Ollscoil Chathair
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

Report on a National Survey of Student Experiences of Bullying in Higher Education Institutions in Ireland

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DUN LAOGHAIRE

National
College of
Ireland

Content Warning

This survey study investigated respondents' experiences of bullying in Higher Level Education. Please avail of the below support services in case the content of this report is distressing to you or makes you feel uncomfortable.

Service	Phone	Webpage
Text 50808	Free 24/7 Support in a Crisis – Text "**HELLO**" to **50808**	https://text50808.ie/
Samaritans	National Helpline – 116 123	https://www.samaritans.org/ireland/samaritans-ireland/
HAS		https://www.hsa.ie/eng/Workplace_Health/Bullying_at_Work/Are_you_being_Bullied/
HSE		https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/mental-health/dealing-with-bullying-at-work.html
LGBT Ireland	National LGBT Helpline 1800 929 539	https://lgbt.ie/
USI	(01) 7099 300	https://usi.ie/contact-us/

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Preface

This report has been prepared for the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science by Dublin City University (DCU) Anti-Bullying Centre (ABC), a national centre for education and research on bullying and online safety, in association with National College of Ireland and Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design & Technology (IADT). The main aim of this report is to investigate the prevalence of bullying among students in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Ireland. ABC is a university designated research centre located in DCU Institute of Education, dedicated but not limited to researching bullying in different contexts, including higher education, the workplace, school, and the online world. The Centre was the first of its kind in Ireland to conduct research on different forms of bullying, including school bullying workplace bullying, homophobic bullying, and cyberbullying. The Centre works to solve the real-world issue of bullying and promote online safety through the extensive collaboration of academic, community and industry partnerships. ABC is an internationally renowned research centre and hosts the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Chair on Bullying and Cyberbullying.

Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of an anonymous online survey examining the prevalence and impact of bullying and related negative experiences among students across higher education institutions (HEIs) in Ireland. This survey was commissioned by The Department for Further and Higher Education, Innovation and Science. The survey included five areas a) Demographic variables, including gender, age, ethnicity and sexual orientation; b) Respondents' awareness of bullying in Higher Education; c) Exposure to online/offline bullying in the institution, as targets, witnesses (i.e., bystanders) and perpetrators; d) Individual variables that - based on previous literature - may be related to bullying in higher education, such as prejudice towards minority groups; e) Contextual variables, including institutional culture and implementation of anti-bullying policies.

A total of 2,573 students aged between 18 and 65+ engaged with the online survey. Of these, the three most frequent identities were 65% female, 25.3% male, and 2.8% identified as Other. 2.7% did not disclose their gender identity. Data were collected during the first semester of 2022/2023 academic year, as students were returning to first semester after remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings showed that just under a fifth of higher education students (18.4%) endured negative acts (such as bullying online or offline) over the last academic year.

Of these, 16.6% of the entire sample occasionally ("now and then") endured negative acts (such as bullying in offline or online). The most commonly experienced type of negative acts experienced "now and then" in offline scenarios were "*being gossiped about in real life*" (37.5%). In comparison, the most commonly experienced type of negative acts experienced "now and then" in online scenarios were "*gossiped about on social media by another*

student" (11.9%). Almost a quarter (23.1%) of respondents who experienced negative acts reported being bullied for several months.

In the majority of cases, the perpetrator of bullying was another student on the same course (37.1%), or another student in the same HEI (23.4%). Other identified perpetrators were less frequently reported, such as a lecturer/professor (9.6%). Students registered as full-time experienced more negative acts (18.7%) than those registered as Part-time (16%).

Overall, minority groups, such as ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ respondents and respondents with a neuro diversity or disability were more likely to endure negative acts at College or University, such as bullying and cyberbullying compared to majority groups (i.e., those who identified as heterosexuals, ethnic majority groups and respondents with no disabilities or no neuro diversity).

In relation to students with a disability or neurodiversity, respondents who identified as having an ongoing Illness reported the highest levels of negative experiences "Every Now and Then" (50%). In contrast, respondents with a Neurological condition reported the highest levels of "Daily" negative acts, such as bullying or cyberbullying (12.5%). Respondents who reported being Deaf, hard of hearing, Blind, or visually impaired, or having a physical or mobility-related disability reported no negative experiences.

With respect to witnessing incidents of negative acts, 31.6% of respondents indicated that they had witnessed bullying at their College/University in the past year. 59.1% of those that witnessed bullying reported that they had taken action to help the target when confronted with bullying.

In most cases, those who reported experiences of bullying others, identified "*gossiping about someone*" as the most frequent behaviour "Every now and then" (37.3%) and "*excluding someone from an in-person group*" (15.6%). Other behaviours such as "picking on others in an online game" (0.8%) and "picking on someone in real life (2.2%) were less frequently reported.

The majority of respondents who were targeted were not sure why this was the case ("*Don't know why*",45.7%), or said this was due to

another unspecified reason ("*Other*",27.6%), due to "*Physical Appearance*" (18.3%) and "*Gender*" (10.5%).

Although 42.4% of survey respondents were aware that their institution had an anti-bullying policy, 56.6% were unsure whether their HEI had an anti-bullying policy and 1% reported that their institution did not have an anti-bullying policy. 35.8% "Strongly agreed" that bullying is against the values of their College/University. 16.5% "Strongly agreed" that their college makes an active effort to tackle bullying (e.g. through awareness raising initiatives and anti-bullying programmes). Only 11.5% of respondents "Strongly agreed" that *Bullying goes unnoticed in my college.*

Overall, these findings offer an overview of bullying experiences endured by students within HEIs in Ireland. Providing HEI students and staff with further awareness raising initiatives and training opportunities along with a continued and sustainable effort towards a more inclusive culture are among the recommended strategies to challenge negative acts such as bullying and cyberbullying in HEIs.

Introduction

Bullying is a multifaceted phenomenon, which impacts people in different ways, making it difficult to define. There are however well-defined typologies of bullying, from verbal and relational aggression to physical and cyber-related actions (Stives, May, Pilkinton, Bethel, Eakin, 2022). This foundational knowledge is largely built upon the seminal work of Olweus (1978) which provided a pathway for researchers to explore the prevalence, typologies, locations, and interventions to contemporary bullying (Harcourt, Jasperse, & Green, 2014; Meriläinen, Puhakka and Sinkkonen, 2015).

Whilst there are numerous definitions of bullying; for the purposes of this report, we will adopt the following understanding, which is adapted from UNESCO (2021):

Bullying is in-person behaviour between students within a social network that causes physical, emotional, or social harm to targeted students. When such behaviour takes place online it is referred to as cyberbullying or online bullying. Bullying is typically characterised by an imbalance of power that is enabled or inhibited by the social and institutional norms and context of schools and the education system.

As an emerging phenomenon within bullying literature, cyberbullying presents a growing challenge for the higher education sector. Similarly difficult to define, the use of technology to carry out online negative acts has been described as; a form of covert psychological bullying using electronic devices such as email, mobile phones, text messages, video clips, instant messaging, photographs and personal websites in order to engage in repeated hostile behaviour intended to harm another person or persons (O'Moore, 2012). The challenges surrounding cyberbullying are quickly becoming even more complex as technologies continue to rapidly evolve and harmful experiences such as *cyber hate, simulated groping*, (Hinduja, 2022), *digital rankism, Cyberflashing, cyberstalking, doxing, non-consensual sharing of images, deepfakes, cancelling, creepshotting and technology-facilitated coercive control* (Ging, 2023) all exist within platforms that are characterised by affordances of persistence, replicability, scalability, and searchability (Boyd, 2011), where perpetrators can act with near-anonymous pseudonymity (Milosevic, Collier, & Norman, 2022).

Within higher education there is a pressing need to further explore these growing trends. Emerging interventions and preventions to negative acts, such as the potential use of artificial intelligence to monitor *online toxicity* (Gordon, Lam, Sung par, Patel, Hancock, Hashimoto & Bernstien, 2022), as well as underlying policies that govern learner safety in multiple ecologies (Culloty, Milosevic, Park, Flynn, Ging, O'Higgins Norman, Suiter, 2021) are needed steps in the right direction. Despite these however, it is important to note that regardless of technological sophistication, the data which trains such AI algorithms mirrors our society as it exists, for better or worse and represents our existing biases in a multi-

ecological world (Wachter, Mittelstadt and Russell, 2021; Malek, 2022).

The multiple ecologies of Higher Education

The topic of bullying, both in schools and in the workplace has been a focus of interest to researchers and policy makers alike (Mazzone, Jones, Freeney & O'Higgins Norman, 2022). Despite this however, there exists a dearth of information on bullying experiences among and against students in higher education. The risks of bullying and cyberbullying do not end when learners transition from post-primary education into Higher Education. In fact, research indicates that between 5-7% of university students have been bullied during their studies (Meriläinen, Puhakka and Sinkkonen, 2014). There is a dearth of information on how negative acts are experienced, as well as where these episodes of bullying or cyberbullying can be experienced.

The importance of socialising and learning inside as well as outside of the classroom is well established and can be traced back to Dewey's (1916) original assertion that "learning in the process of living is the finest product of schooling". This philosophy compliments the growing rise in work-based learning experiences such as "work placement" or "practicums" (Sewell et al., 2009; Sheridan and Linehan, 2013) and indeed apprenticeship programmes. In the context then of being a student in these outside class experiences, (including informal roles in student clubs or societies), it is essential to consider how bullying or cyberbullying is experienced and affected by complex power dynamics (Oblath, Greif Green, Guzmán, Felix, Furlong, Holt, Sharkey, 2020). Evidence suggests that within these significant and impactful experiences, there can be instances of *top-down*, *bottom-up*, and *horizontal* bullying (De Cieri, Sheehan, Donohue, Shea, and Cooper, 2019).

Top-down bullying can involve for example, a placement mentor, tutor, or supervisor bullying a student worker, *Horizontal bullying* could occur in cases where students in the same placement are bullying each other. *Bottom-up* bullying involves a subordinate

bullying an elevated supervisor, or for instance, a student perpetrating negative acts against a lecturer, professor, or administrator. As reported in earlier research (Mazzone, Jones, Freeney & O'Higgins Norman, 2022), instances of top-down bullying are more frequently reported compared to bottom-up bullying incidents (De Cieri et al., 2019). Despite this, previous research has identified a shifted power dynamic whereby individuals with less "formal power" may attempt to exert control over a person with greater authority or status (May & Tenzek, 2018). For example, students may heckle female lecturers or make misogynistic comments in module evaluations, as documented by Jackson and Sunduram's (2015) study of Lad Culture in UK universities.

Finally, it is important to note that episodes of negative experiences, such as bullying or cyberbullying do not only represent interactions between perpetrators and targets. Bystander behaviour (the behaviour of those who witness bullying online or offline) is an integral part of the sociology of bullying and has been shown to affect interventions and (de)-escalation of bullying scenarios in formal settings (Paull, Omari and Standen, 2012; Donoghue, 2022).

In consideration of these points, the primary goal of this research was to establish a deeper understanding into the experiences of bullying among and against students in higher education, which as Kiilakoski, (2012) highlights is complicated as; "there are more players than before. The Field has widened from local to global. The rules are in a state of flux".

1

Aims of the Present Survey Study

1. Aims of the Present Survey Study

This survey study has been commissioned by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. The study aims to:

1. Establish the prevalence and impact of bullying and cyberbullying among survey respondents with different characteristics in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, neurodiversity, and disability.
2. Investigate the profile of the perpetrators of bullying and cyberbullying.
3. Examine respondents' experiences of witnessing bullying.
4. Examine bystanders' response to bullying.
5. Investigate respondents' perception of the anti-bullying culture at their institution and their awareness of the anti-bullying policies.

2

Methods

2. **Methods**

2.1 Procedure
Twenty-four (24) publicly funded HEIs across Ireland were invited to participate in this study. The target population included an estimate of 240,000 students. Contact points for each of the 24 HEIs were given information concerning the objectives of this survey study for circulation to their students.

2.2 Survey
This report draws on the results of an anonymous survey conducted with the population of students in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Ireland. The survey consisted of five sections covering 1) Demographics; 2) Negative acts such as bullying and cyberbullying 3) Bystander and perpetrator behaviour; 4) Anti-bullying culture and awareness of anti-bullying policies; 5) Information on the instruments included in the survey can be found in the Appendix.

3

Sample

3.Sample

2,573 students (1% of students in the HEI's sampled in this study) aged between 18 and 65+ (65% female, 25.3% male; and 2.8% identified as Other). 2.7% did not disclose their gender identity. Most respondents (70.6%) identified themselves as Irish; 13.5% belonged to another White ethnic group; 0.9% preferred not to disclose their ethnic group. 33.77% of survey respondents identified themselves as LGBTQ+3 (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and other sexual orientations not listed in the survey). Overall, 11% reported a disability or a neuro diversity. (See Table 1 for more details on the sample demographics).

Table 1 Participant Demographics

Variable	n (%)	Variable	n (%)
Completion rate		Age range	
Incomplete surveys	487 (18.9%)	18-24	1409 (73%)
Complete surveys	2086 (81.1%)	25-34	258 (13.4%)
		35-44	146 (7.6%)
Gender identity		45-54	78 (4%)
Female	1255 (65%)	55-64	22 (1.1%)
Male	489 (25.3%)	65+	5 (0.3%)
Non-binary	31 (1.6%)	Prefer not to say	13 (0.6%)
Transgender woman	5 (0.3%)		

Transgender man	9 (0.5%)	Do you have a disability?	
Agender person	4 (0.2%)	Yes	213 (11%)
Trans masculine man	5 (0.3%)	No	964 (49.9%)
Gender non-conforming	13 (0.7%)	Prefer not to say	56 (2.9%)
Genderqueer	12 (0.6%)	Unsure	698 (36.1%)
Other	55 (2.8%)		
Prefer not to say	53 (2.7%)	Ethnicity	
		Chinese	30 (1.7%)
Sexual orientation		Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi	45 (2.2%)
Asexual	86 (4.5%)	Any other Asian background	25 (1.3%)
Gay	66 (3.4%)	African	64 (3.3%)
Lesbian	45 (2.3%)	Any other Black background	10 (0.5%)
Bisexual	223 (11.5%)	Arabic	15 (0.7%)
Queer	38 (2%)	Mixed background	65 (3.2%)
Straight/Heterosexual	1287 (66.6%)	Other	33 (1.6%)

Pansexual	52 (2.7%)	Irish	1422 (70.6%)
Questioning	49 (2.5%)	Irish Traveller	10 (0.5%)
Other	13 (0.7%)	Roma	6 (0.3%)
Prefer not to say	72 (3.7%)	Any other White background	272 (13.5%)

4

Key Findings

4. KEY FINDINGS

4.1 Negative Acts Experienced as a student.

Respondents were asked to read a note defining negative experiences such as bullying and cyberbullying. Respondents were then asked if they endured any negative acts over the last academic year. The survey assessed negative acts experienced in real life and online, including acts experienced whilst on placement or practicums. Findings showed that just under a fifth of higher education students (18.4%) endured negative acts (such as bullying in offline or cyberbullying online) over the last academic year.

Overall, 16.6% of respondents reported experiencing real life negative acts "now and then", whereas less than 2% (on average) were subjected to these negative acts monthly, weekly and daily.

Figure 1. Negative acts experienced in the overall sample
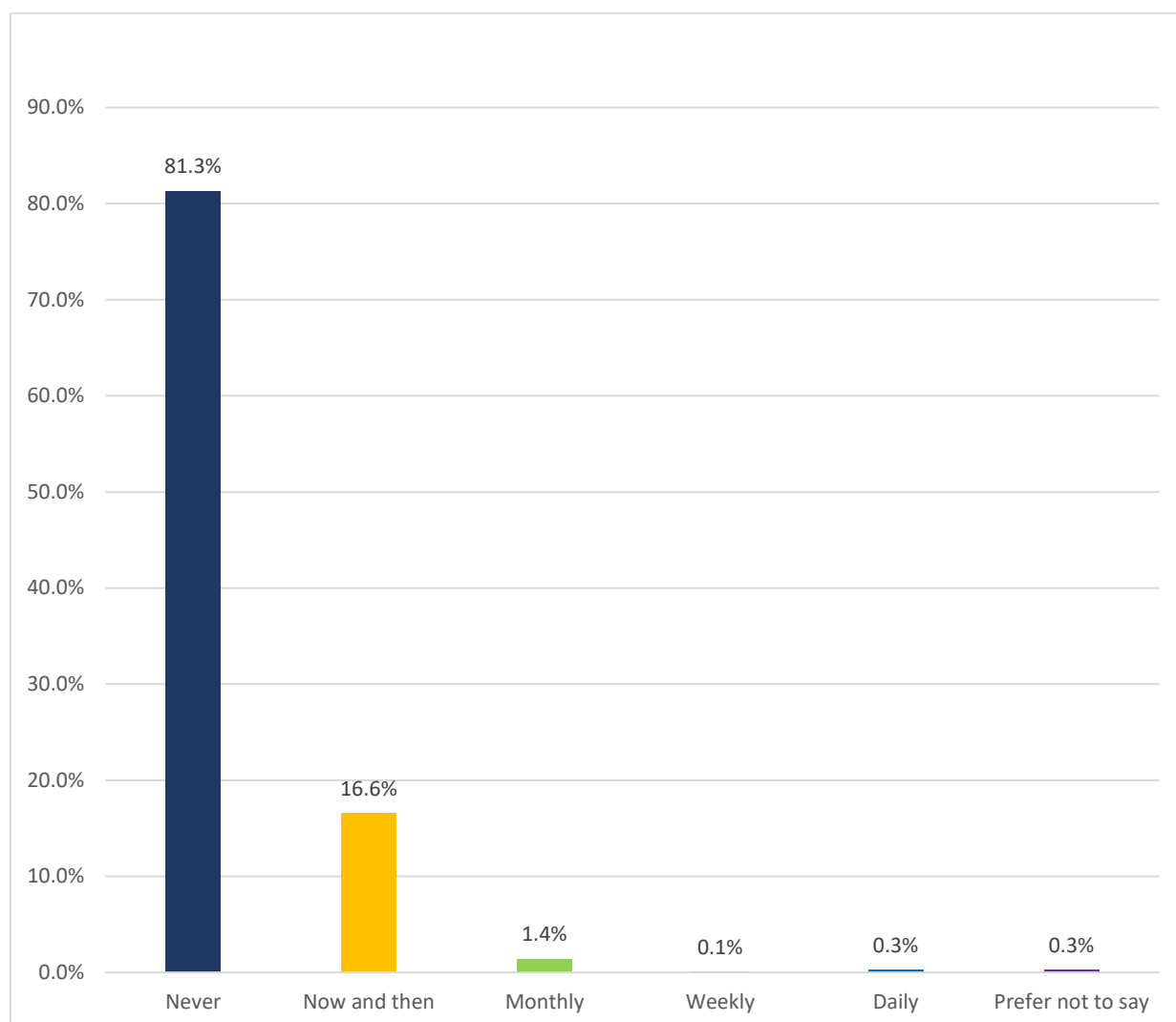
4.2 Negative Acts Experienced Offline

The most commonly experienced type of negative acts experienced "now and then" in offline, in-person scenarios were "*being gossiped about in real life*" (37.5%) and "*excluded from a group in real life*" (37.3%) and "*received unfair or unequal treatment*" (36.7%). Other in-person negative experiences, such as "*physically intimidated/threatened*" (8.6%) and "inappropriate assignments set" (8.6%) were less reported.

Figure 2. Types of acts experienced in person "Now and Then"

Types of acts experienced in person "Now and Then"

Type of act	Percentage
Received threatening gestures	7.60%
Had personal items forcibly taken	3.60%
Sexually harassed on campus	5.90%
Had someone come too close	15.40%
Physically intimidated/threatened	8.60%
Experienced hazing to join a society on campus	1.20%
I was stalked on campus	6.20%
Inappropriate content was assigned to class	6.40%
Inappropriate assignments were set for me	8.60%
Picked on, belittled or exposed to public ridicule in real life	23.70%
Reprimanded by someone in real life	24.70%
Gossiped about in real life	37.50%
Called names in real life	27.20%
Received unfair or unequal treatment in real life	36.70%
Excluded from a group in real life	37.30%

4.3 Negative Acts Experienced as a student in online scenarios

The most commonly experienced type of negative acts experienced "now and then" in online scenarios were "*gossiped about on social media by another student*" (11.9%), "*harassed through instant messaging by someone from college*" (9.9%) and "*harassed online by someone from college*" (8.3%). Other online negative experiences, such as "*Had intimate photos shared online*" (2.1%) and "*Picked on during an online game*" (4.3%) were less reported. A full breakdown of responses can be viewed in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Types of acts experienced online "Now and Then"

Types of negative acts experienced online "Now and Then"

(Horizontal bar chart with x-axis from 0.00% to 14.00% in 2.00% increments)

Categories (top to bottom):
- Harassed online by an individual in my college
- Impersonated by another student online
- Had photos shared with other college students online without permission
- Had personal details shared online
- Excluded from online curricular groups
- Excluded from extra-curricular online groups
- Stalked online by individual from college
- Gossiped about on socia lmedia by another student from college
- Tricked online into giving another student college work
- Had nude photos shared online
- Subjected to online hazing to join a society
- Harassed by an individual in college through text messages
- Harassed by an individual in college through college emails
- Harassed by an individual in college through personal emails
- Harassed through instant messaging
- Picked on, belittled or exposed to public ridicule during an online game
- Other
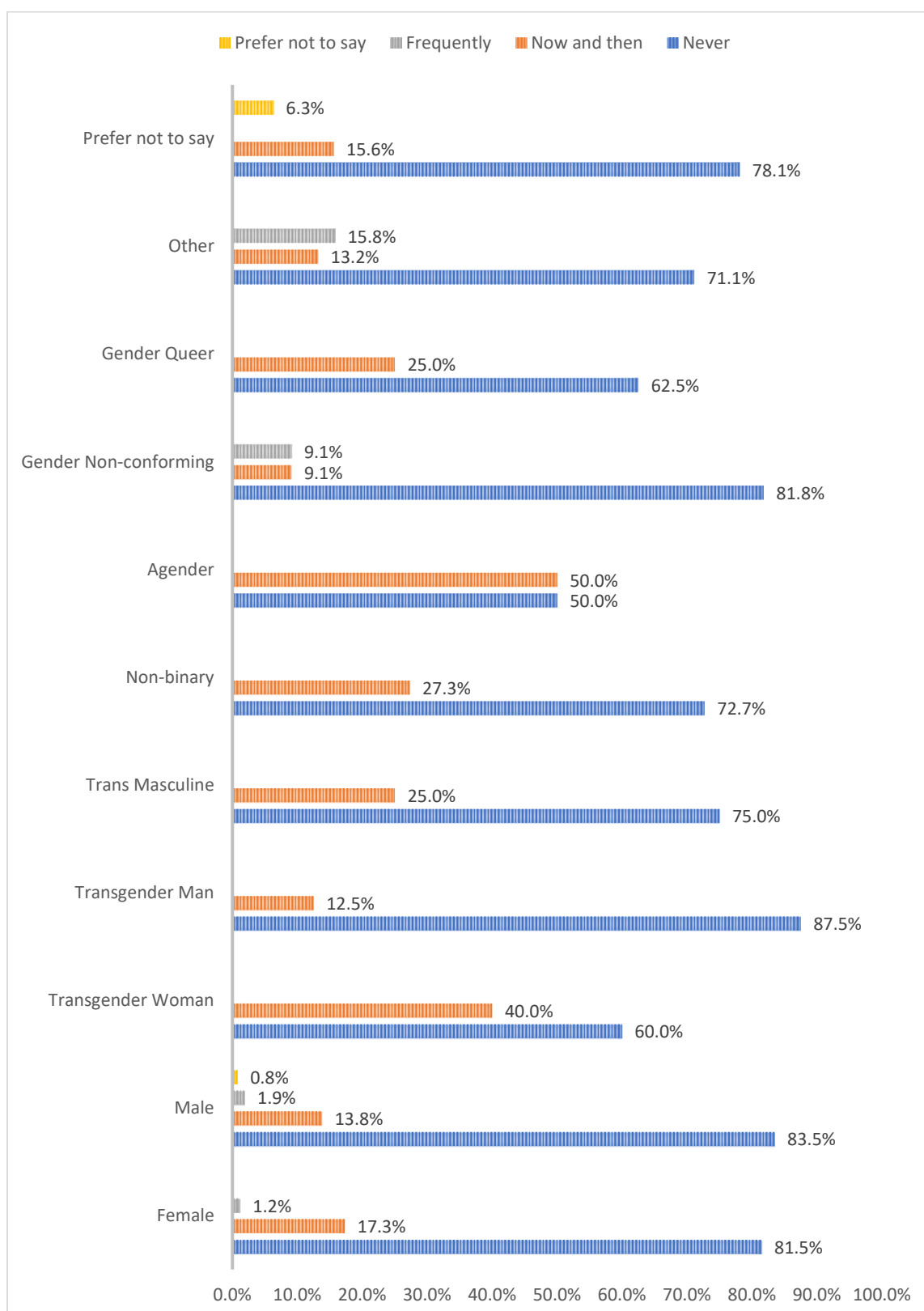
4.4 Negative acts across different gender identities

Respondents who identified as Agender reported highest levels of negative acts experienced "*Now and then*" (50%) compared to both Females (17.3%) and Males (13.8%). Respondents who identify as Other, reported the highest levels of "daily" negative experiences (7.9%). The highest rate of "*Monthly*" experiences of negative acts were reported by Gender Non-conforming respondents (9.1%).

The rates across negative acts for different gender identities are presented in Figure 4.

**Figure 4. Negative acts experienced by different gender identities.**

Legend: Prefer not to say (yellow), Frequently (grey), Now and then (orange), Never (blue)

Prefer not to say
- Prefer not to say: 6.3%
- Now and then: 15.6%
- Never: 78.1%

Other
- Frequently: 15.8%
- Now and then: 13.2%
- Never: 71.1%

Gender Queer
- Now and then: 25.0%
- Never: 62.5%

Gender Non-conforming
- Frequently: 9.1%
- Now and then: 9.1%
- Never: 81.8%

Agender
- Now and then: 50.0%
- Never: 50.0%

Non-binary
- Now and then: 27.3%
- Never: 72.7%

Trans Masculine
- Now and then: 25.0%
- Never: 75.0%

Transgender Man
- Now and then: 12.5%
- Never: 87.5%

Transgender Woman
- Now and then: 40.0%
- Never: 60.0%

Male
- Prefer not to say: 0.8%
- Frequently: 1.9%
- Now and then: 13.8%
- Never: 83.5%

Female
- Frequently: 1.2%
- Now and then: 17.3%
- Never: 81.5%

Note: Nfemale=1255; Nmale=489; Ntransgender woman=5; Ntransgender man=9; Ntrans femine person =0; Ntrans masculine person=5; Nnon-binary person=31; Nagender person=4; Ngender non-conforming person=13; Ngenderqueer=12; Nother = 55

4.5 Negative acts across different sexual orientations

LGBTQ+ respondents experienced significantly higher levels of negative acts compared to heterosexuals. Those who did not disclose their sexual orientation experienced higher levels of negative acts compared to both heterosexuals and to LGBTQ+ respondents. The average rates for different sexual orientations can be found in Figure 5.

**Figure 5. Negative acts across different sexual orientations**

Figure 5. Negative acts across different sexual orientations
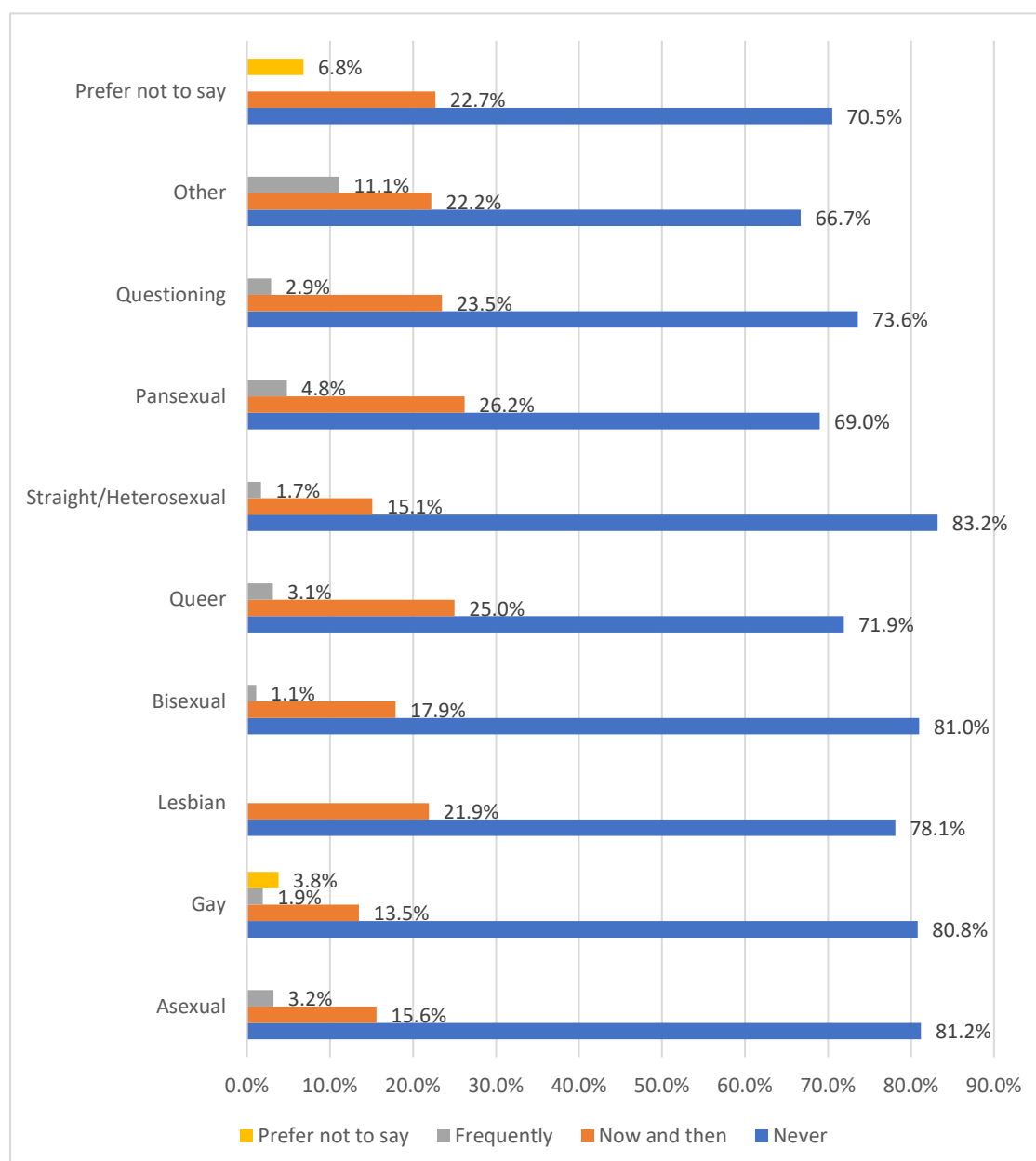
Note: Nstraight/Heterosexual=1287; Nasexual=86; Ngay=66; NLesbian-45; Nbisexual=223; Nqueer=38;; Npansexual=52; Nquestioning=49; Nother=13

4.6 Negative acts across different ethnic identities

Respondents who identified themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority group endured higher levels of negative acts compared to both Irish respondents and to respondent with any other White background. Similarly, respondents who did not disclose their ethnicity reported higher scores in terms of negative acts

compared to both Irish respondents and to respondent with any other White background. Respondents who identified as Irish Traveller reported the highest level of negative acts experienced "Every now and then" (**75%**). The rates across negative acts for different ethnic identities can be found in Figure 6.

**Figure 6. Negative acts across different ethnic identities**
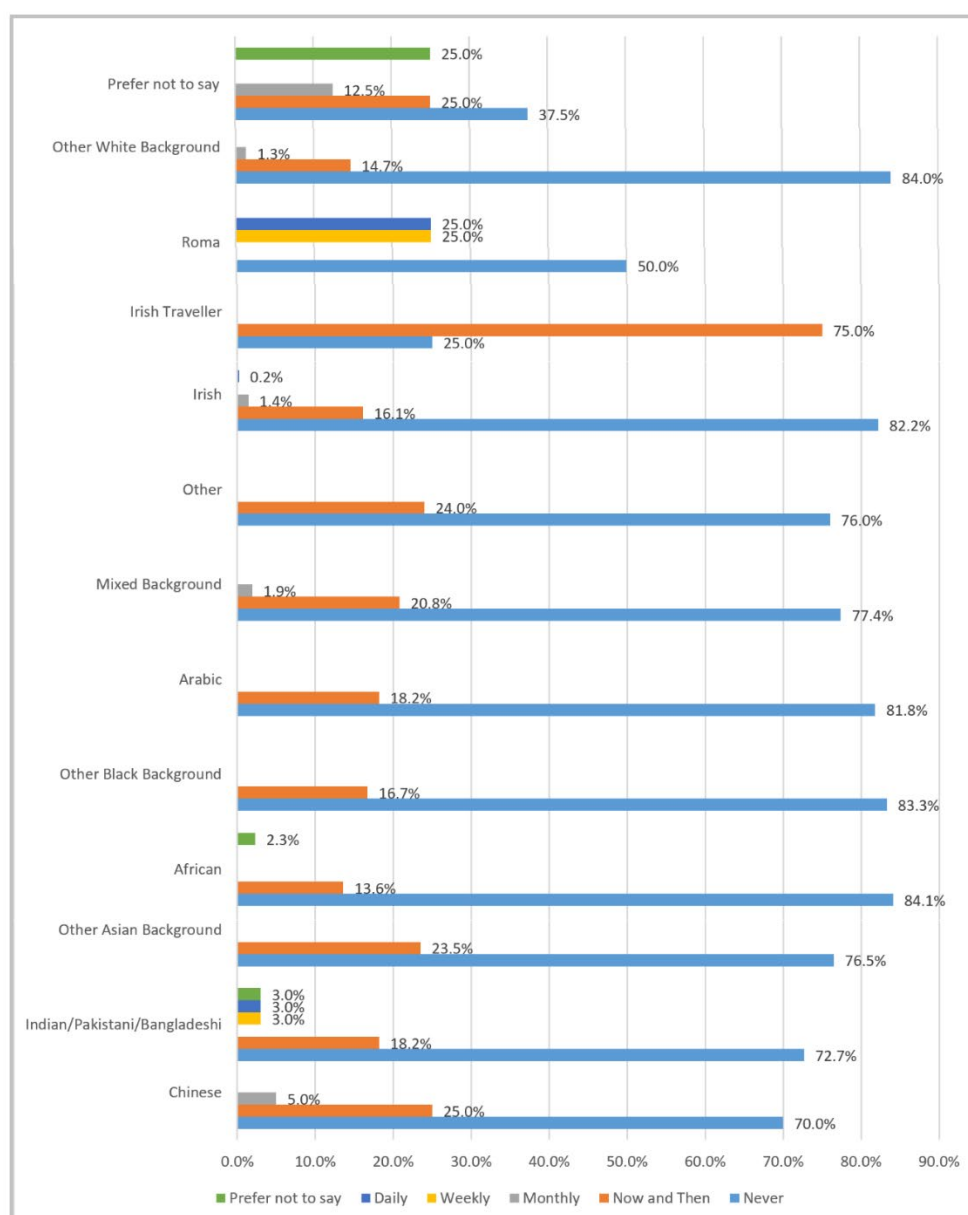
Note: Nirish=1422; Nany other white background= 272; Nchinese=30; Nindian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi=45; Nany other Asian background=25; Nafrican=64; Nany other black background= 10; Narabic=15; Nmixed background=65; Nother=33; Nirish traveller=10; Nroma=6;

4.7 Negative acts among respondents with a disability or neurodiversity

Respondents who indicated having a disability endured significantly higher levels of negative acts compared to those with no disabilities. Respondents who identified as having an Ongoing Illness reported the highest levels of negative experiences "Every Now and Then" (50%). In contrast, respondents who reported as having an Neurological condition reported the highest levels of "Daily" negative acts, such as bullying or cyberbullying (12.5%). Respondents who reported being Deaf, hard of hearing, Blind, or visually impaired, or having a physical or mobility-related disability reported no negative experiences. For a breakdown of the average rates across work-orientated negative acts and person-orientated negative acts see Figure 7.

Figure 7. Negative acts experienced among respondents with and without a disability.
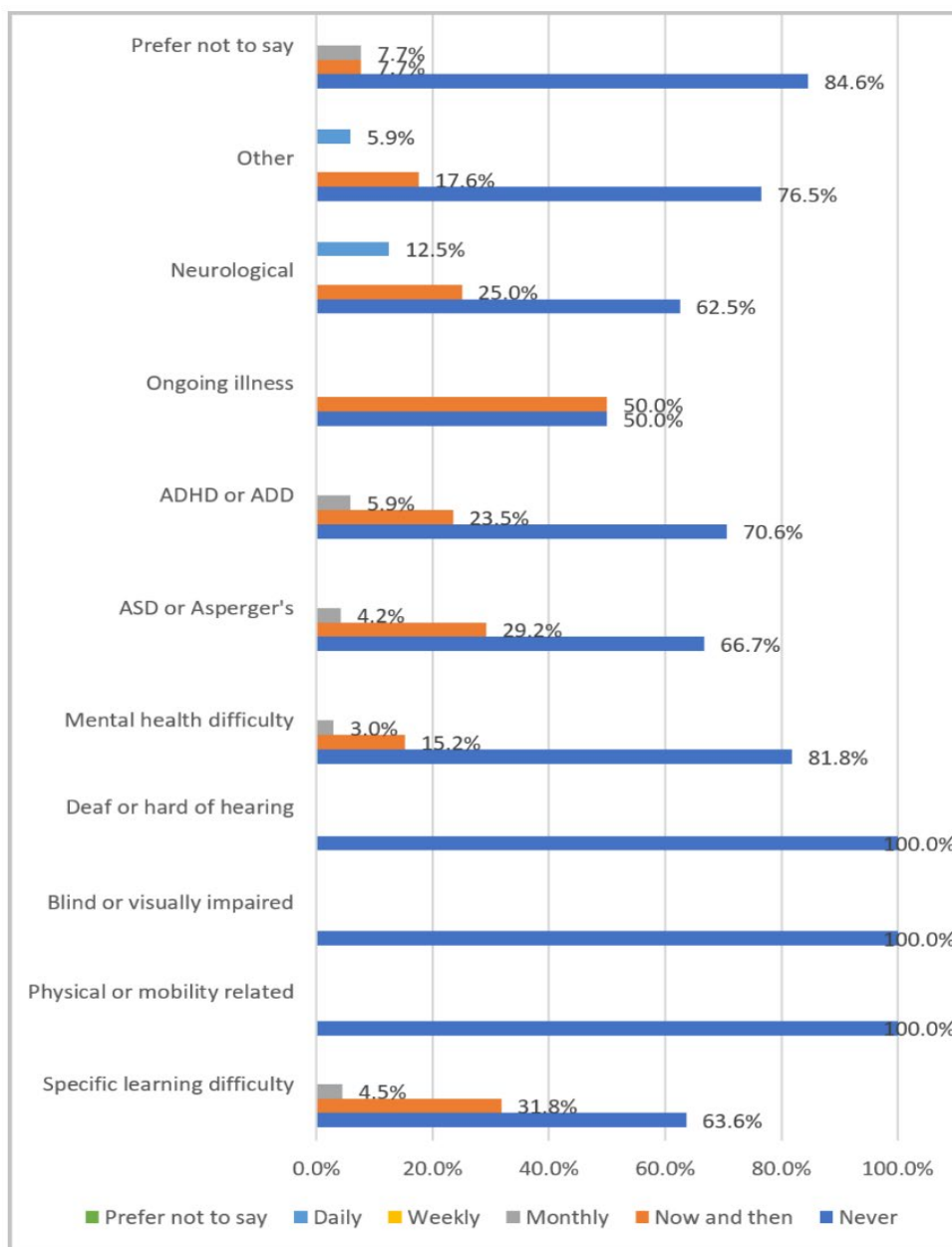
Note: Nspecific learning difficulty=25; Nphysical/mobility related disability= 8; Nblind or visually impaired= 9; Ndeaf or hard of hearing= 4; Nmental health difficulty=37; Nasd or asperger's=33; Nadhd or add= 22; Nsignificant ongoing illness=11; Nneurological=10; Nother=24

4.8 Negative Acts across Different Age Groups

In terms of age differences, students aged between 18-24 experienced higher levels of negative acts compared to all other ranges (25-64), with students 65+ experiencing higher frequent

negative experiences. A breakdown of the average rates of negative acts experienced for different age groups can be found in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Negative acts experienced across different age groups
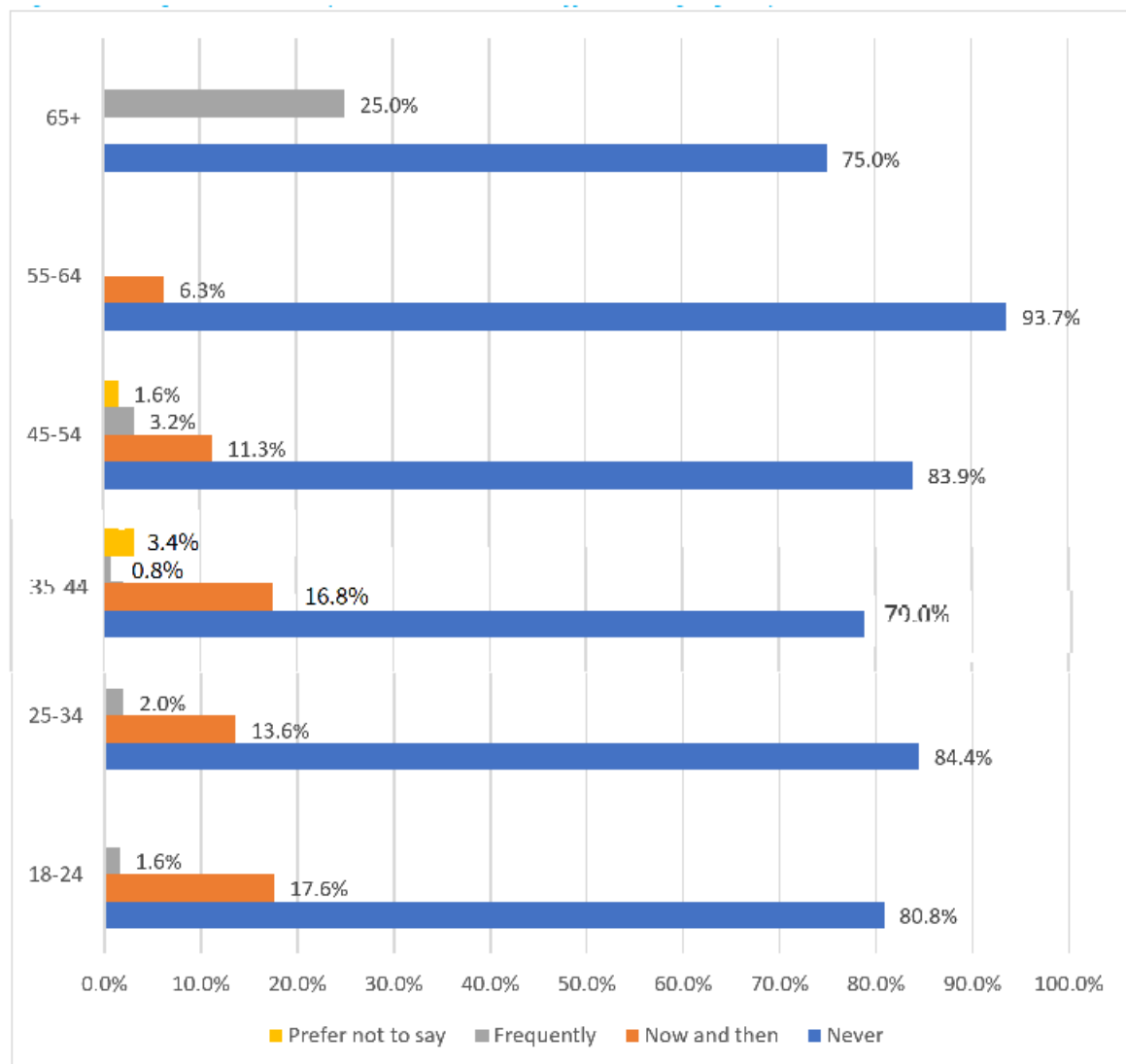

Note: N18-24=1409; N25-34=258; N35-44=146; N45-54=78;N55 64=22;N65+=5;

4.9 Negative Acts across Different Student groups

Survey respondents were asked to indicate the status of their registration, either as a full time or part-time student. In

comparing both groups, students registered as full-time experienced similar levels of negative acts (18.7%) than those registered as Part-time (16%). Full-time students experienced more instances of negative acts "now and then" (16.9%) compared with Part-time students (13.5%). A full breakdown can be seen in Figure 9.

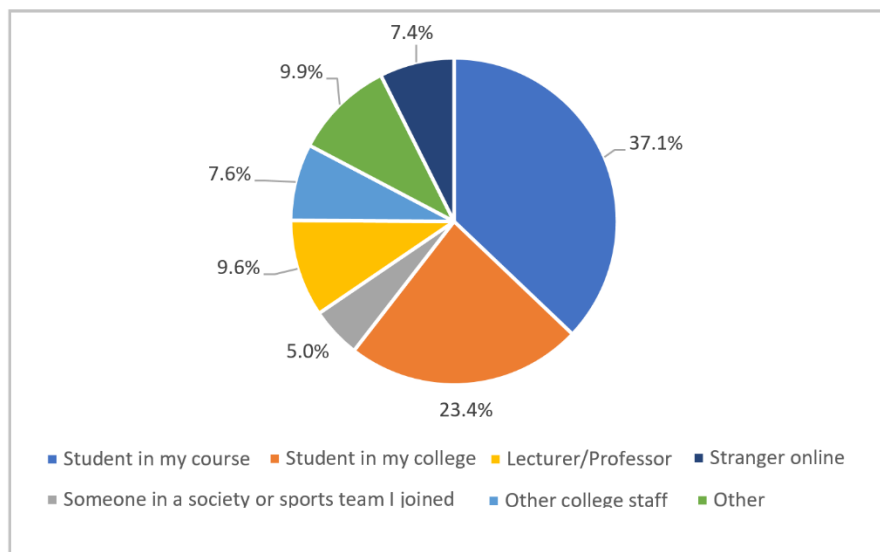**Figure 9. Negative acts experienced across different Student Groups**
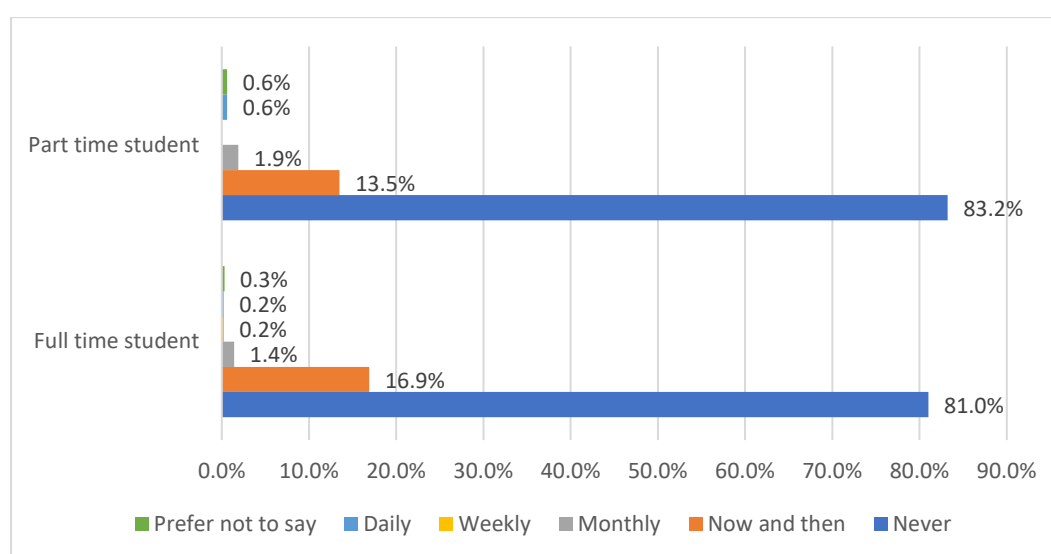
4.10 Status of the Perpetrator

Survey respondents were asked to indicate the status of the person who perpetrated the negative acts against them.
Of those who had been bullied/experienced negative acts (37.1%) identified another student in their course as the perpetrator, whereas 23.4% identified another student in a different course as the perpetrator of the negative acts (see Figure 10 for more details). Moreover, 9.6% of respondents identified their lecturer as the perpetrator, 9.9% identified someone else (other) as the perpetrator.

**Figure 10 Prevalence of Negative Acts from Various Perpetrators**

Legend:
- Student in my course
- Student in my college
- Lecturer/Professor
- Stranger online
- Someone in a society or sports team I joined
- Other college staff
- Other

Values shown: 37.1%, 23.4%, 5.0%, 9.6%, 7.6%, 9.9%, 7.4%

4.11 Impact of Negative Acts on Respondents

Survey respondents were asked to what extent enduring negative acts had a negative impact on their wellbeing.
As it can be seen in figure 11, approximately 57.6% of respondents who experienced negative acts were likely to experience anxiety and 48.2% felt they had a lower self-esteem because of enduring negative acts. Approximately 41.5% of those who experienced negative acts felt less motivated to attend college due to enduring negative acts.

Figure 11. Impact of the negative acts in the overall sample

Figure 11. Impact of the negative acts in the overall sample
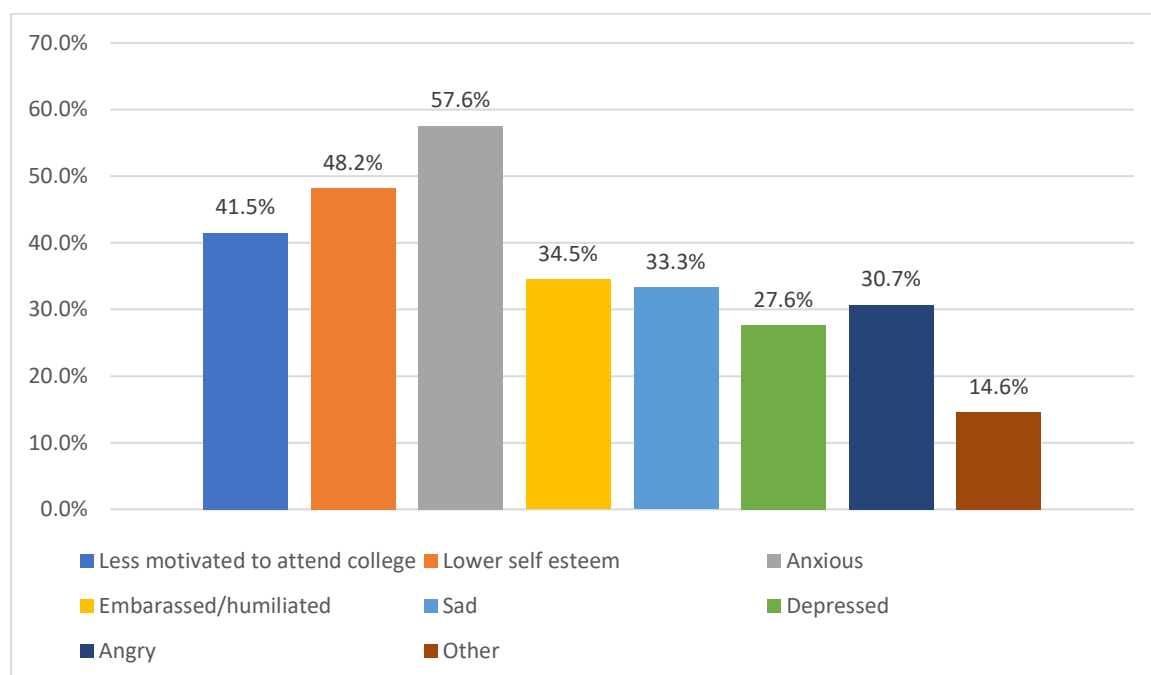
4.12 Student experiences of negative acts whilst on work placement, or practicum

Survey respondents were asked if they were required to engage in work placement or a practicum as part of their course. 12.7% indicated yes. Just over thirty two percent of respondents (32.2%) who were on placement or practicum experienced a form of bullying.

Of these, almost twenty percent (19.4%) of respondents who were on placement experienced a form of bullying now and then.
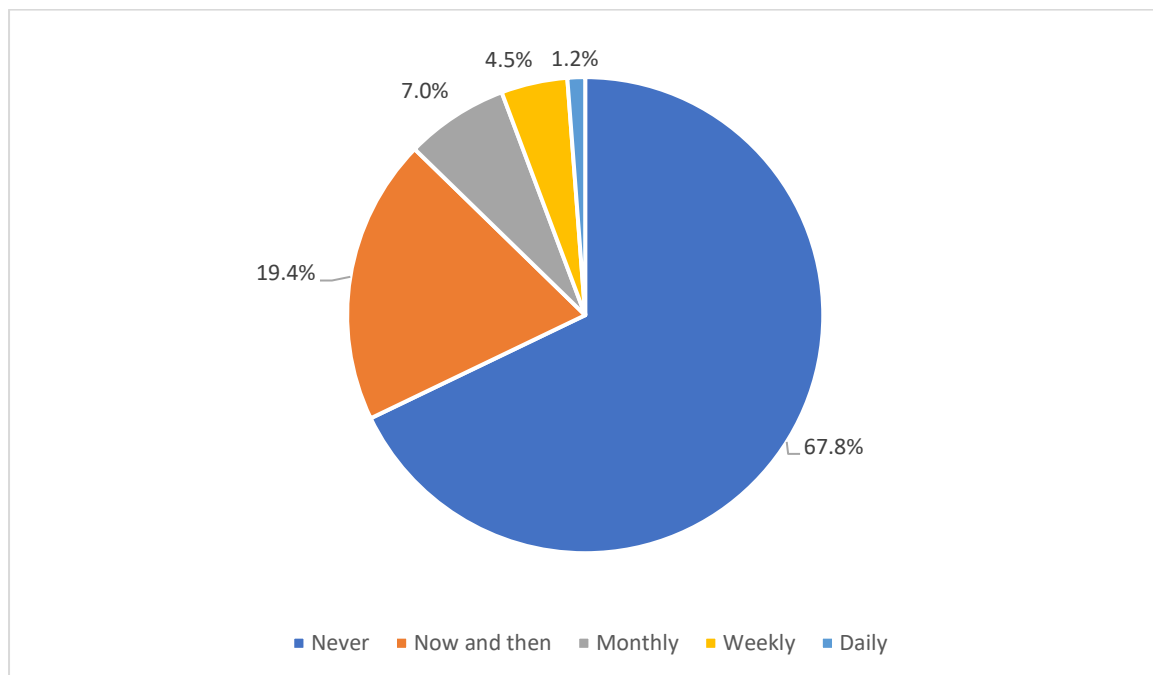7% experienced monthly instances of bullying.
4.5% experienced weekly instances of bullying.
1.2% experienced daily instances of bullying.

A full breakdown can be viewed in Figure 12:

**Figure 12. Experience of bullying while on placement/practicum**

Pie chart legend: Never, Now and then, Monthly, Weekly, Daily

- 67.8%
- 19.4%
- 7.0%
- 4.5%
- 1.2%

4.13 Bystander Behaviour

Survey respondents were asked if they ever witnessed any negative behaviours at College or University in the last academic year.

31.6% of respondents witnessed negative acts on campus. Of those, that witnessed negative acts, 59% reported that they tried to intervene.

Figure 13. Prevalence of bystander behaviour
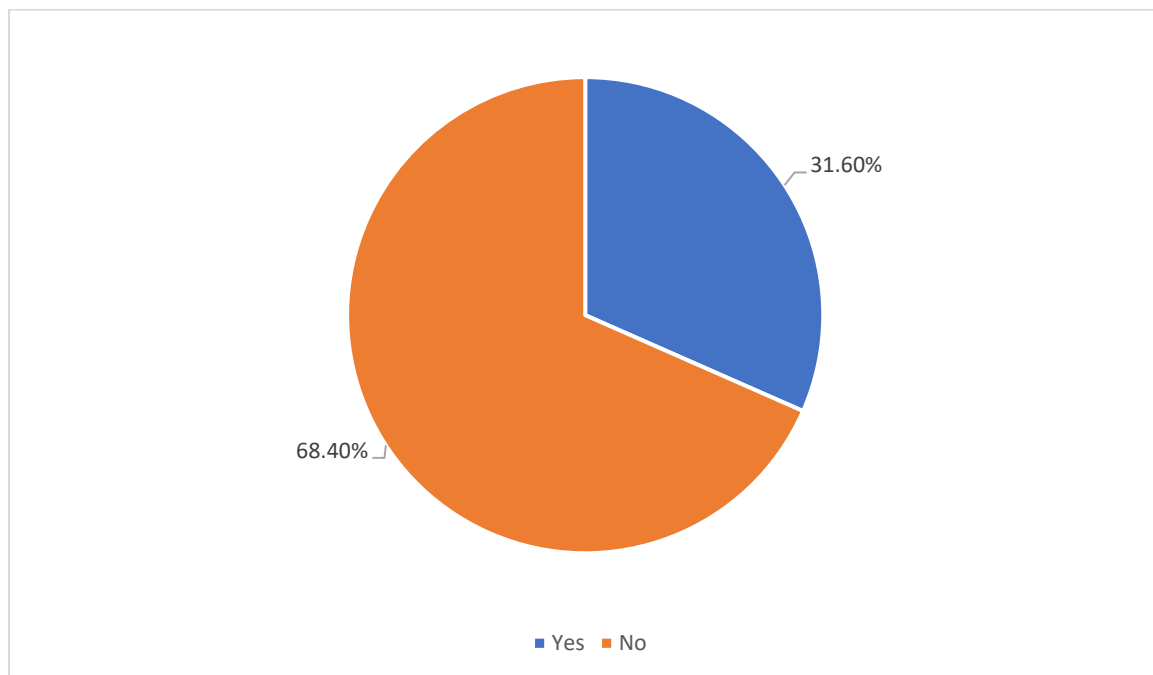
Of those who attempted to intervene, 31.9% intervened by speaking to the person being bullied. In contrast, 22.5% of respondents intervened by directly telling the bully to stop. Over 40% (40.85%) did not intervene. 27.24% of respondents who did not intervene stated they "did not know how to help".

4.14 Anti-Bullying Culture and Awareness of Anti-bullying Policies

Survey respondents were asked if an anti-bullying policy was in place at their HEI.

42.4% of survey respondents were aware that their institution had an anti-bullying policy.
56.6% were unsure whether their HEI had an anti-bullying policy.
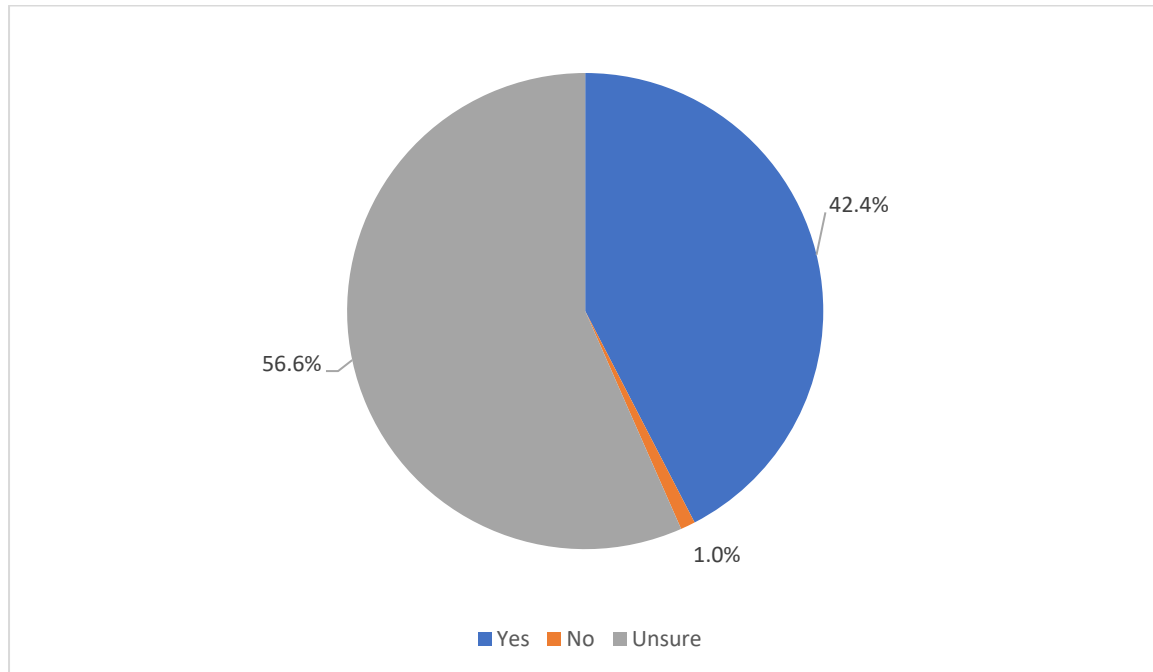**1%** reported that their institution did not have an anti-bullying policy.
    Only **24.2%** of respondents strongly agreed that their college or University actively discourages bullying.
35.8% "Strongly agreed" that bullying is against the values of their College/University.
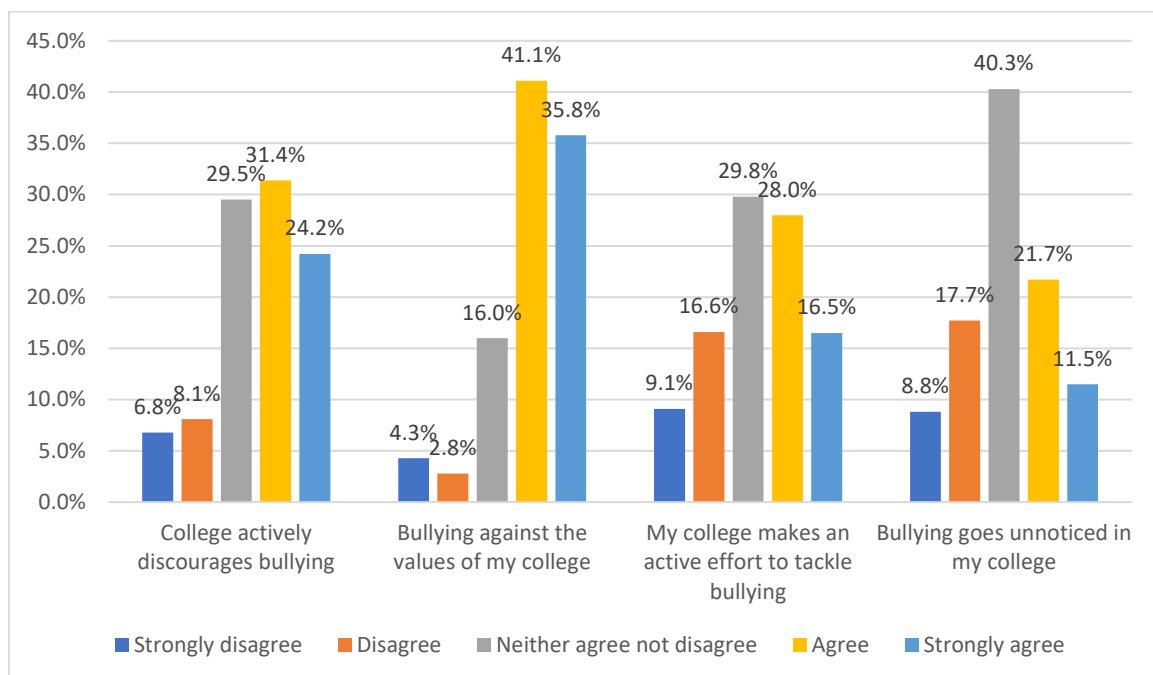**16.5%** "Strongly agreed" that their college makes an active effort to tackle bullying (e.g., through awareness raising initiatives and anti-bullying programmes).
Only **11.5%** of respondents "Strongly agreed" that Bullying goes unnoticed in their College/University.

Figure 14. Respondents' Awareness of Anti-Bullying Policies at their Institution

42.4%

56.6%

1.0%

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Figure 15. Perception of Anti-Bullying Policy and Anti-Bullying Culture

College actively discourages bullying: 6.8%, 8.1%, 29.5%, 31.4%, 24.2%

Bullying against the values of my college: 4.3%, 2.8%, 16.0%, 41.1%, 35.8%

My college makes an active effort to tackle bullying: 9.1%, 16.6%, 29.8%, 28.0%, 16.5%

Bullying goes unnoticed in my college: 8.8%, 17.7%, 40.3%, 21.7%, 11.5%

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree not disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

5

Discussion

5. Discussion

The present survey investigated student's experiences of bullying in Higher Education along with their awareness of anti-bullying policies and their perception of the anti-bullying culture within their institutions.

Negative acts experienced as a student in multiple ecologies. Negative acts such as being gossiped about in person, excluded from a group, or receiving unfair or unequal treatment were commonly experienced by survey respondents both in person and online. This is coherent with previous literature which highlighted spreading rumours and exclusion to be some of the most common types of bullying experienced (Holt and Espelage, 2007). Negative acts associated with cyberbullying such as the sharing of intimate photos without permission, or being picked on during an online game, have emerged as relatively new forms of bullying over the last decade (Slonje and Smith, 2008). Compared to in-person bullying, acts of cyberbullying are unique in so far as that they can exist beyond the confines of an in-person group, with a potential for an unlimited audience across time and digital spaces, where words and multimedia content are preserved in a more permanent state (Nixon, 2014).

Typically, these acts are carried out in un-supervised or mediated channels (Patchin and Hinduja, 2006), however, recent innovations in artificial intelligence may be helpful in future mitigations and interventions in online learning spaces, such as learning management systems or virtual classrooms. Current examples of such AI-mitigation include the monitoring of online toxicity (Gordon et al., 2022), or the use of chatbots to flag harmful behaviours and facilitate faster interventions (Li, Zhang and Liu, 2020). Beyond interactions in these learning spaces, the experiences of cyberbullying acts can be even more difficult to identify and challenge. Recent research has begun to explore this, where the use of AI algorithms can be used to analyse social media

data and identify patterns of cyberbullying among college students (Islam et al., 2021). As the use of AI as a tool to detect and prevent episodes of cyberbullying becomes more commonplace, it is worth noting the need for continued human judgement and interdisciplinary collaboration in this area to enhance ethical implementation.

Similar challenges exist within the current use of technology in the classroom, where even valid pedagogies and strategies, such as game-based learning, have at times inadvertently facilitated bullying or perpetuated stereotypical views. Historical examples of this can be seen in the adoption of learning games, such as the Oregon Trail in the 1980's, which while facilitating the development of critical thinking and decision-making skills, also depicted negative stereotypes, sexist views, and problematic representations of Native Americans as hostile and violent (Bigelow, 1997). Even in more contemporary game-based solutions, literature indicates that without the proper technological and pedagogical knowledge, game-based assessments can lead to negative behaviours, such as exclusion, mocking or trash-talk (Vodenicharova, (2023). In light of these growing challenges and opportunities in technology-enhanced education, further research is encouraged in order to enhance pluralistic and inclusive approaches.

Learning outside of the classroom, either on placement, or practicum, has comparable complex issues, where power dynamics can result in a range of top-down, bottom-up, and horizontal acts of bullying (De Cieri et al., 2019). There is limited research in this area, however some studies have found that student teachers, and nursing students have experienced several forms of bullying whilst on practice (Hutchinson, Vickers and Wilkes, 2010, Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 2013). Further research is needed in this area to explore the prevalence, type and impact of bullying whilst learning in non-formal environments.

Gender

In this study, female students reported higher levels of victimisation compared to male students. This finding is coherent with previous research showing that female students are more likely to experience bullying victimization than males (Popp, Peguero, Day and Semprevivo, 2014). This trend is also supported by an earlier report on staff experiences of bullying in Irish Higher Education (Mazzone, et al., 2022).

Sexual Orientation

LGBTQ+ respondents experienced higher levels of negative acts compared to heterosexuals. This is consistent with findings across the literature (Kosciw, Greytak, Giga, Villenas and Danischewski, 2015). Those who did not disclose their sexual orientation experienced higher levels of negative acts compared to both heterosexuals and to LGBTQ+ respondents. This indicates that despite recent progresses made in LGBTIQ+ rights, homophobic attitudes persist, and more work is needed to promote diversity and inclusion across the higher education landscape.

Ethnic Minority Groups

Findings also showed that respondents who identified themselves with an ethnic minority group were more likely to experience negative acts compared to Irish respondents and to those with any other white background. Similarly, respondents who did not disclose their ethnicity reported higher scores in terms of negative acts compared to both Irish respondents and to respondent with any other white background. These findings could suggest that students who are experiencing bullying are afraid to report their negative experiences, despite the information being collected anonymously. A similar trend was noted in Mazzone, et al (2022), in relation to staff experiences in HEI's. These trends could be due to a number of factors, including fears associated with escalation of bullying (Hutchinson & Jackson, 2015).

Disability or Neurodiversity

Respondents who indicated having a disability or neurodiversity endured higher levels of negative acts compared to those with no

disabilities. These findings are coherent with the literature (Rose, Monda-Amaya and Espelage, 2011; Malecki, Demaray, Smith and Emmons, 2020) and indicate a need for targeted and universal interventions in higher education to address disablist bullying, such as social-emotional lessons which have been implemented in post-primary settings (Le Menestrel, 2020).

Age differences within full-time and part-time students

In terms of age differences, students aged between 18-24 experienced higher levels of negative acts compared to all other ranges (25-64). Currently there is little data to compare these findings with and further studies are needed to explore supports to combat ageist behaviours in higher education. Similarly, differences between full-time and part-time students are not widely apparent within the literature and require follow-up studies.

Status of the Perpetrator

In terms of the status of the perpetrator, over a third of respondents (37.1%) identified another student in their course as the perpetrator of bullying. Similarly, over a fifth of respondents (23.4%) identified another student in a different course as the perpetrator of the negative acts. There is no clear consensus within the literature currently, on whether college students are more likely to bully other students in their own class or those outside their class group. However, just under a tenth of respondents, who endured negative acts (9.6%), identified their lecturer as the perpetrator. This is over double what has been experienced in previous studies (Chapell, Casey, De la Cruz, Ferrell, Forman, Lipkin and Newsham, 2004).

Impact on Respondents

A consistent proportion of respondents were asked to what extent enduring negative acts impacted on their wellbeing. Just over half of respondents (57.6%) who experienced negative acts were likely to experience anxiety and just under half (48.2%) felt they had a lower self-esteem because of enduring negative acts. Over 40% of those who experienced negative acts felt less motivated to attend college as a result. Further research is warranted to explore the

wider impact of negative acts experienced by students in Higher Education.

Bystander Behaviour

In terms of bystander behaviour, just over a third of respondents (31.6%) witnessed negative acts at college or university in the last academic year. Of these, under two third tried to intervene (59%). Interestingly, the highest methods of intervening were to talk directly to the victim (31.9%) or telling the bully to stop (22.5%). These finding are lower than reported in the United States, where over 60% of students in studies reported the witnessing of bullying in some capacity (Chapell et al, 2004). In contrast, the current results are higher than reported experiences in Finland, where a recent study, highlighted that only 11% of students witnessed bullying (Sinkkonen et al., 2014). Of interest, is the large amount of respondents in this study who did not wish to say if they intervened or not (84.3%). Similarly, when asked why they did not intervene, 27% of respondents indicated that they did not know how to help. This would indicate that clearer pathways to reporting negative acts need to developed in higher education.

Anti-Bullying Culture and Policies

Less than half of respondents (42.4%) were aware that their institution had an anti-bullying policy. Similarly, more than half of respondents (56.6%) were unsure as to whether an anti-bullying policy had been put into place at their institution and only 1% reported that their institution did not have an anti-bullying policy. Overall, over a third (35.8%) of respondents strongly agreed that bullying is against the values of their College/University. These trends would indicate a need to develop further awareness of anti-bullying policies and processes in higher education.

6
Recommendations

6. Recommendations

The findings of this survey study are important for HEI Leaders and policymakers at the national and organisational level as they assist in focussing on potential strategies to prevent experiences of negative acts such as bullying and cyberbullying among and between HEI students. Some of the key recommendations following from this survey study include:

- Awareness, Education and Training.
- Supports for Faculty
- Implementing evidence-based support programmes.
- Supporting targets of bullying and bystanders.
- Developing and promoting anti-bullying policies in consultation with all stakeholders.
- Ongoing research to further explore and monitor the prevalence of bullying in HEIs.
- Ongoing research to further explore the typologies of negative acts experienced in person and online.

6.1 Awareness, Education and Training

The need to enhance awareness around online and offline bullying, while promoting and reinforcing a positive learning culture are paramount to successfully tackling bullying. Online professional learning resources with a focus on recognising, responding, and preventing bullying should be integrated within HEIs orientation procedures and ongoing learning development and support initiatives. Similarly, training programmes should be aimed at raising awareness around safe and effective strategies to report bullying from a bystander perspective, such as the *Speak out* Tool. Moreover, supports for students who perpetrate acts of bullying or cyberbullying need to be developed, to support ongoing personal and professional development in an environment that promotes dignity and respect.

6.2 Supports for Faculty

Given the growing adoption of technology in higher education, ongoing professional development supports are essential for faculty in relation to bullying, cyberbullying, and the facilitation of inclusive teaching processes. Building on growing trends such as universal design for learning, there is a need to consider further the roles of reflective tools such as the *digicomp framework for educators*, and processes to consider the interrelated roles of pedagogy, content and technology, such as the *TPACK framework* warrant further research.

6.3 Supporting Targets of Bullying and Bystanders

Although a proactive approach to enhanced awareness and prevention is the optimal pathway, there is a need for more technology-enhanced counselling services across HEI's that offer dedicated supports for students who experience negative acts offline or online. Similarly, such enhanced supports should also be made available not just to targets of bullying but also to bystanders.

6.4 Evidence-Based Programmes

Anti-bullying intervention programmes in HEI's should in all cases, represent a collaborative design between support staff, mental health professionals and students to enhance student agency and ownership of supports, which in turn increases the chances for intervention programmes to be successful (Osatuke et al., 2009). Based on these considerations, it is recommended for anti-bullying experts to collaborate with individual institutions towards a co-design of future supports which reflect the complex experiences of online and offline bullying. Existing examples of this type of approach can be seen in University of Galway's *Active Consent Programme*.

6.5 Anti-Bullying Policies

Based on previous research and on the findings of this survey study, it is paramount to increase HEIs' students trust that the institution

will handle bullying effectively. Safe complaint mechanisms and support systems should be put into place for bystanders to report bullying without the fear of negative consequences to self-image, status or academic progression. One of the viable strategies to promote students' trust in anti-bullying policies lies in the enhanced engagement of HEIs' students in developing anti-bullying policies through open consultation.

6.6 Ongoing research to further explore bullying in HEIs.

Regular survey studies with data collected annually are recommended to help monitoring the phenomenon of student bullying within HEIs. Moreover, survey studies should be combined with focus groups and interviews, which could offer a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of HEI students.

Appendix

APPENDIX

Methods

Survey Development

The items included in the survey were adapted from previous validated questionnaires, which have been widely adopted in the field of Psychology and bullying research studies. The questions inquiring about respondents' demographics were taken from a previous survey commissioned by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (Mazzone, et al., 2022), those inquiring about the impact of bullying and cyberbullying on mental health and wellbeing, reasons for not taking action when witnessing bullying, anti-bullying culture, and knowledge and implementation of anti-bullying policies were similarly adopted from Mazzone, et al., (2022). Specific instruments relating to the multifaceted phenomenon of student bullying in higher education were adapted from Sinkkonen et al (2012).

How did students take part in the survey?

The research team in DCU Anti-Bullying Centre (ABC) emailed their contact points in the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, who circulated the survey link to all HEI's. The survey went live on November 4th, 2022, and remained open until December 4th 2022.

Ethical Considerations

DCU Research Ethics Committee (REC) granted approval for this research study (DCUREC/2022/127). Survey respondents were presented with a plain language statement explaining the goals of the project and were asked to fill out a written informed consent prior to completing the survey. Respondents were provided with the contact numbers, website link and Freephone of relevant support services, which they were advised to consult if they needed help in relation to their bullying experiences.

Survey Instruments

Section 1: Demographics

The demographic information assessed in this survey study included: a) sex, b) Gender identity, c) Correspondence between sex assigned at birth and gender identity, d) Age group, e) Ethnicity, f) Sexual orientation, g) Functional diversity (disability).

Section 2: Experiences within social learning environments

The above questions were followed-up with items inquiring to the experience of negative acts in person, or online. These items inquired into the types of negative acts experienced, their frequency, impact. Participants were also asked to indicate the status of the perpetrator.

Section 3: Experiences of bullying others

In this next part, participants were asked to consider any experiences they may have had of bullying others. These items inquired into the types of negative acts experienced and their frequency.

Section 4: Experiences of witnessing bullying and/or cyberbullying of someone in your college.

In this final section, participants were asked to consider any experiences they have had of witnessing negative acts such as bullying or cyberbullying and whether they intervened or not. Finally, respondents were asked about their perception of their HEI being able to effectively tackle bullying and their awareness about whether their HEI has an anti-bullying policy.

Data Analysis

Analyses were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics software version 27. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for all

study variables. The overall analysis approach involved the following steps:

Descriptive statistics: The first step taken was to report the frequencies and percentages of the nominal variables in the sample. For example, the number and percentage relating to sex assigned at birth and gender identity, different age groups, different ethnicities, sexual orientation, and functional diversity (disability).

Frequency distributions: The next step was to create frequency distributions for the ordinal variables related to acts of bullying and cyberbullying experienced from victims, perpetrators and bystanders. For example, the frequency distribution of responses to questions such that employed ranges such as "*Never, now and then, Monthly, weekly, daily, prefer not to say*". The majority of these variables were presented to participants in a 5-point Likert scale (Never, now and then, Monthly, Weekly, Daily, prefer not to say).

Next steps: Following the completion of this study, the research team will further this research by employing inferential statistics to test whether there are statistically significant differences in the frequency of bullying experiences between genders, different age groups, different ethnicities, and those with functional diversities. These findings may later be used for publication in scientific journals and/or presented at relevant conferences.

Survey

Survey

Plain Language Statement

Survey of the Experiences of Higher Education Students in Ireland

Plain Language Statement
Dr. Michael Goldrick and Professor James O'Higgins Norman of the DCU Anti-Bullying Centre thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this survey. You will find some information about the survey below.

What is the survey about?
This survey enquires about some experiences you may have had so far in your higher education studies. The results of this survey will be used to inform policy and best practice in the provision of a safe educational environment, and to advance the scientific knowledge surrounding student experiences of higher education.

The survey is composed of two sections:
Section 1: Your Background
Section 2: Your Student Experiences that you may have had.

Who is conducting this research?
This research study is being conducted by Dr Michael Goldrick and Professor James O'Higgins Norman of the Dublin City University Anti-Bullying Centre (ABC). This study is being run in conjunction with the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. If you have any questions concerning the contents of this survey, please contact the principal investigator; michael.goldrick@dcu.ie.

What will I be asked to do?
You will be asked a series of questions enquiring if you have experienced particular behaviours, who was the perpetrator, how

often you experienced them, and the effect it had on you. For example, you may be asked:

Have you experienced any of the following acts within College and Social learning environments? Please tick as many as apply.
I was excluded from a group in real life
I received unfair or unequal treatment in real life
I was called names in real life
I was gossiped about in real life
I was reprimanded by someone in real life
I was picked on, belittled, or exposed to public ridicule in real life

This survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Please complete this survey in a quiet environment, where you do not feel observed and where you can respond accurately to the questions being presented to you. Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary and it should not pose any perceived risk in either your personal or educational life. Please keep in mind that there are no wrong answers as this is a survey of your own personal experiences. Therefore, it is important that your answers reflect your own experiences, thoughts, and feelings.

Benefits of participating
By participating in this research study, you will be given the opportunity to reflect on your higher education experience thus far. Your participation in this survey will inform policy and best practices in higher education institutions in Ireland and will help researchers and practitioners to create a better educational environment.

How will my data be stored?
This survey will not collect any personal identifying information about you. Thus, your participation will be entirely anonymous and confidential. Your data will be stored securely on Google Drive. This data will be password protected and will not be accessible to anyone other than the research team involved in this study (within the confines of the law). The data will be collected anonymously and protected in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) – 2018 and will be stored for 5 years after the

completion of the research study. Please do not provide any personal identifiable information (e.g. first name, surname, etc.) that could be used to identify you.

Any individual who wishes to exercise their Data Subject Rights should contact the DCU Data Protection Officer at data.protection@dcu.ie.

How will my data be used?
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and as such, you may close this survey at any point.
Please note that if you withdraw from the survey prior to completion, the data collected up to your withdrawal will be used as detailed in this information sheet. This is due to the fact that this survey does not collect any identifying information about you that could be linked to your answers.

The findings of this research study will be used to inform policy and best practices in Irish Higher Education Institutions. These findings will also be used for the publication of academic papers and for presentation at academic conferences.

Independent contact
If you wish to contact an independent party concerning this project, please contact:
The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000, e-mail rec@dcu.ie

Informed Consent Sheet

Informed Consent Sheet
Anonymous Online Informed Consent Form

I give my consent to participate in this survey and understand that I may withdraw from the survey at any point.

By ticking each box below, you consent to participating in this survey:

□ I confirm that I have read and understood the Plain Language Statement
□ I understand the information provided
□ I understand the information provided in relation to data protection
□ I understand that I may withdraw from this survey at any point
□ I understand that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations
□ I confirm that I had the opportunity to ask questions and received satisfactory answers
□ I consent to participate in this survey

Survey Instrument

Experiences of Bullying within Higher Education.

(Q1)
Participant Information Sheet

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. We have provided some information about this research project below.

What is this survey about?
This survey is about student-related experiences in higher education institutions. This survey includes three sections (TBC):

Who are the people conducting the research?
This research is being conducted by Dr Michael Goldrick and Prof. James O'Higgins Norman of the DCU Anti-Bullying Centre (ABC) at Dublin City University.
This survey has been facilitated by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. If you have any important questions regarding the contents of this survey, please contact michael.goldrick@dcu.ie
Information regarding the aims of this survey is provided below.

What will my participation involve?
This survey will take about 15 minutes to complete. The ideal setting for filling out the survey is a quiet environment, where you do not feel observed and can respond accurately to the questions included in this survey. Your participation in this survey is voluntary and it should not entail any risk in either your personal or student life. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers. Therefore, it is very important that your answers reflect your personal thoughts, experiences, and feelings.

Benefits of participation
By choosing to participate in this research survey, you will get the chance to reflect on your student-related experiences. Your participation will inform policy and best practices in Higher

Education Institutions and will help practitioners to create a better learning environment.

How will the data be stored?
The survey will not collect any personal identifiable information on you. Aggregate data from the study participants will contribute to the overall research findings. Your data will be stored securely using passwords for the survey software and will not be accessed by anyone outside of the research team (subject to legal limitations). The data will be collected anonymously and protected in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) - 2016/679 and will be stored for 5 years after completion of the research in accordance with the Data Protection Act, 1998. Please do not provide any information (e.g. name, surname, etc.) that could be used to identify you.

Any individual wishing to exercise their Data Subject Rights should contact the DCU Data Protection Officer at
data.protection@dcu.ie

How will the data be used?
Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may close this survey at any point.
Please note that if you withdraw from the survey, the data collected up to your withdrawal will be used as detailed in this participant information sheet. This is because this survey does not collect any identifiable information that could be linked to your own answers.

The research findings will be used to inform policy and practice in Irish Higher Education Institutions. Findings will also be used for writing papers for publication in scientific journals, and for presenting the findings of this survey at academic conferences.

Independent contact
If you wish to liaise with an independent person about this survey, please contact the Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee at rec@dcu.ie

Q2 Consent Form

I give my consent to participate in this survey and understand that I may withdraw from the survey at any point.

By ticking each box below, you consent to completing this survey:

- I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet (1)
- I understand the information provided (2)
- I understand the information provided in relation to data protection (3)
- I understand that I may withdraw from this survey at any point (4)
- I understand that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations (5)
- I confirm that I had the opportunity to ask questions and received satisfactory answers (6)
- I consent to participate in this survey (7)

We now need some general information about you. Please note that data is collected and help confidentially.

To understand your answers for statistical research purposes, we would be grateful if you could provide us with some personal demographic information. Where you do not wish to disclose information, please choose the "Prefer not to answer" option.

Demographic information

(Q3) Part 1.

We now need some general information about you. Please note that data is collected and held confidentially.

To understand your answers for statistical research purposes, we would be grateful if you could provide us with some personal demographic information. Where you do not wish to disclose information, please choose the "prefer not to say" option.

(Q4) Are you over the age of 18?
Yes (1)
No (2)
(Q5) Are you a registered student in a third level institution?
Yes (1)
No (2)
(Q6) What gender (if any) do you identify with? Please choose one of the following:
Cisgender woman (female)
Cisgender man (male)
Transgender woman
Transgender man
Trans feminine person
Trans masculine person
Non-binary person
Agender person
Gender non-conforming person
Genderqueer
Other
(Q7) What sexual orientation do you identify with?
Asexual
Gay
Lesbian
Bisexual
Queer
Straight/heterosexual
Pansexual
Questioning
Other
Prefer not to say

(Q8) Please indicate your age group:
18-24
25-34
35-44
45-54
55-64
65+
Prefer not to say

(Q9) With which ethnic group do you most identify?
(The categories below are informed by the Central Statistics Office for Census (2022)
Chinese
Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi
Any other Asian background
African
Any other Black background
Arabic
Mixed background
Other
Irish
Irish Traveller
Roma
Any other White background
Prefer not to say

(Q10) Do you have any functional diversity?
Yes
No
Prefer not to say

(Q11) What is your functional diversity?
  Specific learning difficulty e.g., dyslexia, dyscalculia
  Physical or mobility related disability
  Blind or visually impaired
  Deaf or hard of hearing
  Mental health difficulty
  ASD or Aspergers
  ADHD or ADD
  Significant ongoing illness
  Neurological (incl. Epilepsy and Brain injury)
  Other _____
   Prefer not to say

(Q12) What is your religion?
Muslim
Hindus
Orthodox

Roman Catholic
Buddhism
Jewish
Church of Ireland (including Protestant)
No religion
Other Please state

(Q13) What type of college do you attend?
Institute of Technology
University
Technological University
College of Further Education
Private College

(Q14) What type of description best fits your current status as a student?
Are you a Full time Student?
Are you a Part-time Student?

(Q15) Are you on an exchange programme (such as Erasmus)
Yes
No

(Q16) What qualification should you receive at the end of your course?
Higher Certificate (NFQ Level 6)
Diploma
Degree (NFQ Level 7)
Honours Degree (NFQ Level 8)
Postgraduate Diploma (NFQ Level 8/9)
Taught Masters Degree (NFQ Level 9)
Research Masters Degree (NFQ Level 9)
PhD /EdD / (NFQ Level 10)
Other (please specify)

(Q17) What is your current main area of study?
Education
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction
Humanities & Arts

Agriculture/Veterinary
Social Science
Health/Welfare
Business
Sport
Law
Catering
Science
Services
Maths/Computing/Computer Science
Other (please specify)

(Q18) How many years long is the course in total?
  1 Year
  2 Years
  3 Years
  4 Years
  5 Years
  6 Years / more than 6 Years

(Q19) What year of the course are you currently in?
  1 Year
  2 Years
  3 Years
  4 Years
  5 Years
  6 Years / more than 6 Years

(Q20) PART 2:

Experiences within social learning environments

Here are some questions related to your experiences in College and social learning environments, whether that be in real life, or online. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your actual experiences, feelings and thoughts.

Please read each question carefully before answering:

A Note on Bullying and Cyber bullying

Bullying is in-person behaviour between students within a social network that causes physical, emotional, or social harm to targeted students. When such behaviour takes place online it is referred to as cyberbullying or online bullying. Bullying is typically characterised by an imbalance of power that is enabled or inhibited by the social and institutional norms and context of schools and the education system. As an example of power imbalance, a fellow student who engages in bullying perpetration may have more social support (better social capital), which can facilitate bullying behaviour. Power imbalance can also result from a formal hierarchical structure such as an instructor/professor having more power than a student. The key aspect of bullying rests on the subjective perception of the target that acts are hostile, humiliating or intimidating and that they are directed at the target.
All answers provided are anonymous and confidential.

Q21
Please note the questions in this section may cause stress or be upsetting for some.
Have you experienced any of the following acts within college and social learning environments?

Never	Now and Then	Monthly	Weekly	Daily	Prefer not to say
○	○	○	○	○	○

I was excluded from a group in real life
I received unfair or unequal treatment in real life
I was called names in real life
I was gossiped about in real life
I was reprimanded by someone in real life
I was picked on, belittled, or exposed to public ridicule in real life
Inappropriate assignments were set for me
Inappropriate content was assigned to class by Tutor/Lecturer/Professor
I was stalked on campus (repeated, unwanted behaviour that caused you to feel distressed or scared).

I experienced hazing to join a society on campus (forced you into committing an act that creates a risk for harm, to be initiated into an organization)

I was physically intimidated/threatened

I had someone coming too close to me, repeatedly

I was sexually harassed on campus

I had personal items forcibly taken from me

I had threatening gestures made towards me

I was harassed online by an individual in my college (for example, bombarded with multiple unwanted messages or images)

I was impersonated by another student online (sent messages/contacted people pretending to be me).

I had photos of me shared with other college students online, without my permission.

I had an embarrassing video of me shared, without my permission.

I had my personal details shared online.

I was excluded from my online curricular groups (Such as virtual learning environments, Moodle, Loop, Blackbird, Teams).

I was excluded from my extra-curricular online groups (such as clubs and society pages, sports team pages, special interest group pages).

I was stalked online by an individual from my college.

I was gossiped about on social media by another student from my college

I was tricked online into giving another student my college work

I had some nude/semi-nude photos of me shared online.

I was subjected to online hazing to join a society.

I was harassed by an individual in my college through text messages.

I was harassed by an individual in my college through College emails

I was harassed by an individual in my college through Personal emails

I was harassed through Instant messaging (for example, Whattsapp, Telegram, Facebook chat, Instagram)

I was picked on, belittled, or exposed to public ridicule during an Online Game

Other: Please state

(Q22) The person(s) perpetrating the above was/is
Not applicable. (redirect to next question)
Student in my course
Another student in my college
Someone in a society I joined.
Someone on a sports team I joined
Tutor
Lecturer/Professor
Research supervisor
Manager in the college
Administrative staff
Support services staff
Someone else (please list your connection to this person).
A stranger online

(Q23) Did you change your behaviour as a result of these negative
experiences in the last academic year? (please tick all that apply)

I took time out of college
I am going to drop out of course
I am thinking of changing course
I am thinking of changing college
I didn't go to certain classes
I didn't participate in certain classes
I dropped out of a society
I dropped out of a sports/ esports team
I stopped going to the on-campus gym
I try not to be alone on-campus (stay with one or more people)
I avoid certain areas of campus (where I feel vulnerable).
I avoid certain online student groups

(Q24) Thinking of the negative experiences above, did they have a
negative impact on you in
Relation to any of the following?

motivation to attend college
Lowered self esteem
Anxiousness

Feelings of embarrassment/humiliation
Sadness
Feeling depressed.
Feelings of anger
Other
(Q25) Do you feel that you were targeted as a result of any of the following?
My sexual orientation
My gender
Being transgender
Having a disability
My race
My religion.
My age
My ethnicity
My physical appearance
No idea why I was bullied on campus
Other: Please state.
(Q26) Did you experience bullying at post-primary (secondary) school?
Yes   No

(Q27) If yes, how long did the bullying last?
Less than a week
Around a week.
Less than a month
A few months
Roughly a year
Multiple years

(Q28) Now let's look at experiences you may have had as a result of work experience as a requirement for your course.

Did you go on work placement / practicum during the last academic year as part of the requirement for your college course?

Yes   No

(Q29) If yes, have you experienced any of the following acts from a senior colleague, mentor, placement tutor, or peer?

Never   Now and Then   Monthly   Weekly   Daily Prefer   Not to say

Someone withholding information which affects your performance
Spreading gossip and rumours about you
Being ignored or excluded
Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person, attitudes or private life
Being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous rage
Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes
Being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach someone at work
Persistent criticism of your work and effort
Practical jokes carried out by people you don't get along with
Received messages that have a disrespectful tone
Been unfairly blamed for work-related problems
Received aggressively worded messages (e.g. using all capital letters, bold font or multiple exclamation marks)
Had a staff member copy people into messages that reflect poorly on you
Had your work unfairly criticised
Received rude demands from a colleague
Been sent conflicting information
Been bypassed in group communications that are relevant to your placement role
Been the subject of communications that undermine you
Received unreasonable work demands
Been pressured into responding to technology-mediated communications at all times
(Q30) The person(s) perpetrating the above was/is (please choose all that apply)
   A senior colleague
   A peer
   A Mentor
   A student
   A Placement Tutor

Other

(Q31) Thinking of the negative experiences above, did they have a negative impact on you in terms of your general wellbeing?

I felt/I feel...

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
Sad and in a bad mood (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Tense and nervous (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Inactive and with low energy (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Tired and unrested when waking up (4)	○	○	○	○	○

(Q32) Did you report these experiences to anyone?
Yes   No (if no, redirect to debrief)

(Q33) If yes, who did you report to? (drop down list)
-friend
-lecturer
-parent
-tutor
-student union
-student rep
-college counsellor

Part 3: Experiences of Bullying Others

This next part considers any experiences you may have had of bullying others. All answers provided are anonymous and confidential. Please note the questions in this section may cause stress or be upsetting for some.

(Q34) Have you carried out any of the following acts within college and / or social learning environments?

Never   Now and Then   Monthly   Weekly   Daily Prefer Not to say

I discriminated against someone.
I excluded someone from a group in real life
I excluded someone from an online group
I treated someone unfairly, with unequal treatment
I called someone names
I gossiped about someone
I reprimanded someone
I picked on, belittled, or exposed someone to public ridicule in real life.
I expressed contempt to someone
I stalked someone on campus
I was involved in hazing, to allow someone to join a society on campus
I physically intimidated someone.
I sexually harassed someone on campus
I took personal items from someone
I made threatening gestures towards someone in real life
I made threatening gestures towards someone online
I harassed through Instant messaging (for example, Whattsapp, Telegram, Facebook chat, Instagram)
I picked on, belittled, or exposed to public ridicule during an Online Game.
I harassed an individual in my college through College emails
I harassed an individual in my college through personal emails
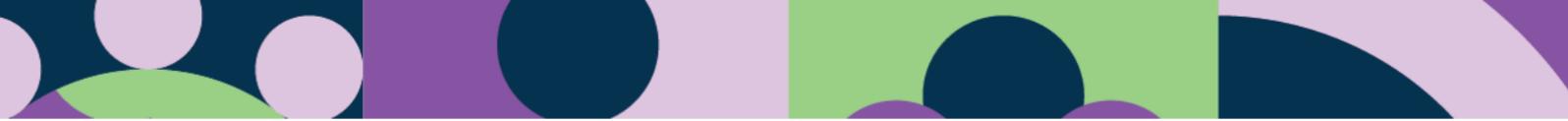
(Q35) Who did you direct these acts towards?
Student in my course
Another student in my college
Tutor
Lecturer/Professor
Research supervisor
Manager in the college
Admin staff
Someone else (please list your connection to this person).
Prefer not to say

PART 4.

Now let's look at witnessing bullying and/or cyberbullying of someone in your college.

(Q36) Have you ever witnessed any form of bullying on campus or cyberbullying?
Yes   No

(Q37) (If yes), Have you tried to intervene?
Yes   No

(Q38) What did you do to intervene?
Spoke to the person being bullied on campus to see if I could help/support them.
Contacted a lecturer
Contacted a Student rep.
Told the person bullying to stop it.
I stepped in to stop the bullying at the time.
I sent a DM to the bully to tell them to stop
Contacted other class members to tell them about the bullying situation.
(Q39) What was the outcome of your actions?
Please state

(Q40) (If no intervention) why did you not intervene?
Afraid for myself, that I would be next

Afraid it would get worse for the person being bullied
None of my business
Thought someone else would intervene
Person should be able to handle it themselves at college
I didn't know how to help
Felt it was too dangerous to intervene
I was friends with the bully
I didn't know the victim well

(41) Please choose the option that best describes your level of agreement to the below statements:

Strongly disagree   Disagree   Neither agree nor disagree
Agree   Strongly agree
My college actively discourages bullying
Bullying is against the values of my college
My college makes an active effort to tackle bullying (e.g. through awareness raising initiatives and anti-bullying programmes)
Bullying goes unnoticed in my college

(42) Does your college have an anti-bullying policy?

Yes
No
Unsure

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