



Data & Analytics

2021 National Student Safety Survey

March 2022

Caution to the Reader

- Please note this report contains incidents of sexual harassment and sexual assault which some readers may find distressing.
- If you feel you would like to speak to someone for support or information in relation to these issues, you can contact these free support services:
 - 1800RESPECT (1800 737 732 or [1800RESPECT.org.au](https://1800respect.org.au))
 - Lifeline (13 11 14 or lifeline.org.au)
 - Qlife (1800 184 527 or qlife.org.au)
 - Relationships Australia (1300 364 277 or relationships.org.au)
 - Mensline Australia (1300 789 978 or mensline.org.au)
 - La Trobe's [Safer Community](#) Service provides support and resources for students and staff who experience concerning, threatening, inappropriate or uncomfortable behaviour.

Introduction

- The National Student Safety Survey (NSSS) ran across the Australian university sector from 6 September to 3 October 2021.
- Students from across 39 Australian universities took part in the online survey conducted by the Social Research Centre (SRC).
- Results were compiled into a quantitative and qualitative national report, as well as individual quantitative reports for each university. These reports were released on 23 March 2022.
- A total of 43,819 students participated in the national survey equating to a response rate of 11.6%. A further 1,835 students chose to anonymously share their story by participating in the qualitative component of the NSSS.
- There were 959 La Trobe university students who participated in the 2021 NSSS.

Weighting of results

- The results for the NSSS have had weighting applied by the SRC to ensure that the survey results are as representative as possible of the student population. *All the percentages seen throughout this report have the weighting applied and are thus considered '**survey estimates**' that are representative of the population.*
- Weights were calculated for each respondent. The approach to deriving weights involved calibrating to match population benchmarks for a range of respondent characteristics.
- For this study, seven parameters were used to calculate the weights: field of education, gender, age, country of birth, commencing student status, citizenship, and undergraduate v postgraduate course. The weights were calculated separately for each institution.

Executive Summary

- The NSSS findings make for uncomfortable reading but shed more light on university students' experiences of sexual harassment and sexual assault.
- This data provides critical information to underpin the next wave of programs and supports to help us prevent and respond to this deeply concerning behaviour.

The 2021 NSSS survey results for La Trobe indicate the following:

- La Trobe is above the national average for prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual assault that students have experienced since starting university. Our response must continue to focus on prevention, support services, and the creation of safe physical and online spaces for students.
- Our students are twice as likely to report and seek support from the University after experiencing sexual assault than the national average, though a significant proportion of our students still do not how to report these serious matters.
- Female students from La Trobe are less likely to experience sexual assault and harassment than their peers nationally. Despite the progress we have made, there is a gendered basis for sexual harassment and sexual assault, and we must maintain a key focus on reducing violence against women.
- Importantly this survey provides greater insight into the experience of gender diverse students, who experience higher than average rates of sexual harassment and sexual assault and who are less likely to report these experiences to the University. This must change. We will work with our sexually diverse students and experts to explore and address this serious issue.
- Further information on the 2021 NSSS and a statement from Vice Chancellor John Dewar AO can be found [here](#)

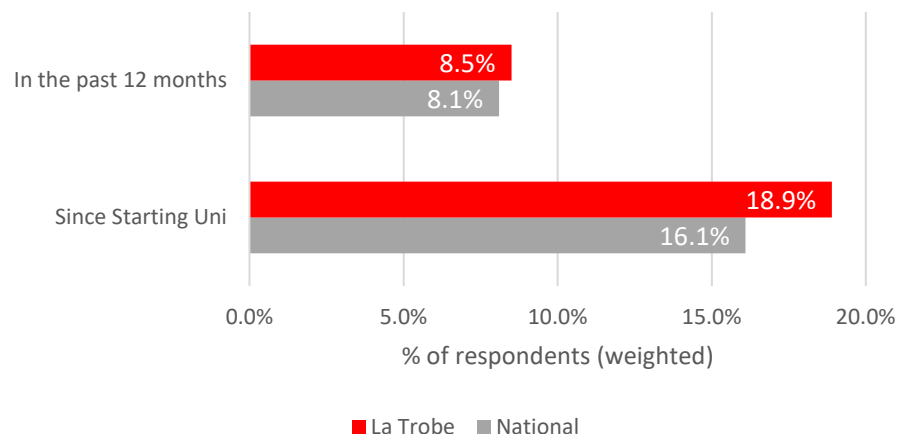
Prevalence of Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault



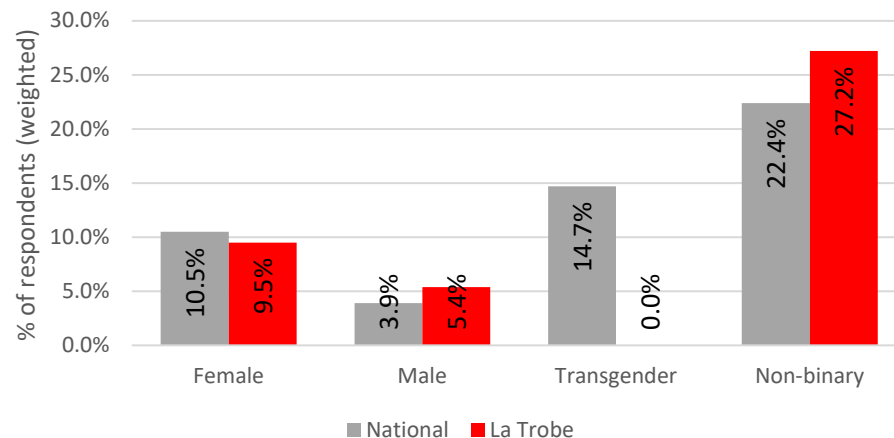
Sexual Harassment

- Incidents of sexual harassment were more prevalent at La Trobe than nationally in the past 12 months and since the respondent started university.
- Sexuality and gender diverse students experienced higher than average rates of sexual harassment than females and males.

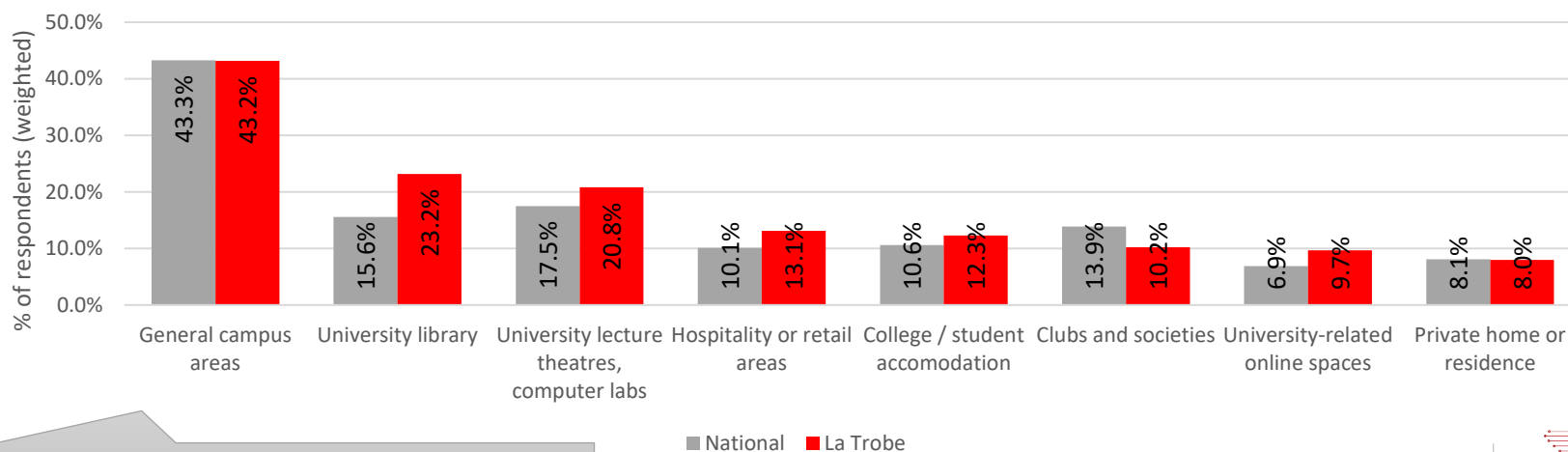
Sexual Harassment in a University Context



Sexual Harassment in the past 12 months, by gender



Sexual Harassment, location of most impactful incident

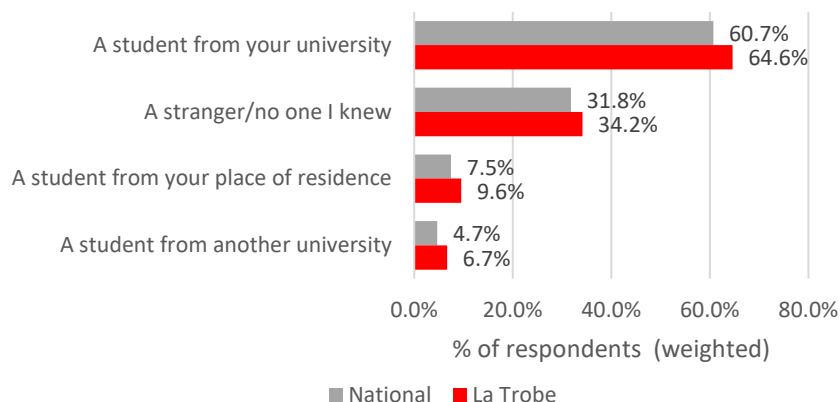


The most common place that sexual harassment occurred for La Trobe students was in General campus areas.

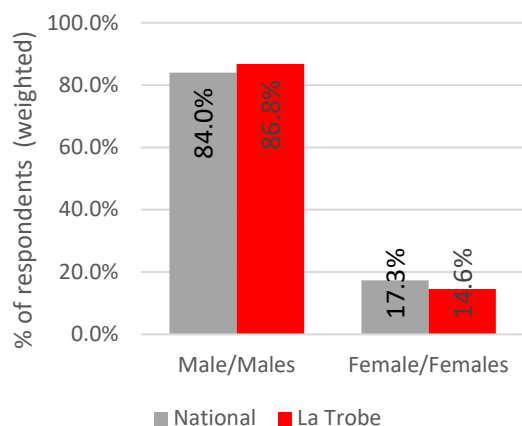
Perpetrator of Sexual Harassment

- The identity of the perpetrator(s) involved in the most impactful incident of sexual harassment was most likely 'a student from your university' or 'a stranger/no one I knew' for both La Trobe and nationally.
- The majority of respondents reported that there was one perpetrator, and they were most likely to be male.

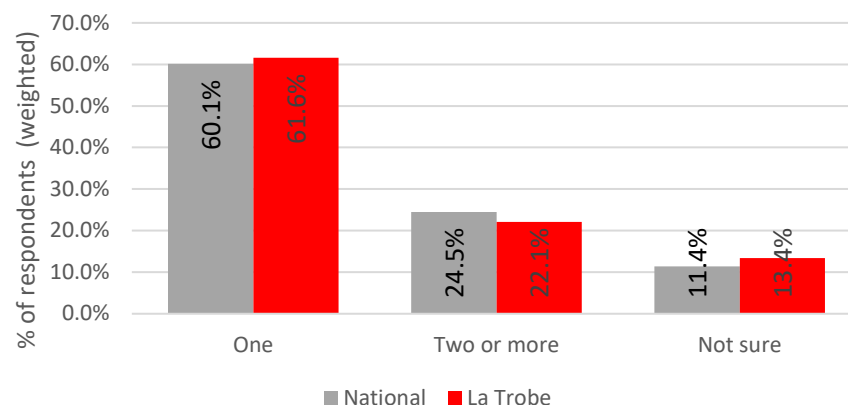
Identity of perpetrator(s) involved in most impactful incident



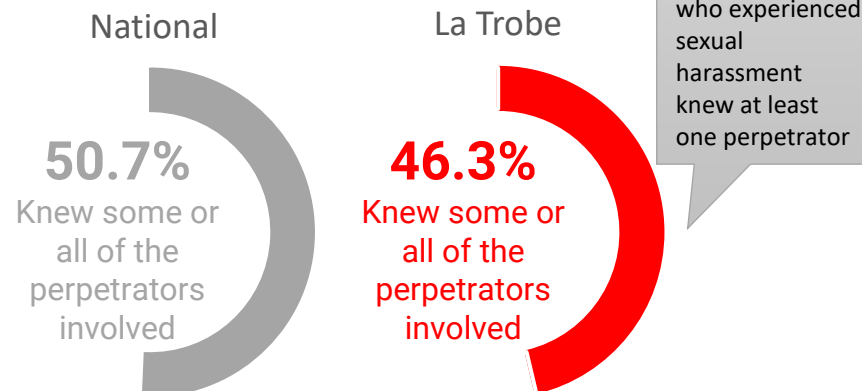
Gender of perpetrator(s)



Number of perpetrator(s)



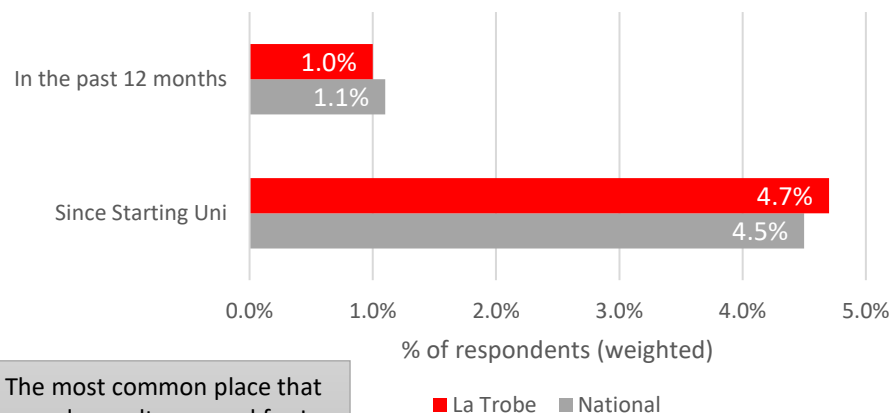
Knowledge of perpetrator



Sexual Assault

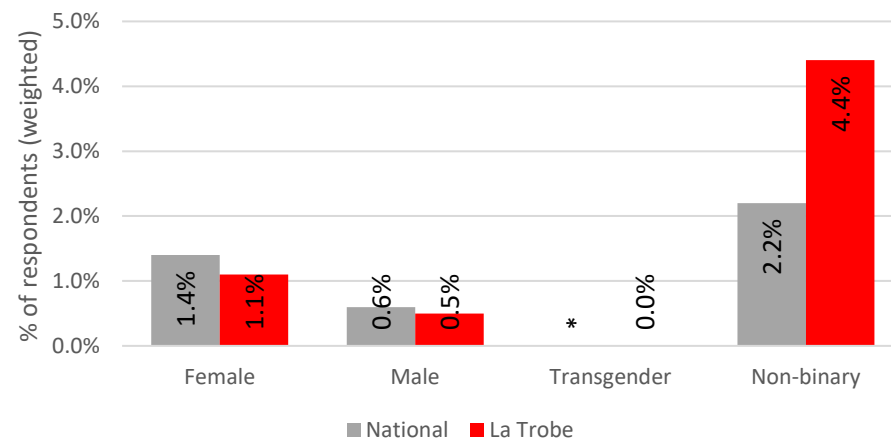
- One per cent of La Trobe students reported incidents of sexual assault 'in the past 12 months.' This was close to the national average of 1.1%.
- Incidents of sexual assault were slightly more prevalent for students at La Trobe (4.7%) than the national average (4.5%) in the category 'since starting at university'.

Sexual Assault in a University Context

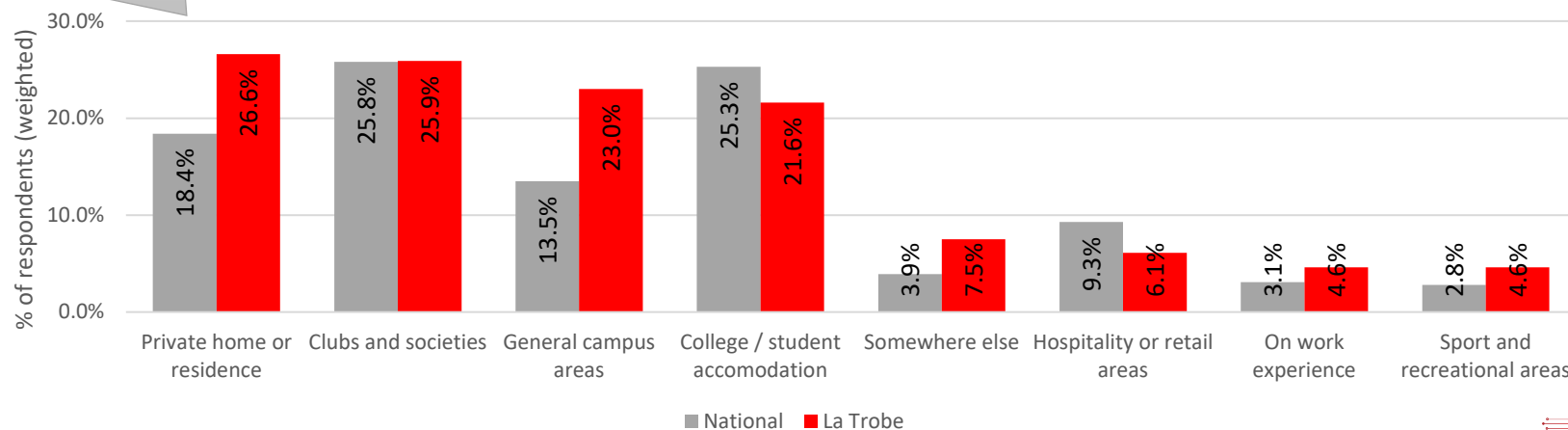


The most common place that sexual assault occurred for La Trobe students was at a private home or residence

Sexual Assault in the past 12 months, by gender



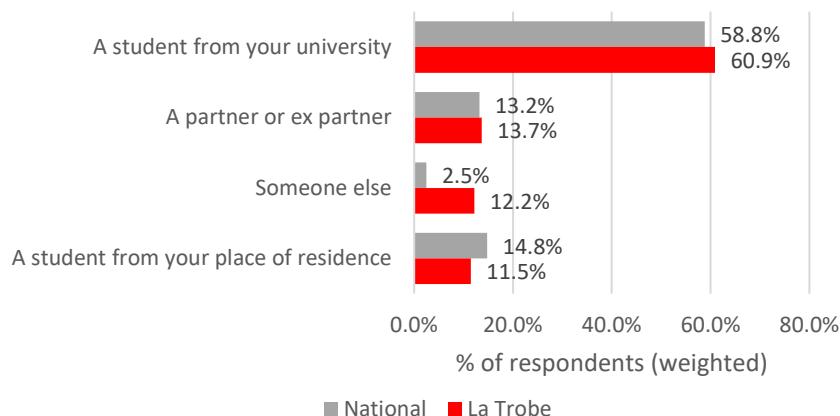
Sexual Assault, location of most impactful incident



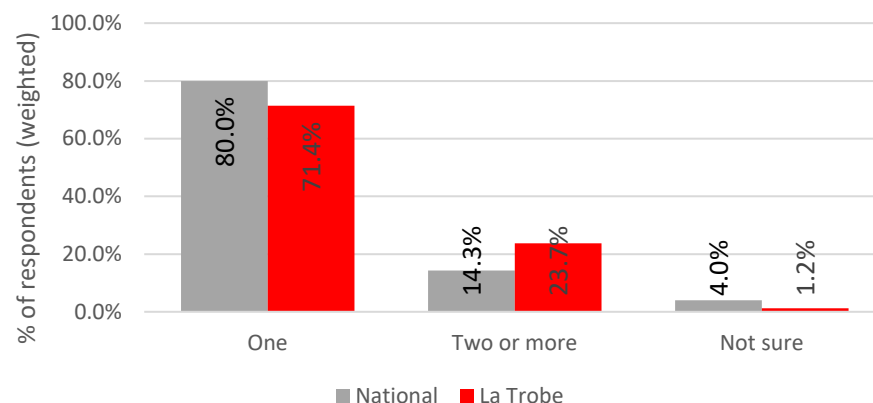
Perpetrator of Sexual Assault

- At the national level the identity of the perpetrator(s) of the most impactful incident of sexual assault was most likely 'a student from your university' or 'a stranger/no one I knew.' For La Trobe, it was most likely 'a student from your university' or 'a partner of ex partner'.
- The majority of respondents reported that there was one perpetrator, and they were most likely to be male.

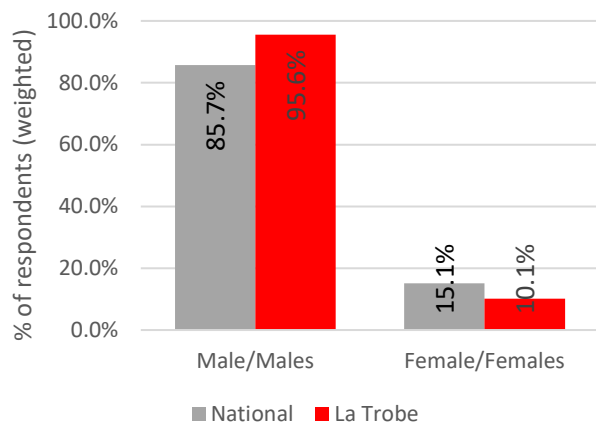
Identity of perpetrator(s) involved in most impactful incident



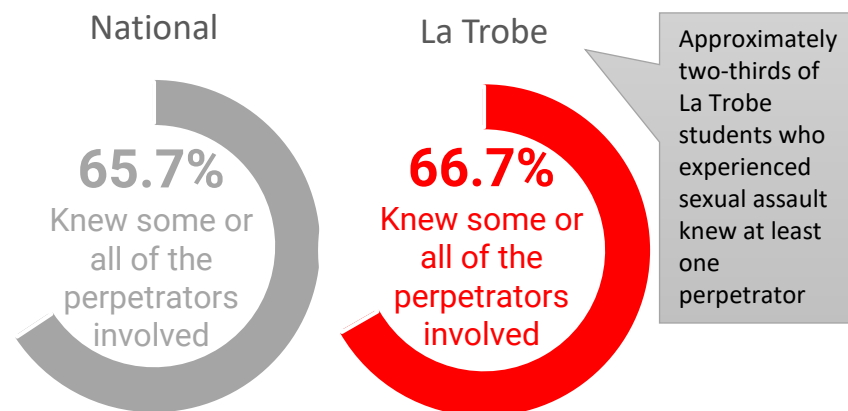
Number of perpetrator(s)



Gender of perpetrator(s)



Knowledge of perpetrator



Support Seeking

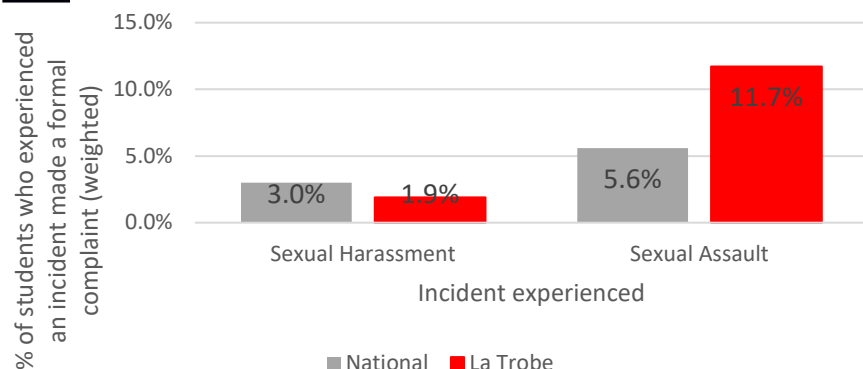


Support Seeking

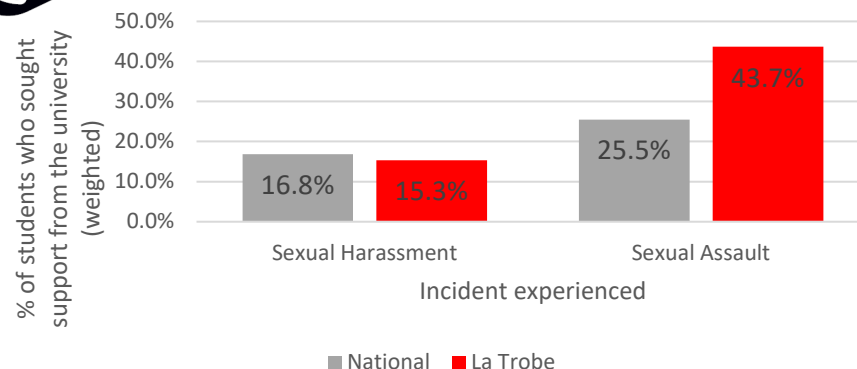
- 1 in 30 students who experienced Sexual Harassment nationally made a formal complaint, which is higher than the approximately 1 in 50 at La Trobe. On the converse, only 1 in 20 students who experienced Sexual Assault nationally made a formal complaint, compared to 1 in 9 at La Trobe.
- Similar proportions of students who experienced Sexual Harassment sought support from their university at both a national and La Trobe level, with 1 in 6 and 1 in 7 doing so respectively.
- Close to 1 in 2 La Trobe students who experienced Sexual Assault at La Trobe sought support from the university compared to 1 in 4 nationally.



Formal complaints made to university

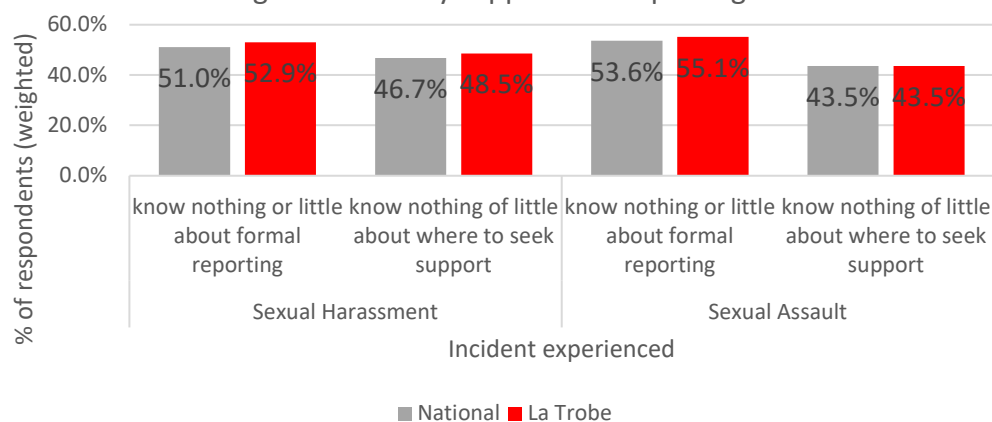


Sought support from the university



- In line with the national results, a high proportion of La Trobe students who experienced Sexual Harassment or Sexual Assault knew nothing or little about formal reporting and where to seek support.

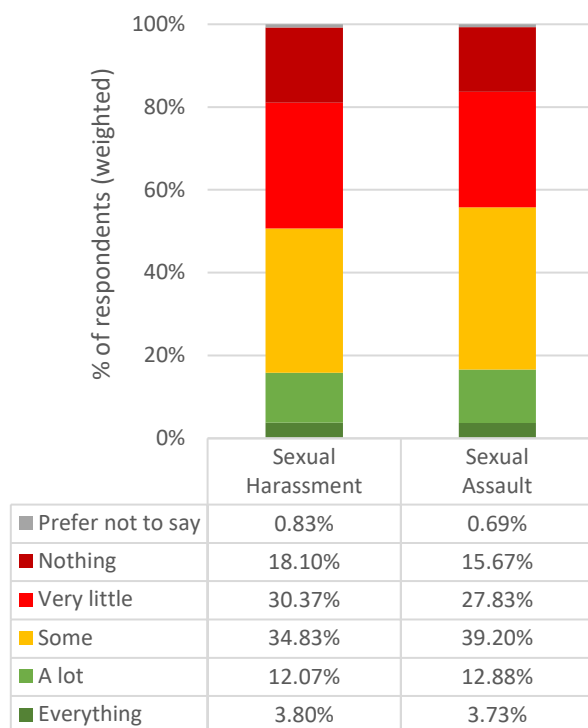
Knowledge of university support and reporting channels



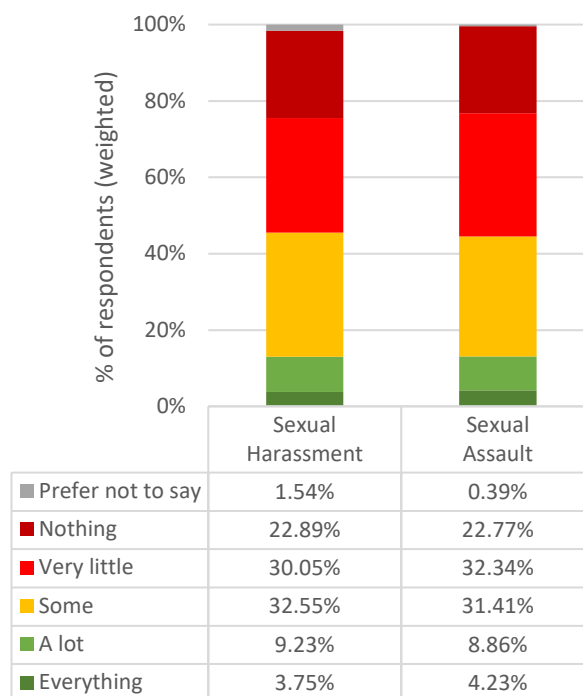
Knowledge and Confidence of Support Services

- This slide provides more detail about our students knowledge of, and confidence in, the university's support services and reporting processes.
- Close to 50% and 45% of La Trobe students know nothing of or very little about where to seek support regarding Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault, respectively (Graph 1).
- Over 50% of La Trobe students know nothing or very little about where they can go to make a formal report regarding Sexual Harassment/Assault (Graph 2).
- While the knowledge of support services is low, approximately 40% of La Trobe students felt extremely or moderately confident in La Trobe's reporting process sexual harassment and sexual assault (Graph 3).

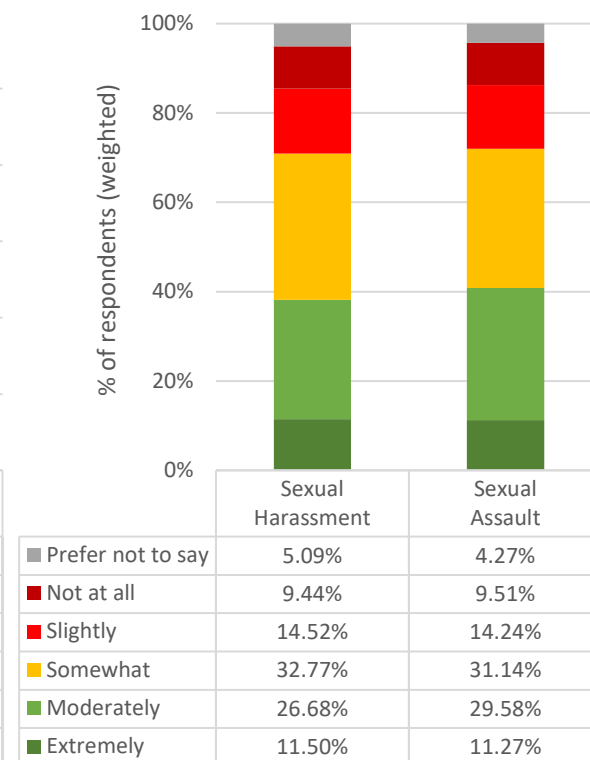
Graph 1: How much do you know about where you can seek support or assistance within the university about an experience of sexual harassment/sexual assault?



Graph 2: How much do you know about where you can go in your university to formally report, or make a complaint about, an experience of sexual harassment/sexual assault?



Graph 3: How confident are you in La Trobe's reporting process for incidents of sexual harassment/sexual assault?



Reasons for not seeking help or reporting an incident

Sexual Harassment

- 15.3% of La Trobe students sought **support** from the university after their most impactful sexual harassment.
- The top reasons students chose not to seek support are:
 1. I did not think I needed help
 2. I did not think others would think it was serious enough
 3. I thought it would be too hard to prove
 4. I felt embarrassed or ashamed
 5. I did not know who could provide me with support or assistance
 6. I did not want to get anyone into trouble
- 1.9% of La Trobe students made a formal **report** of complaint about the sexual harassment to the university.
- The top reasons students chose not to report an incident are:
 1. I did not think I needed help
 2. I did not think others would think it was serious enough
 3. I thought it would be too hard to prove
 4. I did not know where to go to make a formal report or complaint
 5. I felt embarrassed or ashamed
 6. I was worried I might not be believed

Sexual Assault

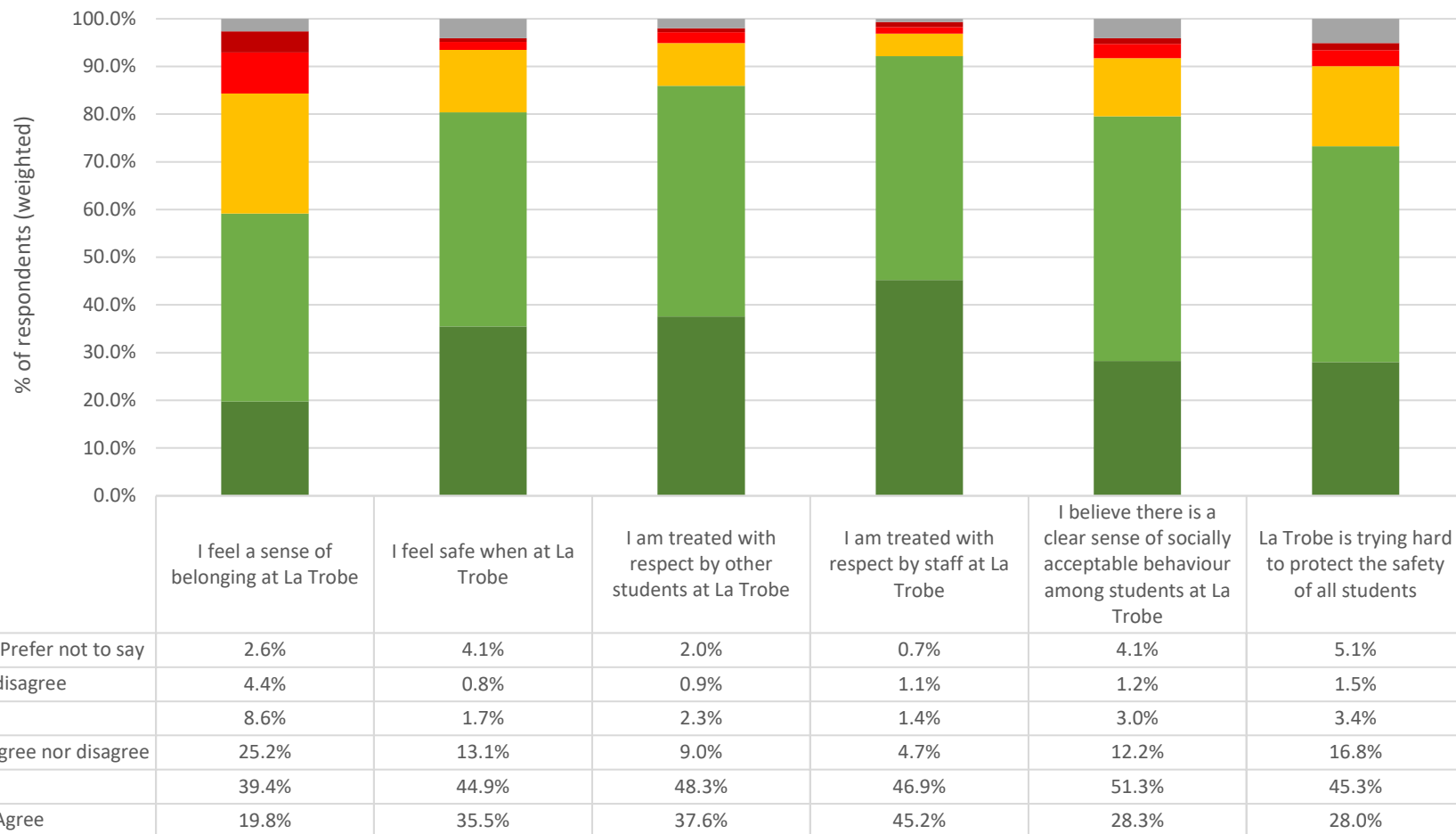
- 43.7% of La Trobe students sought **support** from the university after their most impactful sexual assault.
- The top reasons students chose not to seek support are:
 1. I did not think others would think it was serious enough
 2. I did not think I needed help
 3. I was worried I might not be believed
 4. I did not want to involve the police
 5. I did not want anyone to know
 6. I felt embarrassed or ashamed
- 11.7% of La Trobe students made a formal report of complaint about the sexual assault to the university.
- The top reasons students chose not to report an incident are:
 1. I did not think others would think it was serious enough
 2. I thought it would be too hard to prove
 3. I did not think I needed help
 4. I felt embarrassed or ashamed
 5. I was worried I might not be believed
 6. I did not think the incident would be kept confidential

Perceptions of University Culture



Perceptions of University Culture

- The majority of La Trobe students either strongly agreed or agreed with the 6 questions of perception of university culture.
- The question with the greatest level of agreement was 'I am treated with respect by staff at La Trobe' with over 90% agreeing to this question.
- The question with the lowest level of agreement was 'I feel a sense of belonging to La Trobe' with just under 60% agreeing. 1 in 4 (or 25.2%) of students neither agreed nor disagreed to this question.



Reducing Incidents



Reducing Incidents of Sexual Harassment and Assault

- Students were also asked *'What do you think La Trobe could do to reduce incidents of Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault?'*
- The most common suggestions that La Trobe students provided to reduce incidents of sexual harassment and assault were:
 - Educate students about sexual assault/harassment and consent,
 - Decisive action and clear consequences for offenders,
 - Raise awareness of services available,
 - More security/24 hour security,
 - Clearer/simpler process for reporting sexual assault/harassment, and
 - Better lighting at night.
- Since 2017 La Trobe has delivered, and is continuing to implement, wide-ranging measures to prevent and respond to all forms of sexual harm. This includes relevant measures to each of the suggestions put forward by La Trobe students in the 2021 NSSS.
- Further background information on La Trobe's prevention and support initiatives, including safety and security upgrades to can be found [here](#).

Next Steps at La Trobe

Student and staff safety and wellbeing has always been, and always will be, the highest priority for La Trobe University.

We accepted and implemented all the recommendations from the *2017 Change the Course Report* (the first national student safety survey) and have instigated a wide range of our own initiatives to address sexual harm on campus.

Significant investment to improve campus safety and security measures have been made and we continue to work with partner organisations to enhance safety on and around our campuses.

We have also invested an additional \$2.3 million in staffing and resources to support student wellbeing, deliver more training and prevention programs, and undertake specialist investigations of alleged cases of sexual harm, discrimination and bullying.

The results of the 2021 NSSS provide an important evidence base for La Trobe to take further action. We will work in partnership with our students and academic experts in the field to review and build upon our extensive range of existing programs, training and supports. This includes the following commitments:

- Implement mandatory consent and respectful relationships training for all students, building on our existing respectful relationships and consent training (currently mandatory for on-campus accommodation students).
- Develop targeted programs and supports to prevent and respond to sexual harm in our gender diverse and LGBTIQA+ communities.
- Specifically address online sexual harassment, reviewing and further developing existing resources around appropriate online behaviour, launched during the COVID-19 pandemic.