

**RAPE  
CRISIS  
IRELAND**

# Learning from Survivors of Rape and Sexual Violence

Rape Crisis Statistics 2023



**RAPE  
CRISIS**  

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**IRELAND**



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**Rape Crisis Ireland is a specialist policy NGO working towards freedom from all forms of sexual violence. We are owned and governed by our member Rape Crisis Centres and serve the interests of survivors by improving their access to justice and other supports. We build and sustain considerable expertise to identify, advocate and implement priorities for a whole of society and Government response to sexual violence. Working with stakeholders across Ireland and internationally to improve responses to survivors, we also analyse and advocate on support, primary prevention, and justice responses and solutions.**

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The Rape Crisis model is a unique model of responding to sexual violence that has been developed, tested and adapted over 40 years across hundreds of women-led centres worldwide. The model is part of an international movement for change where local organisations supporting survivors, forge links across organisations and build learning and best practice. Indeed, a foundation stone of the model is that Rape Crisis support and service delivery to a survivor is only ethical if we seek to learn and understand in order to transform. Every survivor using a Rape Crisis Centre (RCC) is not only met with a set of options from which they may benefit but knows that in sharing their stories with a RCC they become part of a movement for change.

This Rape Crisis model is a feminist, woman-led response to sexual violence. We understand all sexual violence to be an abuse of power and we understand gender inequality to be the most important determinant of that abuse, whether the victim (or perpetrator) is male or female. We understand sexual violence happens in a social context and its impact is experienced in a context of gender inequality rather than being purely about individual violations. This is a critical frame which makes Rape Crisis Counselling different to other counselling in that it addresses the practice of victim blaming as well as the shame that seeks to individualise impact and responsibility. The Rape Crisis model sets out to frame sexual violence within the larger system of gender inequality and oppression.

The model of support for survivors is trauma informed, empowerment and healing based. It is non-directive and non-judgemental. It is also survivor-led as we believe that the best responses are led by survivors themselves who are best placed to know what they need at any given point.

Through the RCI Data Collection System, the many thousands of survivors who are in contact with specialist sexual violence services in the community gain a voice in the public sphere, whether or not they have spoken out. We do this by making a record of their data in a safe, secure and confidential way. This process transforms the collective experience of survivors into a statistical evidence base which can drive policy change and inform public debate. The Data Collection System also supports local Rape Crisis Centres and other specialist services to understand and build better services every day. We are honoured by every survivor who chooses to add their voice to this data set and we set out their story in this report.



# Headline Statistics 2023



10,773

Helpline contacts

(See Page 6)

3.47%



13,380

Appointments for counselling and support

(See Page 11)

0.62%



1,454

People engaged in counselling and support

(See Page 13)

0.95%



88%

of survivors attending RCCs were women or girls



96%

of perpetrators were men or boys



50%

of contacts to helplines were through text



51%

of survivors who accessed counselling or support services referred themselves



57%

of survivors had not reported the sexual violence to a formal authority

# Introduction

**Rape Crisis Ireland is proud to share this report which analyses statistics gathered across our network. The insights presented in this report allow us a better understanding of the patterns and impact of sexual violence across 2023. They ground our network's priorities in statistics and ensure our accountability to survivors.**

This report provides insights into the patterns of sexual violence across age groups – we find that girls are subjected to more extreme forms of sexual violence as they get older and move into adulthood. Those who are subjected to sexual violence when under the age of 13 often wait decades before they are ready to disclose what happened.

Our findings echo much of the findings of the landmark Sexual Violence Survey published by the Central Statistics Office in 2023 which has revealed the endemic level of sexual violence in Ireland where 52% of women and 28% of men have been subjected to some form of sexual violence in their lifetime. We provide nuance to these findings by drawing on the accounts of sexual violence that survivors have shared with our network.

By sharing our analysis of the statistics in this report, we in Rape Crisis Ireland strive to ensure that those survivors who choose to remain anonymous still have their experiences of sexual violence acknowledged and heard. Our aim is for the analysis shared in this report to contribute to the development of well-resourced responses that meet the needs of survivors.

We are grateful to our network of Rape Crisis Centres - the volunteers, staff and boards, for their work gathering this information while at the same time providing vital frontline services - that allowed us to undertake this analysis of the patterns and dynamics of sexual violence in Ireland in 2023. And our profound thanks goes to each survivor who was able to contact a Rape Crisis Centre and contribute to the statistics shared in this report.

# Working with Survivors of Sexual Violence



# Helplines

The following information is compiled using data entered by a sample of 8 Rape Crisis Centres (RCCs) into the RCI Data Collection System in 2023. Helplines outside of the National Helpline receive no state support and are provided at a cost to each individual RCC which has to find alternative sources to fund this need.

RCC Helplines are a vital lifeline for many and the main avenue by which people access all RCC services. In 2023 10,773 contacts were made across 8 RCC helplines in the RCI Network.

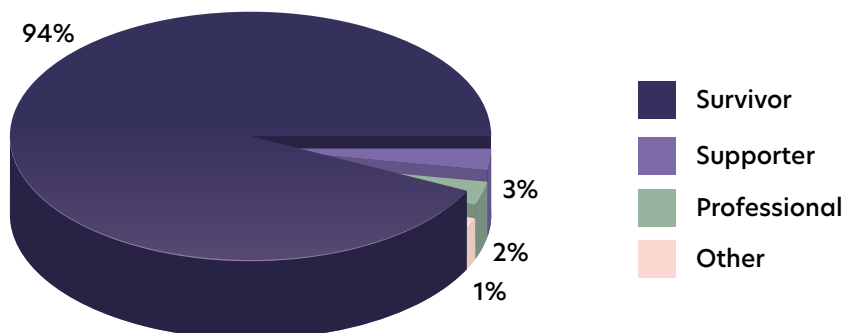
Helpline contacts are not always local. The contacts to the 8 RCC helplines came from the 32 counties on the island of Ireland and also from other countries. Contacts through Helpline services are recorded across multiple channels, including phone calls, video calls, text messages, social media, letters, and emails.

## Who is contacting RCC Helplines?

Due to the confidential nature of the Helplines contacts it is not always possible to link a contact to a service user. Where a contact can be linked to a person, we were able to distinguish 97 individuals who had 21 or more contacts representing 34% (3,623) of all contacts. Of this group, 10 people had 61 or more contacts. High frequency callers may be on a waiting list, may not feel ready for counselling but still need ongoing contact and support or may be navigating a range of concerns as they make decisions or encounter challenges. These callers reflect the complexity of trauma, gaps in supports within the community, the complexity of the legal system being navigated by survivors and the additional care offered by RCCs while a survivor is on a waiting list.

### Type of Callers

Graph 1: Type of Caller (%) n=10,773



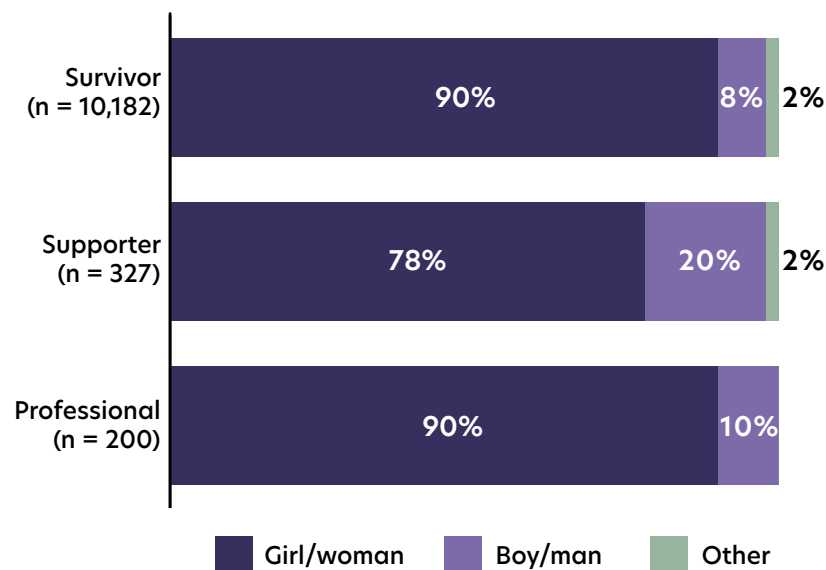
Rape Crisis Centres not only serve as essential resources for survivors of sexual violence but also act as hubs of expertise on sexual, domestic, and gender-based violence. They provide support, information, training, and research to a diverse group of individuals and organisations, as reflected in the wide range of callers to their Helplines. RCC services are accessed by survivors, those supporting them, and professionals whose work brings them into contact with survivors.

The vast majority of contacts 94% (10,182) with Helplines were from survivors of sexual violence.

Among contacts coming from supporters, 65% (207) were from immediate family members of a survivor, such as parents or siblings, and 26% (83) were from partners or ex-partners. Professional contacts came from a broad range of groups with the largest being representatives from community organisations or NGOs (18%), other RCC, domestic violence or gender based violence organisations (14%) and Gardaí (12%).

## Gender of people contacting RCC Helplines

**Graph 2: Helpline Contacts by Type of Caller and Gender (%) 2023**

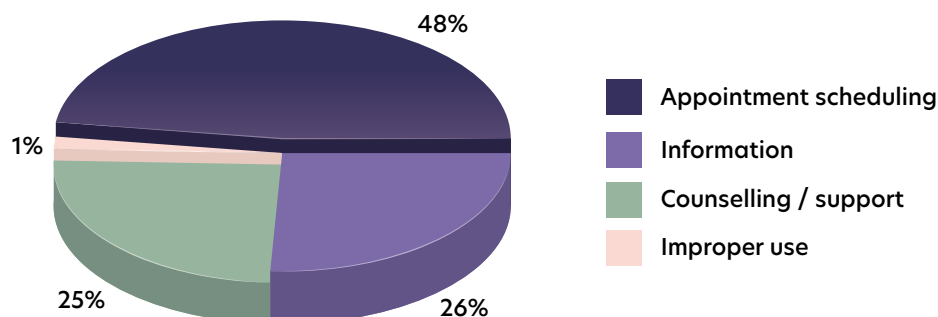


The majority of contacts with RCC Helplines were from girls/women (89%).

- Of the contacts that were from survivors, 90% were women and girls, and 8% were men and boys.
- Of the contacts that were from supporters, 78% were women and girls and 20% were men. Of note, 97% of contacts from male supporters were a parent, partner or ex-partner.
- Of the contacts that were from professionals 90% were from women and 10% from men.

## Reasons for contacting RCC Helplines

Graph 3: Purpose of Helpline Contact 2023 (%) n=10,773

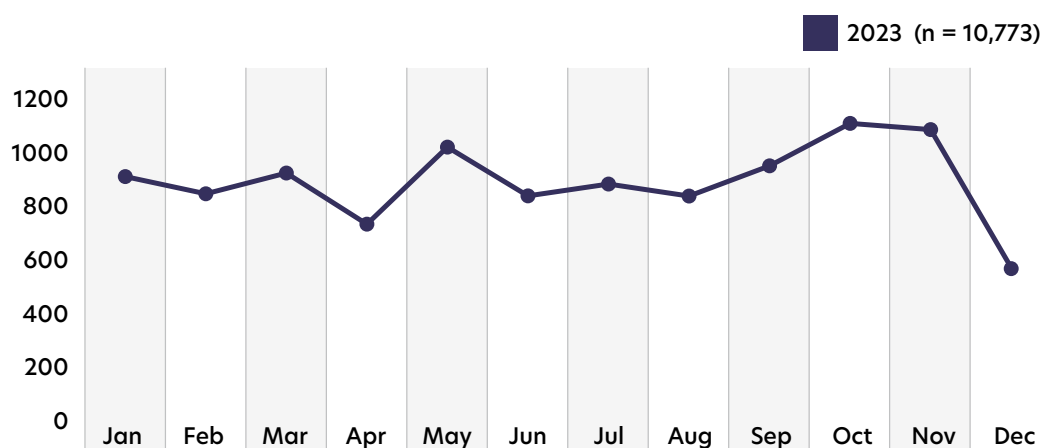


Overall, nearly half of all contacts (48%) were related to scheduling or rescheduling appointments. When reviewing the same information by client type, there were some differences in the purpose of the call:

- Nearly half (49%) of all contacts from survivors relate to appointment scheduling, with the remainder split between counselling or support (25%) and information (26%).
- Contacts from supporters were made up of 59% for appointment scheduling, while 29% are for counselling or support and 12% for information.
- Contacts from professionals primarily came in the information category (65%), with counselling and support comprising 30% of their contacts and 5% for appointment scheduling.

## Monthly contacts to RCC Helplines

Graph 4: Monthly Helpline Contacts 2023

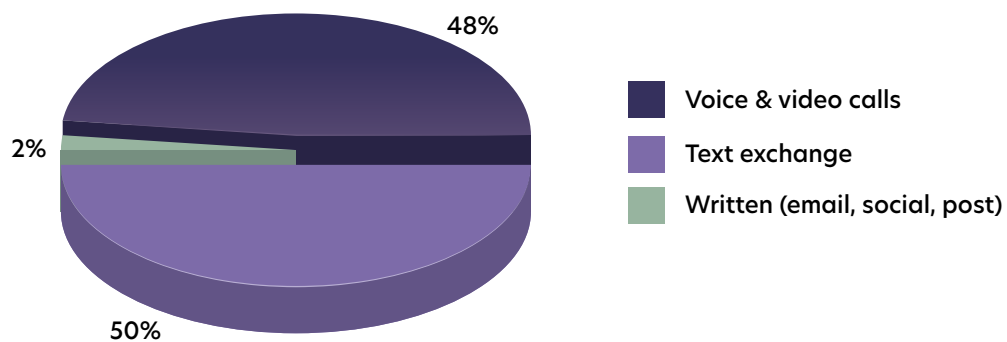


Our record of monthly contacts has broadly returned to pre-Covid pattern. There was a slight increase in contacts compared to other years September through October, returning to a normal number in December.

## Method of Contact

Contacts through Helpline services are recorded across multiple channels, including phone calls, video calls, text messages, social media, letters, and emails. For text-based interactions (such as text messages, social media, letters, or emails), contacts are categorised as either 'Single' or 'Multiple,' meaning that a brief exchange to schedule an appointment is recorded similarly to a prolonged text conversation. Extended exchanges—often necessary when callers lack a safe space to speak or prefer messaging over phone calls—are grouped similarly to brief contacts. RCI is currently reviewing data capture methods to better reflect time allocated to such exchanges.

**Graph 5: Helpline 2023 Method of Contact (%) n=10,773**

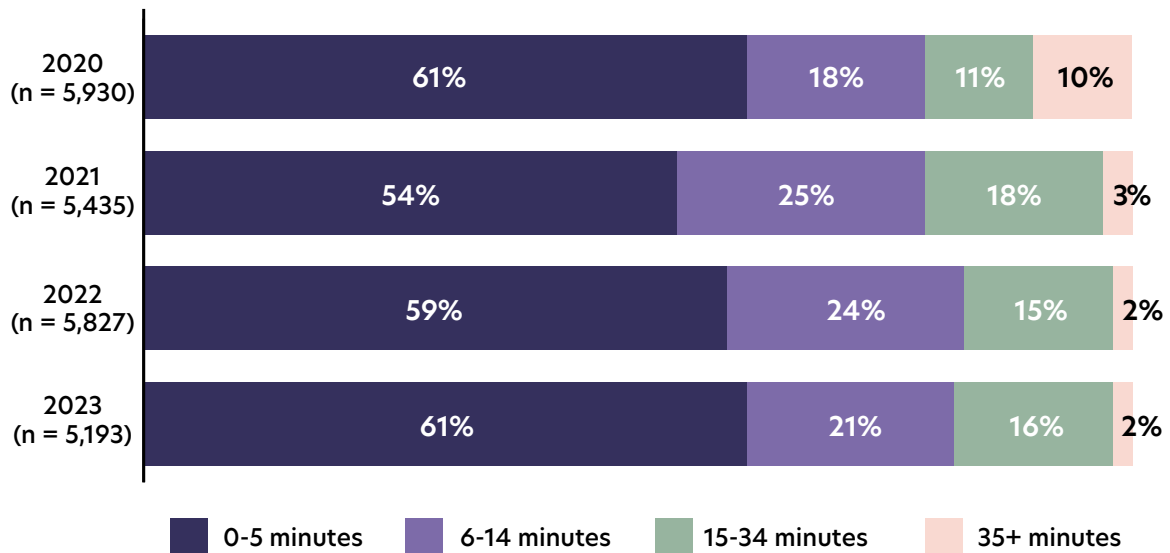


Text message exchanges have eclipsed voice and video calls (50% vs 48%) for the first time since the start of Covid-19 measures. Previously text messages represented 33% in 2019, 51% in 2020, 47% in 2021 and 41% in 2022.

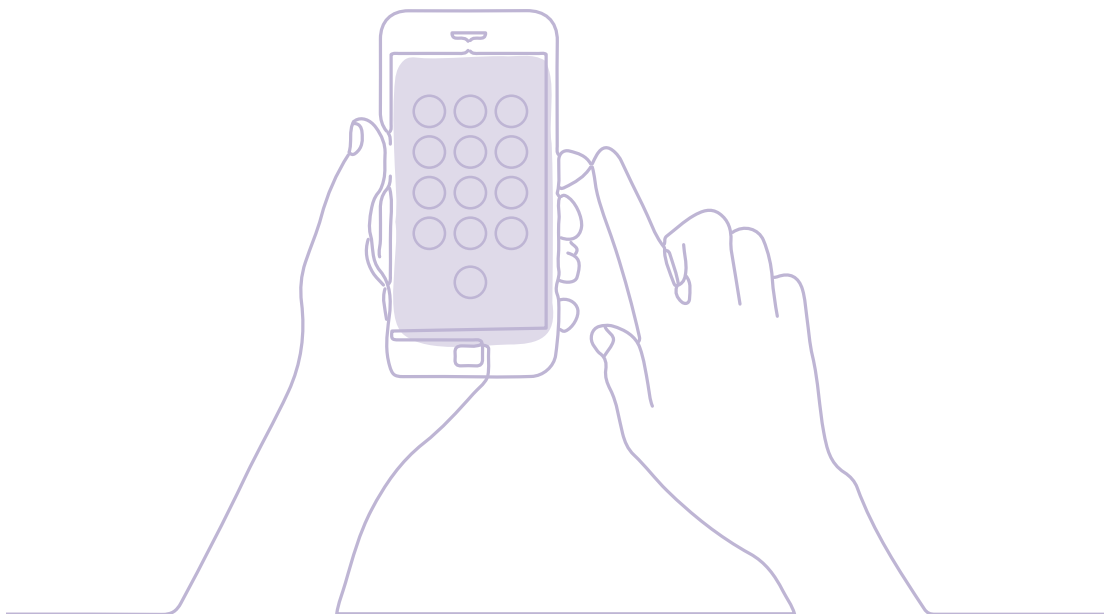
## Helpline voice calls

Voice calls made to RCC Helplines accounted for 5,193 of the overall contacts made in 2023. This is to be considered with the increased portion of text exchanges as the method of contact for service users.

**Graph 6: Duration of Helpline Voice and Video Calls over time**



Prior to the pandemic, 77% of voice calls were under 6 minutes long. The trend for longer calls which saw them increase from 6 minutes in 2019 to 8 minutes in 2023 on average, has remained combined with an increase in text messages.





# Counselling Support and Appointments

The following information is based on data entered into the RCI Data Collection System in 2023 by a sample of 8 Rape Crisis Centres. These patterns are likely reflective of trends across Ireland given this is a representative sample. The data in this section pertains to individuals who accessed counselling and support services at RCCs in 2023. An appointment refers to a pre-arranged time when a counsellor or support worker meets with a service user, either face-to-face or via video/phone call, for a counselling, advocacy, or support session.

A Rape Crisis Centre is a safe space for survivors of sexual violence and their supporters to work through trauma with specially trained counsellors and psychotherapists. Counselling is a one-on-one relationship which provides the support and encouragement necessary to allow someone to talk about what was done to them and their feelings in a safe and confidential space. There is no fixed number of sessions for each client - each person's process of healing is individual and they can attend counselling for as long as they need with the counsellor assigned to work with them. Survivors are not charged for the counselling.

## Who is using Counselling and Support Services?

A total of 1,247 individuals sought support and had at least one completed appointment with one of the 8 RCCs in 2023. Of these appointments, 96% involved survivors, while 4% involved supporters. Most individuals attended between 2 and 12 sessions (41%) over the year, with the average number of completed sessions being 10 per individual. Those requiring more intensive support—attending more than two sessions per month—represented 13% of clients with completed appointments.

Appointments were held with external professionals and others but in numbers too small to report.

## Types of Appointments with RCC Services

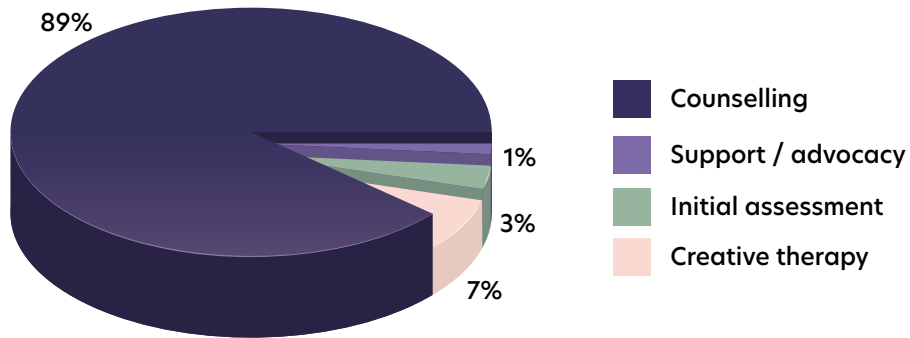
**Counselling:** A counselling appointment refers to a psychotherapy support to clients which offers an opportunity to speak about their experiences and examine their feelings. Counselling is provided by trained, accredited psychotherapists with additional specialist training in sexual violence. Counselling is a two-way process in which the client and the trained counsellor work together. By helping the client to access their own strengths, resources and potential, it aims to enable them to find solutions and develop their capacity to make decisions and choices so that they feel more in control of their lives. Counselling appointments can be one-on-one, for a couple or in a group setting.

**Support / Advocacy:** means providing supports and interventions which address the difficulties survivors encounter when seeking help from other organisations and agencies. It also means providing support in overcoming barriers in full participation in community life.

**Initial Assessment:** The intake / assessment session carried out with clients before they commence counselling and support.

**Creative Therapy:** Includes art therapy, dance therapy, other creative therapies that can be delivered in a group or individual setting.

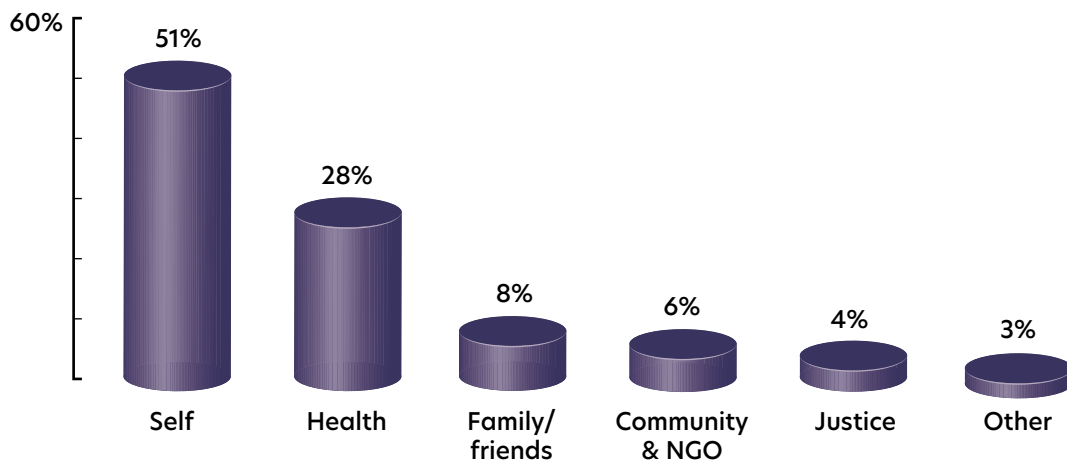
**Graph 7: Purpose of Fulfilled Appointments (%) n=13,380**



89% of fulfilled appointments related to counselling with an additional 7% relating to creative therapy.

## Referrals

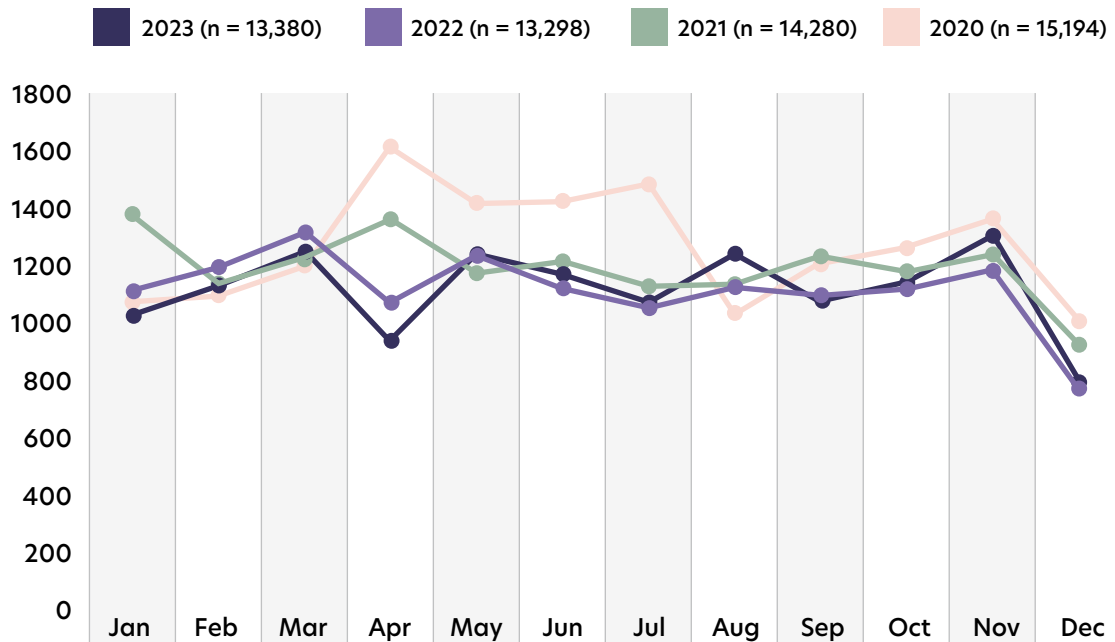
**Graph 8: Survivors referred to RCCs (%) n=1,280**



Approximately half of survivors referred themselves to an RCC (51%). The next most common source was from health services (28%).

## Monthly Appointments with RCCs

Graph 9: Monthly Fulfilled Appointments with RCCs 2020-2023



The last three years has seen a reasonably steady pattern in monthly appointments in line with pre-pandemic levels. 2023 included a slight increase in October and November aligned with the increase in helpline contacts starting September 2023.

*“Counselling has changed my life. I came to work on one thing and I didn’t realise that doing that would change so many other things. I feel like a different person now. I am happy and relaxed and I am no longer afraid. I didn’t want to come to counselling, I thought it was a stupid idea and initially I couldn’t wait to get it over and done with. But the impact that it has had on my life for the better has been huge and I want you to know that.”*

(Survivor, 2023)

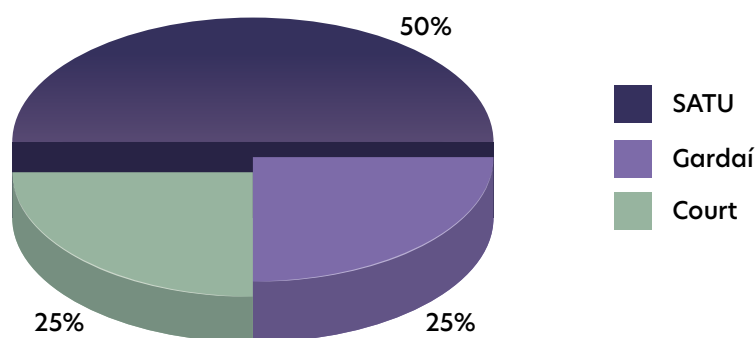
# Accompaniments

**The following information is compiled using data entered by a sample of 5 Rape Crisis Centres into the RCI Data Collection System.**

While RCI runs a national Court and Garda Accompaniment programme funded by the Department of Justice, not all centres delivering this service under that scheme record their activity in the RCI database.

These services are where a RCC trained volunteer, at a survivor's request, accompanies them as they consider, or are interacting with, the various services and responses available. These can include attending a Sexual Assault Treatment Unit (SATU) or going to An Garda Síochána to make a statement, or attending court and any aftermath. While the many professionals a survivor will meet have defined duties to the survivor as they conduct their part of the service, the accompaniment worker has no other duty or task other than to be there for the survivor.

**Graph 10: Accompaniment Type n=105**



- Half of accompaniments were to Sexual Assault Treatment Units (SATUs) (50%).
- A quarter of accompaniments were to Gardaí (25%).
- A quarter of accompaniments were Court accompaniments (25%).

Across the 105 accompaniments captured in the RCI database, there was a total of 135.5 days' duration from RCC staff and volunteers. The majority of accompaniments (58) were a half day. Half of court accompaniments were more than 2 days. A quarter of court accompaniments were more than 5 days' duration.

# Survivors & Sexual Violence Disclosed



# Survivors of Sexual Violence

The following information is compiled using data entered by a sample of 8 Rape Crisis Centres (RCCs) in the RCI Data Collection System in 2023. The data extracted is based on those who attended at least one appointment for counselling or support. Supporters, and users of helpline or accompaniment services are excluded from this section of analysis.

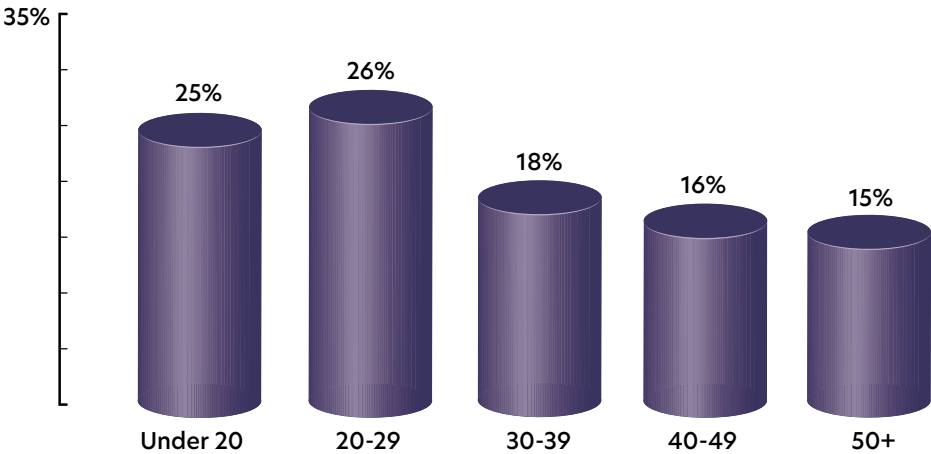
## Gender



The majority of survivors attending RCCs were girls or women (88%). Boys or men accounted for 11% of survivors. A small number of survivors identified as other genders or the gender was unknown (1%). The CSO's Sexual Violence Survey prevalence research found that 52% of women and 28% of men in Ireland have been subjected to sexual violence in their lifetime (CSO, 2022). An assessment of the gender disparity between gendered prevalence and those attending RCCs must consider a number of factors. These include the predominance of childhood abuse experiences for males and different help-seeking and disclosure patterns, depending on these and other factors. It is also influenced by the availability of services by geographic location.

## Age of Survivors

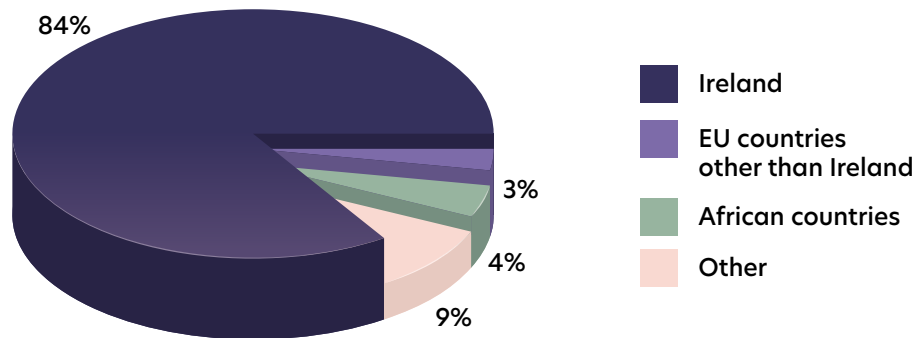
Graph 11: Age of survivors accessing RCC services (%) n=1,419



- 13% of survivors (179 people) accessing service in 2023 were under the age of 18. Most RCCs provide services to people aged 14 and up.
- Survivors were most commonly between the ages of 20-29 during 2023 (26%).
- 18% were aged 30-39.
- 16% were aged 40-49.
- 15% were aged 50 or over.

## Country of Origin

Graph 12: Survivor country of origin (%) n=1,401

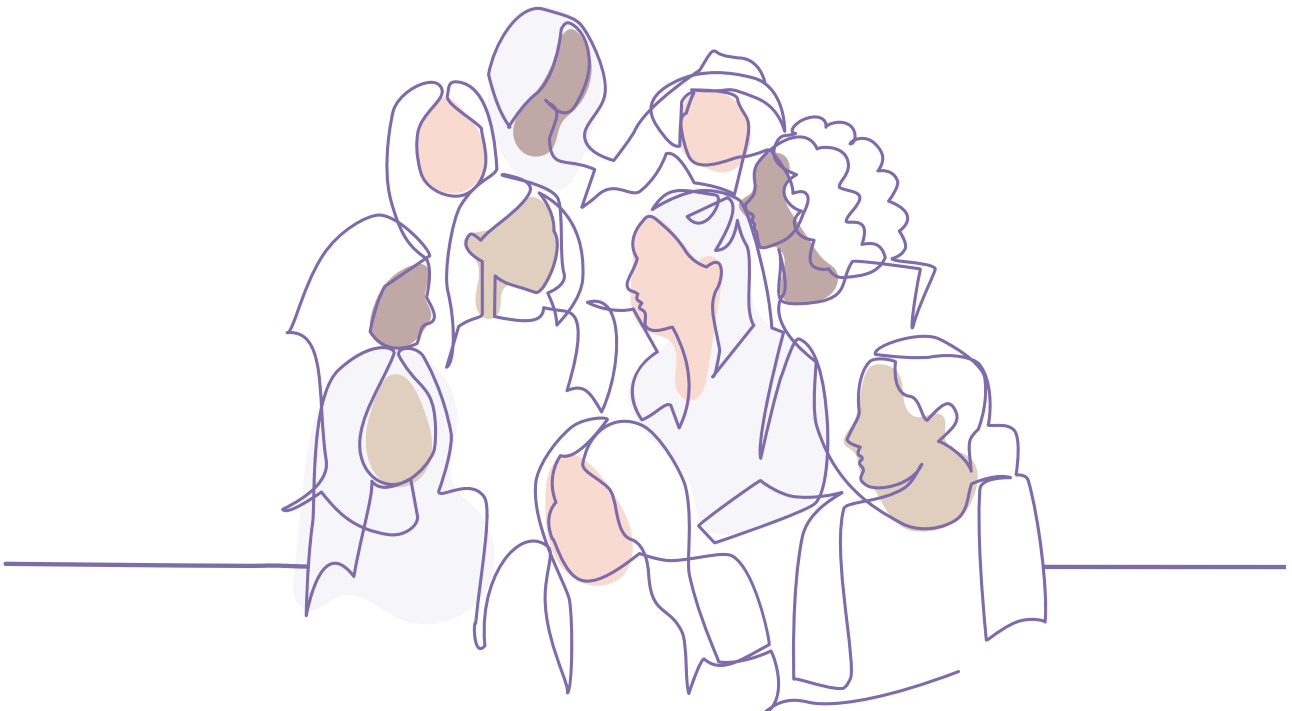


The majority of survivors accessing RCC services in 2023 were from Ireland (84%).

- 3% were from EU countries other than Ireland.
- 4% were from African countries.
- 9% were from other countries, including UK and Northern Ireland, United States and others.

## Pregnancy

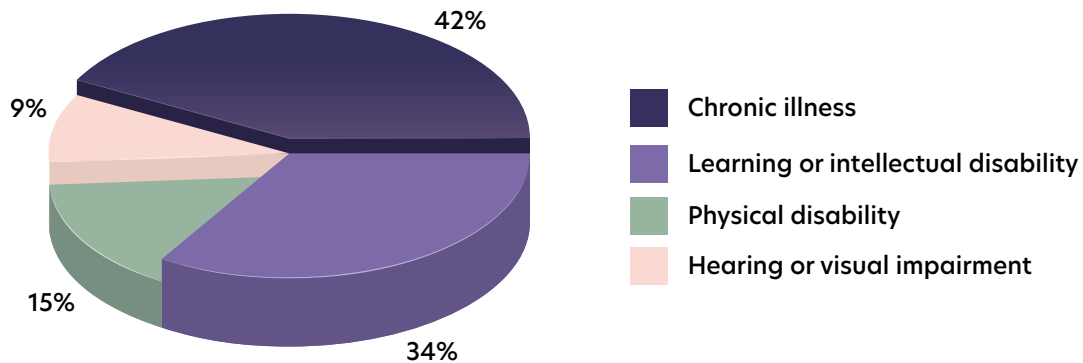
4% of girls and women who were raped became pregnant as a result of the rape. Nearly half went on to parent their baby, more than a quarter terminated the pregnancy and the remainder disclosed a combination of adoption and miscarriage.



## Marginalised Communities

### Disability

Graph 13: Survivors with a disability (%) n=88



8% of survivors attending RCCs for counselling and support in 2023 disclosed a disability of some kind. This amounts to 88 people. Of these:

- Chronic illness is the most commonly disclosed disability (42%), followed by a learning or intellectual disability (34%)

As the numbers are low, we cannot analyse this group in great detail. What we can say is that:

- The majority of survivors with disabilities attending RCCs were girls/women (94%).
- Survivors with disabilities crossed all age groups, the largest being 20-29 year olds (38%) and 50+ (23%).
- Living arrangements for people with disabilities attending RCCs were most frequently private accommodation (private rental or owner occupied) representing 41% or living with parents (28%).

For more detailed information on survivors with disabilities attending RCCs see the RCI report published in 2011 entitled [Sexual Violence Against People with Disabilities: Data collection and barriers to disclosure](#). The CSO Sexual Violence Survey also gives insight into sexual violence perpetrated against people with disabilities, finding that people with a disability experienced sexual violence at a higher rate at all stages of life than those without a disability.



## Survivors seeking International Protection

4% of survivors attending RCCs in 2023, where their legal status was known or disclosed, were people seeking International Protection under international human rights' mechanisms. This amounted to 40 survivors, including those seeking International Protection (asylum), those with leave to remain, and people with refugee status.

For more detailed information on survivors seeking and granted International Protection see the RCI report: [Asylum seekers and refugees surviving on hold](#).

## Irish Travellers

A small number of Travellers attended these RCCs for counselling and support in 2023. The figures are too low to provide meaningful analysis while avoiding the risk of identification. However, we feel that it is important to include a reference to this marginalised group within our reports.

## Lesbian, Gay & Bisexual

7% of survivors attending RCCs in 2023 disclosed they identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or pansexual. This amounts to 81 individuals. Because this number is quite low, we cannot provide detailed analysis.

The CSO prevalence study found that bisexual and gay/lesbian people are subjected to much higher levels of sexual violence at all stages of life than heterosexual/straight people. 58% of bisexual people and 39% of gay/lesbian people disclosed that they had been subjected to sexual violence in childhood. The equivalent level of sexual violence in childhood for heterosexual/straight people was 28%. In adulthood, 55% of bisexual people and 40% of gay/lesbian people disclosed that they had been subjected to sexual violence compared with 25% of heterosexual/straight people (CSO, 2022).

For more detailed information on survivors who identify as LGBT see the RCI report: [Finding a Safe Place, LGBT Survivors of Sexual Violence and Disclosure in Rape Crisis Centres](#) published in 2016.

*"You have allowed me to find my true, powerful self."*

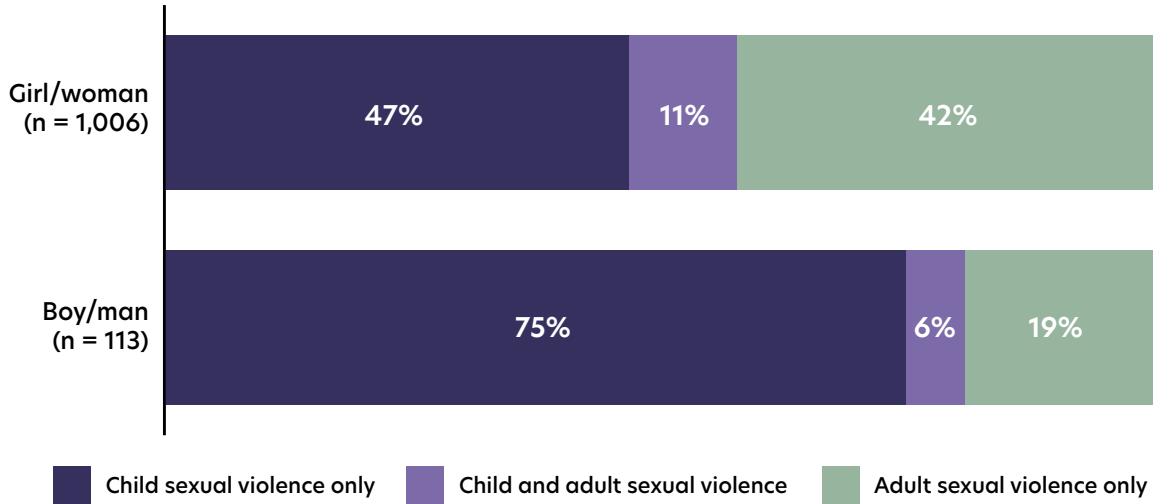
(Survivor, 2023)

# Sexual Violence

## When sexual violence took place

By examining when in the life cycle of a person the sexual violence was perpetrated, we can make predictions about patterns of, and vulnerability to, abuse. The CSO Sexual Violence Survey found that 29% of people in Ireland had been subjected to child sexual violence and 26% had been subjected to sexual violence as an adult in their lifetime. When they examined these figures in more detail they revealed that girls and women are more likely to be subjected to violence at all life stages (36% of women in Ireland have been subjected to child sexual violence, compared with 22% of men. 39% of women have been subjected to sexual violence in adulthood, compared with 12% of men) (CSO, 2022).

**Graph 14: When the Sexual Violence Took Place by Gender (%) n=1,119**



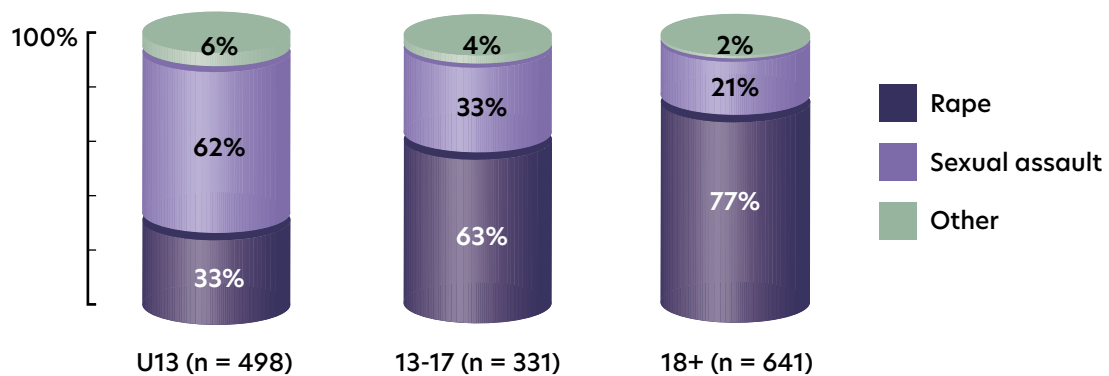
The above graph illustrates how, for the clients utilising counselling services in RCCs in 2023, sexual violence is perpetrated across gender and age. We see that:

- Of the 113 boys and men using the RCC counselling and support services in 2023, 81% experienced sexual violence as a child (75% as a child only, 6% both as a child and an adult).
- Of the 1,006 girls and women using the RCC counselling and support services in 2023, 58% experienced sexual violence as a child (47% as a child only, 11% as an adult and a child).

## Type of sexual violence

In our ongoing analysis, we have seen a common pattern emerging in the type of sexual violence disclosed to RCC counsellors. Our findings indicate that sexual violence is perpetrated against different age groups of survivors in different ways. Many of these patterns are also visible within the CSO prevalence study on sexual violence (CSO, 2022). It is important to note here that the majority of survivors attending RCCs for counselling and support are adults at the time they access services and are attending because of sexual violence perpetrated against them when they were children.

**Graph 15: Type of sexual abuse by age began (%) n=1,470**



When we examine the age at which sexual violence was perpetrated against survivors attending RCCs in 2023, we see that the majority of child sexual abuse was perpetrated against children who were under the age of 13 when the abuse began (498 children under the age of 13 compared to 331 13-17 year olds).

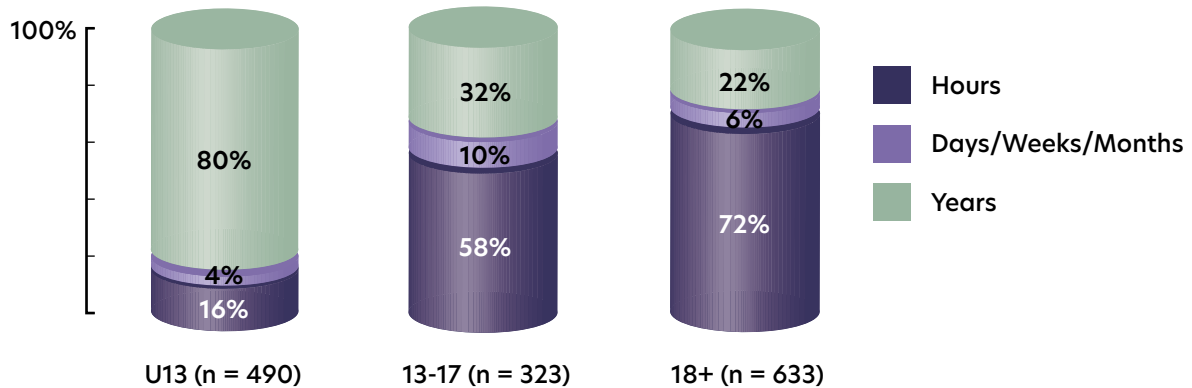
- In children subjected to sexual violence beginning under 13, sexual assault was the most common form (62%). This is consistent when broken down between genders (62% for girls and 63% for boys).
- Through the age groups rape becomes the more common form of violence (63% in 13-17 year olds and 77% in 18+). When this prevalence is reviewed between the genders, rape never exceeds 50% of the type of violence in boys and men (33% in under 13, 43% in 13-17, 46% in 18+) while the occurrence of rape rapidly increases in women and girls (32% in under 13, 65% in 13-17, 79% in 18+).

The majority of people attending RCCs for counselling and support are women and therefore particular patterns of sexual violence that are perpetrated against women and girls are more visible in our data. The majority of boys and men attending RCCs in 2023 were subjected to sexual violence when they were under the age of 13 (59%). Therefore, they and their experiences are most visible in this age cohort.

It is clear that **women and girls become increasingly vulnerable to more extreme forms of sexual violence as they age**. This is evident from when girls enter their teens where they more commonly disclose rape as the dominant form of sexual violence perpetrated against them.

## Duration of sexual violence

Graph 16: Duration of sexual violence by when the violence began (n=1,446)



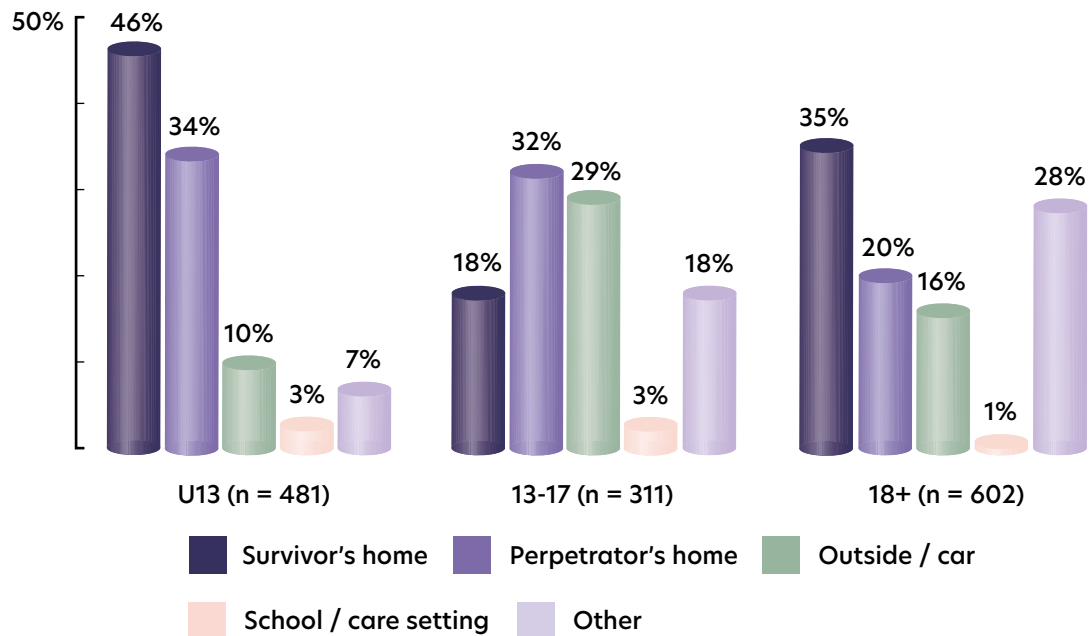
The age of the survivor at the time of the sexual violence is often an indicator of the length of time over which the abuse took place.

- Children who were subjected to sexual violence when under the age of 13 most commonly disclosed that it was perpetrated over a number of years (80%).
- Children between the ages of 13 to 17 when the sexual violence began, most commonly disclosed that the sexual violence was perpetrated over a number of hours (58%). Nearly a third (32%) disclosed that the sexual violence was perpetrated over a number of years.
- Survivors of sexual violence in adulthood most commonly disclosed that they were subjected to abuse which was perpetrated over hours (72%), with 22% disclosing abuse that was perpetrated over a number of years.

It is important to note here that when we further analysed the information provided by survivors subjected to sexual violence as adults, we found an overwhelming correlation between the length of time over which the abuse was perpetrated and the relationship of the perpetrator to the survivor. **The vast majority of adults who were subjected to sexual violence over years disclosed that the abuse had been perpetrated by their partner / ex-partner.**

## Location of sexual violence

Graph 17: Location of sexual violence by when the violence began (%) n=1,403



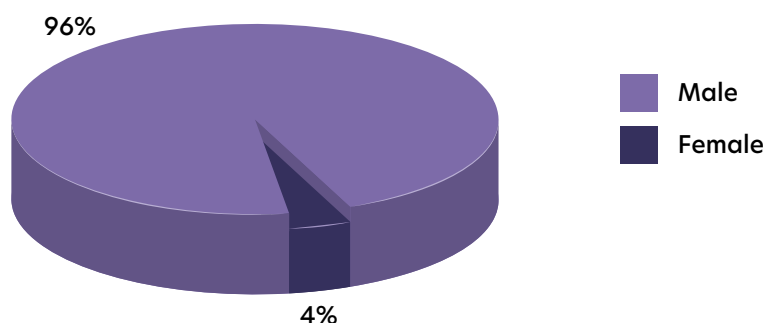
When we examine the location where the sexual violence was perpetrated, we find clear evidence of the relationship between the age of the survivor at the start of the sexual violence and the location where the sexual violence occurred. When further disaggregating into gender we see different profiles of the influence of age and location

- For under 13 girls, the sexual violence most often occurs in the survivor's home (50%) where for boys it is most often in the perpetrator's home (44%). For under 13 girls, the top two locations, survivor's home and perpetrator's home, account for 82% of instance, but for boys the same two locations only account for 68%.
- For girls, when the sexual violence begins between ages 13-17, the most common locations move to the perpetrator's home (30%) or outside / in a car (30%). For boys of the same age the same locations represent 45% and 20% respectively. For boys in this age category occurrences in a school or care setting are 15% compared to 2% for girls.
- Into adulthood the survivor's home returns to being the main location for women (37%) with the category of other dominating for men (43%). The category of other includes friend's house, stranger's house, place of employment, hotel, among other locations.

# Perpetrators of Sexual Violence

## Sex of perpetrator

Graph 18: Sex of perpetrator (%) n=1,680

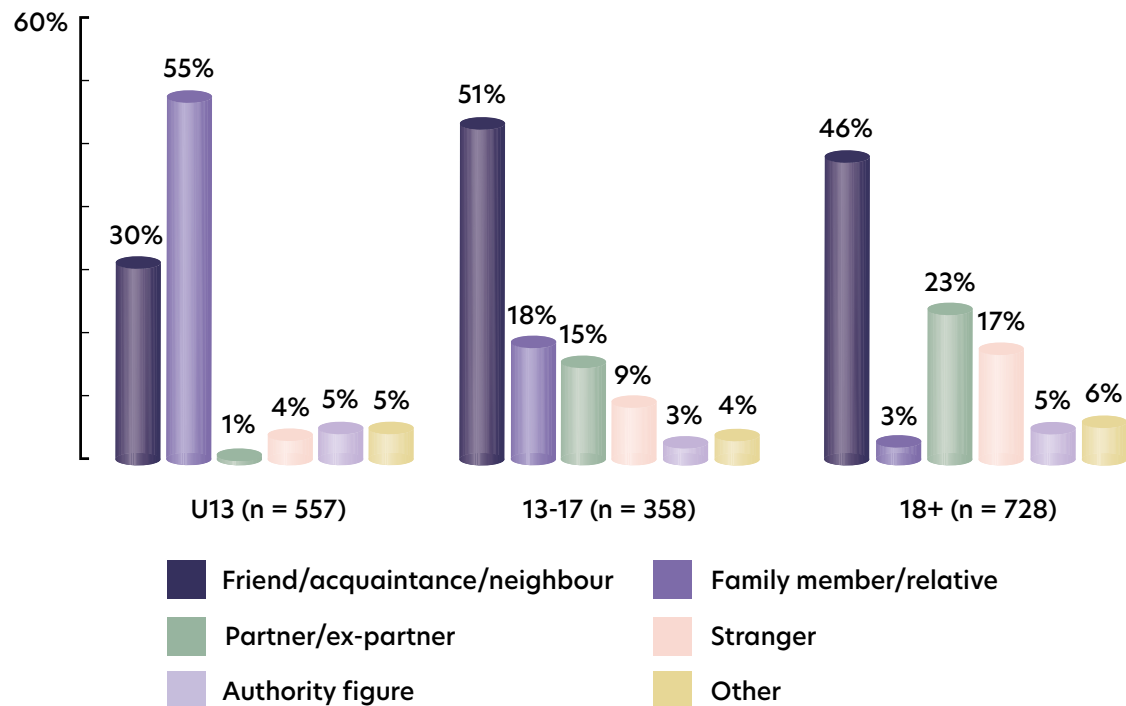


Sexual violence is a gendered crime. It is for the most part perpetrated by men against women and children. Since RCI began producing statistical analysis of survivors attending RCC services in 2004 this pattern holds firm and correlates with the national prevalence study (CSO, 2022).

- The vast majority of perpetrators of sexual violence were male (96%).
- Where a female perpetrator was involved it was most commonly in sexual assault (68%), then rape (27%) then other violence (5%).
- Regardless of the sex of the perpetrator, the survivor was most often female. Where the perpetrator was male, 92% of the survivors were female. Where the perpetrator was female 65% of the survivors were also female.

## Relationship of perpetrator to survivor

Graph 19: Relationship to perpetrator by when the sexual violence began (%) n=1,643



The data presented in this graph reflects each perpetrator/abuse combination recorded. Each abuse can have multiple perpetrators involved and the perpetrator can be involved in multiple abuses. Data that is not known to the counsellor has been excluded from the analysis.

The majority of sexual violence is perpetrated by somebody known to the survivor (84%). The CSO prevalence study found that 78% of perpetrators were known to the victim (CSO, 2022). Common patterns emerge when we examine the relationship of the survivor to the perpetrator in the context of the age of the survivor at the time of the abuse.

### Children under age 13:

- Survivors who were under the age of 13 when the sexual violence began most frequently identified the perpetrator as a family member or relative (55% of perpetrator/abuse combinations). This majority remained true when broken down by gender of the survivor with girls reporting a family member 58% of the time, and boys 40% of the time.
- Less than a third (30%) of perpetrators in this age group were friends, acquaintances or neighbours of the survivor. Broken down by gender this is the same (30%) when the survivor is a girl, but increases to 35% when the survivor is a boy.
- Where the survivor was a boy at the start of the episode of sexual violence, an authority figure was identified 18% of the time.

### Children aged 13-17:

- Children who were between the ages of 13 and 17 when the sexual violence began most frequently disclosed the perpetrator was a friend, acquaintance or neighbour (49%). Broken down by gender of the survivor this was slightly higher where the survivor was a boy (55% vs 50%).
- Overall the next most common relationship to a perpetrator identified in this age category was a family member or relative (18%) with a partner or ex-partner a close third (15%). These two categories break down differently based on the gender of the survivor. Girls in this age category reported a family member or relative 17% of the time and a partner or ex-partner 16%. Whereas boys reported a family member 32% of the time, and zero instances of a partner or ex-partner. However, an authority figure stands out in 9% of identified perpetrators for boys compared to 3% for girls.

### Adults aged 18 and over:

- Of the information disclosed about perpetrators when the sexual violence started while the survivor was an adult, most commonly the perpetrator was identified as a friend, acquaintance or neighbour (46%). This portion is similar when broken down by gender (45% and 50% for women and men).
- The next most frequently identified perpetrator was a partner or ex-partner (23%) mirroring the experience of women (24%). However, men only identified a partner or ex-partner in 7% of disclosed cases. For adult men the second most identified group was strangers at 29% compared to 16% for women.

*“My whole family has attended the centre for both counselling and support sessions. The wraparound service that you have provided us with has been invaluable. You have helped me and my family recover from a situation that I didn’t believe we would ever recover from. We are a normal family again, dealing with family life and I don’t believe that would have been possible without the Donegal Rape Crisis Centre.”*

(Survivor, 2023)



## Age of perpetrator

The majority of survivors disclosed that the perpetrators of sexual violence against them were adults (82%).

**Table 1: Age of Perpetrator to survivor (%) n=1,552**

Perpetrator Age →	U13	13-17	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56+
↓ Survivor Age							
U13 (n=528)	9%	21%	11%	<b>23%</b>	18%	11%	8%
13-17 (n=350)		<b>34%</b>	28%	19%	12%	5%	2%
18-25 (n=395)			<b>52%</b>	28%	13%	5%	2%
26-35 (n=141)			5%	<b>55%</b>	32%	4%	
36-45 (n=94)				14%	<b>45%</b>	30%	9%
46-55 (n=32)					19%	<b>47%</b>	25%
56+ (n=12)							

\*Black squares represent redacted numbers that are too low to report while protecting anonymity.

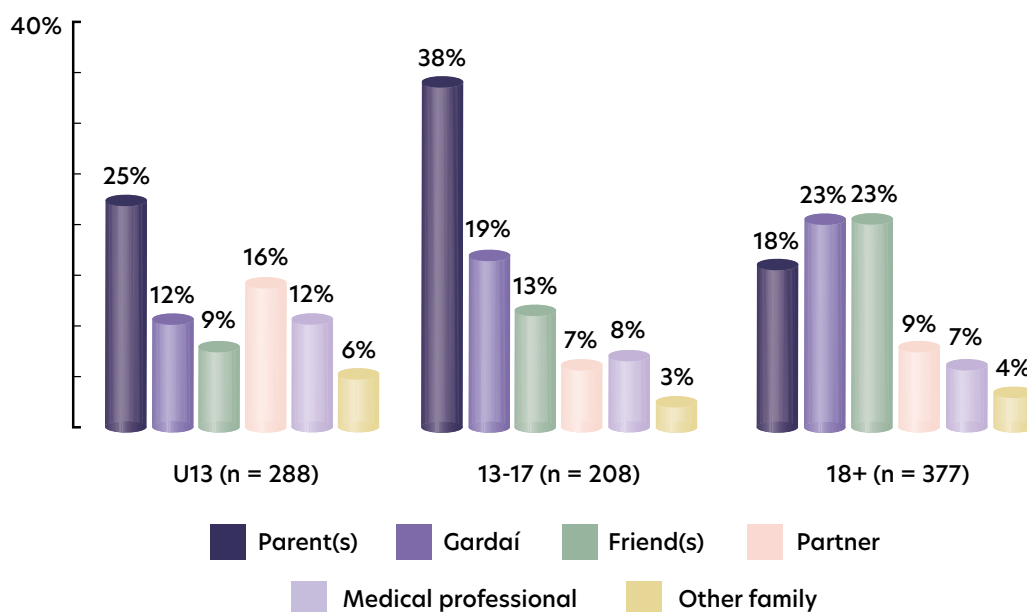
The majority of survivors disclosed that the perpetrators of sexual violence against them were adults (82%). Of the perpetrators under 18, 98% of those under 13 and 51% of those 13-17, the survivor was in the same age bracket.

- The median age of those perpetrating sexual violence against children under the age of 13 was 30.
- The median age of those perpetrating sexual violence against children aged 13-17 was 20.
- Survivors of adult sexual violence were most commonly abused by someone in the same age category or one age category older than them.

# Disclosing and reporting of Sexual Violence

## Telling someone for the first time

Graph 20: Whom survivors first told about the sexual violence by when the abuse began (%) n=1,042

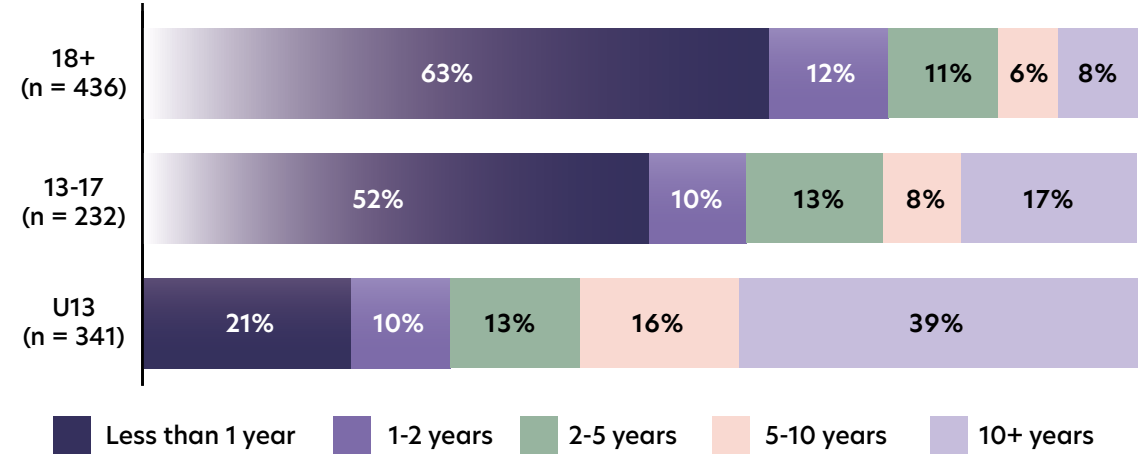


RCCs were the first point of disclosure for 7% of survivors attending their services in 2023. The majority (93%) had disclosed some or all of the details of the sexual violence perpetrated against them to someone else prior to attending the RCC. Women and girls were more likely to have a previous disclosure than boys and men (94% vs 85%).

- A parent was the most common point of first disclosure for those who were subjected to sexual violence when under the age of 13 (25%). The second most common disclosure for this age group was a partner with 16%. Broken down by gender, it was more common for men and boys to disclose to a partner than women and girls (27% vs 13%) when the first violence was in this age category.
- When the act of sexual violence was between 13 to 17, the survivors who had disclosed prior to attending RCC disclosed to a parent 38% of the time and the Gardaí 19% of the time. Men and boys, where the act of sexual violence happened when they were in this group were reporting to a partner 25% of the time or a medical professional 25% of the time (compared to 13% and 11% respectively for women and girls).
- For survivors who were subjected to sexual violence in adulthood, the first disclosure was most often friend(s) or Gardaí (23% each). When looking at this age group for men, a partner or medical professional were most frequently the first disclosure (25% each).

The CSO prevalence study found that women who experienced sexual violence in their lifetime were more likely to have disclosed at least one experience (53%) than men (34%) (CSO, 2022).

**Graph 21: How long after sexual violence was first disclosure (%) n=1,009**



We see a clear correlation between the age of the survivor when they were subjected to sexual violence and the period of time that elapsed before they disclosed what had happened.

- Those who were abused when under the age of 13 most commonly did not disclose anything about the sexual violence for 10 or more years (39%).
- Those who were abused between the ages of 13 and 17 most commonly disclosed that the sexual violence had taken place less than a year afterwards (52%).
- Survivors where the sexual violence occurred in adulthood most commonly disclosed that the sexual violence took place less than a year after (63%).

*“I came to you guys as a very traumatised, fearful person who could not speak to anyone about what was going on inside my head. I felt like I was nothing, not worthy of anything or anyone. Honestly, looking back now, I didn’t think I would still be alive now, but here I am: I have a job I love, a family I love to pieces and some beautiful friendships. That is definitely down to the help of you guys. I will hold on to the gratitude I have for you all forever. What happened to me no longer defines me.”*

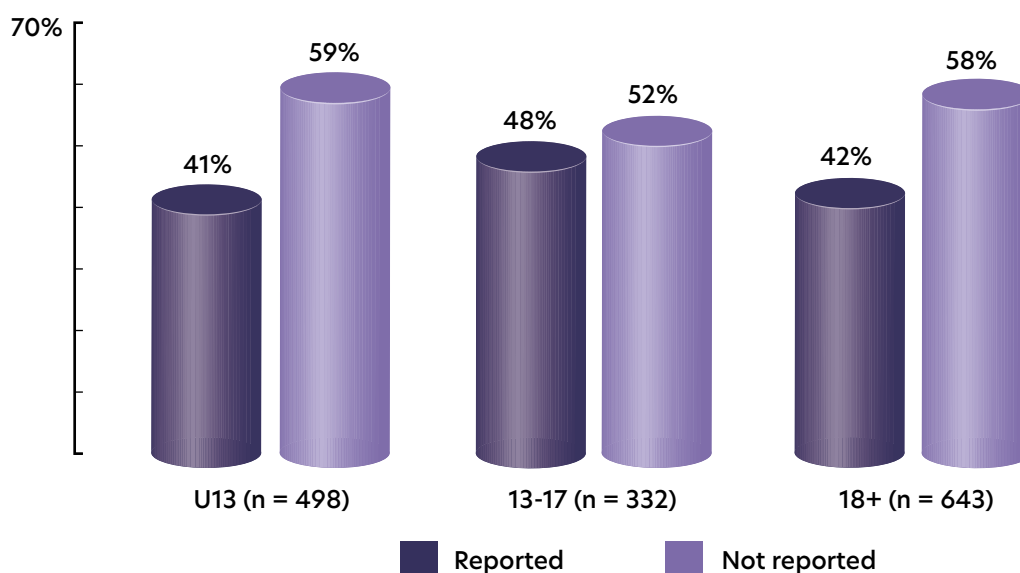
(Survivor, 2023)

## Reporting to a formal authority

RCCs fully support a survivor's choice whether or not to report the sexual violence to a formal authority. The only exception is when a perpetrator poses a risk to a child, in which case the RCC is obliged to make a formal report to Tusla. This section of the report dealing with survivors reporting sexual violence to a formal authority refers to all incidents of sexual violence. This means that it includes every incident that survivors reported to formal authorities. Some survivors reported more than one incident to a formal authority, such as the Gardaí, because they were subjected to multiple incidents of sexual violence. For a definition of 'incident' see the Index of Terms and Methodology sections at the end of this report.

The CSO prevalence study found that over eight in ten adults (81%), who experienced sexual violence as a child and disclosed to others, did not disclose to the police, and over nine in ten persons (93%), who experienced sexual violence as an adult and disclosed to others, did not disclose to the Gardaí (CSO, 2022).

**Graph 22: Reporting the sexual violence to a formal authority (%) n=1,473**

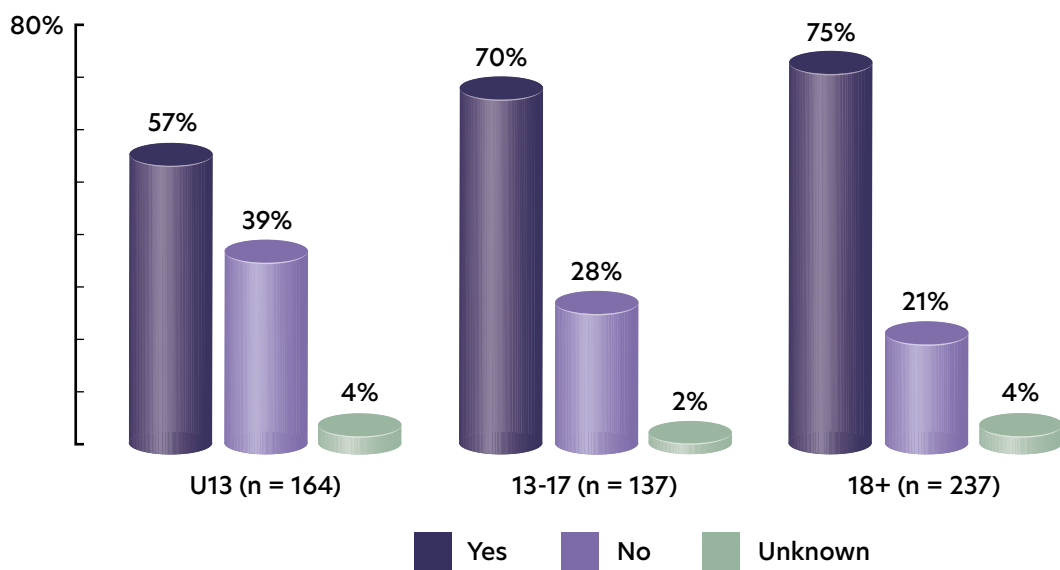


Up to 2022 there was a clear contrast in the level of reporting when broken down by the age at which the abuse started. This difference reflects both the context and autonomy of survivors in the different age categories as well as the climate of belief and its impact on their decision to report. We know from the statistics above that when a child moves from the under 13 to over 13 the abuser is more likely to be the same age, this may play a part in survivor's decision to report. 2022 was the first time there was no significant differences between age categories and this new pattern has carried into 2023.

- Incidents of sexual violence which were perpetrated against adults (age 18 plus) were reported by survivors to a formal authority at a rate of 41% of incidents. This has remained consistent year on year.

- 2023 saw an increase in the portion of incidents of sexual violence that began between the ages of 13 and 17 being reported to a formal authority by survivors. This figure had been reducing annually. In 2022 the portion of incidents of abuse reported in this age group was 36% and has increased to 48%. This is above the 2019 level of 44%.
- 41% of incidents of sexual violence perpetrated against children under the age of 13 were reported to a formal authority by survivors. This increased in 2021 from 2020 by six percentage points and has increased again from 2022 to 2023 by a further five percentage points.

**Graph 23: Survivors that reported that Gardaí maintained ongoing contact by age of the survivor when the abuse began (%) n=538**

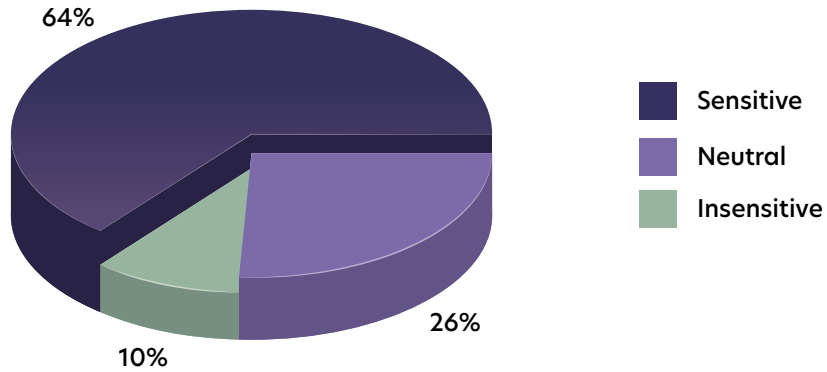


The majority of survivors who reported incidents of sexual violence to An Garda Síochána disclosed that the Gardaí maintained ongoing contact with them throughout the case (68%). This means that the Gardaí contacted the survivor with regular updates on the progress of their case.

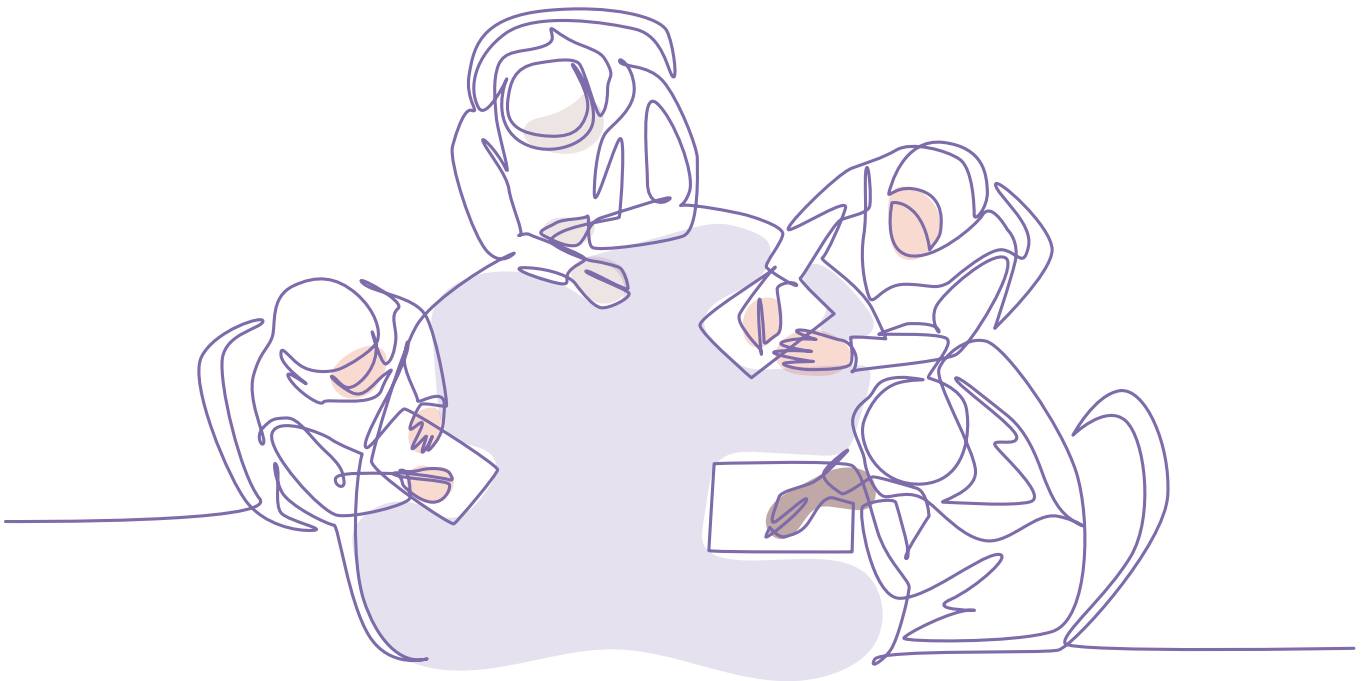
We see some differences emerge in survivor experiences of reporting the sexual violence to the Gardaí when we look at the age of the survivor when the sexual violence took place. The majority of child sexual violence reported to the Gardaí is historic abuse and being reported by survivors who are now adults.

- In 75% of incidents where the sexual violence started as an adult and was disclosed to the Gardaí, the Gardaí had maintained ongoing contact with them throughout the case.
- Those who were subjected to sexual violence when aged 13-17 and reported to the Gardaí, disclosed that 70% of incidents the Gardaí had maintained ongoing contact with them.
- Survivors who were subjected to the sexual violence when under the age of 13 disclosed the lowest levels of Gardaí maintaining ongoing contact with them throughout the case (57%). This includes historical and current reporting.

**Graph 24: How survivors perceived that they were treated by the Gardaí by the age of survivor when the abuse began (%) n=495**



The majority of survivors attending RCCs who reported the sexual violence to the Gardaí felt they were treated in a sensitive manner (64%) and 26% felt they were treated in a neutral manner. This is on par with the results from the previous 3 years. Data is based on survivors working with RCCs during 2023 regardless of when the sexual violence, or the report to Gardaí occurred.



# Sexual Violence by Age Groups

## Age of survivor at time of first abuse

	Under 13 years	13-17 years	18 years plus
Gender of survivor	<b>Girl 80%</b> <b>Boy 20%</b>	<b>Girl 92%</b> <b>Boy 7%</b>	<b>Woman 94%</b> <b>Man 5%</b>
Type of sexual violence	Sexual Assault	Rape	Rape
Duration of sexual violence	Years	Hours	Hours
Location of sexual violence	<b>Girls:</b> Survivor's Home <b>Boys:</b> Perpetrator's Home	<b>Girls:</b> Survivor's Home / Outside <b>Boys:</b> Perpetrator's Home	<b>Women:</b> Survivor's Home <b>Men:</b> Other (friend / stranger's house, hotel, nightclub etc)
Relationship to perpetrator	Family Member	Friend/ Acquaintance/ Neighbour	Friend/ Acquaintance
Sex of perpetrator	Male	Male	Male
Median age of perpetrator	30	19	30
First disclosure to	<b>Girls:</b> Parent <b>Boys:</b> Partner	<b>Girls:</b> Parent <b>Boys:</b> Parent /Partner	<b>Women:</b> Gardaí / Friends <b>Men:</b> Gardaí /Partner
How long after sexual violence was disclosure	10+ years	Less than a year	Less than a year
Reported to a police/formal authority	<b>Girl 41%</b> <b>Boy 40%</b>	<b>Girl 47%</b> <b>Boy 43%</b>	<b>Woman 43%</b> <b>Man 33%</b>

# Methodology

## RCI Database project overview

RCI has developed a highly secure online data collection system which allows authorised RCC personnel to log in and record specific information on each individual service user. RCC personnel do not record any direct identification details for service users or any other person. Those inputting data have varying levels of access to their RCC's data set depending on their role in the data collection process. This system is designed to equip RCI to deliver comparable national data and simultaneously equip RCCs to, at any time, extract data regarding use of their own local service. This data collection system has been specifically designed to collect data in frontline services dedicated to working with victims of sexual violence. RCI has developed standards on data collection, data use and data protection which all RCI database users must adhere to. In order to ensure best practice an extensive data cleaning process is carried out before any data is analysed. This involves checking all the data entered by RCCs for mistakes and omissions, and rectifying these.

## RCI National Statistics Report compilation

The information in this report is compiled from the data entered into the RCI Data Collection System by a sample of Rape Crisis Centres around Ireland. The data represents all people using these RCCs for counselling, support, accompaniment, and helpline services in 2023. It represents only these people and cannot be used to make assumptions about the overall incidence or nature of sexual violence in Ireland.

RCI and RCCs do not have all information on the sexual violence experienced by these survivors, as some information is not always available. For this reason, the n values vary between graphs. The analysis used in this report is compiled using two distinct base figures, that of 'person-related' figures and 'incident-related' figures.

**'Person-related' figures** - Information inputted into the RCI Data Collection System is anonymised by use of unique numeric identifiers for each RCC service user. Demographic information and service user characteristics entered include information such as age, country of origin, legal status, disability, etc. The totals provided in tables and analysis relating to these characteristics refers to the total number of people aggregated across all RCCs in the study and not by individual centres in order to protect privacy.

**'Incident-related' figures** - This information relates to each incident or episode of sexual violence. Some survivors using RCC services have experienced more than one incident of sexual violence. An incident is not necessarily a once-off act of sexual violence. It instead identifies if the sexual violence was connected by the same perpetrator acting alone or a specific group of perpetrators acting together. An incident of sexual violence may last hours, days, weeks, months or years. Each incident may include multiple, if not hundreds of, crimes perpetrated by the same individual or group of perpetrators. The RCI Database collects data on survivors' abuse details by incident because it is the internationally recognised best practice method of doing so (Basile, 2014). For each service user, data is inputted about each incident of sexual violence and the perpetrators of sexual violence.



## Previous Rape Crisis Statistics reports



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# Index of Terms


<b>Acquaintance</b>	Somebody that the survivor may know to say hello to or have chatted to on a night out for example.
<b>Accompaniment</b>	RCC service which supports survivors by being with them when they go for medical treatment, forensic examination, to the Gardaí, court, and refugee legal hearings. This role includes crisis intervention, providing information, and supporting survivors to get the best possible service.
<b>Adult sexual violence only</b>	People attending RCCs who experienced sexual violence solely when they were over the age of 18.
<b>Authority figure</b>	Babysitter/childminder, Carer/Residential staff, Clergy, Doctor/Medical/Caring profession, Employer, Gardaí/PSNI/Other national police force, Landlord/Landlady, Pimp/trafficker, Security forces, Sports coach/Youth worker, Teacher (clergy), Teacher (lay).
<b>Child sexual violence only</b>	People attending RCCs who experienced sexual violence solely when they were under the age of 18.
<b>Child and adult sexual violence</b>	People attending RCCs who experienced sexual violence when they were under the age of 18 and when they were over the age of 18.
<b>Domestic abuse and coercive control</b>	A persistent and deliberate pattern of behaviour by a partner/ex-partner designed to achieve obedience and create fear. In this report it includes sexual violence as part of the abuse. It may also include coercion, emotional/psychological abuse, isolation, physical violence, degradation and control.
<b>Emotional/psychological violence</b>	Harassment/intimidation, Psychological abuse, Stalking, Threats to kill, Coercive control.
<b>Formal authority</b>	Asylum application, Gardaí, PSNI, Other national police, HSE, Redress board, Church authority, Education authority.
<b>Family member/relative</b>	Child, Cousin, Foster parent, Foster sibling, Grandparent, Parent, Parent in law, Sibling, Sibling in law, Step grandparent, Step parent, Step sibling, Uncle/aunt, Parent's partner.

<b>Friend/ acquaintance/ neighbour</b>	Acquaintance, Co-worker, Family friend, Friend, Neighbour.
<b>Incident</b>	An incident of sexual violence is a single act or series of acts of sexual violence which are connected by a single perpetrator acting on his own or a group of perpetrators who act together. An incident is not necessarily a once-off act of sexual violence. Each incident may include multiple, if not hundreds of crimes perpetrated by the same individual or specific group of individuals. It may be perpetrated over hours, days, weeks months or years. A person may be subjected to sexual violence by a single perpetrator over many years, on many different occasions and in different locations - this is one incident of sexual violence, as it involves the same perpetrator every time. A person may be subjected to sexual violence by a particular group of perpetrators who act together all the time - this is also one incident of sexual violence because it involves the same group of perpetrators acting together, all the time. (RCNI, 2022).
<b>International Protection</b>	Human Rights law protecting people who are outside of their country of nationality, who have a well-founded fear of being persecuted in that country if they return to it. This includes people seeking International Protection (formerly known as asylum seekers), and people granted Refugee status or leave to remain.
<b>Other forms of sexual violence</b>	Grooming, Observing/voyeurism, Ritual abuse, Sexual harassment.
<b>Other locations of sexual violence</b>	Car, Direct provision centre, Friends' house, Hospital/Medical Centre, Institution/care setting, Place of employment, Prison, Pub/Nightclub, School, and Other relationships to perpetrator:
<b>Partner/ ex-partner</b>	Partner Cohabiting, Partner Non-Cohabiting, Partner Ex-Cohabiting, Partner Ex-Non-Cohabiting.
<b>Perpetrator</b>	A person who has committed a sexual offence.
<b>Physical violence</b>	Attempts to kill, Imprisonment, Neglect, Physical abuse, Prostitution, Trafficking, Economic abuse.
<b>RAJI</b>	<i>Rape &amp; Justice in Ireland: A National Study of Survivor, Prosecutor and Court Responses to Rape</i> (Hanly et al, 2009).

<b>Rape</b>	Penetration (however slight) of the mouth, vagina, or anus by the penis without consent or penetration (however slight) of the vagina with an object or the penis without consent.
<b>RCC</b>	Rape Crisis Centre.
<b>SAVI</b>	<i>Sexual Abuse and Violence in Ireland: A national study of Irish experiences, beliefs and attitudes concerning sexual violence</i> (McGee et al, 2002)
<b>Service user</b>	A person who is using RCC services. They may be a supporter of a survivor or survivor of sexual violence.
<b>Sexual Assault</b>	An assault, ie: touching or 'reasonable apprehension' of touching without consent, in circumstances of indecency, formally called indecent assault. Sexual assault is without any penetration of the mouth, vagina, or anus. In this report sexual assault also includes aggravated sexual assault which involves added serious violence, grave injury, degradation, humiliation or the threat of serious violence.
<b>Sexual Harassment</b>	Subjecting a person to an act of physical intimacy, requesting sexual favours, or subjecting to any act or conduct with sexual connotations when the act, request or conduct is unwelcome and could reasonably be regarded as sexually offensive, humiliating or intimidating, or someone is treated differently or could reasonably be expected to be treated differently by reason of her or his rejection or submission to the request or conduct.
<b>Sexual violence</b>	Any actions, words or threats of a sexual nature by one person against a non-consenting person who is harmed by same. This could include; Rape, Aggravated sexual assault, Sexual assault, Sexual harassment, Ritual abuse, Trafficking, Reckless endangerment, Observing/voyeurism, Grooming.
<b>Stranger</b>	Somebody that the survivor has never met before.
<b>Supporter</b>	Someone who is supporting a survivor of sexual violence.
<b>Survivor</b>	Someone who has experienced sexual violence.




## Survivors from the following Rape Crisis Centres are included in this report.

To donate to local Rape Crisis Centre select the  button  
beside the Centre you wish to donate to.

**Carlow & South Leinster Rape Crisis  
& Counselling Centre**

 1800 727 737

**Donegal Sexual Abuse & Rape Crisis Centre**

 1800 448 844

**Kerry Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre**

 1800 633 333

**Mayo Rape Crisis Centre**

 1800 234 900

**Rape Crisis Midwest**

 1800 311 511

**Rape Crisis North East**

 1800 212 122

**Waterford Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre**

 1800 296 296

**West Cork Womens Project**

 1800 832 001

**Donate to Rape Crisis Ireland**

For information on sexual violence services and supports in all  
17 Rape Crisis Centres in Ireland: [www.rapecrisisireland.ie](http://www.rapecrisisireland.ie)





Carmichael House, North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7

RCI contact details for support or donations:

[www.rapecrisisireland.ie](http://www.rapecrisisireland.ie)

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**CUAN**

An Ghnóthairíocht um Fhoréigean Baile,  
Gnóthasch agus Inseobhrannáth  
The Domestic, Sexual and  
Gender-Based Violence Agency



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



government supporting communities

Statutory funding for Rape Crisis Ireland and all Rape Crisis Centres comes predominantly through CUAN the Domestic Sexual and Gender Based Agency. All Centres fundraise and accept donations also.

