



Addressing Gender-Based Violence

Annual Report 2024

Acknowledgement of Country

RMIT University acknowledges the people of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung language groups of the eastern Kulin Nation on whose unceded lands we conduct the business of the University. RMIT University respectfully acknowledges their Ancestors and Elders, past and present. RMIT also acknowledges the Traditional Custodians and their Ancestors of the lands and waters across Australia where we conduct our business.

Content warning

This Annual Report includes reference to sexual harm and family violence and gender-based violence. Some readers may find this emotionally distressing. If you are affected by the subject matter of this report, please seek support at the services listed below.

Support for students and staff

Safer Community

Safer Community is RMIT’s dedicated response service for students and staff seeking advice or support about concerning, inappropriate, unwanted or threatening/violent behaviour. This includes threats or hate speech, discrimination, sexual harm and harassment, assault, stalking, image-based abuse/doxing/catfishing or partner and family violence. Whether something has happened to you, you’re feeling unsafe, or you’re concerned about someone else – on or off campus – we’re here to help. Reach out to discuss your options and access support.

Phone: +61 3 9925 2396
Email: safercommunity@rmit.edu.au
Online: [Support Request Form](#)

1800RESPECT

Staff and students can also call 1800RESPECT, the national domestic, family and sexual violence counselling, information and support service. Please call 1800 737 732 to speak with a counsellor.

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About this report

In 2024, RMIT’s prevention and response initiatives demonstrated our strong commitment to national and sector-wide efforts to address gender-based violence (GBV), including aligning with the principles outlined in the proposed National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence (National Code). These initiatives reflect our Theory of Change, advancing the goals of the [2023–2027 Strategic Action Plan](#) while meeting sector expectations for best practice and compliance.

Prevention & Respect Team

RMIT’s work in the prevention and response to gender-based violence calls on all areas of the University to play their part. Key work in the oversight of prevention and response is provided by the Vice-Chancellor’s Gender Based Violence Advisory Group. The Prevention & Respect Team leads all work associated with the prevention of gender-based violence, sexual harassment, harm and assault. This work is focused across key areas of governance, awareness raising, learning and development and our targeted innovation projects and activities.

We believe in the importance of piloting and attempting prevention innovation, to build evidence of what works and respond to emerging issues and concerns in our community.

Email: respect@rmit.edu.au

Foreword



Mish Eastman

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Vocational Education) and Vice-President



Professor Denise Cuthbert

(outgoing co-chair) Associate Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research Training and Development



Professor Matt Duckham

(incoming co-chair) Information in Society Enabling Impact Platform Director

We are pleased to present the 2024 report, *Addressing Gender-based Violence at RMIT*. This report highlights significant progress against the [2023-2027 Strategic Action Plan](#). Our approach to addressing gender-based violence continues to be focused on both prevention and response, and on transparent reporting, for both our internal communities and external stakeholders.

Some milestones from 2024 include the high levels of engagement in our community with prevention and awareness raising programs – from engaging 3,000 students in a variety of awareness-raising activities, to the participation of 107 (75%) of the University’s most senior leaders in SASH (Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment) awareness and prevention training. Recognising that the creation of safe learning, research and work environments is the responsibility of all of us, RMIT continues its focus on masculinity and male allyship in cultural transformation and gender equality work. Two notable programs in this space which were designed in 2024 are:

- The *Adventures of Soy Boy and Friends* creative intervention for male-identifying VE and HE students was finalised, ready for public launch in 2025; and
- The Working Together with Men Research Pilot, sponsored by RMIT’s Research and Innovation Portfolio, which has attracted 14 senior research leaders to undertake gender transformation work in their spheres of influence.

With respect to disclosures of sexual harm within the University community, any incident of sexual harm is one too many. However, the increased reporting seen in 2024 reflects improved trust and awareness amongst our student and staff community and provides us with assurances that those experiencing harm know where to go to make reports and have confidence in the process.

RMIT University gratefully acknowledges the contribution of Professor Denise Cuthbert who was appointed as inaugural co-chair in 2017 and has served in this role continuously until stepping down in December 2024. We were delighted to welcome Professor Matt Duckham as the new co-chair from January 2025.

We thank all members of the Vice-Chancellor’s Advisory Group for their sustained support of this important work; RUSU leadership for unwavering advocacy for student safety; and all members of the Prevention & Respect and Safer Community teams for their outstanding work in preventing gender-based violence and responding with trauma-informed support for those making disclosures.

The co-chairs of the Vice-Chancellor’s Advisory Group on Addressing Gender-Based Violence are:

Mish Eastman Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Vocational Education) and Vice-President

Professor Denise Cuthbert (outgoing co-chair) Associate Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research Training and Development

Professor Matt Duckham (incoming co-chair) Information in Society Enabling Impact Platform Director.

Prevention and Respect Team – Reporting on key action areas

Awareness raising

In 2024, our strategy focused on enhancing the visibility and effectiveness of RMIT's response service, Safer Community. For the first time, we integrated and synchronised our three key action areas: Awareness Raising, Targeted Projects, and Learning and Capability Development. This alignment with the 2023-27 Strategic Action Plan, the Planning for Change Report, and the Respect Capability Framework ensured that our programs directly contributed to creating a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment.

Knowledge is essential to eliminating gender-based violence, and building this knowledge necessitates robust communication and awareness activities. At RMIT, it is vital for staff and students to understand the various forms of gender-based violence, including sexual harm, family violence, coercive control, and technology-facilitated abuse.

Equally important is awareness of the available support for those affected and those who perpetrate violence, as well as guidance on making disclosures or formal reports.

In 2024:

- 3,000 students and 400 staff were engaged both in-person and through dedicated social media campaigns
- 33 events were held across all Melbourne campuses – Melbourne city, Brunswick and Bundoora.

Activations at key events across all RMIT campus locations such as O-Week, Club Week, Open Day, and Wellbeing Weeks demonstrated RMIT's proactive leadership in embedding respect within campus culture.

Importantly, initiatives like *Nachos & Pro-Feminist Film Nights*, held in partnership with UniLodge City and UniLodge Wallert House, reflect our commitment to the National Code's principles, ensuring alignment with broader institutional objectives to create safe and respectful environments.

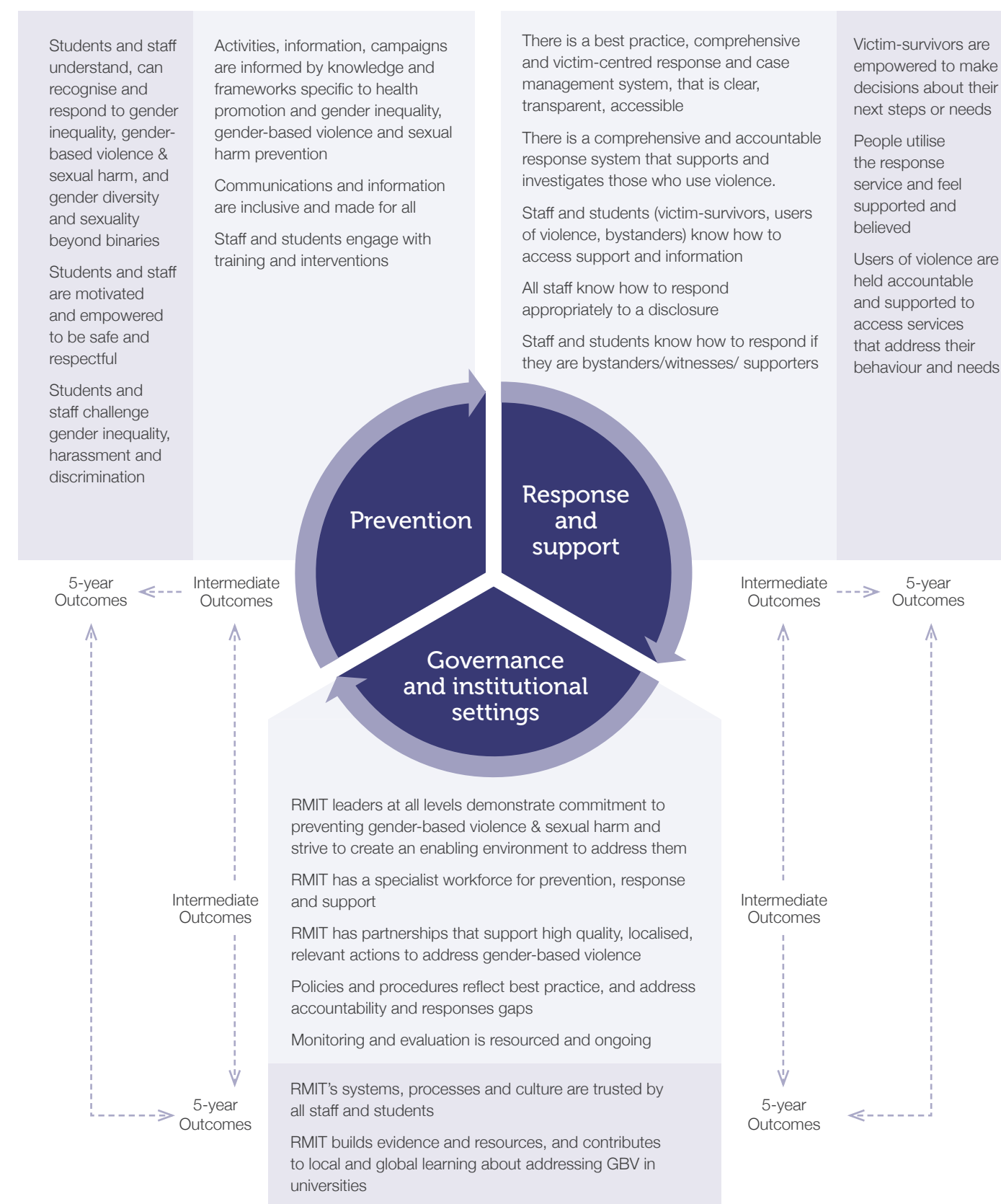
By working closely with accommodation providers, we established inclusive spaces for reflection and dialogue, amplifying the importance of respect, consent, and collective care in the student community.



Theory of Change for addressing gender-based violence

Vision: RMIT is a safe place for all staff and students, where everyone feels included, respected and supported

Impact: Gender-based violence and gender inequality is reduced | Respect, safety and a culture of collective care is normalised | Victim-survivors and users of violence are appropriately considered and supported



Spotlight: Sex & Consent Breakfast and Snack Club

In 2024, RMIT University took a significant step forward by launching its mandatory Sex & Consent e-learning program for commencing students, establishing a new standard for compliance. This initiative, co-developed with Learning Consent, a leading provider of comprehensive, evidence-based, and inclusive relationships and sexuality education in Australia and globally, has seen 22,234 students automatically enrolled in the module with 16,897 students completing it this year.

By the end of 2024, 96.3% of all undergraduate and postgraduate first-year students had completed the learning module, supported by a requirement to complete it before re-enrolling for 2025. For Vocational Education students, where re-enrolment was not linked to module completion, the completion rate was 23.4%. We'll continue to explore ways to support engagement and encourage completion in 2025.

The program aims to support students in understanding the basic concepts of consent, communication, and respect, which are vital for creating a safer environment for everyone. It has equipped students with the knowledge needed to minimise the risk of contributing to sexual assault and harassment and covers topics such as appropriate and respectful behaviour, the definition of sexual consent, and strategies for safely intervening in difficult situations.

To support promotion, the Sex & Consent Breakfast & Snack Club was introduced, combining in-person engagement with innovative outreach. Hosted events provided students with the opportunity to complete the e-learning module with the guidance of trained staff. The Snack Attack Cart, a mobile activation, distributed QR codes for easy access to the module, along with information materials and post-event resources.



This campaign engaged 1,100 students, and a promotional Instagram story reached 2,164 users, demonstrating RMIT's commitment to empowering young people with the tools, language, and rights to navigate the biggest transition (to post-school education) in a young person's life.

Learning and Capability Development

A central component of the [Addressing Gender-Based Violence Strategic Action Plan 2023-2027](#) is the development and maintenance of the necessary knowledge, skills, and capabilities to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. To effectively address this issue, it is crucial to understand its underlying drivers, such as gender inequality, misuse of power, and harmful gendered norms. The *RMIT Respect Capability Framework* outlines the skills, knowledge, and capabilities that we aim for our staff and students to cultivate in the prevention of gender-based violence.

Evidence and feedback from RMIT students, staff, and communities highlight the importance of safety and respect, emphasising the need to focus on both prevention and response. For our initiatives to be effective, they must be grounded in knowledge and incorporate a dual focus that supports individuals who experience harm and addresses the behaviours of those who cause harm. This approach is crucial for driving the required and sustainable change.

In 2024, RMIT advanced its commitment to staff capacity-building for the prevention of and response to gender-based violence, aligning efforts with the proposed National Code (due to be introduced as new legislation in 2025) and RMIT's *Planning for Change: Learning and Development Plan*. These initiatives reflect a strategic, evidence-based approach to increasing their engagement with compliance-based learning.



Spotlight:

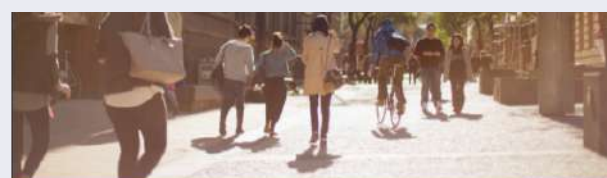
Strategic Alignment with Planning for Change

RMIT's initiatives in 2024 were explicitly designed to reflect the guiding principles and objectives of the [Planning for Change: Learning and Development Plan](#). The Respect Capability Framework – centred on understanding gender, intersectionality, and the prevention of gender-based violence – provided a foundation for all learning and development offerings.

The *Planning for Change* framework emphasises embedding respect, gender equity, and intersectional practices into all aspects of institutional learning and development. RMIT's achievements this year exemplify this vision, driving progress toward a culture of safety, inclusion, and collective care.

Senior Officer Sexual Harm Workshop:

Internally co-designed and developed in collaboration with Prevention & Respect, Safer Community, the Academic Registrar's Group, and Leadership & Capability Development, this pilot program has successfully equipped Academic Integrity Senior Officers with the necessary skills and knowledge to address student-facing conduct issues related to sexual harm. The program provided comprehensive training and support, preparing them for their panel responsibilities. Following the successful pilot in Semester 2 of 2024, the continuation of the Senior Officer Sexual Harm Workshop is planned for rollout in 2025 and ongoing.



Planning for change

A learning and development approach for the prevention of gender-based violence, sexual harm and harassment at RMIT

12 in-person workshops engaged 75% of Executive Leadership Team members

(107 senior leaders), including the senior leaders across all Colleges and Portfolios and RMIT Council members, in the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) training on preventing sexual harassment in the workplace. This initiative further embedded the Planning for Change's goals into organisational leadership practices. Launching as a standard offering in 2025, the program reflects *Planning for Change*'s focus on advanced competency-building for leadership roles and directly addresses the framework's Respect Capability domains. It tailors the content to focus specifically on RMIT, reflecting its updated policies and procedures.

Sexual Harassment and Responding to Disclosures:

In partnership with the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC), RMIT implemented a mandatory e-learning module for all staff, achieving a 97% completion rate. This initiative complements *Planning for Change*'s emphasis on foundational competency-building for all staff, addressing the core knowledge and skills needed to foster respectful behaviours.

Are You Safe at Home? Workshop:

This initiative is a critical tool for fostering safer and more supportive workplaces by addressing the often-hidden issue of family violence. Grounded in a trauma-informed and culturally safe approach, this training has equipped individuals and organisations with the knowledge and skills needed to identify and respond to signs of family violence, ensuring those affected can access timely and appropriate support. Complementing the module, RMIT implemented six engaging promotional strategies inspired by the Snack Cart model, effectively raising awareness and encouraging engagement among employees.



Innovation: Targeted Projects and Activities

Spotlight:

Working Together with Men – Research and Innovation Pilot

This initiative continues our bold work to embed a masculinities approach in all that we do and aligns with the proposed National Code's call for innovative approaches to engaging men in violence prevention. An adaption of the Working Together with Men (WTWM) model was customised for the research setting and commenced in August 2024. This 12-month pilot is in partnership with the RMIT's Research and Innovation Portfolio and provides senior research leaders who identify as men, the opportunity to deepen their knowledge and skill in allyship for gender equity and harm prevention work. Twenty-eight senior male research leaders were engaged, with 14 commencing the intensive allyship model. This year-long pilot moves allies through key phases of learning and into action, where men co-design ideas with women and their teams and it exemplifies RMIT's commitment to attempt to address the systemic drivers of gender-based violence.



Spotlight:

The Adventures of Soy Boy & Friends – Exploring Masculinities through Creative Engagement

Co-designed by RMIT students, educators and violence prevention experts, *The Adventures of Soy Boy and Friends* comic series aims to engage students in conversations about mental health, gender-based violence, and harmful online behaviours, while challenging disinformation spread through online algorithms.

In Semester 1 of 2024, 29 male students were engaged in several co-design workshops and campus pop up sessions, that provided young men with the chance to explore and discuss current masculinities research and men's lived experience associated with outdated gender stereotypes, violence, wellbeing and university life.

From these discussions, an idea to create a digital comic series about a group of friends navigating university life, in the age of wellness bros and algorithms was created.

In partnership with RMIT's College of Vocational Education's Creative Industries, the first ever co-designed and embedded student assessment opportunity was created. In Semester 2 2024 students in the Advanced Diploma of Screen and Media were offered the opportunity to illustrate the comic as an alternative assessment, with the successful comic being chosen for public launch and promotion for Respect at Uni week in 2025.

The winning [Soy Boy comic](#) design was created by Millie Ovenden (now recent alumni), with more co-designed stories and adventures to be released in 2025.

[Explore the recently released, first edition of The Adventures of Soy Boy and Friends comic series.](#)



Response and Support - Reporting on key action areas

In 2024, Safer Community continued to strengthen its trauma-informed, victim-centred response. The development of a Safer Community Handbook provides a clear induction tool for staff, outlining the skills, experience and knowledge required to deliver a best-practice approach.

Safer Community staff have continued to uplift their skills and knowledge in this field, engaging in relevant professional development and threat assessment supervision. This will continue in 2025, with the team engaging in training on an additional evidence-based tool for assessing the risk of violence (HCR-20).

Safer Community continued to see an increase in case work, engaging over 1,600 individuals with the service in various forms throughout the year. There has been a particular increase of staff engaging with Safer Community for support and formal reporting through 2024, which could be attributed to the service's increased visibility through the VEOHRC training and activations promoting the service as-a-whole-of-organisation approach to gender-based violence (GBV).

The embedding of the specialist response to GBV into the Safer Community team has enabled a trauma-informed holistic approach to formal reporting and management of SASH matters, minimising the potential impact of re-traumatisation and reducing delays in the process. This is particularly highlighted in the number of formal SASH investigations detailed in the data report for 2024, demonstrating a significant increase than reported in previous years.

The availability of data has significantly improved as 2024 was the first full year of contemporaneous record keeping. The Salesforce Case Management system has enabled a clearer perspective on the trends in real time and is supporting more accurate data interrogation in most areas, with further development work with the Salesforce team.





Safer Community data 2024

RMIT is committed to delivering on the recommendations set out in the Australian Human Rights Commission's *Change the Course* (2017) report. Over the last few years, the University has been improving data capture systems to better share a broad set of sexual harm data, including formal reports and disclosures.

The communication of this data is a key part of the University's drive to be open, honest and accountable, while keeping our communities informed of our progress towards the goals set out in the [2023-2027 Strategic Action Plan](#).

The current data set provides a high-level overview of the information currently recorded and available to the Safer Community team. This includes the capacity to consider trends in relation to gender, level of study, domestic and international students. It reflects our efforts on expanding awareness of the availability of the University's support services through numerous activations detailed earlier in this report.

RMIT will continue to review the types of data communicated each year to ensure we balance transparent reporting with the University's commitment to the anonymity of our victim-survivors.

Gender-based violence disclosure data

In 2024, the total number of inquiries to Safer Communities increased by 16% compared to 2023. Of all inquiries received by Safer Community 28% involved gender-based violence, with 16% related to sexual harm and 12% family violence. This has largely been proportionally similar since 2021. There was 10% increase in sexual harm related inquiries compared to 2023.

Australian data tells us that sexual assault and sexual harassment is under disclosed and underreported. RMIT is committed to the provision of evidence-based, best practice prevention and response efforts with the aim of facilitating increased disclosure rates. Because an increase in disclosures is an indicator of increased confidence in our response systems and procedures.

2.1

Staff and student disclosures

RMIT will always support victim-survivors regardless of where the harm occurred. This includes both within and outside an RMIT context. RMIT's largest campus is located in Melbourne's CBD, so we necessarily have a broad definition of what constitutes an RMIT context.

We define the RMIT context as on campus or in the workplace, at a University or club event, on placement, in student accommodation, on a study tour/exchange, or while travelling to or from the University. In addition, incidents of sexual harm that occur off campus or online may also be considered to have occurred in an RMIT context depending on the circumstances.

Our broad definition of the RMIT context is in response to the 2021 National Student Safety Survey that included data on disclosures of sexual harm. In the data below, outside an RMIT context refers to any activity, event or location that doesn't meet the definition of within an RMIT context, such as a private social event. RMIT takes a whole-of-institution approach to prevention and support to generate change across multiple levels. Part of this is reporting on both staff and student disclosures.

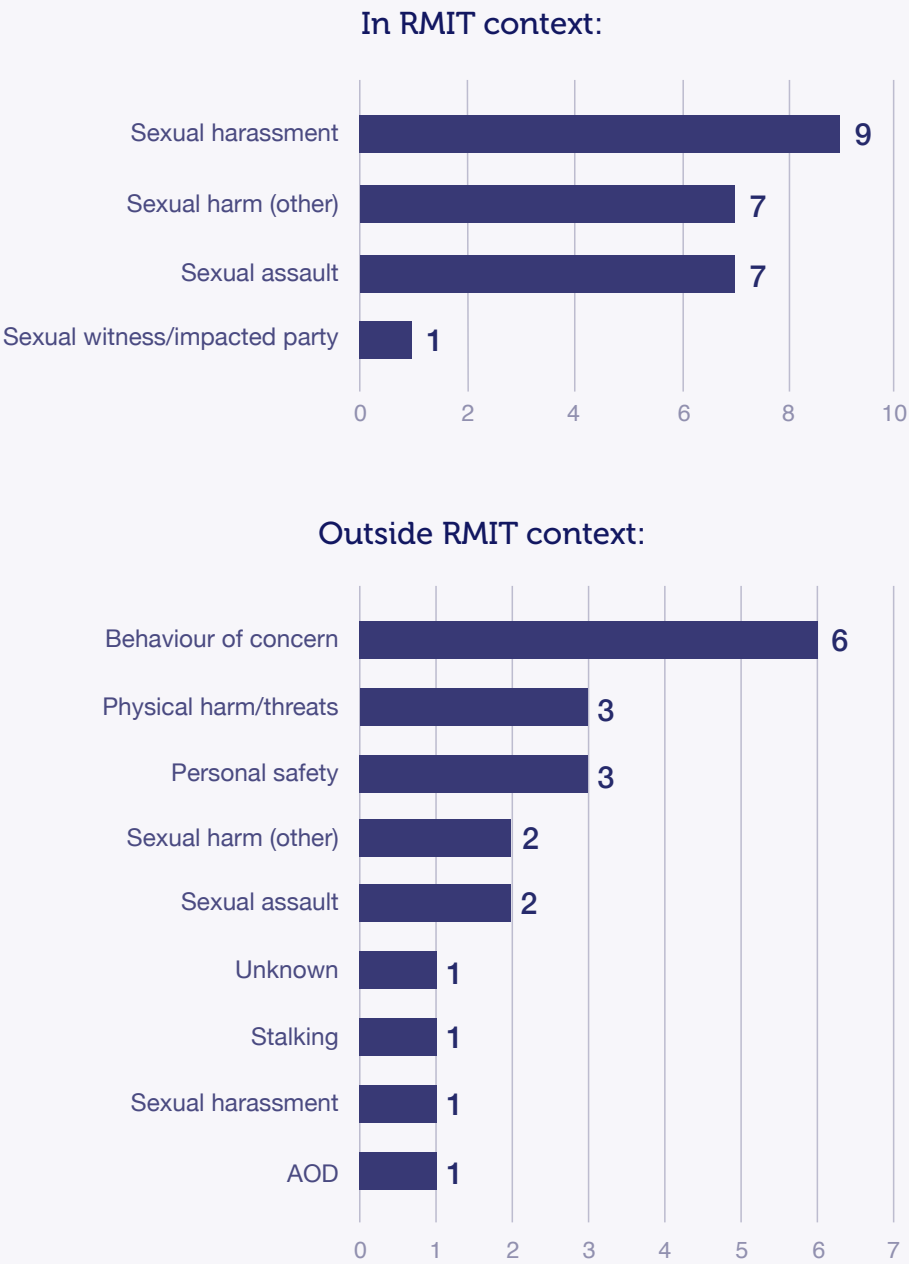
In 2024, both staff and student disclosures of sexual harm incidents increased from 2023 levels, which we believe indicates our efforts to raise awareness of our support services and the formal reporting process has been impactful. The intense focus on increasing awareness saw a significant increase in the number of staff and students reporting incidents and seeking support from Safer Community.

RMIT is committed to supporting victim-survivors in making informed decisions post-incident by providing a range of support options. These include access to counselling, financial grants, and wellbeing resources, irrespective of where an incident has occurred. Victim-survivors can choose to make a formal report, which may initiate a trauma-informed investigation. Such formal reports can result in various disciplinary actions, including behavioural warnings or executive suspensions for students, and formal warnings or terminations for staff members.

2.2
Staff disclosures

Figure 1 shows the staff disclosures, with 24 occurring within an RMIT context and 20 outside the RMIT context. Of those 44 disclosures, 9 were sexual assault, 10 were sexual harassment and 25 were other forms of gender-based violence, such as stalking.

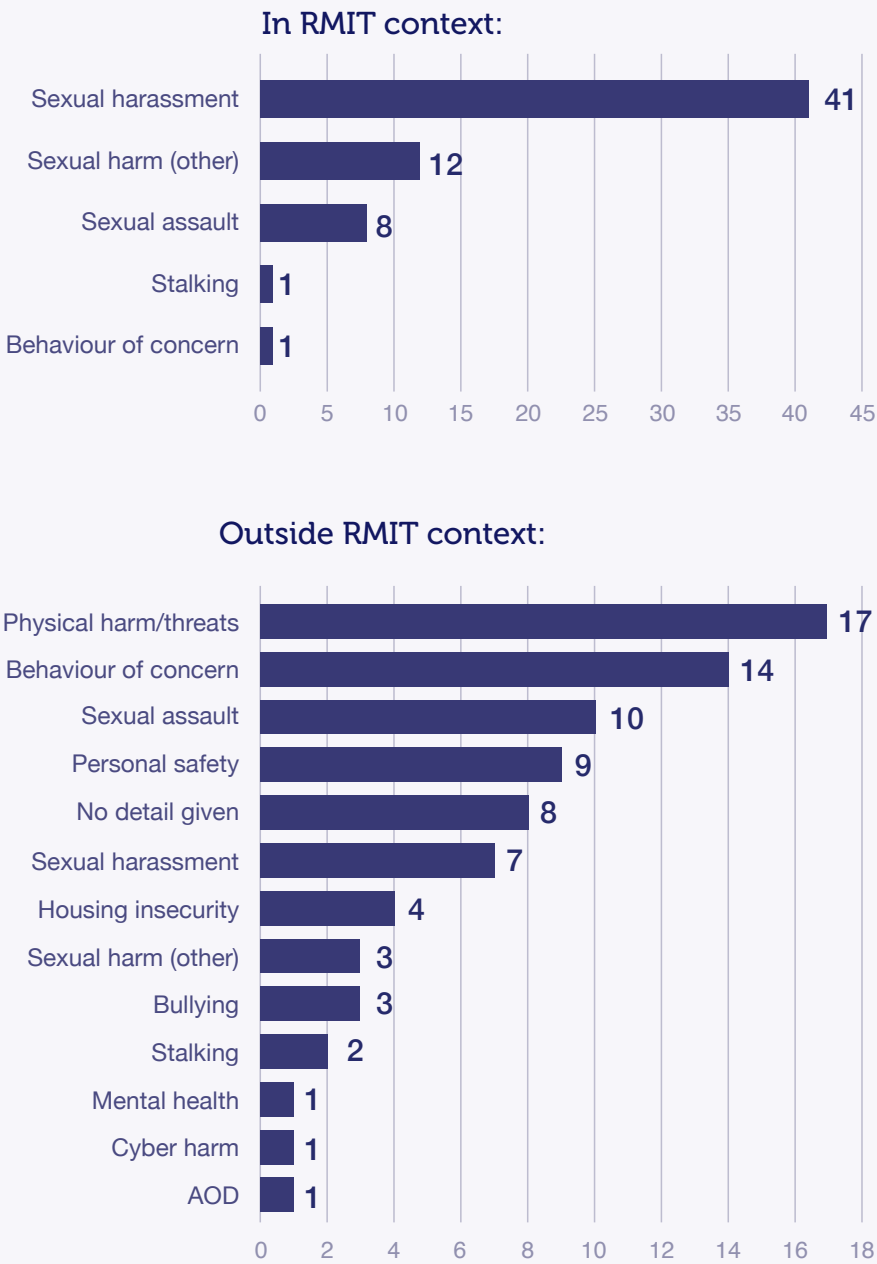
Figure 1



2.3
Students disclosures

Figure 2 shows the student disclosures, with 63 disclosures occurring within an RMIT context and 80 occurring outside of an RMIT context. Of those 143 disclosures, 18 were sexual assault, 48 were sexual harassment and 77 were other forms of gender-based violence, such as stalking.

Figure 2



Safer Community received 80 disclosures relating to family violence throughout 2024. We provided direct case management and support to 62 students and 15 staff members, as well as continuing to support multiple staff from previous referrals.

Formal reports and any disciplinary or investigation actions

Disciplinary report process

RMIT supports victim-survivors to make informed decisions about their options following an incident.

The University offers victim-survivors a range of support options following disclosure regardless of where the incident occurred. Supports available include access to wellbeing support and materials including counselling and financial grants, as well as the option to formally report an incident.

While not all victim-survivors decide to formally report an incident, those that do have the option to instigate a trauma-informed investigation.

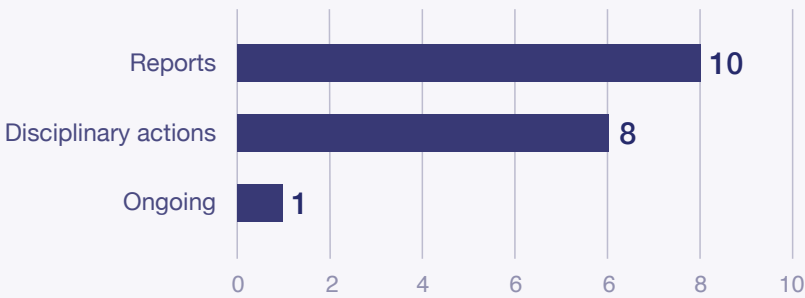
Formal reports can lead to several possible disciplinary actions, including behavioural warnings and executive suspensions for students and employment-related disciplinary actions for staff, such as formal warnings and terminations.

The integration of a specialist response to GBV into the Safer Community team has facilitated a trauma-informed, holistic approach to formal reporting and management of SASH matters. This minimises re-traumatisation and reduces process delays. This approach, combined with increased awareness, has contributed to more formal SASH investigations and increased conduct reporting in 2024, as detailed in the data report, marking a significant rise compared to previous years.

3.1 Staff conduct data

Figure 3 shows reports where staff were the perpetrators that received disciplinary action and those that did not. No disciplinary action can be the result of unsubstantiated claims and report withdrawals. One was withdrawn with a request of the discloser.

Figure 3



3.2 Student conduct data

Figure 4 shows reports where students are the perpetrators that received disciplinary actions and those that did not. One was withdrawn with a request of the discloser.

Figure 4

