87.9%) and they felt a sense of belonging (63.5%). Students living with their parents or family were more likely to agree they are treated with respect by staff (91.0%) and other students (89.6%) at their university, they felt safe (86.5%) and that there is a clear sense of socially acceptable behaviour among students at their university (83.4%).

Students' perceptions of the culture at their university were also related to whether they had observed or witnessed another student from their university being sexually harassed in the past 12 months. Specifically, students were less likely to agree with each of the statements if they had directly observed or witnessed an incident. A similar trend was found among students who had been told or suspected another student had been sexually assaulted in a university context in the past 12 months.

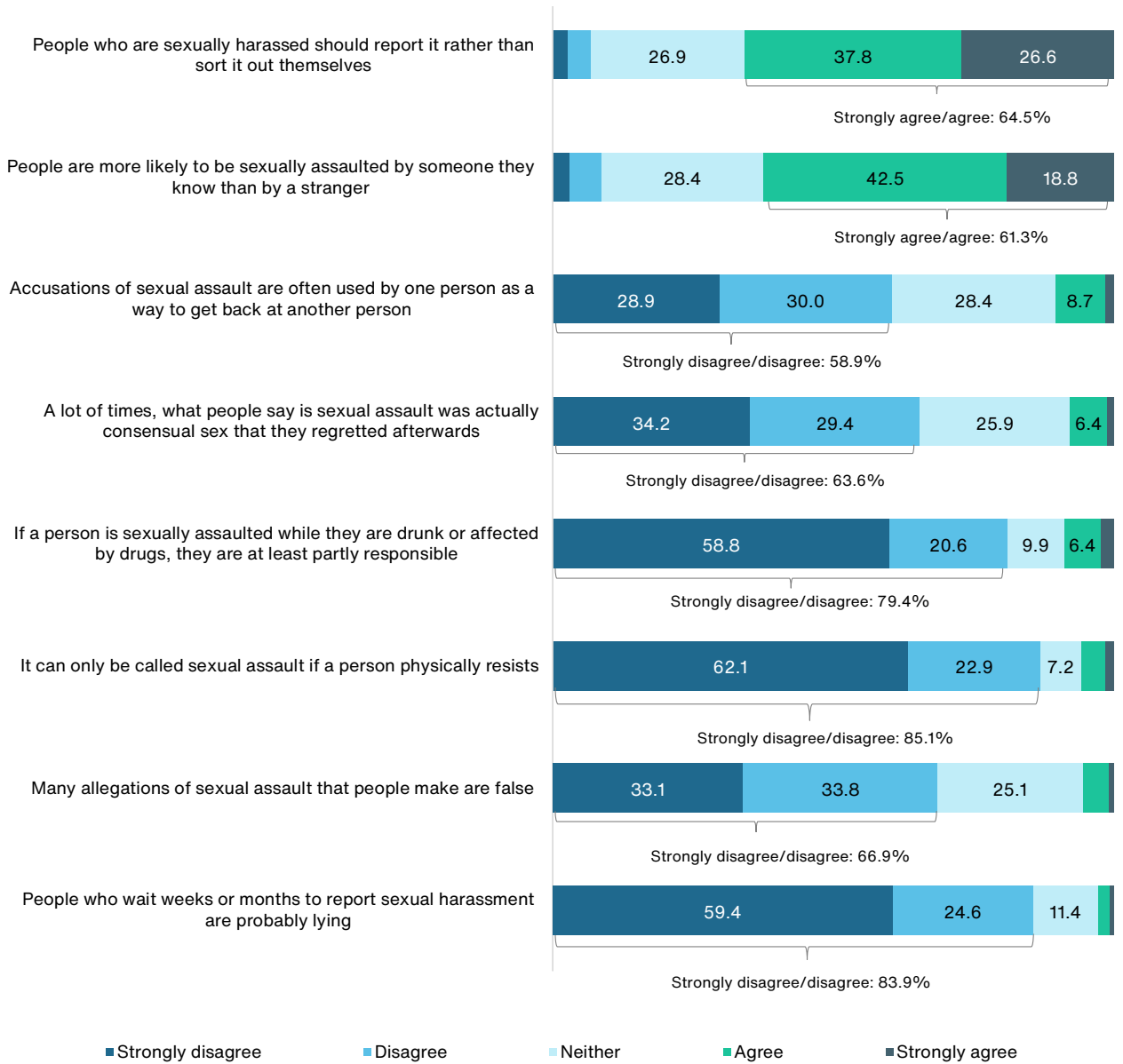
## 8.2. What were students' attitudes about sexual harassment and sexual assault?

Students' attitudes towards sexual harassment and sexual assault were measured using a series of statements adapted from the National Community Attitudes Survey (Webster et al., 2018).

Figure 34 displays the percentage of students who agreed or disagreed with each statement.



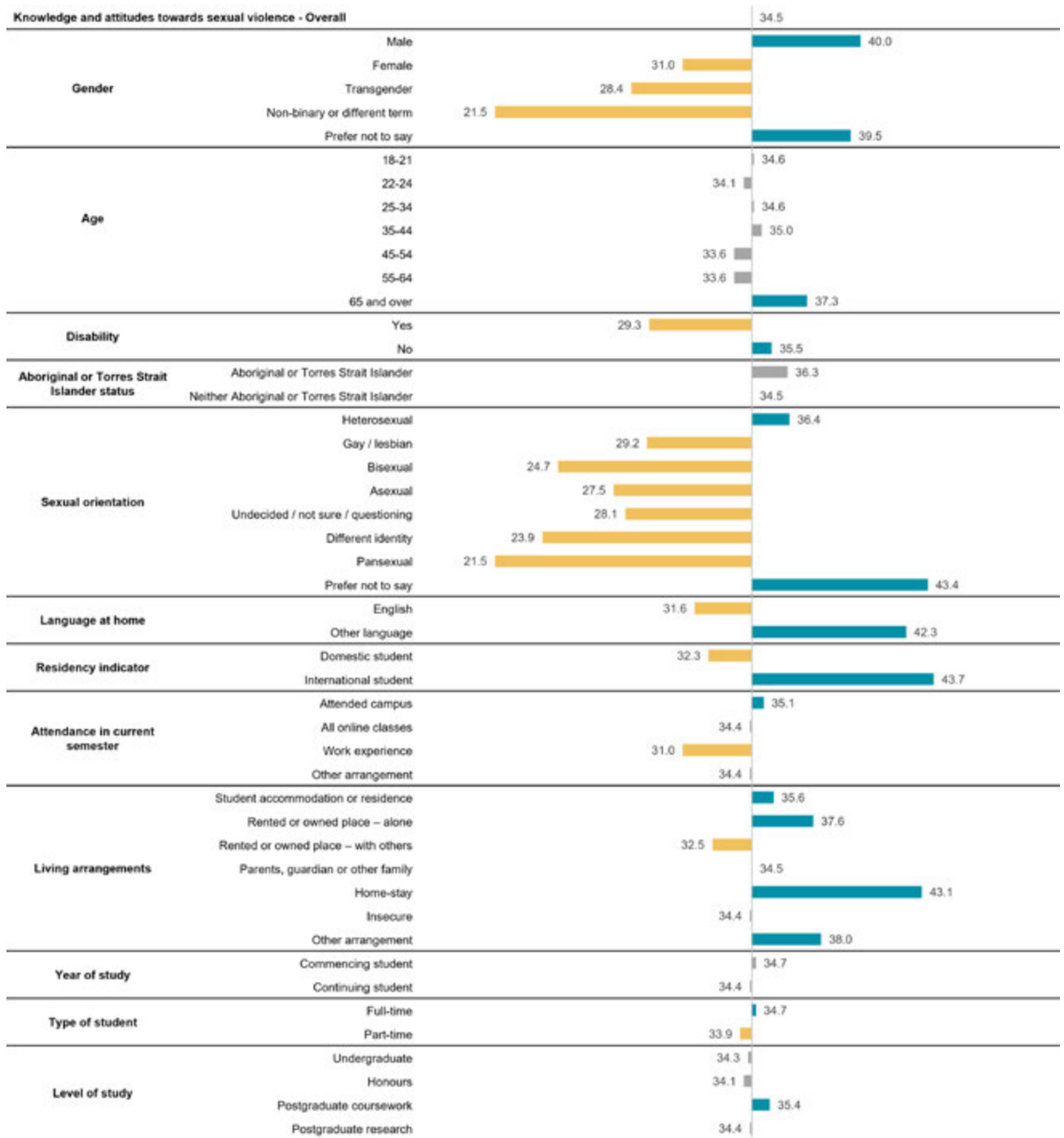
Figure 34: Knowledge and attitudes about sexual harassment and assault (%)



Base: All students (n=43,819). Question J1. Prefer not to say % not shown.

A composite measure was formed using a statistical method called Rasch analysis. Scores ranged from 0 to 100, with 0 representing lower levels of support for sexual violence (a positive result). Attitudes and knowledge varied across some sociodemographic sub-groups (see Figure 35).

Figure 35: Knowledge and attitudes towards sexual violence (average scores)



Base: All students who provided a valid response at J1 (n=43,333). Question: J1 (excluding J1b).  
 Light blue bar = significantly higher than overall (p<0.01). Light yellow = significantly lower than overall (p<0.01).

Male students had higher levels of attitudinal support towards sexual violence (less favourable) when compared with female students, transgender and non-binary students. Other notable subgroup differences included:

- **students with a disability had lower levels of attitudinal support towards sexual violence than other students**
- **heterosexual students had higher levels of attitudinal support towards sexual violence than gay or lesbian students, bisexual students, asexual students, pansexual students and students who were unsure or questioning their sexuality**
- **international students and those who speak a language other than English at home had higher levels of attitudinal support towards sexual violence**
- **students enrolled full-time had higher levels of attitudinal support towards sexual violence than part-time students**
- **postgraduate coursework students had higher levels of attitudinal support towards sexual violence than students in other courses**
- **those living in student accommodation or residences, students living on their own or in homestay arrangements had higher levels of attitudinal support towards sexual violence than those living elsewhere.**

There was also a correlation between witnessing or observing sexual harassment and attitudes towards sexual violence. Higher levels of attitudinal support towards sexual violence were found among those who had not observed or witnessed another student from their university being sexually harassed (average 34.7 compared with 25.9 among those who had observed or witnessed another student being sexually harassed) and among those who witnessed an incident but did not do anything (average 27.8 compared with 24.1 among those who had taken an action).

Similarly, higher levels of attitudinal support towards sexual violence were found among those who had not been told or suspected another student had been sexually assaulted in a university context in the past 12 months (average 34.9% compared with 25.5 among those who had been told or suspected another student had been sexually assaulted).



# Appendix 1

## Acknowledgements

### Universities Australia NSSS Committee

Khyaati Acharya, Prevention Advisor – Policy, Domestic Violence Victoria/Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria

Professor John Germov, Interim Vice-Chancellor, Charles Sturt University

Dr Renee Hamilton, Policy Director – Safety and Wellbeing, Universities Australia

Professor Sandra Harding, Vice-President and Vice-Chancellor, James Cook University

Catriona Jackson, Chief Executive, Universities Australia (Chair)

Anne-Marie Lansdown, Deputy Chief Executive, Universities Australia

Professor Brian Schmidt, Vice-Chancellor and President, Australian National University

Krista Seddon, Executive Director – Primary Prevention, Domestic Violence Victoria/Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria

Jenefer Tan, Senior Policy Analyst – Safety and Wellbeing, Universities Australia

Dr Christie White, Director – Safety, Security and Sustainability, University of Southern Queensland

Dr Sonia Whiteley, independent expert

Dr Omer Yezdani, Director – Planning and Strategic Management, Australian Catholic University

### External Expert Advisory Group

Dr Christine Coumarelos, ANROWS

Associate Professor Kristin Diemer, The University of Melbourne

Dr Bianca Fileborn, The University of Melbourne

Associate Professor Michael Flood, Queensland University of Technology

Elise Holland/Melalie Collie, Our Watch

Associate Professor Anastasia Powell, RMIT University (Chair)

Dr Laura Tarzia, The University of Melbourne

### University Student Representative Consultations

Sharna Bremner, End Rape on Campus

Nina Funnell, End Rape on Campus

Natasha Abrahams, President, Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations

Mark Pace/Deiree Cai, President, National Union of Students

Bijay Sapkota/Belle Lim, President, Council of International Students Australia

Sarah Tynan, Women's Officer, National Union of Students

National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Postgraduate Association

Union of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students

## Appendix 2

# Methodology

The development, implementation and analysis of the NSSS was undertaken by the Social Research Centre between August 2019 and January 2022

### Ethics and quality assurance

All stages of the NSSS were reviewed and approved by the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee (Ref 22399, 22470, 22528 and 24259).

All data collection activities were undertaken in accordance with the *Privacy Act (1988)*, the Australian Privacy Principles, The Research Society's Code of Professional Practice, the Market and Social Research Privacy Principles, and ISO 20252 standards.

### Survey instrument redevelopment

The redevelopment of the survey instrument for the NSSS involved the following stages:

- Review of the 2016 National Survey to identify items that must remain unchanged, items in need of modification, items to be deleted and the new content areas to be included
- Rapid Evidence Review of sexual harassment and sexual assault research among the general population, youth populations and university settings
- Formative research to explore terminology and concepts being examined, leading to the identification of new and emerging issues and topics of interest. Seven formative focus groups were undertaken in Victoria in October 2019
- Drafting of proposed survey instrument
- Cognitive testing of the proposed survey instrument to examine in detail the cognitive processes and reactions people have when being asked survey items. Eleven cognitive interviews were conducted in Melbourne in November-December 2019
- Consultation with various student representatives
- Expert review and input from the Universities Australia Steering Committee, the External Expert Advisory Group and Professor Stanley Presser (University of Maryland).

The final questionnaire for the NSSS included a combination of purposively developed new items and modified versions of items from the 2016 National Survey (AHRC, 2017), US Campus Climate Survey Validation Study (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016), Cultural Renewal at University of Sydney (Elizabeth Broderick & Co, 2017) and University of New England Residential Colleges (AHRC, 2019), research by Tarzia et al. on the relationship between sexual violence, mental health and perpetrator identity (2018) and National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (Webster et al., 2018).

## Pilot test

The pilot test replicated all aspects of the intended main survey processes, including the use of sample frames, the online self-complete questionnaire and all sundry survey procedures and supporting documentation. The pilot was limited to 2,000 selected students from two institutions – The Australian National University and Charles Sturt University.

A total of 332 students participated in the pilot survey for a completion rate of 16.6%. The average survey length for those completing the survey was 11.2 minutes.

The pilot test was initially planned to be conducted in March-April 2020. However, due to the rapid introduction of restrictions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in March the pilot was delayed until the following year. The pilot test was undertaken from 22 March 2021 to 18 April 2021.

Based on the results of the pilot test, changes were made to the structure of the survey instrument, wording of individual questions and communication materials.

## National survey

The NSSS was undertaken online from 6 September 2021 to 3 October 2021 with students from 38 UA member institutions. One member institutions conducted the survey in November; however, the data from that undertaking are not included in this report.

The in-scope population for the NSSS was students studying at Australian universities aged 18 years and over. The specific criteria used to determine eligibility included:

- **Currently enrolled in an undergraduate, a postgraduate by coursework or a postgraduate by research course**
- **Studying onshore, that is students who were either:**
  - attending onshore campuses of an Australian higher education provider or
  - residing in Australia for the term/semester and undertaking an external program of study at an institution via distance education or online
- **Or, international students who had intended to study onshore but were located offshore studying online due to COVID-19 restrictions**
- **Aged 18 years or over as of 31 May 2021.**

The sampling frames for the NSSS were the student administration databases held by each university. The sampling process for the national survey was as follows:

- **De-identified population file:** Each institution extracted a de-identified 'population file' of all onshore students meeting the in-scope definition via a template. The population file then contained all sufficient information to undertake sampling, weighting and analysis but did not include personal contact information. The majority of data elements were included in the de-identified population file requested in a format consistent with Tertiary Collection of Student Information (TCSI) submissions (formerly Higher Education Information Management System (HEIMS)). However, a small number of other variables were derived by institutions and provided in specified formats.
- **Sample review and selection:** The Social Research Centre undertook sampling from the de-identified population file according to the agreed sample design and returned to each institution a 'selections file' containing students randomly selected to take part in the survey.
- **Contact file:** The sample design for the national survey involved selections of 10,000 students from each institution to take part in the survey. For institutions with less than 10,000 students, all in-scope students were selected. The sample was stratified within each institution by gender recorded at enrolment (male/female), year of study (commencing/continuing), residency (domestic/international) and level of study (undergraduate/postgraduate). Other balancing factors were included in the sample design to ensure a representative sample. These included course, age, disability status and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status. A total of 378,992 students were selected for the national survey.

- Institutions then provided the Social Research Centre with a 'contact file' for selected students. The contact file contained all information from the population file along with contact details (e.g., email address and mobile telephone number).

The contact strategy adopted for the NSSS represented a balance between attempting to make contact via numerous communications channels, sending reminders to encourage participation and minimising perceptions of overt 'hassling'. It involved the following:

- pre-engagement communications within each university
- inviting students via email and SMS (where student personal mobile number is available) to complete the survey online, and
- sending multiple (4) reminder emails over the fieldwork period

The implementation of the NSSS was supported by a:

- 1800 Helpdesk and inbox to give students the opportunity to seek clarification or ask for assistance regarding any survey matters.
- survey microsite which provided information about the importance and relevance of the survey, information about privacy and confidentiality (including the Participant Information Sheet), answers to frequently asked questions and a contact form for the Helpdesk.
- A student engagement and communication strategy commissioned by Universities Australia and distributed via universities.

A total of 43,819 students participated in the NSSS during September – October for a completion rate of 11.6%. The average survey length for those completing the survey was 9.5 minutes.

## Analysis and reporting

### Weighting

To ensure survey results were as representative as possible of the student population, weights were calculated for each respondent. The approach to deriving weights involved calibrating to match population benchmarks for a range of respondent characteristics. These included the strata variables (gender at enrolment, year of study, residency, level of study) and three additional variables found to be related to non-response (age, country of birth and field of education). The weights were calculated separately for each institution and account for non-response bias and selection bias on the benchmark variables used to generate more precise survey estimates.

### Statistical analysis

Statistical tests were conducted to establish whether differences between the responses of subgroups of students were genuine rather than simply due to random variation. Testing of the statistical significance of differences between estimated proportions has been carried out using survey-weighted t-tests. These account for the survey design implemented in the surveys, correctly calculating variances for stratified, disproportionate samples. The testing was undertaken in R (R Core, 2017) using the "survey" package (Lumley, 2017). Where results are reported as "different", it implies that a statistically significant difference at a 99 per cent confidence level has been established.

Relative standard errors were also calculated for survey estimates. A relative standard error (RSE) between 25% and 50% indicates caution should be used with the associated estimate while a relative standard error above 50% generally means the estimate is unreliable. The following conversions have been used when reporting survey estimates:

- if the RSE was greater than 50% an \*\* appears in charts and tables instead of the survey estimate as the value is deemed too unreliable for general use.
- if the RSE was between 25% and 50% an \* appears next to the estimate to caution the reader that this score does not meet established standards for reliability. Results of significance testing are not shown for these variables or population subgroups.



Further, results for subgroups are generally only noted if a statistically significant difference exists and the differences are substantial in size. This is because when a large sample size is involved, small subgroup differences may be statistically significant, but are likely to be of little practical importance. Given that these relatively small differences will sometimes be statistically significant, the commentary in this report does not mention every statistically significant difference, but rather draws out the main themes, trends and relationships in the data.

A series of survey-weighted, logistic regression were also conducted to determine which socio-demographic and enrolment factors were independently associated with experiences of sexual harassment and sexual assault. Regression modelling was conducted using Stata Version 16.1 (StataCorp, 2019). Final models are presented Appendix 6.

## Reading charts and tables

All charts and tables in this report, unless otherwise specified, show survey estimates that have been weighted in this manner. The bases (n) shown in the tables and graphs are unweighted.

The final point to consider when reading this report is that in some tables and figures the totals shown and/or mentioned in the accompanying text may differ slightly from the apparent sum of their component elements. This is simply because of rounding.

## Appendix 3

# National Student Safety Survey Questionnaire

### SCREENING AND INITIAL DEMOGRAPHICS

\*(ALL)

DEM1 To start with, we have a couple of quick questions about yourself.

What is your age today?

1. Age given (RECORD AGE IN YEARS) (RANGE 0 TO 99) (TERM1 IF UNDER 18)
99. Prefer not to say

\*(DEM1=99, REFUSED AGE)

DEM1a Which of these age groups do you belong to?

1. Under 18 (TERM1)
2. 18-21
3. 22-24
4. 25-34
5. 35-44
6. 45-54
7. 55-64
8. 65 and over

\*(TIMESTAMP)

\*(ALL)

DEM2a What was your sex recorded at birth?

1. Female
2. Male
3. Another term (please specify)
99. Prefer not to say

\*(ALL)

DEM2 How do you describe your gender?

Gender refers to current gender, which may be different to sex recorded at birth and may be different to what is indicated on legal documents.

1. Woman or female
  2. Man or male
  3. Non-binary
  4. I use a different term (please specify)
99. Prefer not to say

\*(ALL)

DEM3 Do you consider yourself to be...

1. Straight or heterosexual
  2. Gay
  3. Lesbian
  4. Bisexual
  5. Asexual
  6. Undecided, not sure, questioning
  7. Different identity (please specify)
99. Prefer not to say

\*(ALL)

DEM4 What is your main language spoken at home?

1. English
  2. Arabic
  3. Cantonese
  4. French
  5. German
  6. Greek
  7. Hindi
  8. Indonesian
  9. Italian
  10. Korean
  11. Macedonian
  12. Malay
  13. Mandarin
  14. Nepali
  15. Spanish
  16. Urdu
  17. Vietnamese
  18. Some other language
99. Prefer not to say

\*(ALL)

DEM6 Do you identify as...

1. Aboriginal
  2. Torres Strait Islander
  3. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
  4. Neither Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
99. Prefer not to say

\*(ALL)

DEM7 Do you currently have a disability, health condition or injury that has lasted, or is likely to last, 6 months or more?

1. Yes
2. No

99. Prefer not to say

\*(ALL)

U5 Have you previously been enrolled at a university other than <INSERT UNIVERSITY>?

1. Yes
2. No

99. Prefer not to say

\*(ALL)

U6 In total, how many years have you been enrolled at [IF U5=1, "any Australian university", IF U5=2 or 99, <INSERT UNIVERSITY>]?

1. Less than 1 year
2. 1 year to less than 2 years
3. 2 years to less than 3 years
4. 3 years to less than 4 years
5. 4 years to less than 5 years
6. 5 years to less than 6 years
7. 6 years to less than 7 years
8. More than 7 years

99. Prefer not to say

\*(ALL)

U7 Which best describes your living arrangements during the current semester/session?

1. Student accommodation or residences such as a college, hall, house or a residence operated by the university, churches and companies like UniLodge, Student Housing Australia or Urbanest
2. In your own place (rented or owned) on your own
3. In your own place (rented or owned) with others
4. With your parents, guardian or other family
5. In a 'home-stay' arrangement
6. Insecure accommodation (e.g. couch surfing)
96. Other

99. Prefer not to say

\*(U7=1, LIVING IN STUDENT ACCOMODATION)

U8 At which student accommodation do you live during the current semester/session?

\*[PROGRAMMER NOTE: UNFOLDING RESPONSE OPTIONS RESTRICTED TO UNIVERSITY. LOOKUP FROM EXCEL LIST OF STUDENT ACCOMMODATION]

96. Other

99. Prefer not to say

\*(ALL)

U11 How are you undertaking your studies during the current semester/session at <INSERT UNIVERSITY>?

Classes include study activities like research meetings and lab work.

1. All my classes are conducted on campus
2. All my classes are conducted online
3. Some of my classes are on campus and some online
4. I am currently on work experience or placement and not attending campus
5. I am currently on work experience or placement but also attend some on campus classes
6. I have some other arrangement

99. Prefer not to say

\*(U6>1 OR 99, AT UNI FOR MORE THAN 1 YEAR)

U11a Thinking back to before restrictions were introduced in 2020 to stop the spread of COVID-19, how did you undertake your studies?

Classes include study activities like research meetings and lab work.

1. All of my classes were on campus
2. All of my classes were online
3. Some of my classes were on campus and some online
4. I was on work experience or placement and not attending campus
5. I was on work experience or placement but also attending some on campus classes
6. I had some other arrangement
7. I started classes after restrictions were introduced in 2020

99. Prefer not to say

\*(U11=1, 3 and 5, STUDYING ON CAMPUS) [MULTIPLE RESPONSE]

U12 Which university campus do you attend?

Please select all campuses you attend for the subjects you are studying this semester/session.

Please select all that apply.

\*[PROGRAMMER NOTE: UNFOLDING RESPONSE OPTIONS RESTRICTED TO UNIVERSITY. LOOKUP FROM EXCEL LIST OF UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES]

96. My campus is not listed \*[EXCLUSIVE]

99. Prefer not to say

\*(TIMESTAMP)

## PERCEPTIONS OF UNIVERSITY CULTURE

\*(ALL)

A1 To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements about <INSERT UNIVERSITY>?

(RANDOMISE AND DISPLAY STATEMENTS IN GRID)

- a) I feel a sense of belonging at <INSERT UNIVERSITY>
- b) I feel safe when at <INSERT UNIVERSITY>
- c) I am treated with respect by other students at <INSERT UNIVERSITY>
- d) I am treated with respect by staff at <INSERT UNIVERSITY>
- e) I believe there is a clear sense of socially acceptable behaviour among students at <INSERT UNIVERSITY>
- f) <INSERT UNIVERSITY> is trying hard to protect the safety of all students

(RESPONSE FRAME) (CODE FRAME ORDER BASED ON 'ORDER' VARIABLE)

- 1. Strongly disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Neither agree nor disagree
- 4. Agree
- 5. Strongly agree
  
- 98. Not sure
- 99. Prefer not to say

\*(TIMESTAMP)

## UNIVERSITY OWNED OR PRIVATE ACCOMMODATION CULTURE

\*(U7=1, LIVES IN RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION)

K1 The next few questions are about your student accommodation  
[DISPLAY IF U8 ≠ 96 OR 99: "at <INSERT COLLEGE/RESIDENCE FROM U8>".

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about your student accommodation.

(RANDOMISE AND DISPLAY STATEMENTS IN GRID)

- a) I feel a sense of belonging at <INSERT RESPONSE FROM U8 / DISPLAY IF U8=96 OR 99: "my residence">
- b) I feel safe when at <INSERT RESPONSE FROM U8 / DISPLAY IF U8=96 OR 99: "my residence">
- c) I am treated with respect by other students at <INSERT RESPONSE FROM U8 / DISPLAY IF U8=96 OR 99: "my residence">
- d) I am treated with respect by staff at <INSERT RESPONSE FROM U8 / DISPLAY IF U8=96 OR 99: "my residence">
- e) I believe there is a clear sense of socially acceptable behaviour among students at <INSERT RESPONSE FROM U8 / DISPLAY IF U8=96 OR 99: "my residence">
- f) <INSERT RESPONSE FROM U8 / DISPLAY IF U8=96 OR 99: "my residence"> is trying hard to protect the safety of all students

(RESPONSE FRAME) (CODE FRAME ORDER BASED ON 'ORDER' VARIABLE)

- 1. Strongly disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Neither agree nor disagree
- 4. Agree
- 5. Strongly agree
  
- 98. Not sure
- 99. Prefer not to say

\*(TIMESTAMP)

## SEXUAL ASSAULT

### Prevalence

\*(ALL)

INTSA The next questions are about sexual experiences you may have had that were unwanted.

These can include unwanted sexual acts or sexual contact that happened because someone you agreed or not. It can also include when you were asleep or affected by drugs or alcohol.

We're interested in all of your experiences – whether they have happened in ways connected to your university, or at other times and places in your life.

We would like to again assure you that your answers to these questions are completely confidential. If you would prefer not to answer a particular question, you can select "Prefer not to say" and move on to the next question.

If you experience any distress, you can access confidential support by contacting free support services. Please click on the link at the bottom of this page for a list of available services.

1. Next

\*(ALL)

F1 Has anyone ever done the following things to you when you **did not want them to**? This could have been anywhere, not just at university, and includes when you were asleep or affected by alcohol or drugs.

(DISPLAY STATEMENTS IN GRID)

- a) Pinched, grabbed or fondled your sexual body parts, even if it was over the top of your clothes
- b) Kissed you in a sexual way
- c) Tried to make you have vaginal, oral, or anal sex with them, but sex did not happen
- d) Put their fingers or an object in your vagina or anus
- e) Made you perform oral sex on them
- f) Made you receive oral sex
- g) Had vaginal or anal sex with you

(RESPONSE FRAME)

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

99. Prefer not to say

DVF1 EXPERIENCED SEXUAL ASSAULT

- 1. Yes (ANY F1a to F1g=1)
- 2. No

\*(DVF1=1, EXPERIENCED SEXUAL ASSAULT)

F2 Did the things you mentioned experiencing happen to you in an **Australian university context**?

By university context, we mean any kind of event, place, or social occasion;

- that was arranged or supported by your university, or
- where students or staff from your university were present.

This could have occurred on or off campus.

*We are interested in any experiences you may have had since you first started any university study, not just your current degree.*

\*[PROGRAMMER NOTE: DISPLAY BEHAVIOURS SELECTED AT F1 ONLY]  
(DISPLAY STATEMENTS IN GRID)

- a. Pinched, grabbed or fondled your sexual body parts, even if it was over the top of your clothes
- b. Kissed you in a sexual way
- c. Tried to make you have vaginal, oral, or anal sex with them, but sex did not happen
- d. Put their fingers or an object in your vagina or anus
- e. Made you perform oral sex on them
- f. Made you receive oral sex
- g. Had vaginal or anal sex with you

(RESPONSE FRAME)

1. Yes
  2. No
99. Prefer not to say

DVF2 EXPERIENCED SEXUAL ASSAULT IN A UNI CONTEXT

1. Yes (ANY F2a to F2g=1)
2. No

\*(DVF2=1, EXPERIENCED SEXUAL ASSAULT IN A UNI CONTEXT)

F3 Did the things you mentioned happening in an Australian university context occur in the **last 12 months**?

(DISPLAY BEHAVIOURS SELECTED AT F2 ONLY)  
(DISPLAY STATEMENTS IN GRID)

- a) Pinched, grabbed or fondled your sexual body parts, even if it was over the top of your clothes
- b) Kissed you in a sexual way
- c) Tried to make you have vaginal, oral, or anal sex with them, but sex did not happen
- d) Put their fingers or an object in your vagina or anus
- e) Made you perform oral sex on them
- f) Made you receive oral sex
- g) Had vaginal or anal sex with you

(RESPONSE FRAME)

1. Yes
  2. No
99. Prefer not to say

DVF3 EXPERIENCED SEXUAL ASSAULT IN A UNI CONTEXT IN PAST 12 MONTHS

1. Yes (ANY F3a to F3g=1)
2. No



\*(DVF3=1, EXPERIENCED SEXUAL ASSAULT IN A UNIVERSITY CONTEXT IN PAST 12 MONTHS)

F3a Where did the things you mentioned experiencing in an Australian university context in the last 12 months occur?

Please select all that apply.

(RANDOMISE 1 to 12)

1. University library
2. University lecture theatres, computer labs
3. Hospitality or retail areas on campus (e.g. bar, shops)
4. Sports and recreational areas on campus (e.g. gym, sports fields, galleries)
5. General campus areas (e.g. carpark, walkways, gardens, bathrooms)
6. Clubs and societies, events and spaces
7. On work experience or professional placement
8. University-related online spaces and social activities (e.g. chatroom, online classrooms, messaging apps) \*[DO NOT DISPLAY]
9. At a private home or residence
10. University residential college or other type of student accommodation
11. Academic or administrative staff office
12. Hospitality or retail areas off campus
96. Somewhere else (please specify)
  
99. Prefer not to say \*[EXCLUSIVE]

### **Context of most impactful experience**

\*(DVF2=1, EXPERIENCED SEXUAL ASSAULT IN A UNIVERSITY CONTEXT) [MULTIPLE RESPONSE]

F5 The next questions will ask about the **most impactful** incident of sexual assault you have experienced in an Australian university context.

Which of the following describes what happened in the incident?

*Please select all that apply.*

\*[PROGRAMMER NOTE: DISPLAY BEHAVIOURS SELECTED AT F2 ONLY]

1. Pinched, grabbed or fondled your sexual body parts, even if it was over the top of your clothes
2. Kissed you in a sexual way
3. Tried to make you have vaginal, oral, or anal sex with them, but sex did not happen
4. Put their fingers or an object in your vagina or anus
5. Made you perform oral sex on them
6. Made you receive oral sex
7. Had vaginal or anal sex with you
  
99. Prefer not to say \*[EXCLUSIVE]

\*(DVF2=1, EXPERIENCED SEXUAL ASSAULT IN A UNIVERSITY CONTEXT)

F4 How long ago did this the incident happen?

1. In the last month
2. In the last 12 months but not in the last month
3. More than 12 months ago
  
99. Prefer not to say

\*(DVF2=1, EXPERIENCED SEXUAL ASSAULT IN A UNIVERSITY CONTEXT) [MULTIPLE RESPONSE]

F6 Where were you when the incident occurred?

*Please select all that apply.*

[DISPLAY OPTIONS IN SAME ORDER AS F3a]

1. University library
2. University lecture theatres, computer labs
3. Hospitality or retail areas on campus (e.g. bar, shops)
4. Sports and recreational areas on campus (e.g. gym, sports fields, galleries)
5. General campus areas (e.g. carpark, walkways, gardens, bathrooms)
6. Clubs and societies, events and spaces
7. On work experience or professional placement
8. University-related online spaces and social activities (e.g. chatroom, online classrooms, messaging apps) \*[DO NOT DISPLAY]
9. At a private home or residence
10. University residential college or other type of student accommodation
11. Academic or administrative staff office
12. Hospitality or retail areas off campus
96. Somewhere else (please specify)
  
99. Prefer not to say \*[EXCLUSIVE]

\*(DVF2=1, EXPERIENCED SEXUAL ASSAULT IN A UNIVERSITY CONTEXT)

F7 Excluding yourself, how many people were directly involved (i.e. took part) in the incident?

1. One
2. Two
3. Three
4. Four
5. Five or more
  
98. Not sure
99. Prefer not to say

\*(DVF2=1, EXPERIENCED SEXUAL ASSAULT IN A UNIVERSITY CONTEXT)

F8 How many of them did you know?

1. All of them
2. Some of them (SUPPRESS IF F7=1)
3. None of them
  
99. Prefer not to say

\*(DVF2=1, EXPERIENCED SEXUAL ASSAULT IN A UNIVERSITY CONTEXT) [MULTIPLE RESPONSE]

F9 Was this person (IF F7=1) / Were any of these people (IF F7=2-99) ...

*Please select all that apply.*

(RANDOMISE 1 to 12)

1. A student from your university
2. A student from your place of residence
3. A student from another university
4. A tutor or lecturer from your university
5. A non-academic (administrative) university staff member
6. Your research or academic supervisor at the university
7. Your supervisor at your professional placement or internship
8. A co-worker in your paid employment at university
9. A supervisor or employer in your paid employment at university
10. A co-worker or supervisor in your paid employment outside of the university
11. A partner, hook-up or date
12. A family member
13. A stranger/no one I knew
96. Someone else (please specify)
  
99. Prefer not to say \*[EXCLUSIVE]

\*(DVF2=1, EXPERIENCED SEXUAL ASSAULT IN A UNIVERSITY CONTEXT)  
F10 Was this person (IF F7=1) / Were these people (IF F7=2-99)...

*Please select all that apply.*

1. Male (IF F7=1) / Males (IF F7=2-99)
  2. Female (IF F7=1) / Females (IF F7=2-99)
  3. Non-binary
  4. Different gender (please specify)
- 
98. Not sure
  99. Prefer not to say

### Support and reporting

\*(DVF2=1, EXPERIENCED SEXUAL ASSAULT IN A UNIVERSITY CONTEXT)  
G2 Did you seek support or assistance from within the university?

(RANDOMISE STATEMENTS A-E)

- a) Counselling services
- b) Campus security
- c) Someone in my faculty or school (lecturer or tutor)
- d) Someone from my residential college/dorm/house
- e) Student leader (e.g. Women's Officer or President of a Student Union or Guild)
- f) Someone else associated with the university

(RESPONSE FRAME)

1. Yes
  2. No
- 
99. Prefer not to say

\*(G2a-f=1, SOUGHT ANY SUPPORT FROM UNIVERSITY)

G3 Overall, how satisfied were you with the support or assistance provided to you from within the university?

(CODE FRAME ORDER BASED ON 'ORDER' VARIABLE)

1. Very dissatisfied
  2. Dissatisfied
  3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
  4. Satisfied
  5. Very satisfied
- 
99. Prefer not to say

\*(G2a-f=2, DID NOT SEEK ANY SUPPORT FROM UNIVERSITY OR COLLEGE) [MULTIPLE RESPONSE]

G4 Many people do not seek support or assistance for unwelcome sexual behaviour for a variety of reasons.

Which of the following, if any, were reasons you did not seek support or assistance **from within the university**?

*Please select all that apply.*

(RANDOMISE 1 to 13)

1. I did not know who could provide me with support or assistance
2. I did not know where to go to get support or assistance
3. I felt embarrassed or ashamed
4. I did not think the incident would be kept confidential
5. I did not think I needed help
6. I did not think others would think it was serious enough
7. I was worried I might not be believed
8. I did not want to get anyone into trouble
9. I thought it would be too hard to prove
10. I was too scared or frightened
11. I did not want anyone to know
12. I did not want to involve the police
13. I was worried it would affect my studies or career opportunities
96. Other reasons (please specify)

99. Prefer not to say \*[EXCLUSIVE]

\*(DVF2=1 EXPERIENCED SEXUAL ASSAULT IN A UNIVERSITY CONTEXT)

G6 Did you seek support or assistance from somewhere or someone outside the university?

(RANDOMISE STATEMENTS A-I)

- a) Friend
- b) Family
- c) Support provided in the workplace
- d) Local sexual assault service/rape crisis centre
- e) Telephone or online counselling service (e.g. 1800 RESPECT or Lifeline)
- f) Police
- g) Mental health professional
- h) Doctor
- i) Religious or spiritual leader
- j) Someone else

(RESPONSE FRAME)

1. Yes
2. No

99. Prefer not to say

\*(DVF2=1, EXPERIENCED SEXUAL ASSAULT IN A UNIVERSITY CONTEXT)

G7 Did you formally report or make a formal complaint about the incident to anyone within the university?

1. Yes
2. No

99. Prefer not to say

\*(G7=1, MADE A FORMAL REPORT)

G8 Did the university explain their formal reporting or complaint processes to you, including any involvement with or processes for reporting to the police?

1. Yes
2. No

98. Not sure  
99. Prefer not to say

\*(G7=1, MADE A FORMAL REPORT)

G9 How satisfied were you with the university's formal reporting or complaint process?

(CODE FRAME ORDER BASED ON 'ORDER' VARIABLE)

1. Very dissatisfied
2. Dissatisfied
3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
4. Satisfied
5. Very satisfied

99. Prefer not to say

\*(G7=1, MADE A FORMAL REPORT)

G10 Was the incident reported to the police?

1. Yes
2. No

98. Not sure

99. Prefer not to say

\*(G7=2, DID NOT MAKE A FORMAL REPORT) [MULTIPLE RESPONSE]

G11 Many people do not report experiences of unwanted sexual behaviour for a variety of reasons.

Which, if any, of these were reasons you decided not to formally report or make a complaint to your university?

*Please select all that apply.*

(RANDOMISE 1 to 13)

1. I did not know who I could make a formal report or complaint to
2. I did not know where to go to make a formal report or complaint
3. I felt embarrassed or ashamed
4. I did not think the incident would be kept confidential
5. I did not think I needed help
6. I did not think others would think it was serious enough
7. I was worried I might not be believed
8. I did not want to get anyone into trouble
9. I thought it would be too hard to prove
10. I was too scared or frightened
11. I did not want anyone to know
12. I did not want to involve the police
13. I was worried it would affect my studies or career opportunities
96. Other reasons (please specify)

99. Prefer not to say \*[EXCLUSIVE]

### **Bystander perceptions and experiences**

\*(ALL)

H1 The unwanted sexual acts and touching we have asked about in earlier questions are examples of **sexual assault**.

Sexual assault is usually defined as any unwanted sexual acts and/or touching where a person **does not freely agree**, or is unable to freely agree – for example if they are forced, threatened, pressured, incapacitated, asleep, passed out or affected by alcohol or drugs. It can include attempted and completed acts, and does not require that a person said 'no' or tried to resist the acts.

In the past 12 months, has another student from <INSERT UNIVERSITY> told you, or you suspected, that they may have been **sexually assaulted** in a university context?

1. Yes
2. No

99. Prefer not to say

\*(H1=BYSTANDER TO SEXUAL ASSAULT)

H2 Bystanders may choose to take action or not to take action for a variety of reasons.

Thinking about the most recent experience, did you do anything when you became aware of this sexual assault?

1. Yes
2. No

99. Prefer not to say

\*(H2=1, TOOK ACTION) [MULTIPLE RESPONSE]

H3 Which of the following actions did you take?

*Please select all that apply.*

(RANDOMISE 1 to 8)

1. Talked to or offered assistance or advice to the victim/survivor
2. Spoke to the alleged perpetrator
3. Reported the incident to the university
4. Spoke to someone at the university about the incident
5. Spoke to someone outside the university about the incident
6. Contacted a telephone or online service (e.g. 1800 RESPECT or Lifeline)
7. Called the police
8. Called university campus security
96. Took some other action

99. Prefer not to say \*[EXCLUSIVE]

\*(H2=2, DID NOT TAKE ACTION) [MULTIPLE RESPONSE]

H4 People may choose to not take action for a variety of reasons.

Which of the following best describes why you did not take any action when you became aware of this sexual assault?

*Please select all that apply.*

(RANDOMISE 1 to 8)

1. I felt it would endanger the victim/survivor
2. I felt worried for my own safety
3. I didn't think it was serious enough to intervene
4. I didn't think it was my responsibility
5. I knew that other people were supporting and assisting them
6. I didn't know what to do
7. The victim asked me not to take any action
8. I was told that action was already taken
96. Other (please specify)

99. Prefer not to say \*[EXCLUSIVE]

**Knowledge of university's support services**

\*(ALL)

I1 We would like to know more about your understanding of your university's support services, formal reporting/complaint processes and policies on sexual assault.

How much do you know about where you can seek support or assistance within the university about an experience of sexual assault?

(CODE FRAME ORDER BASED ON 'ORDER' VARIABLE)

1. Nothing
2. Very little
3. Some
4. A lot
5. Everything

99. Prefer not to say

\*(ALL)

I2 How much do you know about where you can go in your university to formally report, or make a complaint about an experience of sexual assault?

(CODE FRAME ORDER BASED ON 'ORDER' VARIABLE)

1. Nothing
2. Very little
3. Some
4. A lot
5. Everything

99. Prefer not to say

\*(ALL)

I4 How confident are you in <INSERT UNIVERSITY>'s reporting process for incidents of sexual assault?

(CODE FRAME ORDER BASED ON 'ORDER' VARIABLE)

1. Not at all
2. Slightly
3. Somewhat
4. Moderately
5. Extremely

98. Not sure

99. Prefer not to say

\*(ALL)

I5 What else, if anything, do you think <INSERT UNIVERSITY> could do to reduce incidents of sexual assault?

1. (SPECIFY: FULL VERBATIM)
2. Nothing

99. Prefer not to say

\*(TIMESTAMP)

## SEXUAL HARASSMENT

### Prevalence

\*(ALL)

INTSH The next questions are about unwelcome behaviours of a sexual nature you may have experienced.

We're interested in all of your experiences – whether they have happened in ways connected to your university, or at other times and places whether in person, via phone, text message, email or social media.

Your answers to all questions in this study are completely confidential. If you would prefer not to answer a question, you can select "Prefer not to say".

1. Next

\*(ALL)

B1 Has anyone ever made you feel **uncomfortable, harassed or upset** in the following ways?

This could have been anywhere, including online, not just when you were at university.

(DISPLAY STATEMENTS IN GRID)

- a) Touching you, hugging you, or invading your personal space
- b) Staring at you
- c) Following you or loitering nearby
- d) Making or sending you sexually suggestive comments, jokes or insults
- e) Making sexual gestures or exposing themselves to you
- f) Showing or sending you sexually explicit pictures or messages
- g) Making requests for sex or repeated invitations to go out on dates
- h) Making comments or asking intrusive questions about your private life, body or physical appearance
- i) Taking a nude or sexual photo/video of you without your permission
- j) Posting a nude or sexual photo/video of you online, or sending it to others, without your permission

(RESPONSE FRAME)

1. Yes
  2. No
99. Prefer not to say

DVB1 EXPERIENCED SEXUAL HARASSMENT

1. Yes (ANY B1a to B1j=1)
2. No

\*(DVB1=1, EXPERIENCED SEXUAL HARASSMENT)

B2 Did the unwelcome behaviours you mentioned experiencing happen to you in an **Australian university context**?

By university context, we mean any kind of event, place, or social occasion;

- that was arranged or supported by your university, or
- where students or staff from your university were present.

This could have occurred on or off campus, or in a digital environment.

*We are interested in any experiences you may have had since you first started any university study, not just your current degree.*

\*[PROGRAMMER NOTE: DISPLAY BEHAVIOURS SELECTED AT B1 ONLY]

(DISPLAY STATEMENTS IN GRID)

- a) Touching you, hugging you, or invading your personal space
- b) Staring at you
- c) Following you or loitering nearby
- d) Making or sending you sexually suggestive comments, jokes or insults



- e) Making sexual gestures or exposing themselves to you
- f) Showing or sending you sexually explicit pictures or messages
- g) Making requests for sex or repeated invitations to go out on dates
- h) Making comments or asking intrusive questions about your private life, body or physical appearance
- i) Taking a nude or sexual photo/video of you without your permission
- j) Posting a nude or sexual photo/video of you online, or sending it to others, without your permission

(RESPONSE FRAME)

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

99. Prefer not to say

#### DVB2 EXPERIENCED SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN A UNI CONTEXT

- 1. Yes (ANY B2a to B2j=1)
- 2. No

\*(DVB2=1, EXPERIENCED SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN A UNI CONTEXT)

B3 Did the unwelcome behaviours you mentioned happening in an Australian university context occur in the **last 12 months**?

\*[PROGRAMMER NOTE: DISPLAY BEHAVIOURS SELECTED AT B2 ONLY]

(DISPLAY STATEMENTS IN GRID)

- a) Touching you, hugging you, or invading your personal space
- b) Staring at you
- c) Following you or loitering nearby
- d) Making or sending you sexually suggestive comments, jokes or insults
- e) Making sexual gestures or exposing themselves to you
- f) Showing or sending you sexually explicit pictures or messages
- g) Making requests for sex or repeated invitations to go out on dates
- h) Making comments or asking intrusive questions about your private life, body or physical appearance
- i) Taking a nude or sexual photo/video of you without your permission
- j) Posting a nude or sexual photo/video of you online, or sending it to others, without your permission

(RESPONSE FRAME)

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

99. Prefer not to say

#### DVB3 EXPERIENCED SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN A UNI CONTEXT IN PAST 12 MONTHS

- 1. Yes (ANY B3a to B3j=1)
- 2. No

\*(DVB3=1, EXPERIENCED SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN A UNIVERSITY CONTEXT IN PAST 12 MONTHS)

B3a Where did the things you mentioned experiencing in an Australian university context in the last 12 months occur?

*Please select all that apply.*

(RANDOMISE 1 to 12)

- 1. University library
- 2. University lecture theatres, computer labs
- 3. Hospitality or retail areas on campus (e.g. bar, shops)
- 4. Sports and recreational areas on campus (e.g. gym, sports fields, galleries)
- 5. General campus areas (e.g. carpark, walkways, gardens, bathrooms)
- 6. Clubs and societies, events and spaces
- 7. On work experience or professional placement
- 8. University-related online spaces and social activities (e.g. chatroom, online classrooms, messaging apps)

9. At a private home or residence
10. University residential college or other type of student accommodation
11. Academic or administrative staff office
12. Hospitality or retail areas off campus
96. Somewhere else (please specify)

99. Prefer not to say \*[EXCLUSIVE]

**Context of most impactful experience**

\*(DVB2=1, EXPERIENCED SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN UNIVERSITY CONTEXT) [MULTIPLE RESPONSE]

B5 The next questions will ask about the **most impactful** incident of unwelcome sexual behaviour that you have experienced in an Australian university context.

Which of the following describes what happened in the incident?

*Please select all that apply.*

\*[PROGRAMMER NOTE: DISPLAY BEHAVIOURS SELECTED AT B2 ONLY]

1. Touching you, hugging you, or invading your personal space
2. Staring at you
3. Following you or loitering nearby
4. Making or sending you sexually suggestive comments, jokes or insults
5. Making sexual gestures or exposing themselves to you
6. Showing or sending you sexually explicit pictures or messages
7. Making requests for sex or repeated invitations to go out on dates
8. Making comments or asking intrusive questions about your private life, body or physical appearance
9. Taking a nude or sexual photo/video of you without your permission
10. Posting a nude or sexual photo/video of you online, or sending it to others, without your permission

99. Prefer not to say \*[EXCLUSIVE]

\*(DVB2=1, EXPERIENCED SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN UNIVERSITY CONTEXT)

B4 How long ago did this incident happen?

1. In the last month
2. In the last 12 months but not in the last month
3. More than 12 month ago

99. Prefer not to say

\*(DVB2=1, EXPERIENCED SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN A UNIVERSITY CONTEXT)

[MULTIPLE RESPONSE]

B6 Where were you when the incident occurred?

*Please select all that apply.*

[DISPLAY OPTIONS IN SAME ORDER AS B3a]

1. University library
2. University lecture theatres, computer labs
3. Hospitality or retail areas on campus (e.g. bar, shops)
4. Sports and recreational areas on campus (e.g. gym, sports fields, galleries)
5. General campus areas (e.g. carpark, walkways, gardens, bathrooms)
6. Clubs and societies, events and spaces
7. On work experience or professional placement
8. University-related online spaces and social activities (e.g. chatroom, online classrooms, messaging apps)
9. At a private home or residence
10. University residential college or other type of student accommodation
11. Academic or administrative staff office
12. Hospitality or retail areas off campus
96. Somewhere else (please specify)

99. Prefer not to say \*[EXCLUSIVE]

\*(DVB2=1, EXPERIENCED SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN A UNIVERSITY CONTEXT)

B7 Excluding yourself, how many people were directly involved (i.e. took part) in the incident?

1. One
  2. Two
  3. Three
  4. Four
  5. Five or more
- 
98. Not sure
  99. Prefer not to say

\*(DVB2=1, EXPERIENCED SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN A UNIVERSITY CONTEXT)

B8 How many of them did you know?

1. All of them
  2. Some of them (SUPPRESS IF B7=1)
  3. None of them
- 
99. Prefer not to say

\*(DVB2=1, EXPERIENCED SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN A UNIVERSITY CONTEXT)

[MULTIPLE RESPONSE]

B9 Was this person (IF B7=1) / Were any of these people (IF B7=2-99)...

*Please select all that apply.*

(RANDOMISE 1 to 12)

1. A student from your university
  2. A student from your place of residence
  3. A student from another university
  4. A tutor or lecturer from your university
  5. A non-academic (administrative) university staff member
  6. Your research or academic supervisor at the university
  7. Your supervisor at your professional placement or internship
  8. A co-worker in your paid employment at university
  9. A supervisor or employer in your paid employment at university
  10. A co-worker or supervisor in your paid employment outside of the university
  11. A partner, hook-up or date
  12. A family member
  13. A stranger/no one I knew
  96. Someone else (please specify)
- 
99. Prefer not to say \*[EXCLUSIVE]

\*(DVB2=1, EXPERIENCED SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN A UNIVERSITY CONTEXT)

B10 Was this person (IF B7=1) / Were these people (IF B7=2-99)...

*Please select all that apply.*

1. Male (IF B7=1) / Males (IF B7=2-99)
  2. Female (IF B7=1) / Females (IF B7=2-99)
  3. Non-binary
  4. Different gender (please specify)
- 
98. Not sure
  99. Prefer not to say

## **Support and reporting**

\*(DVB2=1, EXPERIENCED SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN A UNIVERSITY CONTEXT)

C2 Did you seek support or assistance from within the university?

(RANDOMISE STATEMENTS A-E)

- a) Counselling services
- b) Campus security
- c) Someone in my faculty or school (lecturer or tutor)
- d) Someone from my residential college/dorm/house
- e) Student leader (e.g. Women's Officer or President of a Student Union or Guild)
- f) Someone else associated with the university

(RESPONSE FRAME)

1. Yes
2. No

99. Prefer not to say

\*(C2a to f=1, SOUGHT ANY SUPPORT FROM UNIVERSITY)

C3 Overall, how satisfied were you with the support or assistance provided to you from within the university?

(CODE FRAME ORDER BASED ON 'ORDER' VARIABLE)

1. Very dissatisfied
2. Dissatisfied
3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
4. Satisfied
5. Very satisfied

99. Prefer not to say

\*(C2a-f=2, DID NOT SEEK ANY SUPPORT FROM UNIVERSITY OR COLLEGE) [MULTIPLE RESPONSE]

C4 Many people do not seek support or assistance for unwelcome sexual behaviour for a variety of reasons.

Which of the following, if any, were reasons you did not seek support or assistance from **within the university**?

*Please select all that apply.*

(RANDOMISE 1 to 13)

1. I did not know who could provide me with support or assistance
2. I did not know where to go to get support or assistance
3. I felt embarrassed or ashamed
4. I did not think the incident would be kept confidential
5. I did not think I needed help
6. I did not think others would think it was serious enough
7. I was worried I might not be believed
8. I did not want to get anyone into trouble
9. I thought it would be too hard to prove
10. I was too scared or frightened
11. I did not want anyone to know
12. I did not want to involve the police
13. I was worried it would affect my studies or career opportunities
96. Other reasons (please specify)

99. Prefer not to say \*[EXCLUSIVE]

\*(DVB2=1 EXPERIENCED SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN A UNIVERSITY CONTEXT)

C6 Did you seek support or assistance from somewhere or someone **outside the university**?

(RANDOMISE STATEMENTS A-I)

- a) Friend
- b) Family
- c) Support provided in the workplace
- d) Local sexual assault service/rape crisis centre
- e) Telephone or online counselling service (e.g. 1800 RESPECT or Lifeline)
- f) Police
- g) Mental health professional
- h) Doctor
- i) Religious or spiritual leader
- j) Someone else

(RESPONSE FRAME)

1. Yes
2. No

99. Prefer not to say

\*(DVB2=1 EXPERIENCED SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN A UNIVERSITY CONTEXT)

C7 Did you **formally report or make a formal complaint** about the incident to anyone within the university?

1. Yes
2. No

99. Prefer not to say

\*(C7=1, MADE A FORMAL REPORT)

C8 Did the university explain their formal reporting or complaint processes to you, including any involvement with or processes for reporting to the police?

1. Yes
2. No

98. Not sure

99. Prefer not to say

\*(C7=1, MADE A FORMAL REPORT)

C9 How satisfied were you with the university's formal reporting or complaint process?

(CODE FRAME ORDER BASED ON 'ORDER' VARIABLE)

1. Very dissatisfied
2. Dissatisfied
3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
4. Satisfied
5. Very satisfied

99. Prefer not to say

\*(C7=1, MADE A FORMAL REPORT)

C10 Was the incident reported to the police?

1. Yes
2. No

98. Not sure

99. Prefer not to say

\*(C7=2, DID NOT MAKE A FORMAL REPORT) [MULTIPLE RESPONSE]

C11 Many people do not report experiences of unwelcome sexual behaviour for a variety of reasons.

Which, if any, of these were reasons you decided not to formally report or make a complaint **to your university**?

*Please select all that apply.*

(RANDOMISE 1 to 13)

1. I did not know who I could make a formal report or complaint to
2. I did not know where to go to make a formal report or complaint
3. I felt embarrassed or ashamed
4. I did not think the incident would be kept confidential
5. I did not think I needed help
6. I did not think others would think it was serious enough
7. I was worried I might not be believed
8. I did not want to get anyone into trouble
9. I thought it would be too hard to prove
10. I was too scared or frightened
11. I did not want anyone to know
12. I did not want to involve the police
13. I was worried it would affect my studies or career opportunities
96. Other reasons (please specify)

99. Prefer not to say \*[EXCLUSIVE]

### **Bystander perceptions and experiences**

\*(ALL)

D1 The unwelcome behaviours of a sexual nature we have asked about in earlier questions are examples of **sexual harassment**.

Sexual harassment is usually defined as an unwelcome sexual advance, unwelcome request for sexual favours or other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature which makes a person feel offended, humiliated and/or intimidated.

In the past 12 months, have you directly observed or witnessed another student from <INSERT UNIVERSITY> being sexually harassed in an Australian university context?

1. Yes
2. No

99. Prefer not to say

\*(D1=1, BYSTANDER TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT)

D2 Bystanders may choose to take action or not to take action for a variety of reasons.

Thinking about the most recent experience, did you do anything in relation to the incident of sexual harassment you observed?

1. Yes
2. No

99. Prefer not to say

\*(D2=1, TOOK ACTION) [MULTIPLE RESPONSE]

D3 Which of the following actions did you take?

*Please select all that apply.*

(RANDOMISE 1 to 8)

1. Talked to or offered assistance or advice to the victim/survivor
2. Spoke to the alleged perpetrator
3. Reported the incident to the university
4. Spoke to someone at the university about the incident
5. Spoke to someone outside the university about the incident

- 6. Contacted a telephone or online service (e.g. 1800 RESPECT or Lifeline)
- 7. Called the police
- 8. Called university campus security
- 96. Took some other action
  
- 99. Prefer not to say \*[EXCLUSIVE]

\*(D2=2, DID NOT TAKE ACTION) [MULTIPLE RESPONSE]

D4 People may choose to not take action for a variety of reasons.

Which of the following best describes why you did not take any action about the incident you witnessed?

*Please select all that apply.*

(RANDOMISE 1 to 8)

- 1. I felt it would endanger the victim/survivor
- 2. I felt worried for my own safety
- 3. I didn't think it was serious enough to intervene
- 4. I didn't think it was my responsibility
- 5. I knew that other people were supporting and assisting them
- 6. I didn't know what to do
- 7. The victim asked me not to take any action
- 8. I was told that action was already taken
- 96. Other (please specify)

99. Prefer not to say \*[EXCLUSIVE]

#### **Knowledge of university's support services**

\*(ALL)

E1 We would like to know more about your understanding of your university's support services, formal reporting/complaint processes and policies on sexual harassment.

How much do you know about where you can seek support or assistance within the university about an experience of sexual harassment?

(CODE FRAME ORDER BASED ON 'ORDER' VARIABLE)

- 1. Nothing
- 2. Very little
- 3. Some
- 4. A lot
- 5. Everything

99. Prefer not to say

\*(ALL)

E2 How much do you know about where you can go in your university to formally report, or make a complaint about, an experience of sexual harassment?

(CODE FRAME ORDER BASED ON 'ORDER' VARIABLE)

- 1. Nothing
- 2. Very little
- 3. Some
- 4. A lot
- 5. Everything

99. Prefer not to say

\*(ALL)

E4 How confident are you in <INSERT UNIVERSITY>'s reporting process for incidents of sexual harassment?

(CODE FRAME ORDER BASED ON 'ORDER' VARIABLE)

1. Not at all
2. Slightly
3. Somewhat
4. Moderately
5. Extremely

98. Not sure

99. Prefer not to say

\*(ALL)

E5 What else, if anything, do you think <INSERT UNIVERSITY> could do to reduce incidents of sexual harassment?

1. FULL VERBATIM

2. Nothing

99. Prefer not to say

\*(TIMESTAMP)

### KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES ABOUT SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ASSAULT

\*(ALL)

J1 The following are statements people sometimes make about sexual assault and sexual harassment. There are no right or wrong answers, we are just looking for your opinions.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements.

(RANDOMISE AND DISPLAY STATEMENTS IN GRID)

- a) It can only be called sexual assault if a person physically resists
- b) People are more likely to be sexually assaulted by someone they know than by a stranger
- c) Many allegations of sexual assault that people make are false
- d) If a person is sexually assaulted while they are drunk or affected by drugs, they are at least partly responsible
- e) People who are sexually harassed should report it rather than sort it out themselves
- f) People who wait weeks or months to report sexual harassment are probably lying
- g) A lot of times, what people say is sexual assault was actually consensual sex that they regretted afterwards
- h) Accusations of sexual assault are often used by one person as a way to get back at another person

(RESPONSE FRAME) (CODE FRAME ORDER BASED ON 'ORDER' VARIABLE)

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

99. Prefer not to say

\*(TIMESTAMP)



## UNIVERSITY OWNED OR PRIVATE ACCOMMODATION

\*(U7=1, LIVES IN RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION)

K2 The next few questions are about your student accommodation [DISPLAY IF U8 ≠ 96 OR 99:  
“at <INSERT COLLEGE/RESIDENCE FROM U8>”.

How much do you know about where you can seek support or assistance within **your residence**  
about an experience of **sexual harassment or sexual assault**?

(CODE FRAME ORDER BASED ON ‘ORDER’ VARIABLE)

1. Nothing
2. Very little
3. Some
4. A lot
5. Everything

99. Prefer not to say

\*(U7=1, LIVES IN RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION)

K3 How much do you know about where you can go in **your residence** to formally report,  
or make a complaint about, an experience of **sexual harassment or sexual assault**?

(CODE FRAME ORDER BASED ON ‘ORDER’ VARIABLE)

1. Nothing
2. Very little
3. Some
4. A lot
5. Everything

99. Prefer not to say

\*(U7=1, LIVES IN RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION)

K4 How confident are you in <INSERT COLLEGE/RESIDENCE FROM U8 OR DISPLAY IF U8=96  
OR 99: “your residence>’s reporting process for incidents of **sexual harassment or sexual  
assault** among its students?

(CODE FRAME ORDER BASED ON ‘ORDER’ VARIABLE)

1. Not at all
2. Slightly
3. Somewhat
4. Moderately
5. Extremely

98. Not sure

99. Prefer not to say

\*(TIMESTAMP)

## Appendix 4

# List of figures

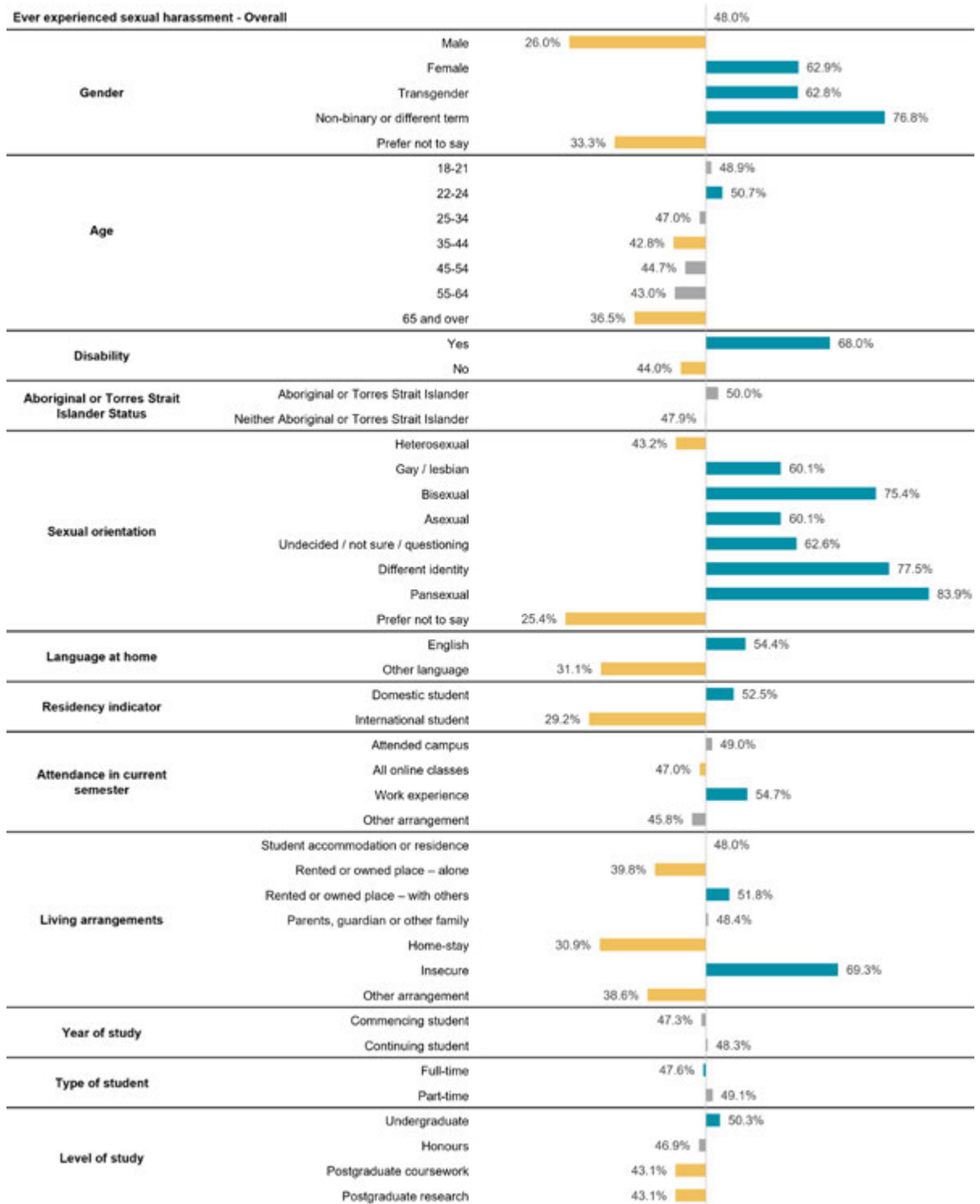
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## Appendix 5

# Lifetime prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual assault

Figure 36: Lifetime prevalence of sexual harassment

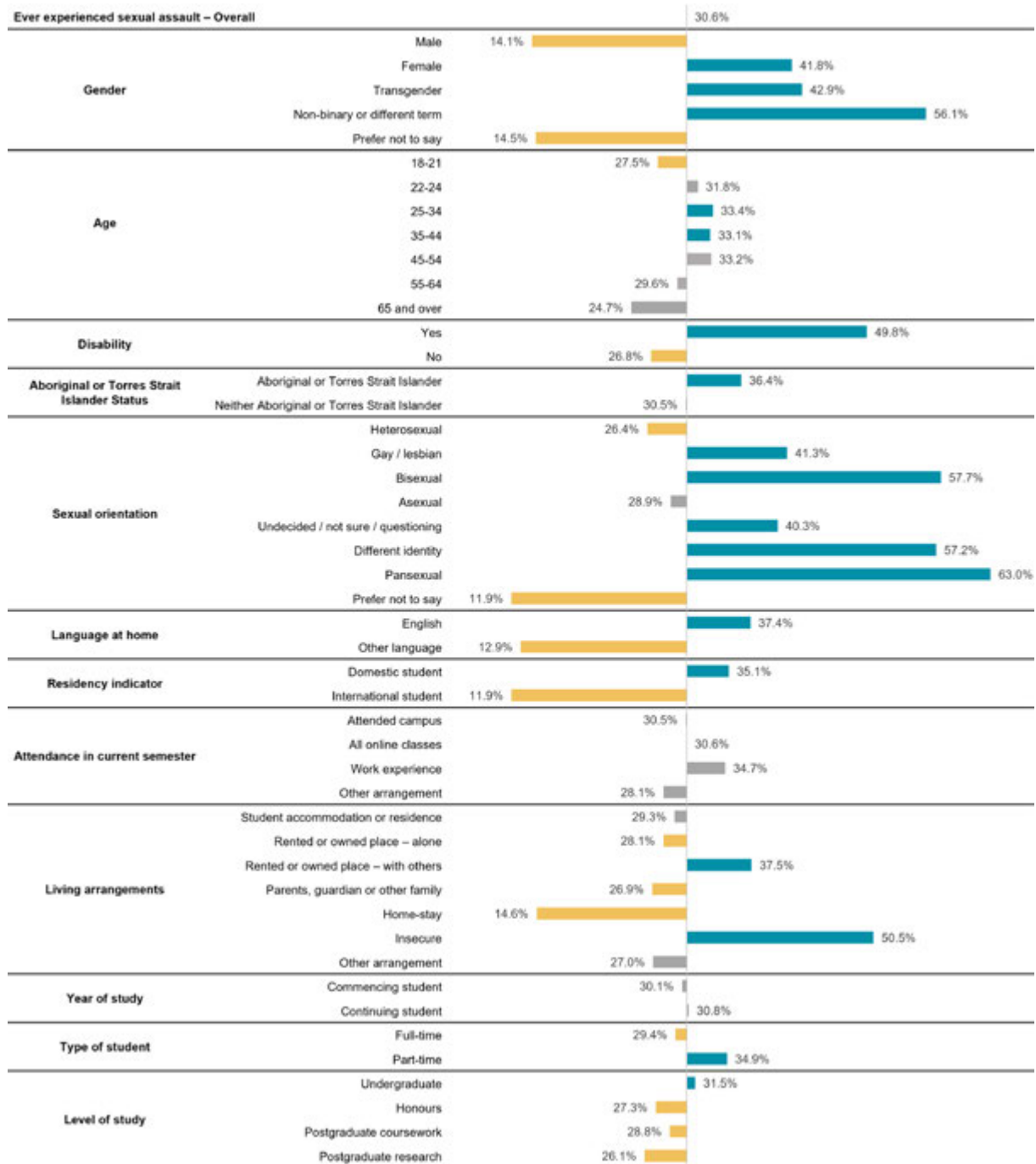


Base: All students (n=43,819). Question: DVB1.

One asterisk \* and lighter grey bar = RSE >25%. Bar excluded for measures where RSE >50% and two \*s.

Light blue bar = significantly higher than overall (p<0.01). Light yellow = significantly lower than overall (p<0.01).

Figure 37: Lifetime prevalence of sexual assault



Base: All students (n=43,819). Question: DVF1  
 One asterisk \* and lighter grey bar = RSE >25%. Bar excluded for measures where RSE >50% and two \*s.  
 Light blue bar = significantly higher than overall (p<0.01). Light yellow = significantly lower than overall (p<0.01).

## Appendix 6

# Regression outputs

### Experienced sexual harassment in an Australian university context since starting at university

Co-variate	Odds ratio	Lower CI	Upper CI	P value	
(Intercept)	0.046	0.04	0.054	<0.001	
<b>Age (18-21)</b>					
22-24	1.24	1.095	1.404	<0.001	***
25-34	0.759	0.656	0.878	<0.001	***
35-44	0.413	0.339	0.503	<0.001	***
45-54	0.306	0.237	0.394	<0.001	***
55-64	0.332	0.235	0.468	<0.001	***
65 and over	0.268	0.134	0.134	<0.001	***
<b>Gender (Male)</b>					
Female	3.09	2.746	3.477	<0.001	***
Transgender	2.763	1.726	4.42	<0.001	***
Non-binary or different term	3.652	2.769	4.817	<0.001	***
Prefer not to say	2.024	1.218	3.363	<0.001	***
<b>Disability (No)</b>					
Yes	2.01	1.814	2.227	<0.001	***
<b>Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status (Neither Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander)</b>					
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	1.237	0.942	1.625	0.044	*
<b>Sexual orientation (Heterosexual)</b>					
Gay / lesbian	2.026	1.624	2.527	<0.001	***
Bisexual	2.01	1.773	2.278	<0.001	***
Asexual	1.251	0.9	1.74	0.08	ns
Undecided / not sure / questioning	1.453	1.201	1.759	<0.001	***
Different identity	1.743	1.21	2.511	<0.001	***
Pansexual	2.23	1.515	3.283	<0.001	***
Prefer not to say	0.955	0.67	1.361	0.737	ns

Co-variate	Odds ratio	Lower CI	Upper CI	P value	
<b>Language at home (English)</b>					
Other language	0.706	0.609	0.818	<0.001	***
<b>Level of study (Undergraduate)</b>					
Honours	1.218	1.062	1.398	<0.001	***
Postgraduate coursework	1.45	1.261	1.666	<0.001	***
Postgraduate research	2.208	1.806	2.7	<0.001	***
<b>Attendance in current semester (All online classes)</b>					
Attended campus	1.202	1.095	1.32	<0.001	***
Work experience	1.335	1.089	1.637	<0.001	***
Other arrangement	1.242	0.979	1.575	0.019	*
<b>Living arrangements (Parents, guardian or other family)</b>					
Student accommodation or residence	2.015	1.711	2.373	<0.001	***
Rented or owned place - alone	1.156	0.981	1.362	0.023	*
Rented or owned place - with others	1.232	1.096	1.385	<0.001	***
Home-stay	1.387	0.731	2.63	0.188	ns
Insecure	3.624	1.536	8.549	<0.001	***
Other arrangement	0.874	0.608	1.256	0.34	ns
<b>Residency indicator (Domestic student)</b>					
International student	0.531	0.437	0.644	<0.001	***
<b>Year of study (Commencing student)</b>					
Continuing student	1.463	1.327	1.614	<0.001	***
<b>Type of student (Full-time)</b>					
Part-time	0.97	0.862	1.091	0.5	ns

Note: \*p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001, ns – nonsignificant

### Experienced sexual harassment in an Australian university context past 12 months

Co-variate	Odds ratio	Lower CI	Upper CI	P value	
(Intercept)	0.033	0.028	0.04	<0.001	
<b>Age (18-21)</b>					
22-24	0.751	0.639	0.882	<0.001	***
25-34	0.453	0.373	0.551	<0.001	***
35-44	0.249	0.184	0.339	<0.001	***
45-54	0.136	0.083	0.222	<0.001	***
55-64	0.186	0.096	0.358	<0.001	***
65 and over	0.066	0.017	0.255	<0.001	***
<b>Gender (Male)</b>					
Female	2.686	2.298	3.138	<0.001	***
Transgender	2.709	1.569	4.677	<0.001	***
Non-binary or different term	3.265	2.34	4.555	<0.001	***
Prefer not to say	2.26	1.184	4.313	0.001	**



Co-variate	Odds ratio	Lower CI	Upper CI	P value	
<b>Disability (No)</b>					
Yes	1.703	1.494	1.941	<0.001	***
<b>Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status (Neither Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander)</b>					
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	1.366	0.957	1.95	0.024	*
<b>Sexual orientation (Heterosexual)</b>					
Gay / lesbian	2.137	1.633	2.797	<0.001	***
Bisexual	1.933	1.663	2.247	<0.001	***
Asexual	1.105	0.709	1.721	0.563	ns
Undecided / not sure / questioning	1.222	0.959	1.559	0.033	*
Different identity	1.569	1.01	2.438	0.008	**
Pansexual	2.083	1.368	3.17	<0.001	***
Prefer not to say	1.098	0.684	1.764	0.61	ns
<b>Language at home (English)</b>					
Other language	0.719	0.586	0.882	<0.001	***
<b>Level of study (Undergraduate)</b>					
Honours	0.987	0.832	1.172	0.846	ns
Postgraduate coursework	0.949	0.767	1.174	0.527	ns
Postgraduate research	1.679	1.259	2.24	<0.001	***
<b>Attendance in current semester (All online classes)</b>					
Attended campus	1.866	1.655	2.104	<0.001	***
Work experience	1.669	1.273	2.188	<0.001	***
Other arrangement	1.499	1.078	2.086	0.002	**
<b>Living arrangements (Parents, guardian or other family)</b>					
Student accommodation or residence	2.589	2.168	3.092	<0.001	***
Rented or owned place - alone	1.17	0.931	1.471	0.076	ns
Rented or owned place - with others	1.169	1.005	1.358	0.008	**
Home-stay	1.358	0.627	2.942	0.307	ns
Insecure	4.356	1.635	11.609	<0.001	***
Other arrangement	0.862	0.537	1.383	0.417	ns
<b>Residency indicator (Domestic student)</b>					
International student	0.695	0.53	0.911	0.001	**
<b>Year of study (Commencing student)</b>					
Continuing student	1.118	0.991	1.262	0.017	*
<b>Type of student (Full-time)</b>					
Part-time	0.779	0.65	0.933	<0.001	***

Note: \*p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001, ns - non-significant

## Experienced sexual assault in an Australian university context since starting at university

Co-variate	Odds ratio	Lower CI	Upper CI	P value	
(Intercept)	0.008	0.006	0.01	<0.001	
<b>Age (18-21)</b>					
22-24	1.428	1.163	1.753	<0.001	***
25-34	0.806	0.63	1.032	0.025	*
35-44	0.387	0.279	0.537	<0.001	***
45-54	0.364	0.241	0.549	<0.001	***
55-64	0.369	0.219	0.621	<0.001	***
65 and over	0.399	0.139	1.15	0.025	*
<b>Gender (Male)</b>					
Female	2.599	2.096	3.222	<0.001	***
Transgender	2.748	1.283	5.884	0.001	**
Non-binary or different term	2.816	1.852	4.282	<0.001	***
Prefer not to say	2.597	0.978	6.896	0.012	*
<b>Disability (No)</b>					
Yes	2.127	1.803	2.508	<0.001	***
<b>Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status (Neither Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander)</b>					
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	1.421	0.903	2.235	0.046	*
<b>Sexual orientation (Heterosexual)</b>					
Gay / lesbian	1.95	1.348	2.821	<0.001	***
Bisexual	2.043	1.683	2.481	<0.001	***
Asexual	1.008	0.592	1.717	0.968	ns
Undecided / not sure / questioning	1.543	1.128	2.111	<0.001	***
Different identity	1.743	0.967	3.143	0.015	*
Pansexual	1.636	0.908	2.948	0.031	*
Prefer not to say	0.776	0.354	1.698	0.403	ns
<b>Language at home (English)</b>					
Other language	0.548	0.411	0.73	<0.001	***
<b>Level of study (Undergraduate)</b>					
Honours	1.41	1.123	1.77	<0.001	***
Postgraduate coursework	1.67	1.337	2.086	<0.001	***
Postgraduate research	2.082	1.484	2.92	<0.001	***
<b>Attendance in current semester (All online classes)</b>					
Attended campus	0.929	0.789	1.095	0.25	ns
Work experience	1.195	0.881	1.621	0.133	ns
Other arrangement	1.273	0.863	1.88	0.11	ns

Co-variate	Odds ratio	Lower CI	Upper CI	P value	
<b>Living arrangements (Parents, guardian or other family)</b>					
Student accommodation or residence	4.181	3.254	5.372	<0.001	***
Rented or owned place - alone	2.161	1.622	2.879	<0.001	***
Rented or owned place - with others	2.522	2.045	3.112	<0.001	***
Home-stay	3.386	1.175	9.756	0.003	**
Insecure	4.359	1.26	15.083	0.002	**
Other arrangement	1.661	0.917	3.007	0.028	*
<b>Residency indicator (Domestic student)</b>					
International student	0.379	0.254	0.565	<0.001	***
<b>Year of study (Commencing student)</b>					
Continuing student	1.442	1.216	1.711	<0.001	***
<b>Type of student (Full-time)</b>					
Part-time	1.047	0.858	1.277	0.553	ns

Note: \*p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001, ns – nonsignificant

#### Experienced sexual assault in an Australian university context past 12 months

Co-variate	Odds ratio	Lower CI	Upper CI	P value	
(Intercept)	0.004	0.003	0.007	<0.001	
<b>Age (18-21)</b>					
22-24	0.593	0.401	0.879	0.001	**
25-34	0.28	0.167	0.47	<0.001	***
35-44	0.101	0.038	0.271	<0.001	***
45 and over	0.202	0.071	0.575	<0.001	***
<b>Gender (Male)</b>					
Female	1.884	1.316	2.697	<0.001	***
Transgender	2.648	0.732	9.584	0.051	ns
Non-binary or different term	1.074	0.513	2.248	0.805	ns
Prefer not to say	2.621	0.398	17.27	0.188	ns
<b>Disability (No)</b>					
Yes	2.14	1.574	2.909	<0.001	***
<b>Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status (Neither Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander)</b>					
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander	1.743	0.785	3.87	0.073	ns
<b>Sexual orientation (Heterosexual)</b>					
Gay / lesbian	2.356	1.279	4.342	<0.001	***
Bisexual	2.189	1.541	3.109	<0.001	***
Asexual	1.038	0.373	2.891	0.925	ns
Undecided / not sure / questioning	1.619	0.966	2.715	0.016	*
Different identity	0.824	0.279	2.435	0.646	ns
Pansexual	2.516	1.089	5.81	0.005	**
Prefer not to say	1.05	0.264	4.181	0.927	ns
<b>Language at home (English)</b>					

Co-variate	Odds ratio	Lower CI	Upper CI	P value	
Other language	0.589	0.326	1.063	0.021	*
<b>Level of study (Undergraduate)</b>					
Honours	0.932	0.65	1.337	0.617	ns
Postgraduate coursework	1.008	0.559	1.816	0.973	ns
Postgraduate research	0.795	0.3	2.11	0.546	ns
<b>Attendance in current semester (Online classes)</b>					
Attended campus	1.704	1.272	2.282	<0.001	***
Work experience	2.061	1.1	3.861	0.003	**
Other arrangement	1.95	0.87	4.369	0.033	*
<b>Living arrangements (Parents, guardian or other family)</b>					
Student accommodation or residence	7.343	5.295	10.185	<0.001	***
Rented or owned place - alone	2.076	1.122	3.842	0.002	**
Rented or owned place - with others	1.787	1.211	2.638	<0.001	***
Home-stay	0.69	0.086	5.521	0.646	ns
Insecure	11.769	2.195	63.117	<0.001	***
Other arrangement	1.42	0.384	5.253	0.49	ns
<b>Residency indicator (Domestic student)</b>					
International student	0.795	0.397	1.594	0.396	ns
<b>Year of study (Commencing student)</b>					
Continuing student	0.979	0.739	1.297	0.848	ns
<b>Type of student (Full time)</b>					
Part time	0.811	0.485	1.357	0.295	ns

Note: \*p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01, \*\*\* p<0.001, ns – nonsignificant

## Appendix 7

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