

# Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Counselling Centre Sligo, Leitrim and West Cavan



## Annual Report 2014

Kempton House  
Kempton Parade  
Sligo

Tel: 071 9171188

Fax: 071 9171268

Email: [info@srcc.ie](mailto:info@srcc.ie)

Freephone Helpline: 1800 750 780

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

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## Introduction

There are adults everywhere who have experienced some form of sexual violence either as a child or adult. The unacceptability of sexual violence and the devastating effects of such traumatic experiences have long been recognised by the Rape Crisis Movement resulting in Rape Crisis Centres being set up to address both the needs of survivors of sexual violence and the causes of sexual violence in our society. The Rape Crisis Movement has its roots in feminism and believes that sexual violence is a result of the power imbalance and role differences between men, women and children within our society.

The Centre was originally established in 1996 as a local response to sexual violence within the region. Our geographical remit is essentially the regions of Sligo, Leitrim and West Cavan. Previous to its establishment the nearest Rape Crisis Centre was the Mayo Rape Crisis Centre, Castlebar Co. Mayo. The Centre is a member of the Rape Crisis Network Ireland.

## How we work

The Centre provides a safe, confidential space for survivors of child sexual abuse, rape and sexual assault where adults and young people can explore and access help with the legacy of issues resulting from their traumatic experiences. The centre provides a non-directive service where survivors are treated with respect and empowered throughout their counselling process. This process is underpinned by the belief that everyone has the inner capacity and resources to move towards change and well being. We believe that no matter what the circumstances sexual violence is never the survivor's fault, the perpetrator is always solely responsible for their actions. All our counselling and support services are also available to survivor's families and friends. This ethos is reflected in our following vision statement:

## Key Principles

Sexual violence in all its forms is an abuse of human rights and should never be accepted.

To provide a model of good practice in our centre and for our clients.

To ensure clients volunteer and staff are treated with respect and dignity.

To underpin our work with the following values: empowerment, equality, inclusiveness and mutual support.

To take a proactive approach in the area of sexual violence; providing education on the dynamics behind sexual violence, the effects upon survivors and society's reactions.

## Mission Statement

Our purpose is to create a safe place for those who have experienced sexual violence recently or in the past

We provide when required:

Counselling and emergency advocacy,

Awareness and training to support other agencies who are working with survivors

We are also committed to challenging the tolerance and very existence of sexual violence

## What we do

The response of the Centre to the issues of sexual violence is to provide the following services:

Crisis counselling

Ongoing face to face counselling

Outreach counselling

Free phone helpline

Support, advocacy and information for survivors, in particular around legal issues

Relationship counselling

Survivors support group

Counselling, support and information for supporters of survivors

Hospital, court, GP, garda accompaniment

Education, training and awareness-raising

Lobbying and influencing policy on relevant issues through the Rape Crisis Network Ireland

Networking, experience and information sharing with other relevant voluntary and statutory organisations.

## Who we are

Members of the Centre are as follows:

Gilla Cornelius

Elaine Hanson

Tina Horton

Joan Mullan

Mary Roche

Kate Duke

Ursula Devaney

Margaret Thermes

Cynthia Adubango

Suzanne Connolly

Sylvia Farkasovska

Helen Murphy

Parvez Butt

Ann Murray

### **Directors (Volunteers)**

The following members were appointed and retained as Directors at the Annual General Meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2014

Suzanne Connolly (Chair)  
Mary Roche (Secretary)  
Kate Duke  
Parvez Butt  
Sylvia Farkasovska  
Ann Murray  
Karen O'Shea  
Michael Carty

Later in the year Ann Murray and Suzanne Connolly resigned from the Board.

### **Counselling Volunteers**

Ursula Devaney  
Margaret Thermes  
Suzanne Connolly  
Cathy Ham  
Pia Luck  
Rebecca O' Connor  
Joanne Lawrie  
Rosemary McWeeney

### **Staff**

Counselling Coordinator: Gilla Cornelius  
Administrator/Counsellor: Elaine Hanson  
Co-ordinator/Counsellor: Tina Horton

### **Contracted Counsellor**

Outreach counsellor: Ursula Devaney

### **Development to date**

The Centre has developed substantially during the last 17 years both as an organisation and in terms of the services it offers. Initially funding was secured from both, the Programme for Peace and Reconciliation and the Health Service Executive. The Centre has established itself as both a limited company and registered charity and obtained rented premises in central Sligo. The centre was officially opened by Ms Mary Wallace, T.D in 1999.

Further developments have been established in terms of staff and volunteer personnel within the centre. Throughout this period we have secured paid

employment in relation to certain roles within the centre while still maintaining invaluable voluntary input.

All members have undergone the extensive Rape Crisis Network Ireland Training and many have gone on to do further counselling training. The Centre is committed to providing further training to its members in order to provide a competent, professional service. Counsellors are accredited with such bodies as the Rape Crisis Network Ireland, The Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy, The British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy. The Centre is a member of the Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy.

We have developed a four year Strategic Plan for 2012 –2016 and are committed to continuously reviewing and refining our service provision and operation.

## **Development within the year 2014**

### **Outreach Counselling**

In 2014 we continued our provision of Face to Face Outreach Counselling in Carrick-on-Shannon, County Leitrim, having secured funding from the Child and Family Agency. The service provides all the counselling and support services offered at our main centre in Sligo. At the end of 2013 we evaluated the progress of the Outreach Service so far and developed the service with the addition of 2 new voluntary counsellors as well as our paid Outreach Counsellor. This development led us to be able to advertise the service wider. During 2014 there was an increase from 8 (2013) clients to 20 clients and a 70% increase in counselling sessions provided. This represents a significant step towards providing counselling and support services throughout our catchment area of Sligo, Leitrim and West Cavan.

### **Volunteer Activity**

Volunteer involvement ranges from provision of face to face therapy, helpline cover, directorship, fundraising, awareness raising, training and education. We welcomed 5 new counselling volunteers in 2014, 2 of these volunteers work in the Carrick Outreach and 3 of the 5 have specialised training in working with children which is a very welcome addition to our skill set. In 2014 54% of face to face clients were seen by volunteers this is an increase of 26% from 2013. In January 2014 we continued with our Fundraising Volunteer Group for further information on this group's substantial achievements please see the fundraising section of this report.

### **Moving Premises**

Finally after years of searching we secured new premises. We have gone from having 2 counselling rooms to 5 which is just fantastic. Our new premises are accessible to people with disabilities and provides beautiful counselling rooms and a group work room. This move provides us with potential to grow.

### **Survivor's Group**

The survivor's support group was run twice in 2014 jan-june and sept- onwards into 2015 there were 9 participants in the first group and 7 in the second. Each time the group lasted for 10 sessions. The group had space for facilitated sharing and also exercises on topics identified by the group and designed by the facilitators. There was also a social tea break in the middle. Overall people were committed and attendance was good. Feedback was given by the participants and comments included:

*"The way there was two counsellors there at all times gave the group structure."*

*"Allowed to share as much or as little as I wanted no pressure."*

*"Feedback from group members."*

*"I am very grateful for the group."*

*"I feel that the meditation, group input and many of the activities are helpful and engage us in our recovery."*

*"Able to share fears and concerns."*

*"Being challenged a little through activities."*

*"No judgement from counsellors just acceptance."*

*"Checking things out with others".*

*"Perhaps pick a topic each meeting and spend time on it. Topic decided by counsellors."*

*"I feel that the breaks between are a bit long."*

*"I would like to see it continue for 9 mts of the year."*

*"Maybe a group that is more peer lead."*

The facilitators could see the benefit of the group to the participant's personal development and also gained a lot personally themselves from running the group. The facilitators felt that the group would benefit from the sessions being weekly rather than fortnightly in the interest of both continuity of group process and also it would be easier for participants to commit to a shorter time frame.

## **Interagency Work**

### **Rape Crisis Network, Ireland**

The Rape Crisis Network continues to act as a source of support, information, training and development to member rape crisis centres and is a medium through which we as a rape crisis centre can influence policy and lobby for change on a national level. We attended the launch of the RCNI National Statistics and the RCNI AGM.

### **Racist Incident Reporting Project by Gilla Cornelius**

In 2014 on behalf of our centre, I took part in establishing a 'Racist Incident Referral and Support Service' for Sligo.

This project was funded by 'Peace and Reconciliation' and led by Deo Ladislav Ndakengerwa together with the Sligo Family Centre as the lead agency.

We were among a number of local service providers who came together to work on procedures and provide training to front line staff to become a first point of contact for reporting racist incidents.

By the end of 2014 racist and sectarian incidents were being recorded, monitored and analysed. Through our work with asylum Seekers we have an important role in ensuring any racist incidents reported by our clients are fed into this project.

### TUSLA

2014 saw the establishment of TUSLA and various members of our team attended the initial consultative meetings with TUSLA in which the remit of TUSLA was established and proposed developments for the sexual violence sector were outlined.

During 2014 we were also represented within the Youth Mental Health Initiative and Diversity Sligo.

## Education and Awareness Raising

During 2014 we provided the following education/awareness raising inputs:

### Disclosure Workshops by Ursula Devaney

2014 saw us delivering 4 workshops on Disclosure of Sexual Violence to professionals. Each workshop had between 10-14 participants. These workshops were designed to be delivered to different support services. There were attendees from Social Services, Childcare Workers, Mental Health Services, Foroige, the Travelling Community, District Nurses, Focus Ireland and other services. Each day was 6.5 hours long and divided into information about sexual violence, statistics and what services we provide. There was time allocated for experiential work using scenarios to allow the participants the opportunity to role play both the person disclosing abuse and the service provider. There was time to allow participants to look at their own self care and how they might get support from their own organisation and from themselves in order to mind themselves. There were evaluation sheets to measure the workshop and here are some of the comments from participants;

*"This workshop should be delivered to all service providers"*

*"I found the day informative and the scenarios were valuable to me"*

*"This is a very sensitive topic and it was delivered in a way that ensured everyone's opinion was valued"*

*"This is a thought provoking workshop"*

*"I would have liked more time on self care"*

The feedback was very positive and all groups enjoyed working with other organisations.

### Foroige Training

Ursula supported Foroige in the delivery of training of trainers in the Sex and the Law modules of the Real U training to 37 participants. This is a national broad based sex and relationships education programme which we were able to contribute to in design terms and it is aimed at groups of young people in youth centres, HSE residential centres and some schools.



## 16 Days of Action Against Violence Against Women

In 2014 we teamed up with the Domestic Violence Advocacy Service to deliver our 16 Days Campaign. The theme of the campaign was to highlight both the prevalence of violence against women and how to support a women experiencing violence. We did this through window displays in empty shops located in Sligo and Leitrim emphasising 1 in 4 women experience some form of violence during their lifetime. These window displays also provided information on how to support women and the contact details of support services available.

We also had a series of newspaper articles, social media campaign and radio coverage for the campaign.

We also provided a talk to Carrigallen National School on empowerment, relationships and our services to 30 students.

## Other Awareness Raising:

Throughout 2014 the following media inputs occurred;

Newspaper adverts : Sligo Champion, Sligo Weekender, Leitrim Observer

Radio adverts on Ocean FM

Website

Face book page

Newspaper articles submitted:

TORL article

April Fundraising Day x 2

Carrick Outreach Service

16 Days x 3

Radio Interviews:

Outreach service in Carrick

## Training and Conferences

Extensive further training was sourced and undertaken by both staff and volunteers during 2013. The training and conferences undertaken by different members is as follows:

### Training

**Self Harm, Self Injury, Self Care-** Sligo RCC

**Victim Impact and legal Update training** –RCNI

**Trauma and Recovery: The Rothchild Perspective**– Sligo RCC

**Emotional Freedom Technique** – EFT Practitioner

**Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy and Play Therapy** – Children's Therapy Centre, Mullingar

**Working in the Intercultural Field** - Sligo RCC  
**Working Creatively with Clients** – Boyle Family Life Centre  
**Healing Tasks Workshop**- Mayo RCC  
**Working with Shame and Culture**- Mayo RCC  
**Mindfulness Meditation**- Learning to Exhale  
**Meditation Course**- Sligo Gestalt Counselling  
**Holotropic Breathwork** – Jean Farrell  
**Medication and its uses**-Irish Gestalt Centre  
**Gestalt Psychotherapy Diploma**- Irish Gestalt Centre  
**The Artist's Way**- Sligo Gestalt Counselling  
**Shamanic Workshop**- Jean Farrell  
**Therapy in Outdoor Setting**- Peter Devlin  
**Dream Workshop** – Paul Brady  
**Court Accompaniment** - RCNI

During 2014 we established a programme of Continued Professional Development inputs drawing on the expertise of our own members, this programme was offered to our own members and other local therapists. The feedback we received was excellent from all participants and the programme was a success both in terms of providing high quality training and being extremely cost effective.

## Conferences

Mind Your Head Conference- Youth Mental Health Services  
 Seed Project Conference- Sligo Leader Partnership  
 RCNI Launch of Young People, Alcohol and Sex: What's Consent got to do with it?  
 Rape Crisis Network Ireland AGM  
 Rape Crisis Network Ireland National Statistics Launch  
 'Violence against women: an EU wide survey.' RCNI, Safe Ireland, the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights and the National Women's Council of Ireland

## Fundraising Events

During 2014 we undertook a number of initiatives with our Fundraising Volunteer Group as follows:

Spike Sligo- bright side of life gig, april day , flag day, blue raincoat

- Our Annual Church gate collection raised €315
- Fundraising Day – This project was a day of awareness raising and fundraising involving a bucket collection, cake sale, music and street entertainment. The day was an enormous success with €918 being raised. The whole team, especially Irene Mcloughlin, Tina Horton and Ursula Devaney really put in a huge amount of effort and this was rewarded by the atmosphere they created on the day and the money they raised.
- Spike Sligo is a local group who organise comedy gigs and have very kindly given us a percentage of their profits for each gig. This particular gig was called 'The Bright Side of Life' and featured local musicians and comedians in 5th on Teeling. It was a great night and raised €310.

- Our annual Flag Day was held in October and this year raised the substantial amount of €1752 many thanks to Deirdre O'Rourke who put in a huge amount of effort into the day.
- We were extremely lucky to get to collect at Sligo Live 2014: Ireland's folk, Roots and Indie Festival, we raised €1,709 it was great fun and we even got to sneak a peek at the some of the acts!
- Our CPD workshop programme raised €450 well done to Gilla who took the lead on organising this.
- We also received just over €1455 in donations through our donation boxes in the counselling rooms and private donations.

We would like to thank all the organisations and individuals who kindly contributed to our fundraising efforts in 2014 all their hard work made each event a great success. Finally a big thank you to all who support us through attending our fundraising events, the support of our community is invaluable.

### **Applications for Funding 2014**

Applications for funding were made to the following organisations during the year 2014:

TUSLA received €160,222

COSC received €2000

Lottery Funds received €2000

ETB €1205

### **Evaluation 2014**

During 2014 the Board continued a process of self appraisal around their role, responsibilities and effectiveness including training around The Governance Code. We are working towards signing up to the Governance Code and have made significant progress in terms of Board Code of Conduct, Risk Assessment, Financial Reporting and Health and Safety and have identified employment as a key issue for 2015. We are also beginning the process of signing up to the Charity Regulatory Authority which will bring welcome developments in accountability and governance to the charity sector.

### **Future Development**

The Centre intends to engage to a greater degree with the wider community via the implementation of a comprehensive public awareness and training campaign. This work was continued in 2014 through the delivery of the disclosure workshops and it is hoped this progress will be continued. The main barrier to this initiative continues to be the lack of resources available to the centre and so our Strategic Plan 2012-16 focusses on creative ways we can build on opportunities for awareness raising in partnership with other agencies. In particular the centre would like to build stronger links through the media and social media to raise our profile.

In terms of administrative back up both the Co-ordinator and Administrator positions need to be increased to full-time in line with the demands of the workload.

We hope to further develop our Outreach Counselling Service and to secure consistent core funding as a matter of priority.

Developing our services for young people features in our Strategic Plan we have made a good start with the Addressing the Needs of Young People Report and the Teen Health Initiative Foróige Training. We hope to build on links with other services working with young people and be instrumental in the development of new services for young people in the Sligo/Leitrim region.

The free phone help line is still only open for 1 ½ hours in the morning Monday to Friday it is reasonable to assume that a phone line so limited in its operational time does not suit many potential clients. Consequently we require further resources to increase volunteer and paid staff cover in order to extend the phone line opening hours.

Fundraising is playing an increasingly important part in our financial picture; further developing a Fundraising Strategy which incorporates all of our catchment area is a priority for the foreseeable future.

## Statistical Information 2014

The information in this report is compiled using the RCNI Database. The RCNI Database equips RCCs to extract data regarding use of their own local service and simultaneously equips RCNI to deliver comparable national data.

### Face to Face Client Information (survivor and supporter)

The following figures refer to information about the survivors and supporters who use our face to face counselling and support services.

Figure 1.1 The percentage of Supporters has decreased from 23% to 16% in 2014

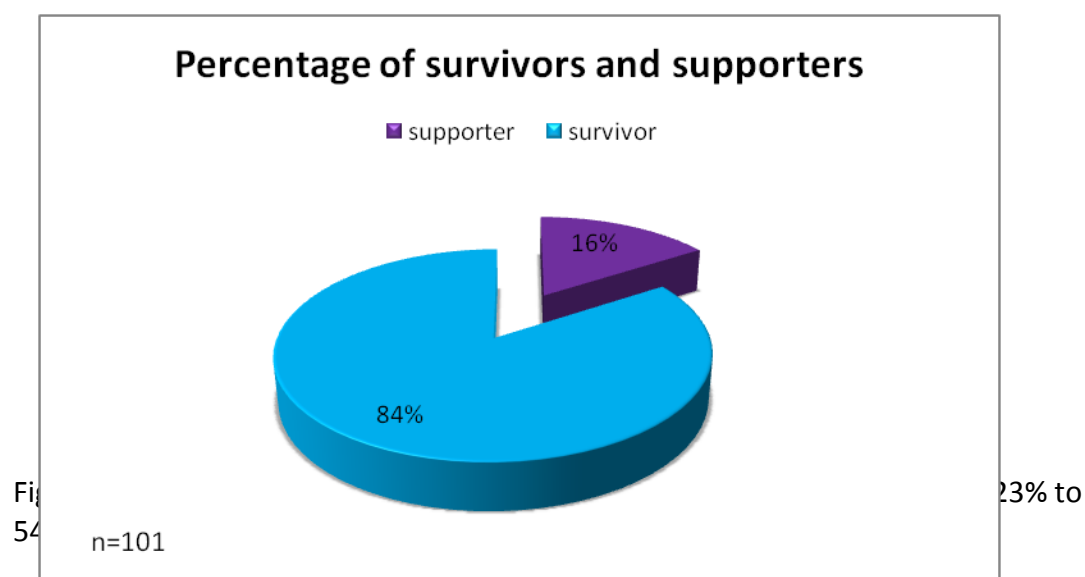
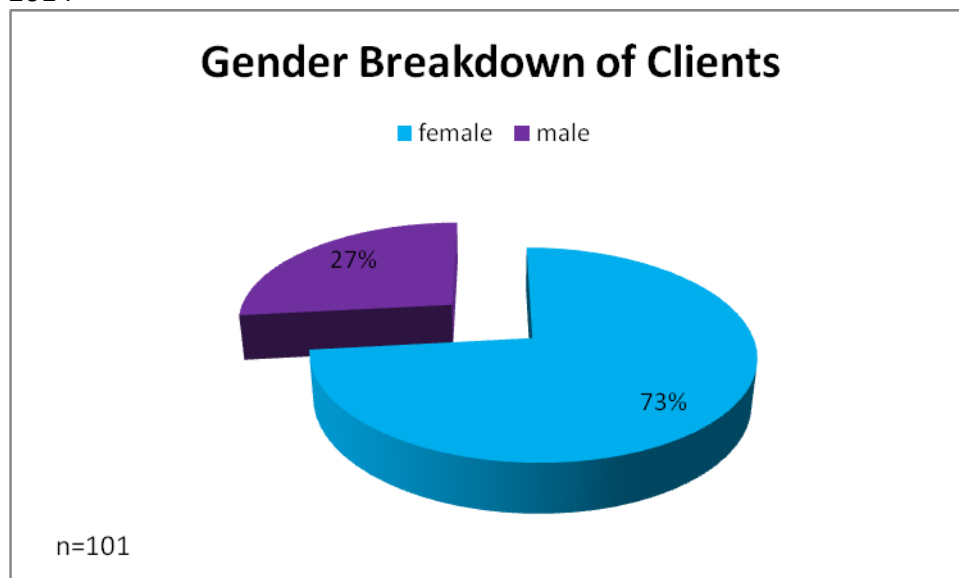




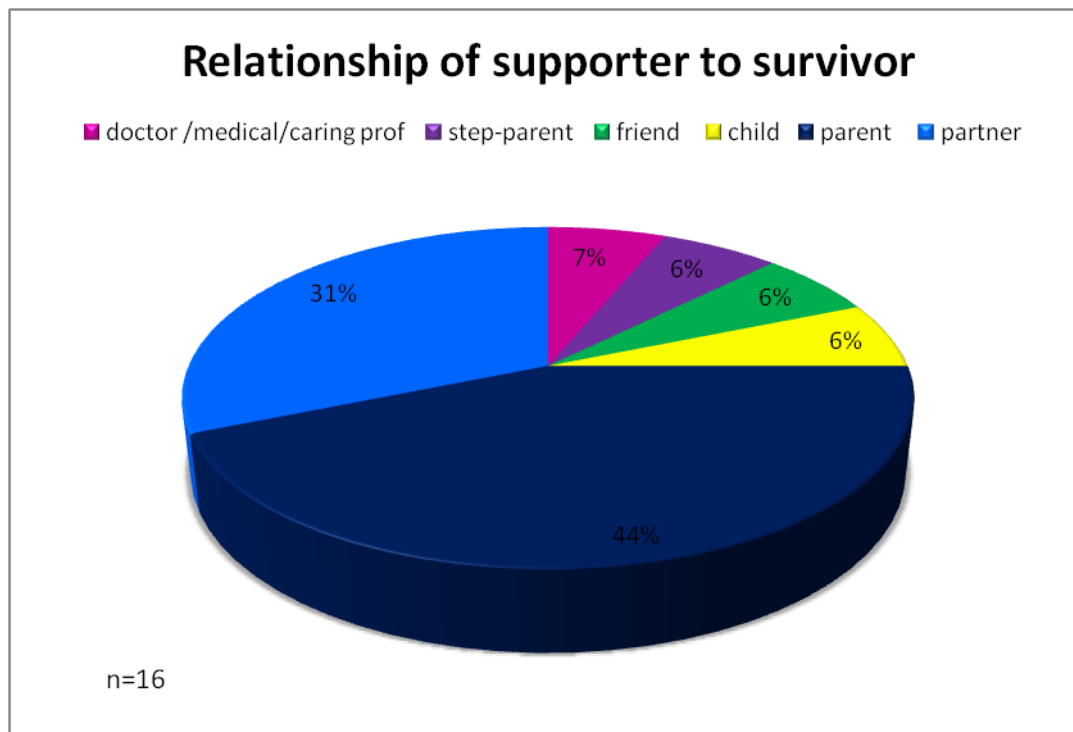
Figure 1.3 There has been a 3% increase in the number of men using our service in 2014



## Supporter Information

The following statistics refer to supporters only

Figure 2.1 Shows that the vast majority of supporters are parents or partners of survivors.



## Survivor Information

The following figures provide demographic information on the survivors accessing our face to face Services

Figure 3.1 The main difference in 2014 is that the percentage of Asylum Seekers availing of our service continues to fall. This is not surprising given that the services that were in place for Asylum Seekers which used to refer to us have been cut.

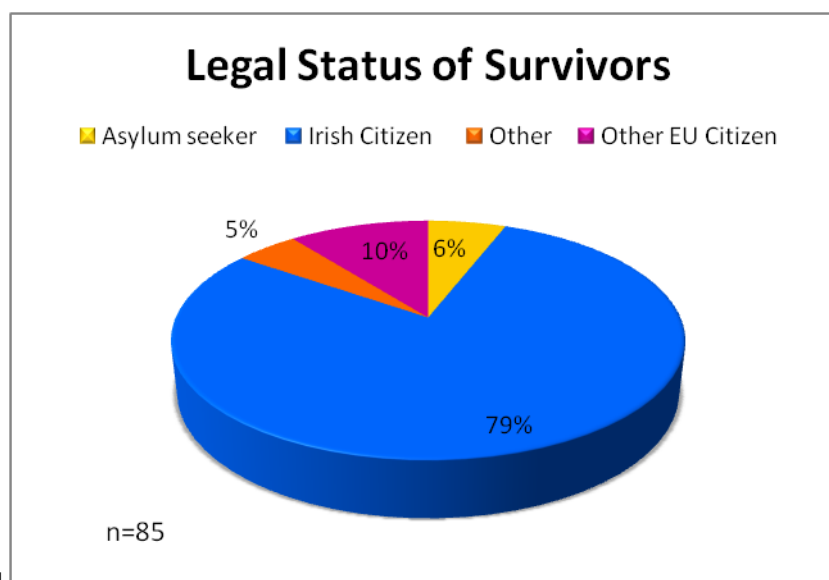


Figure 3.2 The main difference is the number of clients from African countries has continued to fall in 2014. This is not surprising given that the services that were in place for Asylum Seekers which used to refer to us have been cut.

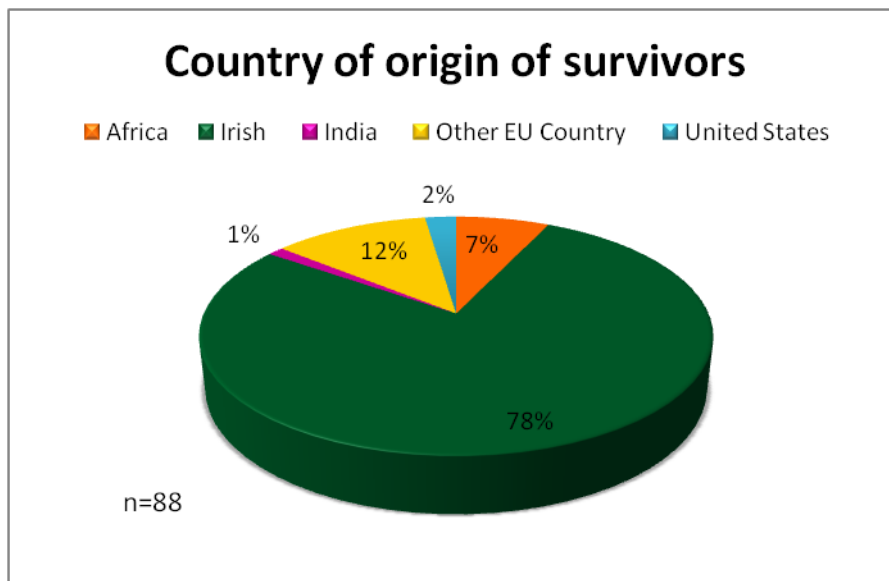


Figure 3.3 In 2014 26% of our clients were under 24.

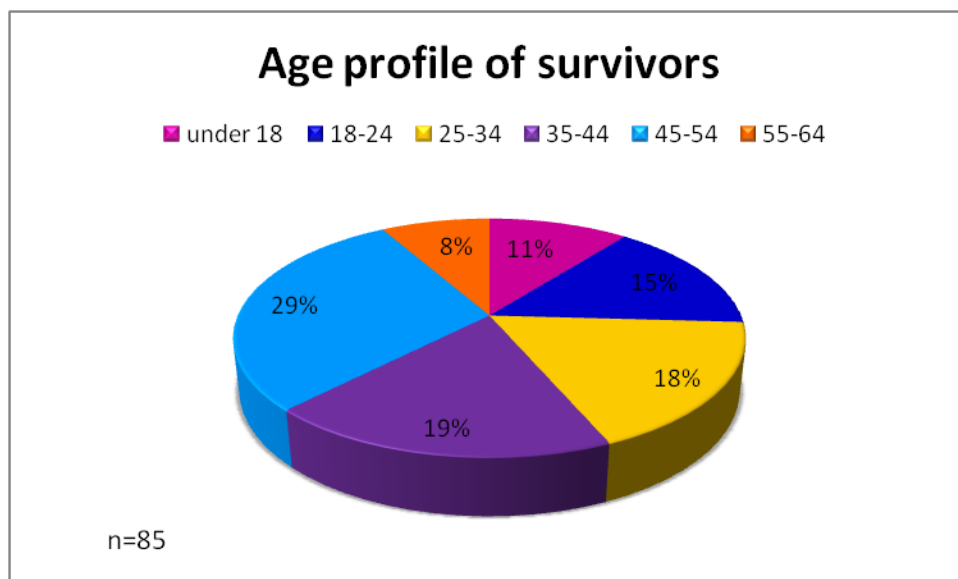


Figure 3.4 There was no substantial change in figures for 2014

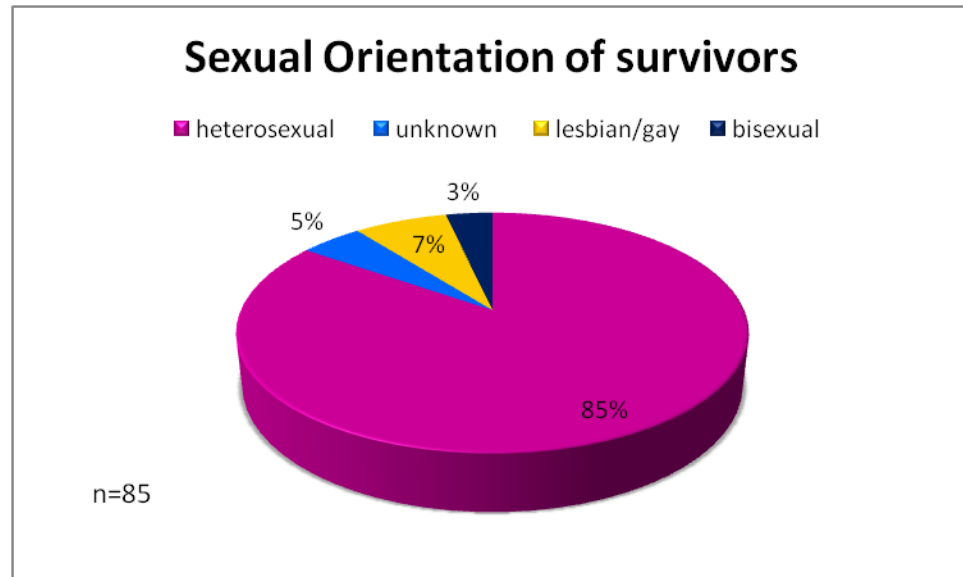


Figure 3.5 There was no substantial change in figures for 2014

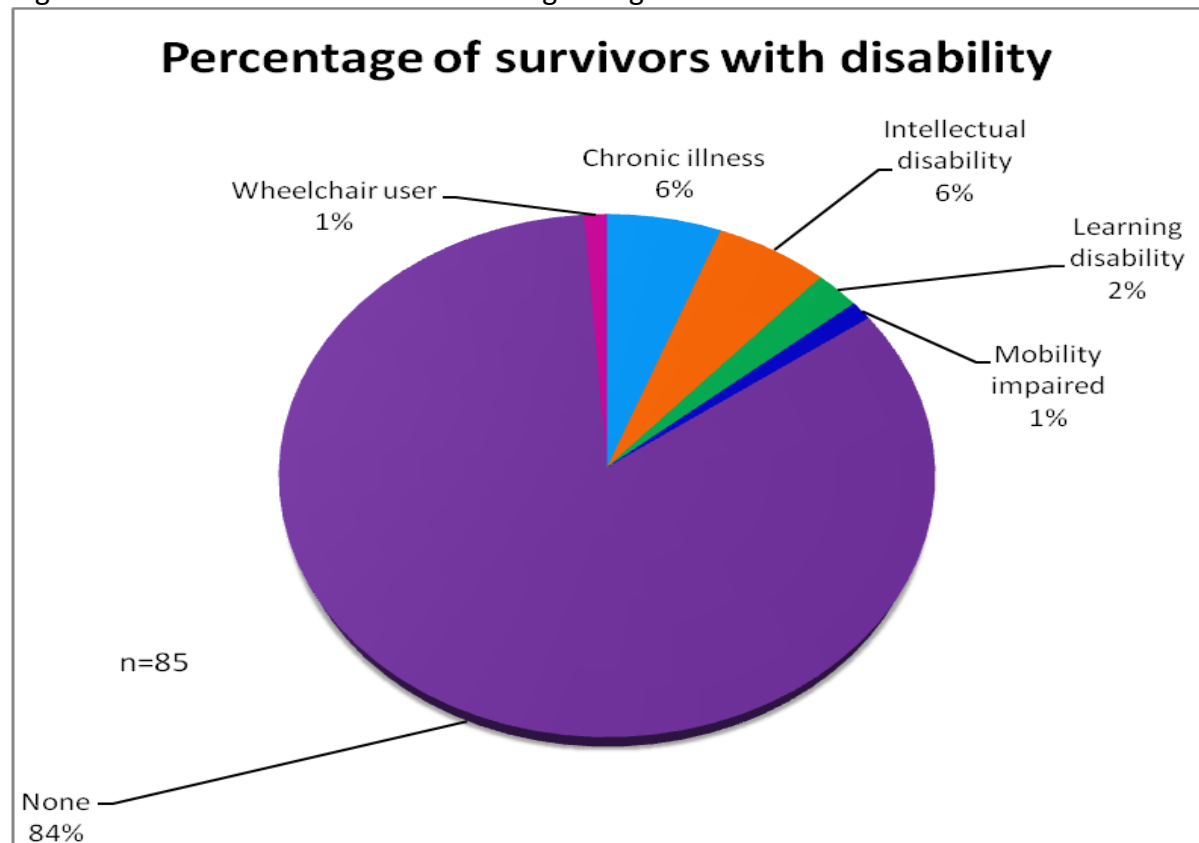




Figure 3.6 There was a 7% increase in the number of clients from Leitrim in 2014 due to the further development of our Outreach Service

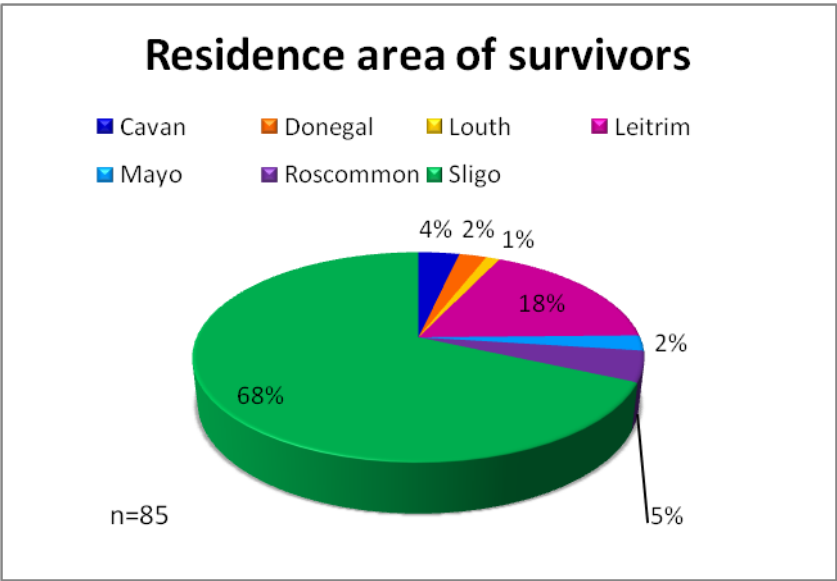
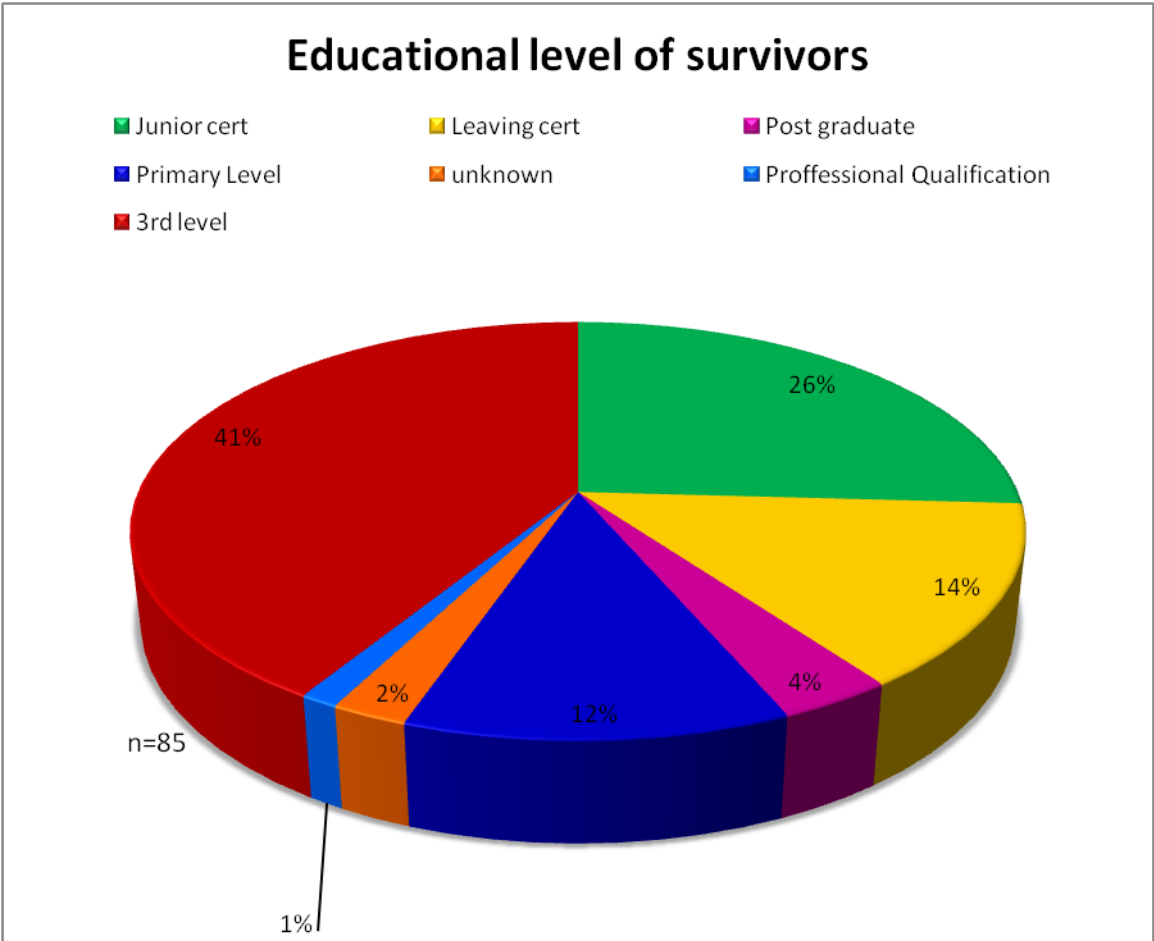


Figure 3.7 Figures 3.7 and 3.8 show that a wide cross section of our community uses our services from all educational and social economic backgrounds



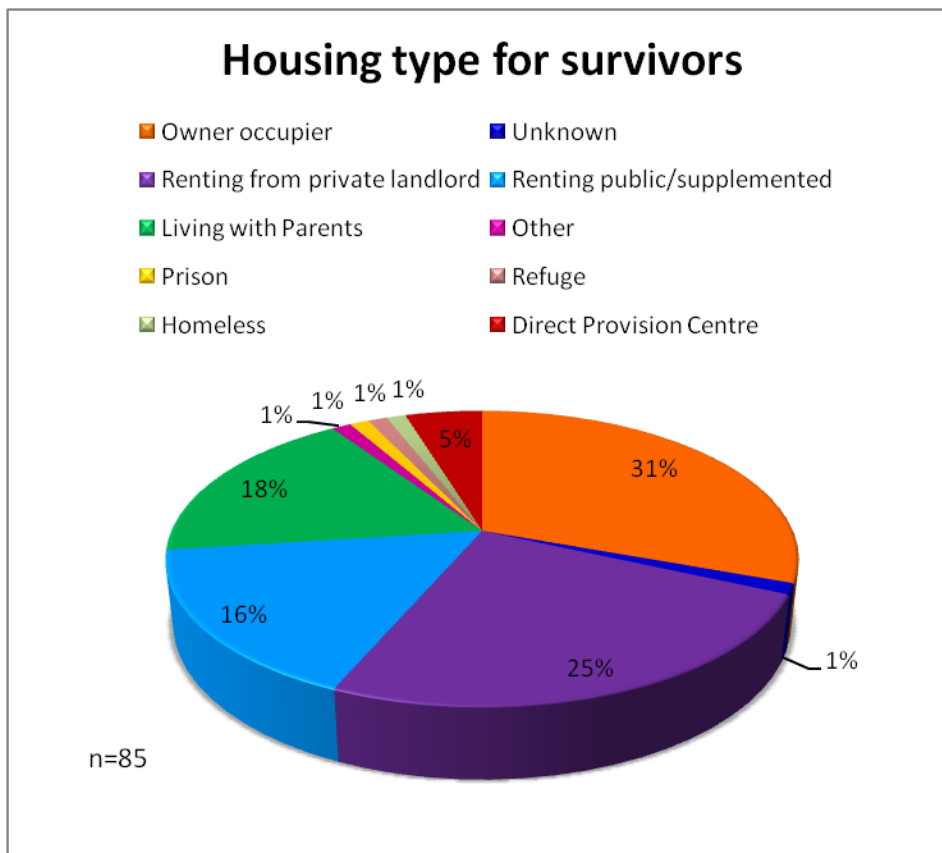


Figure 3.8

Fig 3.9 The percentage of unreported crimes of sexual violence increased slightly from 50% to 53% in 2014. Over all the percentage of our clients that report to the Gardai (18%) is higher than that of the general population which has a reporting rate of 10% (Sexual Violence in Ireland, 2002). Evidently the vast majority of sexual crime is not reported or not taken forward to trial and this is a situation rape crisis centres want to see changed by calling for legislative reform that makes the whole legal process an easier, quicker, more supportive and informed experience for complainants of sexual crime

### Percentage of survivors reporting to authorities



n=85

## Sexual Violence Information

The following figures refer to the type of sexual violence experienced by the survivors availing of our face to face counselling and support services

Figure 4.1 In 2014 73% of our clients had experienced child sexual abuse.

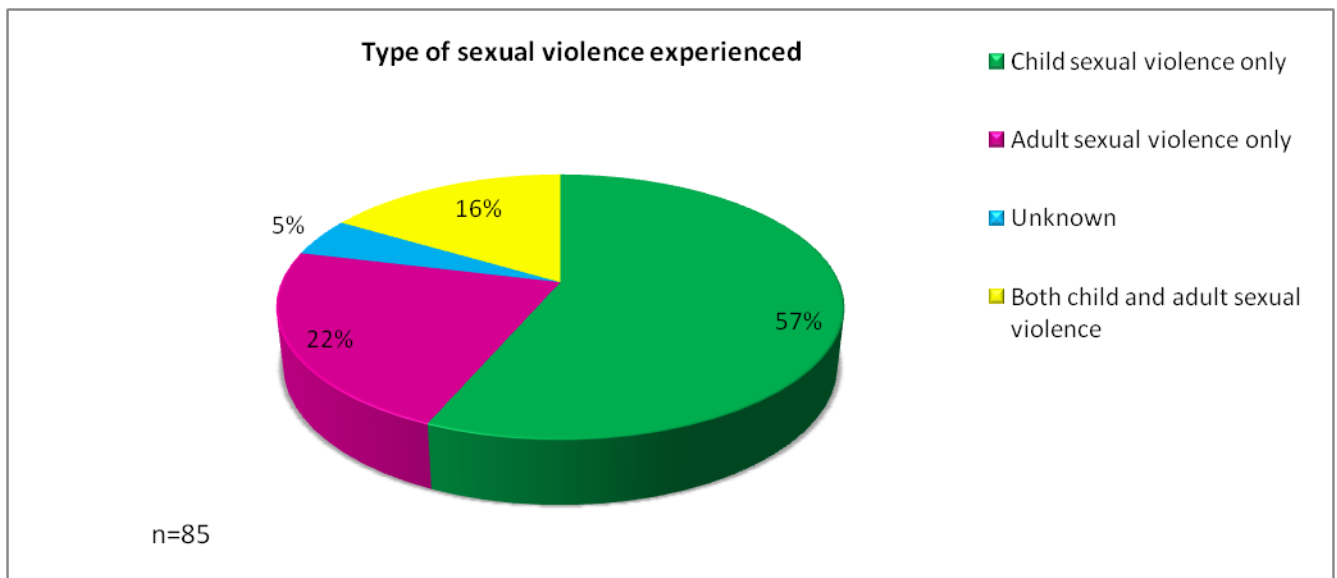


Figure 4.2 The percentage of survivors experiencing more than one form of violence increased by 8% in 2014

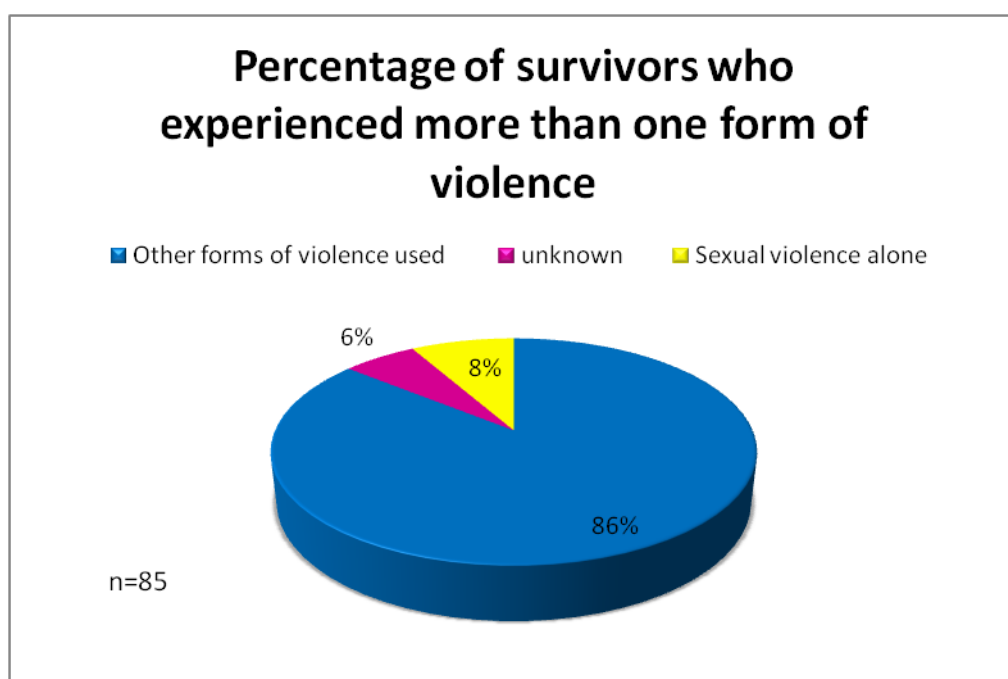
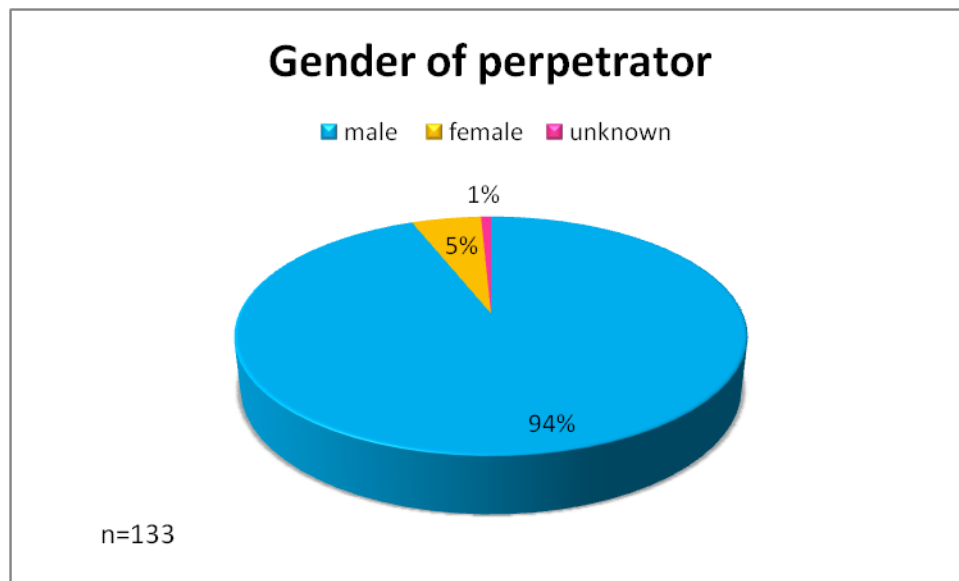


Figure 4.3 The % of female perpetrators has increased from 1 to 5% in 2014



### Service Information

The following figures refer to service statistics relating to how clients come to our face to face service, the types of services clients are using and the uptake of services in comparison with other years

Fig 5.1 There has been a slight decrease in the number of face to face clients in 2014

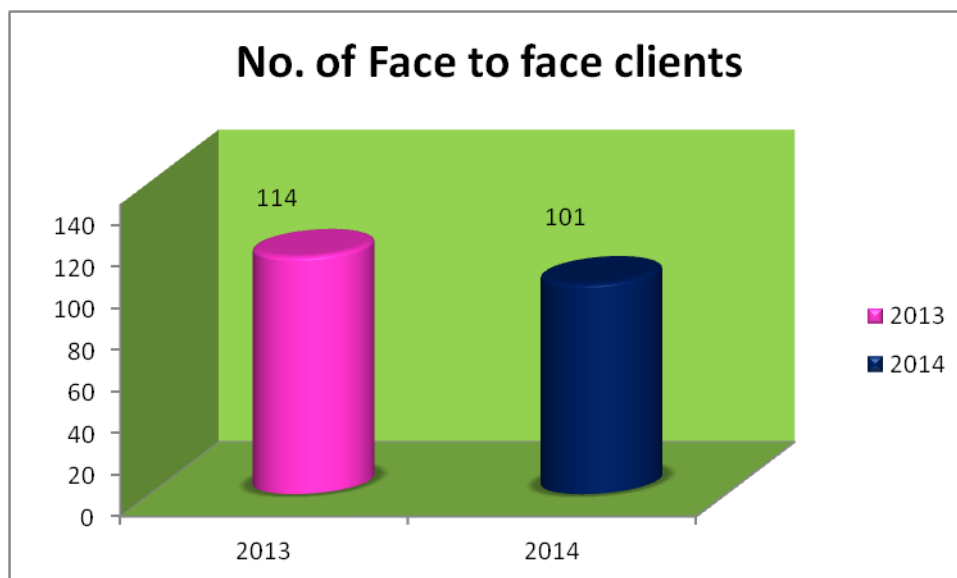
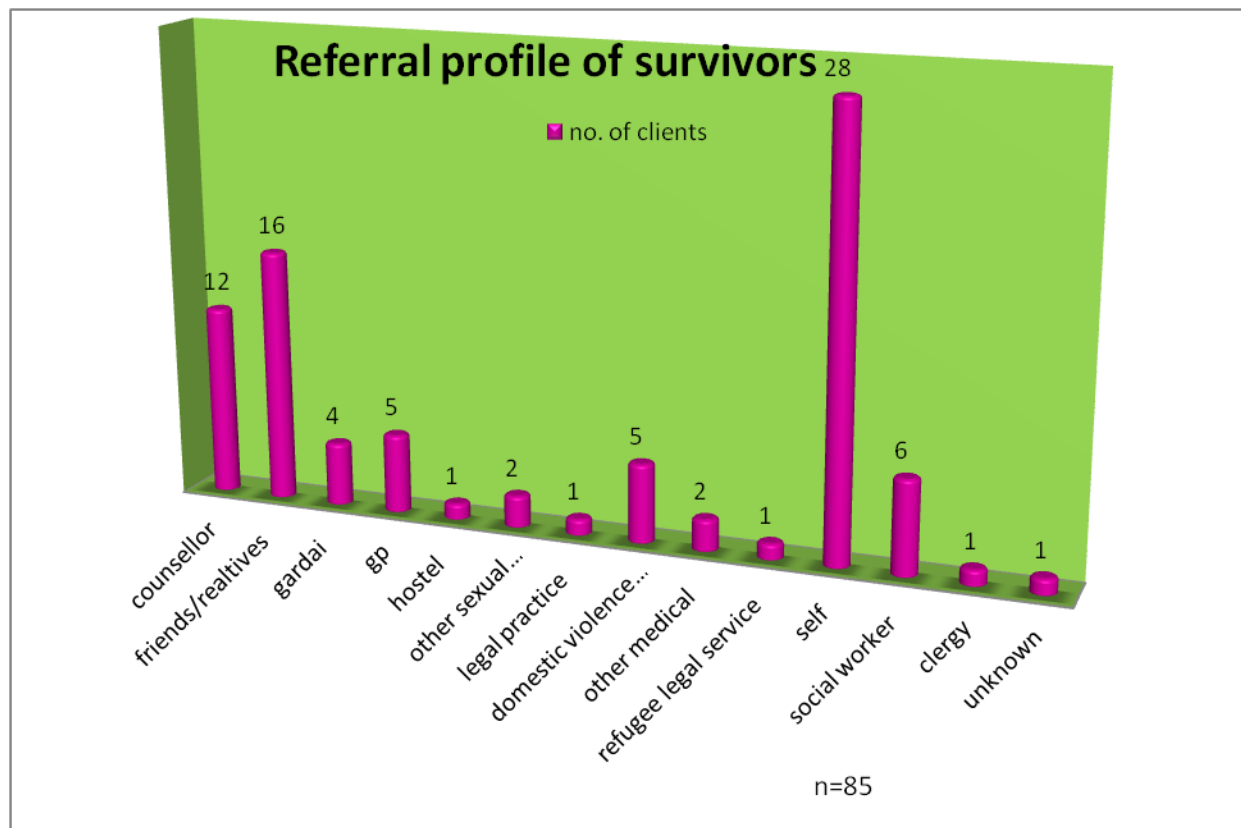


Figure 5.2 The referral pattern has remained similar over the last number of years with the vast majority of referrals being self and from friends and relatives.



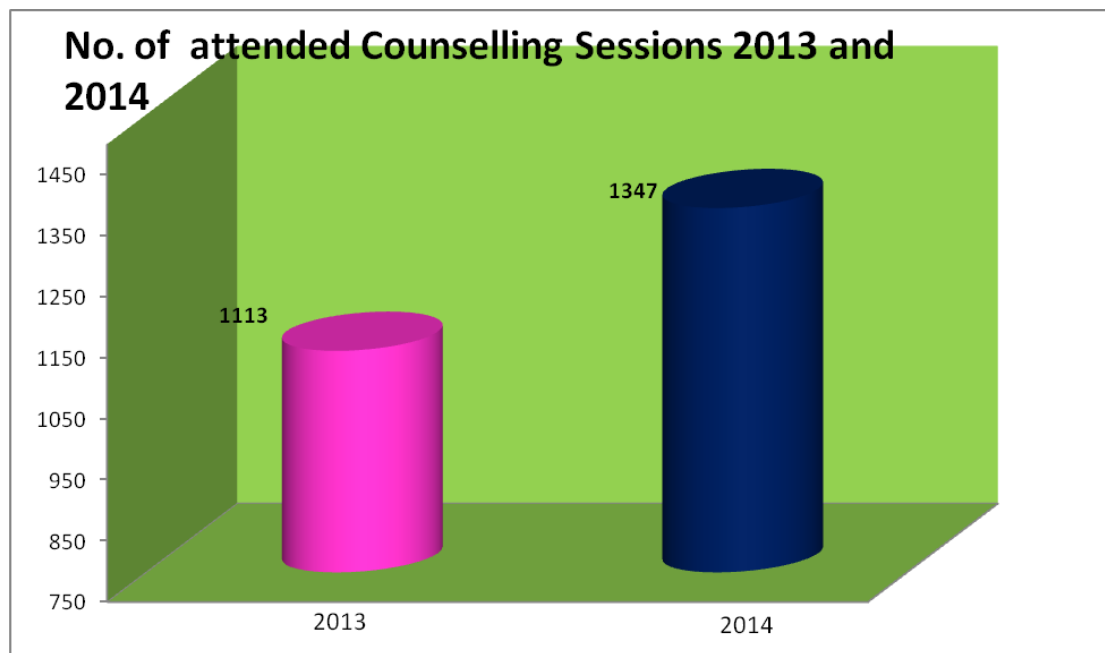


Figure 5.3 The number of counselling sessions attended in 2014 has increased by 21% in 2014

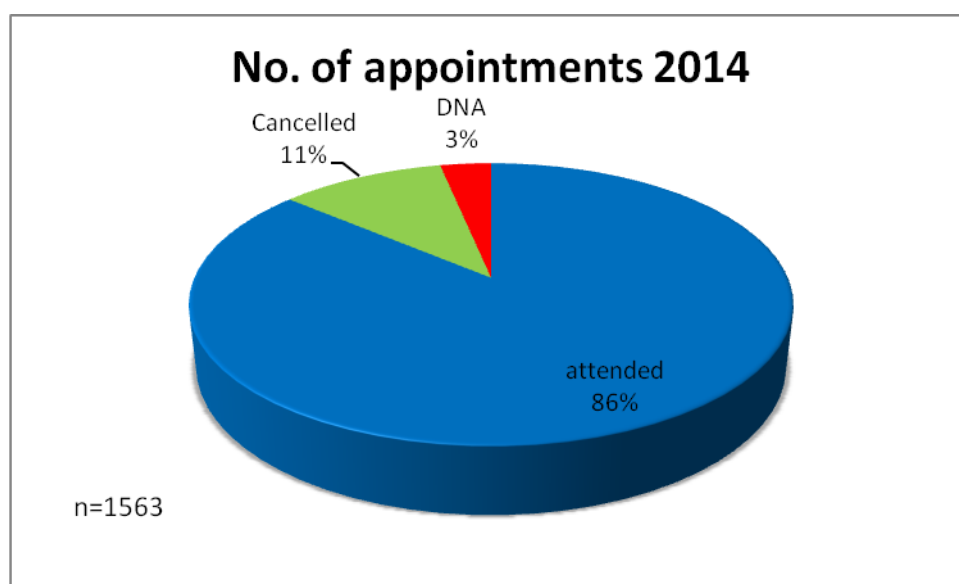
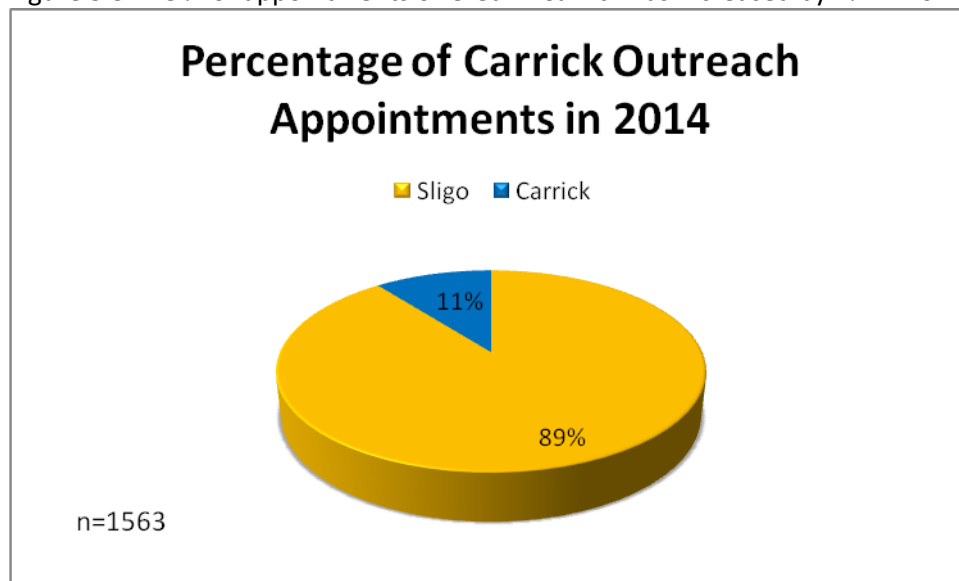


Figure 5.4 The Percentage of attended appointments remains similar to previous years

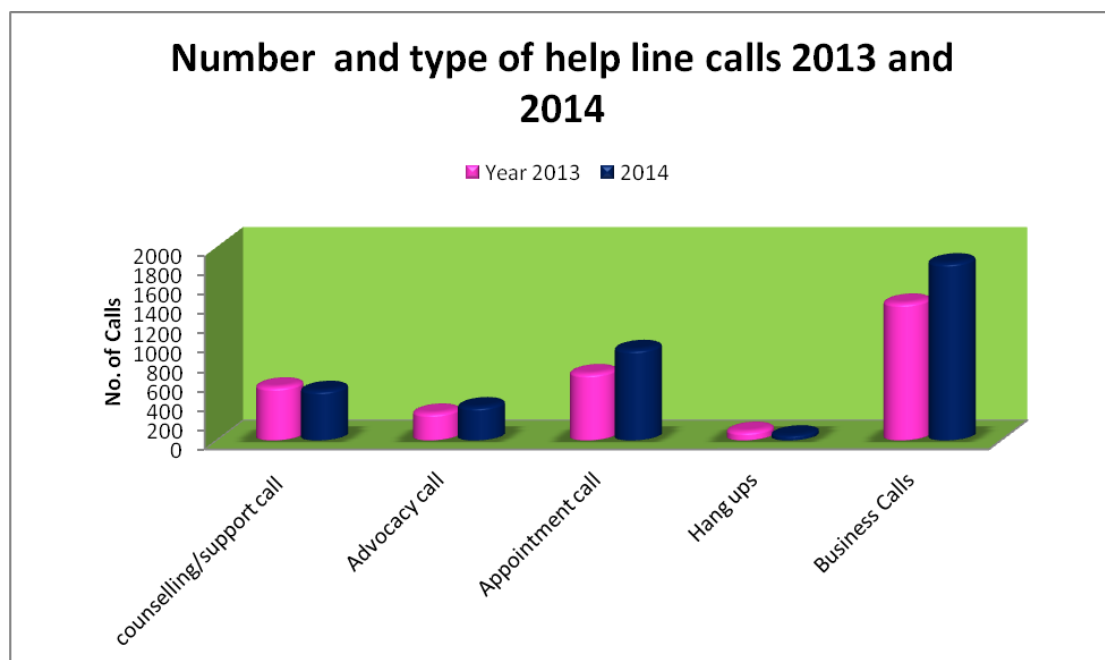
Figure 5.5 The % of appointments offered in Carrick has increased by 4% in 2014



### Free phone Helpline Information

The following figures refer to our free phone helpline counselling service

Fig 6.1 The number of counselling/support calls have decreased and the number of appointment and advocacy calls have increased.





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