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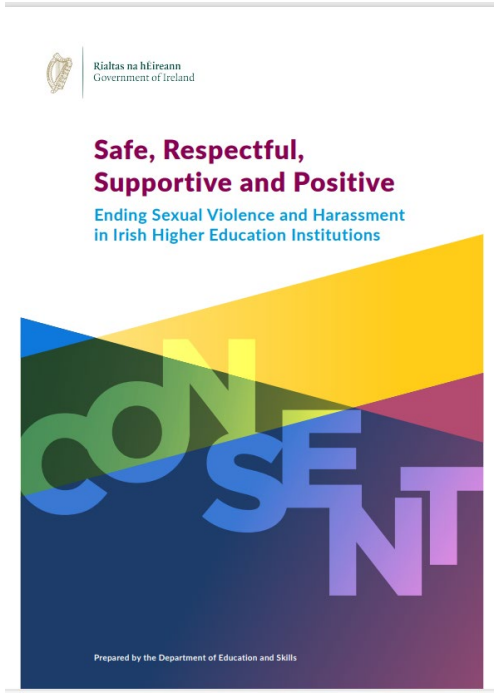
Bystander Intervention @ UCC
- A Harm Prevention Training Programme

WWP Annual Conference Ljubljana October 2026

Professor Louise Crowley

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Safe, Respect and Positive, Ending Sexual Violence and Harrassment in Irish Higher Education Instiutions (2019)



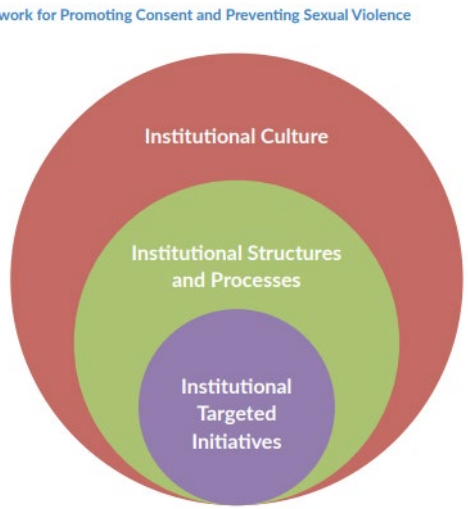
Targeted initiatives

The Framework requires institutions to

"Use evidence-informed means to engage students in a coordinated manner on awareness and skills concerning active consent, sexual violence, and seeking support".

The Framework outlines 4 Key Outcomes which includes the development by all HEIs of Targeted Initiatives, meaning

"Direct student-facing activities including workshops/classes that promote an understanding of consent and calling out unacceptable behaviour.' It mandates the creation of an education plan that ensures '*ongoing messaging to disseminate information consistent with the Framework aims for cultural change and awareness raising*.'



Bystander Intervention - Vision

- Introduce participants to the concept of an active bystander
- Educate participants to understand and identify acts of sexual hostility, harassment and violence, and recognise the dangers of the normalisation of abuse.
- Empower and upskill participants to safely intervene and demand a safer workplace and society
- Develop a workplace, social, school culture which stands against unacceptable behaviour and abuse

Why educate and empower Bystanders?

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- Bystander Intervention training, positioned within a safe and supportive community of allies, supports the psychological, social, cultural and welfare needs of students, by emphasising the right of all students to study and live in a respectful environment.

- By delivering the message in terms of community and cultural change as opposed to individual personal encounters, participants develop an enhanced sense of responsibility, giving rise to both personal development and improved normative societal expectations. Capacity as a social activist is awakened with both knowledge and skills, to demand a new normal of safety and respect for all.



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Passive Bystander witnesses the behaviours but does not get involved.

Active Bystander makes a conscious choice to speak up when they see a problematic situation or event. It doesn't always require direct confrontation and can take many forms.

Rarely requires a **confrontation** and can take many forms.

By addressing unacceptable behaviour, we challenge it's normalisation and ensure a more respectful and inclusive environment for staff and students to study, work and thrive.

Dr Rachel Fenton (Univ of West England)

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The Intervention Initiative

UWE BRISTOL
University of the West of England

Public Health England

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Student recommendations following participation in pilot programme 2016-2018

- “This is a fantastically organized module… in my opinion the inclusion of this module as an essential module for all first-year students is a fantastic way for UCC to make a stand on an enormous global societal issue.”
- “I really do hope that this goes mainstream, valuable life lessons and students deserve to learn these skills… ”
- “I can’t stress enough how important it is that more students get the opportunity to participate in this workshop. I didn’t actually realise that I was personally affected by the material, but it meant that I could go and talk about it.”
- “Very valuable module with huge relevance to student life.”
- “… because imagine if 20,000 people took one thing from that class that's changed that’s a lot of people…. if [they] learn how to prevent it or see it leading up to what was going to happen it could prevent it, that will be quite significant…”



Bystander Intervention Programme Delivery

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Online Programme Overview

5 modules online, Self directed and self paced.

The content includes academic theory, research, data, videos and discussion boards, book-ended with support services. A UCC Digital Badge awarded on completion.

- Introducing the Bystander
- Social Norms
- Sexual Violence
- Relationship Violence
- Bystander Intervention

1 hour facilitated workshop for peer engagement and scenario-based learning, reflection piece submitted

UCC Clubs, Student Union, in person workshops

3-hour workshops – Same key messages delivered in an entirely group session, modified with participant leads to reflect the lived experiences of the group.

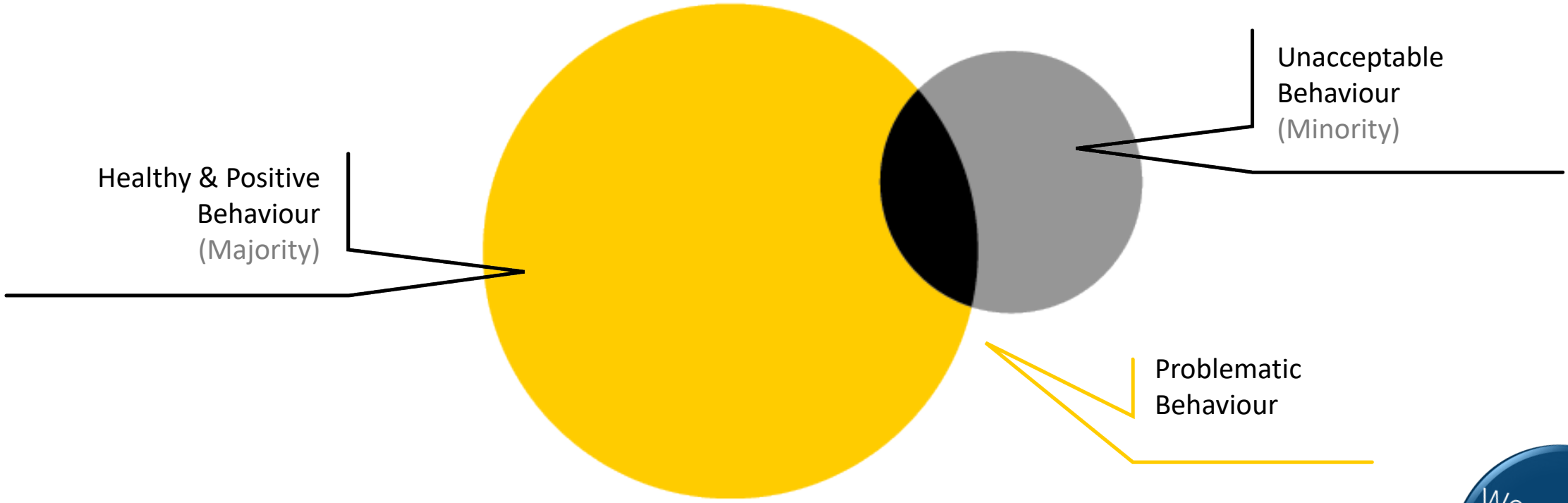
Bystander @ Orientation



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WHERE WE ARE


Healthy & Positive
Behaviour
(Majority)
Unacceptable
Behaviour
(Minority)
Problematic
Behaviour

WHERE WE ARE

But from the perspective of those in the **minority** – they believe they are in the **majority** (false consensus) and that their behaviour is not unacceptable.



WHERE WE NEED TO GET TO

"A NEW NORMAL"

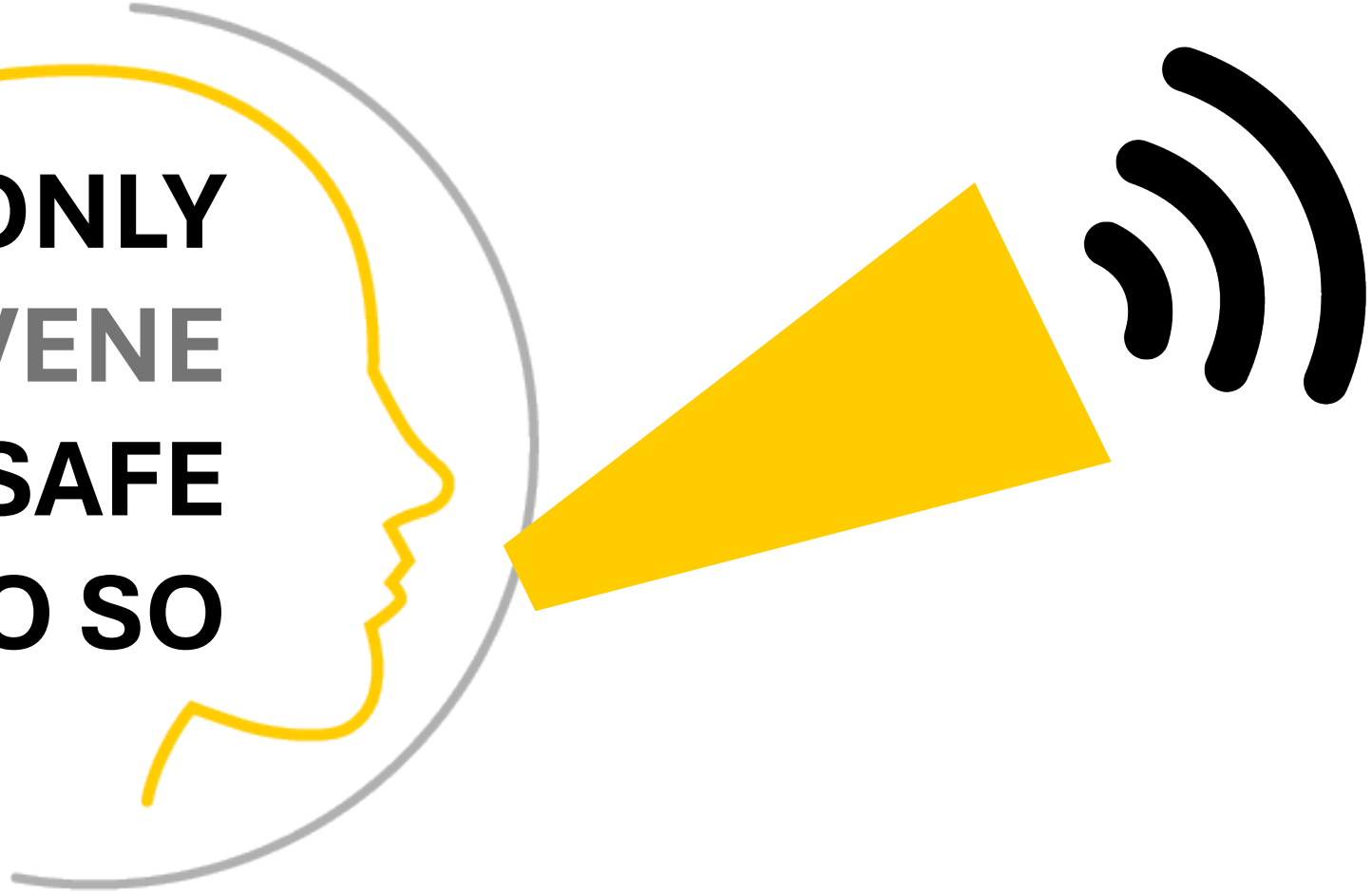


Healthy
& Positive
Majority
Behaviour

BYSTANDER GOLDEN RULE

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ONLY
INTERVENE
IF IT IS SAFE
TO DO SO



We are all Active Bystanders

Bystander Intervention promotion & visibility @ UCC

Bystander Intervention Week

- Social Media
- Community Partners
- Workshops for staff and students Student events
- Staff events
- **10th anniversary – week 9th February 2026**



Win an iPad for completion of training

- First Year Guide to Success
- Community Life Booklet
- Freshers Fest etc.
- Social Media campaigns & takeovers



Mandatory Student Training



Academic Modules

1st year Inter'nal Development

1st year BA International

1st year Applied Psychology

1st year Law

1st year Engineering

3rd year Mental Health Nursing

4th year Pharmacy

MA Women's Studies

MA Analytical Chemistry

MSc. Nursing (Non-EU)

PG Law



Student Groups

Student Union - Peer Support Leaders

Quercus Scholars - Ionad Na Gaeilge scholars

Respect Officers - Le Cheile - Sports Clubs


BYSTANDER
INTERVENTION
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK


FAIR PLAY
BYSTANDER INTERVENTION
RESPECT IN OUR BONES
BYSTANDER INTERVENTION
PLAYING TOWARDS CHANGE
BYSTANDER INTERVENTION


RESPECT IN OUR BONES
BYSTANDER INTERVENTION
PLAYING TOWARDS CHANGE
BYSTANDER INTERVENTION
FAIR PLAY
BYSTANDER INTERVENTION
BYSTANDER INTERVENTION
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK


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Johnson & Perrott



Staff Training and Promotion



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- Voluntary sign ups
- Unit based workshops
- Athena Swan action
- Cross campus visibility and promotion
- Staff Insight session
- Staff peer testimonials
- EDI soapbox event
- Teaching and learning showcase
- Presidents café
- Yearly newsletter
- High Level reporting
- EDI: Belonging at UCC25-28 Framework

Bystander Intervention Programme
A Cross sectoral approach to ending GBV at Third level

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2019 – UCC Bystander Intervention training expressly identified in Third Level National Framework as a key training initiative to end Sexual Harassment and Violence across the sector.

2019 - Minister Higher Education allocated seed funding to pilot the sampling of the UCC Bystander Intervention online programme across Irish HEIs to facilitate each institution to better understand the potential for change for its students.

2020 – Minister Simon Harris requested that UCC develop Bystander Intervention material for first year orientation across the sector.

2022 – Significant increase in staff (male) training. Bespoke Bystander Intervention **staff** training created.

2025 – HEA funding to support cross sectoral rollout, as a key aspect of the Implementation of the National Framework to end SHV.





External Societal and Workplace Reach

Evident appetite for evidence based cultural change

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Óglaigh na hÉireann
DEFENCE FORCES IRELAND

LAW SOCIETY OF IRELAND



WiMIN.ie

IRISH MEDICAL ORGANISATION

Belfast City Council

Comhairle Ceantair an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

ARTHUR COX

SAFE TO CREATE

Johnson Controls

pepsi

CARRIGALINE & DISTRICT LIONS CLUB

Northern Ireland Civil Service

St John Ambulance

EVERSHEDS SUTHERLAND

CORK CITY PPN
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION NETWORK

ABBEY THEATRE AMHARCLANN NA MAINISTREACH

THE lir
NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DRAMATIC ART

ThermoFisher SCIENTIFIC

Women's Aid ARMAGH DOWN

Boston Scientific
Advancing science for life™

Vhi HEALTHCARE

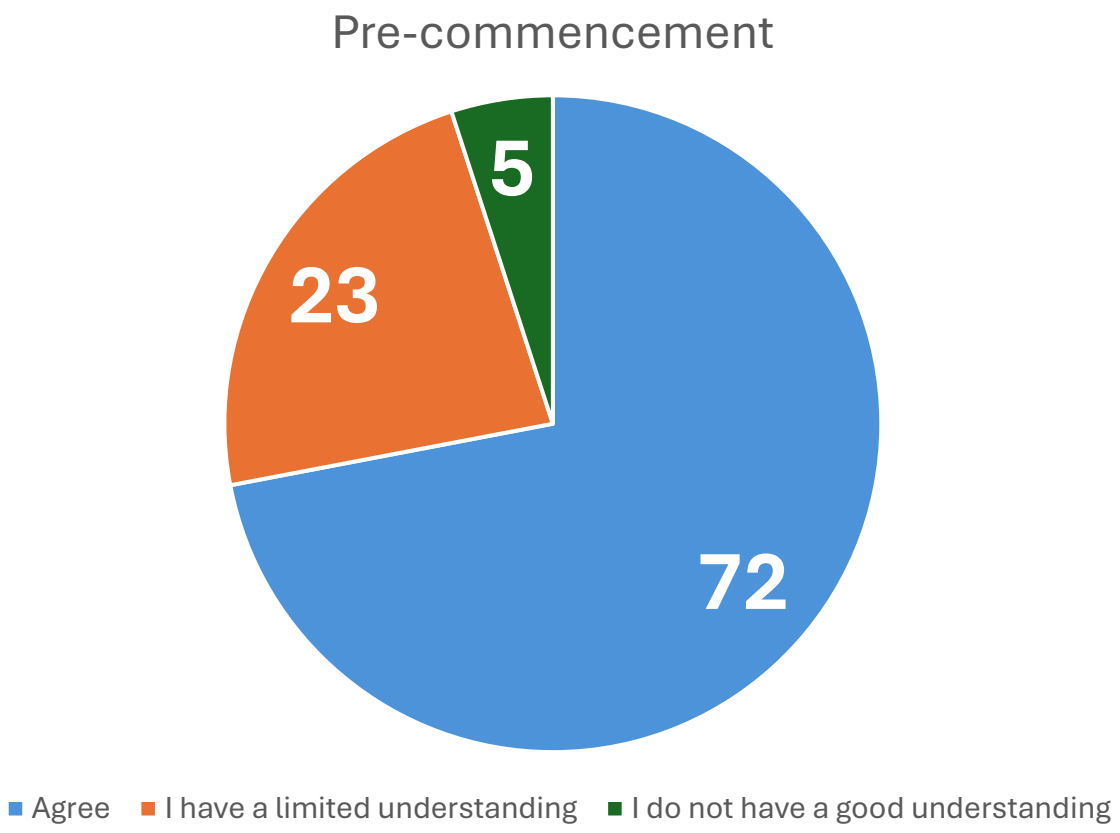
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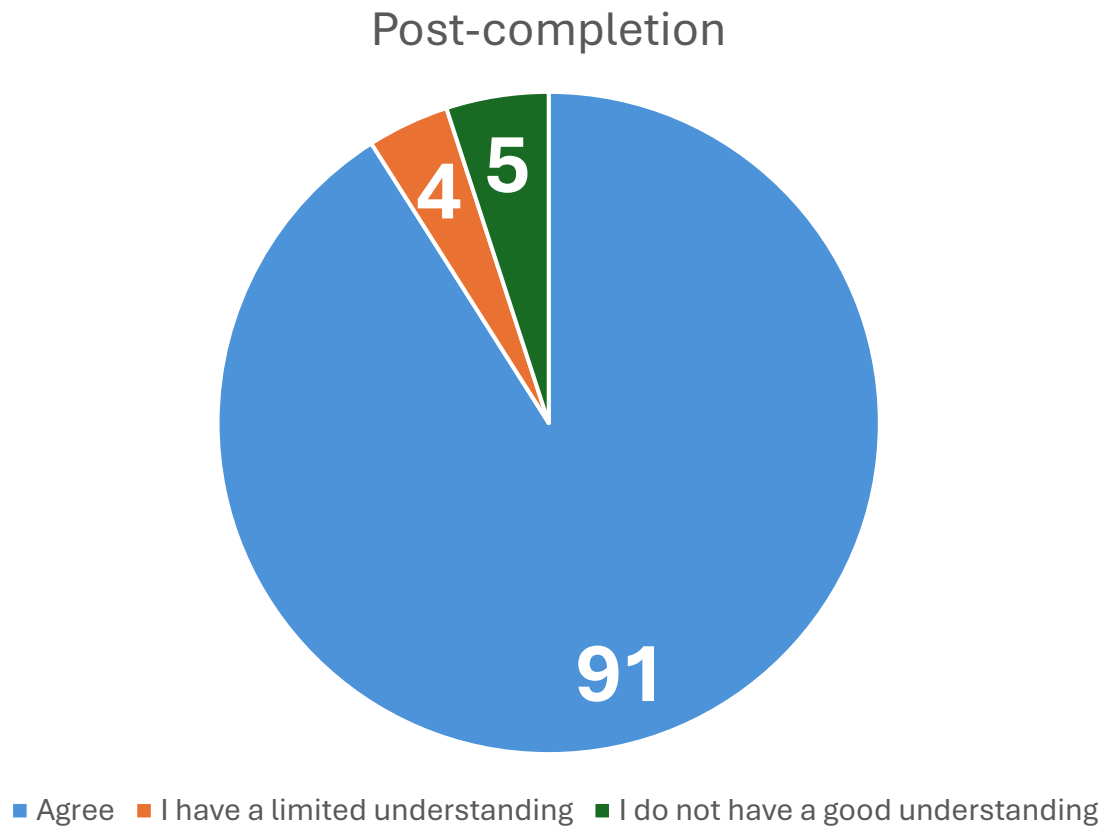
Impact Data



Student Impact Data (2024/25)

I have a good understanding of what constitutes sexual violence and harassment

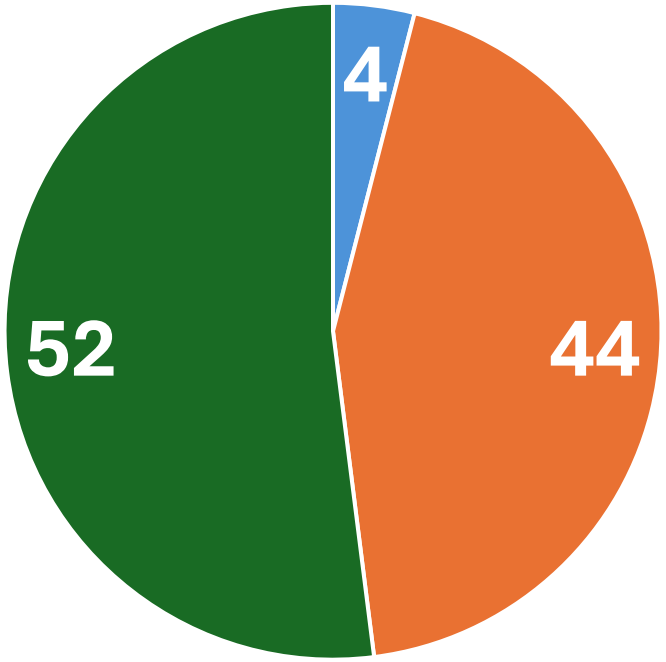




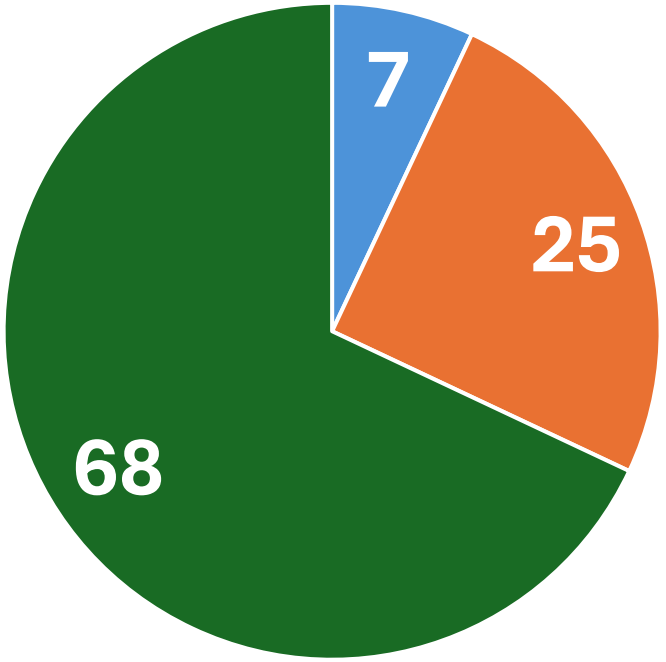
Student Impact Data (2024/25)

There is little I can do about sexual violence and harassment at my institution

Pre-commencement



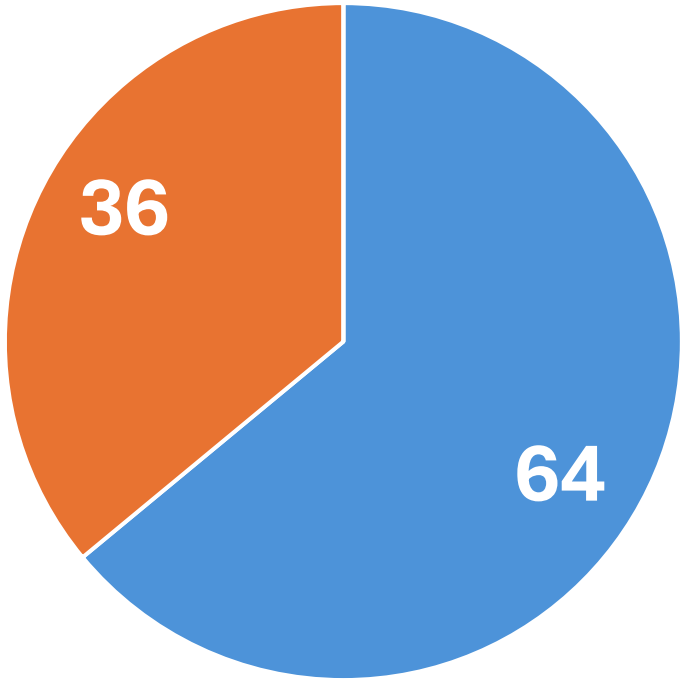
Post-completion



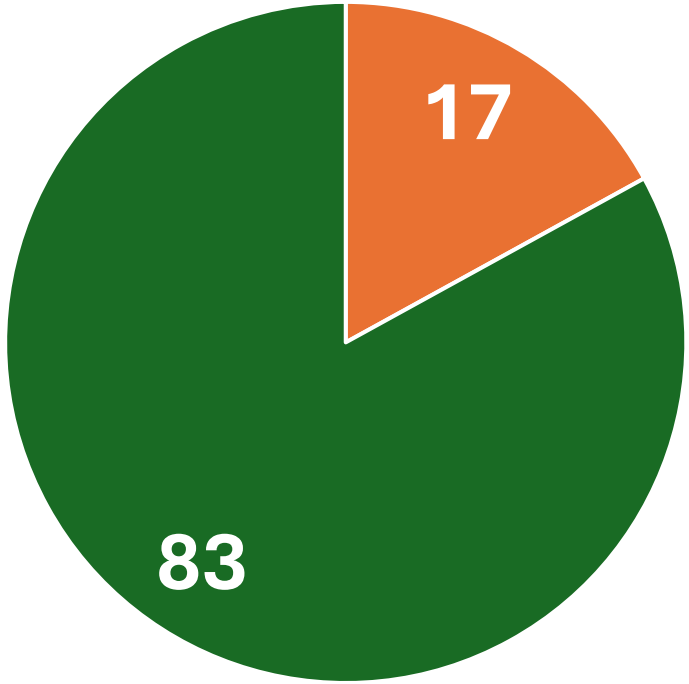
Staff Impact Data (2022/23)

It is not my responsibility to address issues of SVH, this is the responsibility of perpetrators, support services and the Gardaí

Pre-Commencement



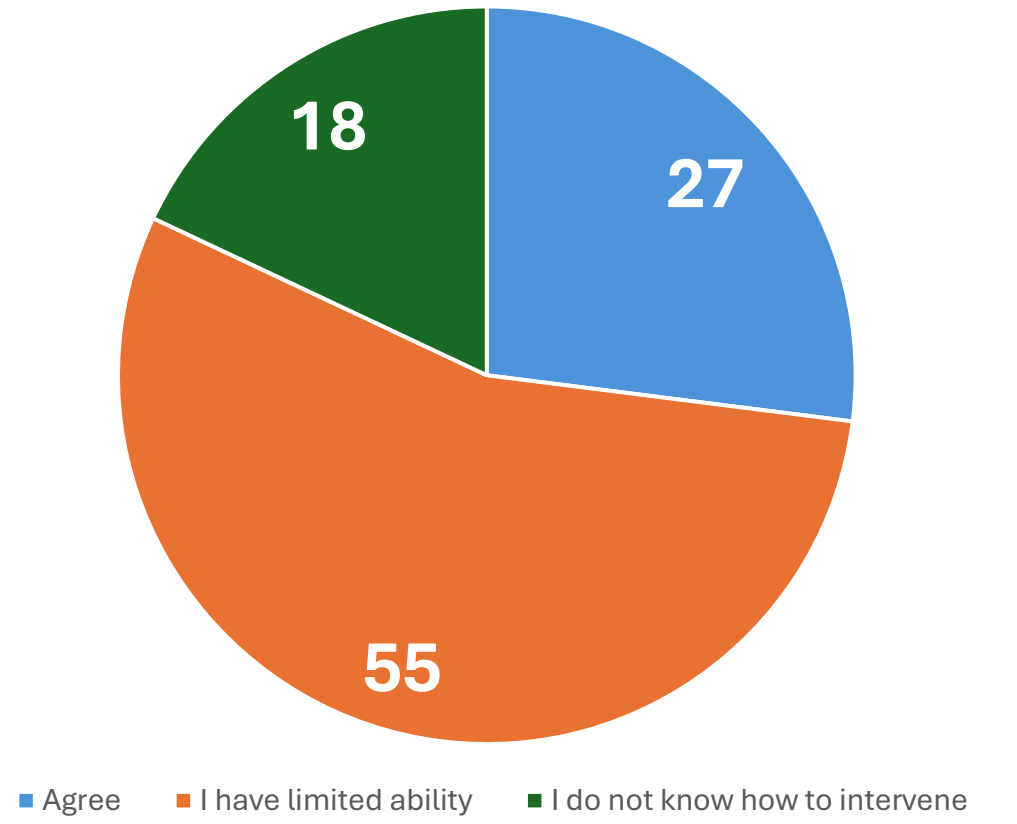
Post-completion



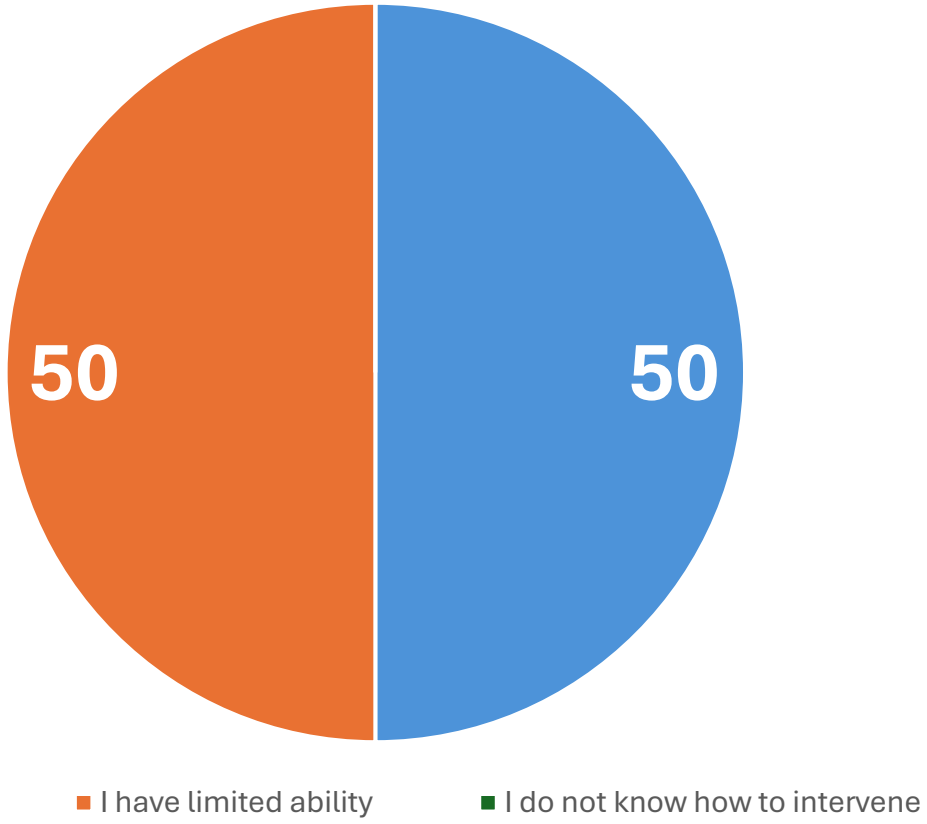
Staff Impact Data (2022/23)

I have a good ability to intervene in a threatening or dangerous situation

Pre-commencement



Post-completion



Participant Reflections

Reflective Submission

- For my reflection piece for the Bystander Intervention Programme, I decided to do a little painting. On it you can see two hands, one comforting the other with a subtle human touch and saying, ‘I believe you’. The painting is simple, and I wanted to keep it that way as I think that something as simple as telling a survivor, ‘I believe you’, can make a huge impact.
- It is so important for a survivor to be believed because it can help them heal from what has happened, support is essential and that's something I definitely learned from the programme.



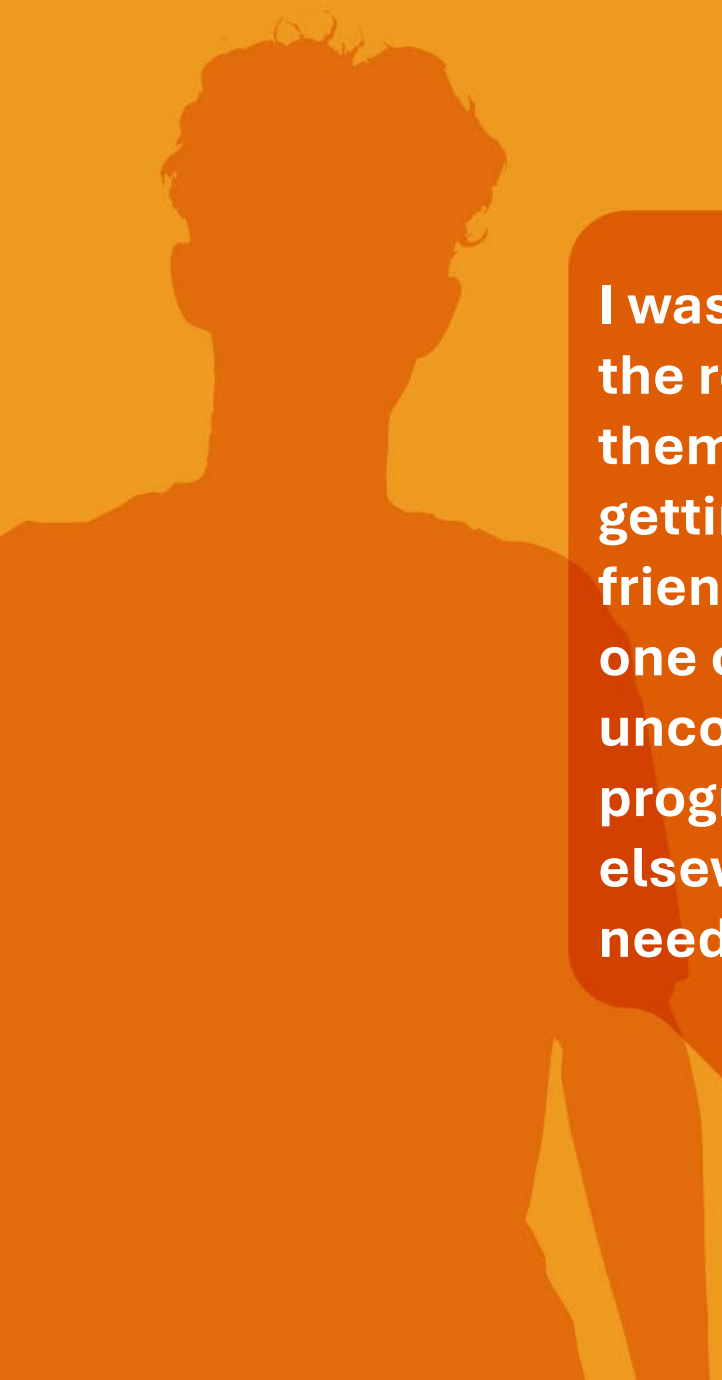
Reflective Submission

- **#ibelieveher**
-
- #ibelieveher trended today
  reminding me of #itsnotokay
-
  #timesup was supposed to reclaim power but #metoos grow by the hour

- #believewomen they tried to say
  cries of false allegations never go away

- #nomeansno seems pretty clear
  yet sometimes “no” gets choked by fear

Powerful Testimonies

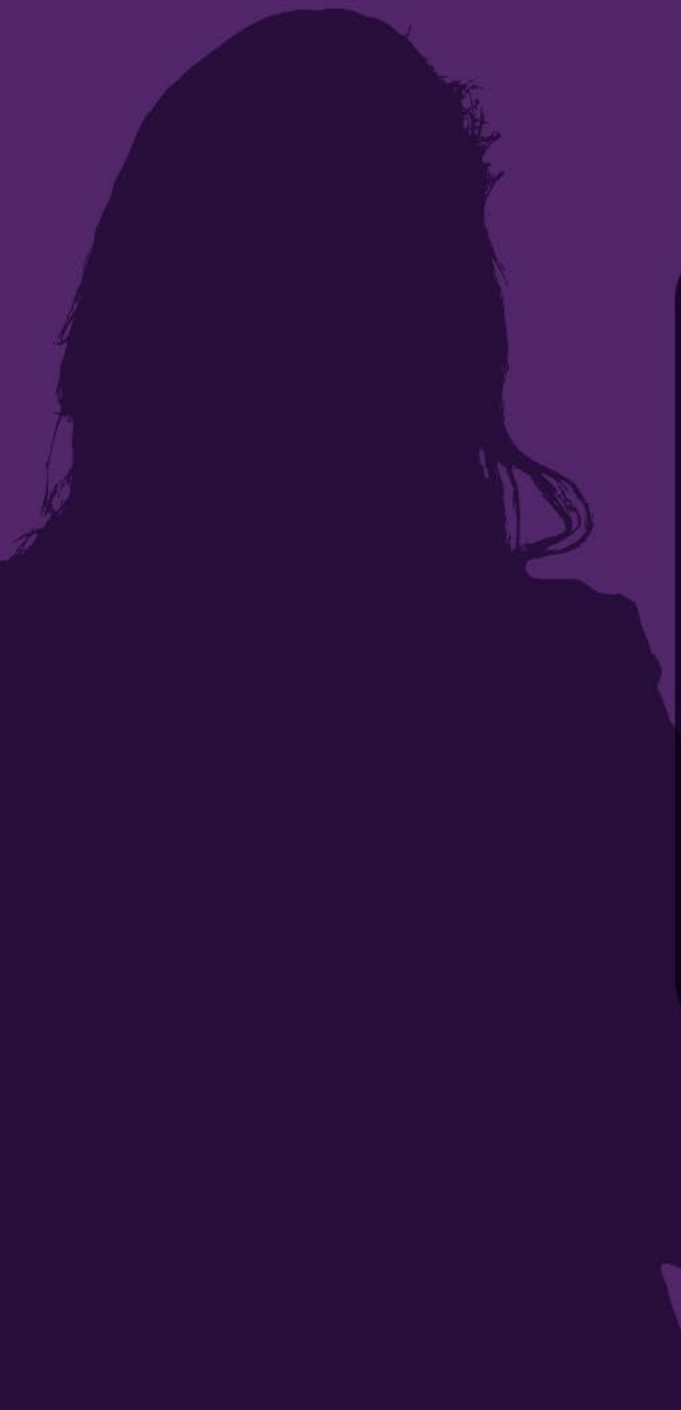


I was at a friend's house. There were three lads in the room where the drinks were, and I knew one of them was interested in my friend. As we were getting our drinks the lads tried to separate my friend and I so she would be in the room alone with one of the lads, which I could tell she was uncomfortable with. From the bystander programme I knew to distract and draw attention elsewhere by pretending I lost my phone, and I needed my friend's help to find it, and so we left.

We are all Active Bystanders



I helped a girl find her friends on a night out when her friends were lost, and some guy would not take no for an answer about going back with his mates. I'm 6'4 so I simply stood in front of her, and he scarpered like a startled dog.



“The understanding that small, supportive actions matter has changed how I approach potentially harmful dynamics at work. I have also become more proactive in creating inclusive spaces, whether by amplifying quieter voices in meetings or challenging stereotypes when they arise. These actions may seem minor, but collectively, they contribute to a culture where respect and accountability are the norm”.

Staff participant

We are all Active Bystanders



Before completing the course, I am confident that I would have stepped in if I believed someone was at risk of serious sexual or physical harm. What I am much more aware of now is that harm exists on a scale. Not every situation involves visible distress or immediate danger, but that does not mean it is harmless. Someone can appear fine on the surface while feeling deeply uncomfortable or unsafe. The course helped me understand that being an active bystander is about paying attention to these subtler moments, rather than only responding to the most extreme scenarios.

Staff participant

We are all Active Bystanders



The Bystander Project also highlighted the importance of collective responsibility. While individual actions matter, systemic change requires a community committed to challenging harmful norms. This insight has motivated me to share what I have learned with peers and colleagues, fostering conversations about respect and inclusion. In doing so, I hope to contribute to a ripple effect—where one person's courage inspires others to act.

Staff participant

We are all Active Bystanders

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Further information on UCC's Bystander Intervention Programme:

https://www.ucc.ie/en/bystander/

