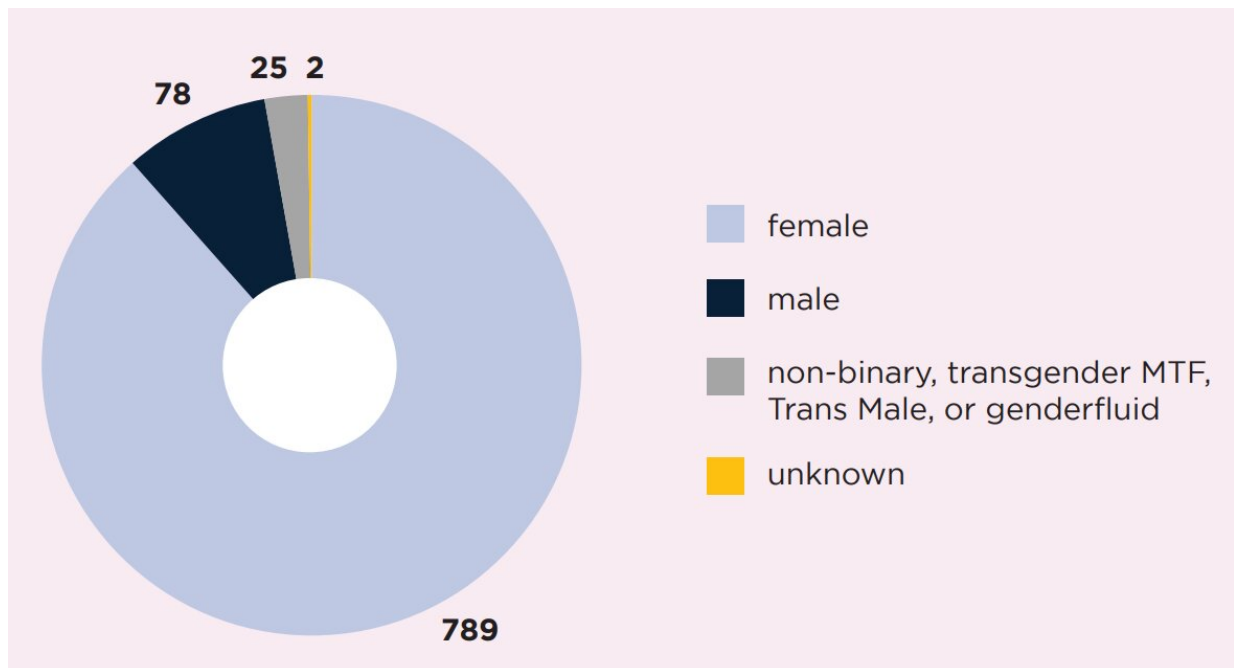


# First Irish study on the experiences of people who are stalked or harassed

March 21 2023



Gender of Respondents. Credit: *STALKING AND HARASSMENT: AN INVESTIGATION OF EXPERIENCES IN IRELAND* (2023).

The first Irish study of those who have been stalked and/or harassed is published today (Tuesday, March 21) and reveals the social, financial and psychological impact upon those who experienced it, while urging a number of recommendations.

The University College Cork (UCC) report , undertaken by Dr. Catherine O'Sullivan and Dr. Ciara Staunton in partnership with the Sexual Violence Centre Cork (SVCC), shows how in the majority of cases perpetrators of stalking or harassment were known to them.

"The main objective of the study was to focus on the process of stalking and harassment, the effects on those who have been stalked and harassed and their responses to these behaviors," stated Dr. Catherine O'Sullivan.

Over one thousand participants responded to the survey and the research was prompted by the bravery of Una Ring and Eve McDowell who spoke out about their experiences of stalking and who advocated for the introduction of a new stalking offense in addition to the existing harassment offense in Ireland.

"Our findings identify a range of avoidance behaviors used by victims to protect themselves and reveals the social, financial, physical, and psychological consequences of stalking and harassment," stated Dr. Ciara Staunton.

Key findings in the report—Stalking and Harassment: An Investigation of Experiences in Ireland—include:

- The perpetrators identified by the victims were mostly known to them, i.e., partner or ex-partner, acquaintance, friend, or work colleague.
- In a considerable proportion of cases the perpetrator was categorized as a stranger.
- Respondents reported being threatened, physically attacked and sexually assaulted.
- There were 367 reports of the perpetrator threatening to harm themselves around the respondent. Having pictures or recordings taken without consent was mentioned 270 times with 170 reports

- of private images of a very personal nature being shared.
- 44% of respondents indicated that the perpetrators threatened to harm them or those close to them, directly or indirectly.
- Inappropriate texts, WhatsApps or emails were the most common forms of malicious communications identified by respondents.
- Being the target of inappropriate or malicious social media contacts (e.g. Twitter, Facebook) was the second highest form of reputational damage, mentioned 268 times.
- Changing routes from home or school and giving up [social activities](#) were the most common social impacts mentioned.
- Long term [psychological distress](#) was apparent among respondents with anxiety being the most frequently reported psychological consequence of the stalking and/or. Fear, increased distrust and sleep disturbances were the next most frequently reported consequences.
- Significant [financial impact](#) was highlighted with 401 respondents (45%) indicating that they sought psychological help in the form of counseling or other therapies, [legal advice](#) or the installation of security systems which comes at a cost.
- Forty-two percent of respondents indicated that they reported the incidents to An Garda Síochána. Over half did not report.
- For those who did report, experiences of reporting were more likely to be negative than positive but key features of positive experiences included being believed, being taken seriously and having the report followed up.
- For those who did not report, and who gave reasons, there seems to be a general lack of trust in An Garda Síochána regarding gender-based violence and/or a fear that they would not be believed because of awareness of deficiencies regarding garda responses to gender-based violence.

The report makes ten recommendations including the need for an information campaign on stalking and harassment, improvements in

training in An Garda Síochana and changes to the proposed new wording of Stalking Offenses.

"This research is unique and will inform [public policy](#) and debate around the introduction of anti-stalking legislation and raise public awareness of the dangers of stalking and harassing behaviors," Dr. Ciara Staunton.

"The [report](#) includes the voice of those who have experienced stalking and [harassment](#). This contributes not only to our understanding of the experience but also to our general knowledge of these behaviors," stated Dr. Catherine O'Sullivan.

**More information:** Report: [www.ucc.ie/en/media/mandc/Stal...CCReport\\_Feb2023.pdf](http://www.ucc.ie/en/media/mandc/Stal...CCReport_Feb2023.pdf)

Provided by University College Cork

Citation: First Irish study on the experiences of people who are stalked or harassed (2023, March 21) retrieved 1 September 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-03-irish-people-stalked.html>

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