



March 2020

Safe Cities London

Scoping Study

anova

a future without violence.

Trigger Warning

This report examines the realities of violence against women and girls and includes detailed descriptions of violence experienced in our community. This subject matter may create feelings of discomfort and may be triggering to survivors of sexual assault or violence.

Please be advised that some descriptions of violence against women and girls contained in this report include potentially disturbing language that may not be appropriate for all audiences.

It is important to practice self-care when engaging with this material. If you or someone you know requires support or information relating to violence, please call Anova's 24/7 crisis and support line at 519-642-3000.

Disclaimer

We recognize the importance and value of the stories that women and girls have shared in this report. In accordance with the City of London Procedure By-law, some words have been redacted from this report.

For anyone who wishes to obtain an unedited copy of the report, please visit [Anova's website](#).



Acknowledgements

Land Acknowledgement

Safe Cities London acknowledges the Indigenous peoples on whose traditional territory we gather and work. They include: the Anishinaabeg Peoples who include the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Pottawatami Nations; the Haudenosaunee Peoples who include the Mohawk, Oneida, Cayuga, Onondaga, Seneca, and Tuscarora Nations; and the Lunaapeewak Peoples, also referred to as the Delaware or Munsee.

We also recognize the three First Nations communities neighbouring the City of London.

- Chippewas of the Thames First Nation;
- Oneida Nation of the Thames; and,
- Munsee-Delaware Nation.

There are many long standing treaty relationships between Indigenous Nations and Canada. We recognize that all levels of government in Canada have a responsibility to honour these nation-to-nation relationships and that individually, we all have a role to play in honouring the treaties and contributing to reconciliation.

Gratitude

We are grateful to the Community Advisory Committee for their support and guidance in the development of this report. Thank you to the Research Sub-Committee for their work in establishing the methodological approaches of the study, providing assistance with data collection and analysis, and supporting the development of this report.

To the City of London, thank you for your support of the Safe Cities London scoping study.

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Section 1.0

Introduction

1.1 United Nations Women Safe Cities Initiative

Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces (Safe Cities) is a worldwide United Nations Women initiative that draws attention to the issue of violence against women and girls in public spaces, such as the workplace, a school, a restaurant or bar, while using public transportation or recreational spaces, or in a park. In 2013, sexual violence against women and girls in public spaces was identified as an area of concern by the United Nations Commission for the Status of Women, who called on governments around the world to prevent violence against women and girls.¹ The goal of the Safe Cities initiative is to empower women and girls and create safer communities by identifying strategies for preventing and responding to violence.

1.2 Safe Cities London

Anova and the Mayor's Office embarked on undertaking a Safe Cities initiative in early 2017 and gained unanimous endorsement from London City Council. In September 2017, London became the third Canadian city to join the United Nations Safe Cities initiative, along with Winnipeg and Edmonton.

As part of the Safe Cities initiative, London committed to:

1. Completing a scoping study of the incidence (where, what, who, when) of sexual violence in public spaces in London; and
2. Using the data that emerges from the scoping study to determine locally relevant actions to prevent and better respond to sexual violence and harassment in public spaces in London.

In March 2018, London City Council allotted financial resources for the scoping study. Further, a Community Advisory Committee and Research Sub-Committee were created to guide the scoping study, including the development of the data collection methods and priority areas for inquiry, data analysis, and preparation of a results report about the local experiences of sexual violence and harassment in public spaces among women and girls.

¹ UN Women. (2019). Flagship Programme Brief. Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/creating-safe-public-spaces>



The Community Advisory Committee was comprised of members from the following organizations and communities:

Joanna Bedggood, King's University College
Sharon Bernards, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
Lesley Bikos, Women & Politics
Cat Dunne, University Students' Council of Western
Rick Ezekiel, Western University
Kathy Furlong, London District Catholic School Board
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Tracey Stub, YMCA of Southwestern Ontario
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Dr. Samantha Wells, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
Rosanna Wilcox, City of London
Chief Steve Williams, London Police Service
Megan Wilson-Cornwell, Community Volunteer

1.3 Purpose of the Scoping Study

United Nations Women states that, "Although violence in the private domain is now widely recognized as a human rights violation, violence against women and girls, especially sexual harassment in public spaces, remains a largely neglected issue, with few laws or policies in place to prevent and address it."² Further, when women and girls feel unsafe in these spaces, it can limit their ability to navigate, enjoy, and actively participate in public life. For these reasons, the Safe Cities initiative focused on public spaces, such as parks, streets, public transit, community centres, etc.

² UN Women. (n.d.). Creating Safe Public Spaces. <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/creating-safe-public-spaces>



The Safe Cities London scoping study sought to better understand the local context related to targeted acts of violence experienced by women and girls, including sexual violence in public spaces, as well as factors that influence the perceptions of safety for women and girls. The scoping study also explored the unique experiences of Indigenous women and girls, newcomer women and girls, women and girls with disabilities, and members of the LGBTQ2+ community in relation to incidents of violence and factors that promote or reduce safety in public spaces.

1.4 Purpose of the Report

This report provides a summary of the results from the Safe Cities London scoping study that was conducted between July 1, 2018 and December 31, 2018, including results from the participative mapping tool and focus groups. Further, this report provides recommendations for next steps for the Safe Cities London initiative.

The results presented in this report will be used to inform decision-making regarding strategies for preventing and responding to violence against women and girls in public spaces, as well as approaches for promoting safety in the community.

1.5 Scope of the Report

The Safe Cities initiative focuses on empowering and creating safer spaces for women and girls, as outlined by the United Nations Women mandate. Therefore, this report focuses on the experiences of self-identified women and girls as they relate to incidents of violence and harassment in public spaces, as well as factors women and girls reported affected their sense of safety.

While it is important to recognize and acknowledge that anyone can experience sexual violence, including men and boys, experiences of violence among men and boys is outside the scope of the study and therefore will not be addressed in this report.

Further, while recent Canadian findings suggest that Internet-based harassment, specifically cyber-stalking, affects 2.5 million Canadians, with more women reporting these experiences than men, the focus of the scoping study was on identifying incidents of violence in public spaces.³ Therefore, this report does not address experiences of violence in cyber spaces.

³ Burlock, A., & Hudon, T. Statistics Canada. (2018). Women and Men Who Experienced Cyberstalking in Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2018001/article/54973-eng.htm>

Human trafficking is another form of violence that largely affects women and girls, with an estimated 70% of reported cases of human trafficking in Ontario being for the purpose of sexual exploitation.⁴ In 2017, the Human Trafficking Unit created by the London Police Service conducted 184 investigations, facilitated the escape of 15 victims, and laid 16 human trafficking charges.⁵ While human trafficking is an important issue being addressed in London, it is outside the scope of this report.

⁴ London Police Service. (2017). Human Trafficking. <https://www.londonpolice.ca/en/crime-prevention/human-trafficking.aspx>

⁵ London Police Service. (2017). Human Trafficking. <https://www.londonpolice.ca/en/crime-prevention/human-trafficking.aspx>



Section 2.0

Setting the Context

2.1 Gender-Based Violence

Gender refers to culturally defined identities and roles associated with males/masculinity and females/femininity and is not necessarily linked to biological sex.⁶ Gender-based violence is violence committed against another person based on their gender identity, gender expression, or perceived gender.⁷ Gender-based violence takes many forms, including unwanted sexual behaviour, sexual assault, physical assault, and words, actions, or attempts to degrade, control, humiliate, intimidate, coerce, deprive, threaten, or harm another person.^{8,9}

In Canada, women and girls are disproportionately impacted by gender-based violence.¹⁰ As gender is a common determinant for increased risk of experiencing violence, particularly sexual violence, it is important to look at all incidents of reported violence using a gendered lens, including those discussed in this report.

It is also important to consider the intersection of gender with other inequalities and oppressions (e.g., sexuality, gender identity, ethnicity, indigeneity, immigration status, disability, etc.) to understand the context of violence against women and girls. An intersectional approach recognizes that all oppressions exist simultaneously and create unique experiences of violence for women and girls.¹¹

⁶ Status of Women Canada. (2018). Glossary. <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/violence/knowledge-connaissance/fs-fi-6-en.html>

⁷ Status of Women Canada. (2018). About Gender-Based Violence. <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/violence/knowledge-connaissance/about-apropos-en.html>

⁸ Cotter, A., & Savage, L. Statistics Canada. (2019). Gender-Based Violence and Unwanted Sexual Behaviour in Canada, 2018: Initial Findings From the Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/85-002-x/2019001/article/00017-eng.pdf?st=vPlcTTpf>

⁹ Status of Women Canada. (2018). About Gender-Based Violence. <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/violence/knowledge-connaissance/about-apropos-en.html>

¹⁰ Status of Women Canada. (2018). About Gender-Based Violence. <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/violence/knowledge-connaissance/about-apropos-en.html>

¹¹ Imkaan. (2019). The Value of Intersectionality in Understanding Violence Against Women and Girls. <https://www2.unwomen.org/->

[/media/field%20office%20eca/attachments/publications/2019/10/the%20value%20of%20intersectionality%20in%20understanding%20violence%20against%20women%20and%20girls.pdf?la=en&vs=3339](https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20eca/attachments/publications/2019/10/the%20value%20of%20intersectionality%20in%20understanding%20violence%20against%20women%20and%20girls.pdf?la=en&vs=3339)



2.2 Reported Forms of Violence

Through the analysis of the reported incidents and experiences of scoping study participants, two main forms of violence against women and girls were commonly identified, specifically sexual violence and violence that is non-sexual.

A description of each form of violence, as informed by participants' responses, is outlined below.

Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is an umbrella term that refers to any form of sexualized behaviour that is conducted without consent and may cause physical, psychological, or emotional harm. Sexual violence includes sexual acts or attempts to obtain a sexual act using violence, coercion, or force, unwanted sexual comments, advances, or touching, and acts of violence or harassment directed against an individual because of their sexuality.¹² Sexual assault, rape, and sexual harassment are all considered to be forms of sexual violence.¹³ Other examples of sexual violence include stalking, public indecency, and street-based harassment (commonly referred to as “catcalling”) where a person or a group of people make sexual comments, gestures, threats, or sexual advances.

Participants of the scoping study reported experiencing various forms of sexual violence, including sexual violence that was physical and non-physical in nature. For more information about the experiences of sexual violence reported by women and girls in London, please see [pages 21-24](#).

Violence That Is Non-Sexual

In the context of this report, violence that is non-sexual refers to a wide range of unsolicited behaviours that are not sexual in nature, conducted without consent, and done with the intent to harm another person, either physically, psychologically, or emotionally. Violence that is non-sexual includes physical harassment and aggression, such as pushing or shoving, hitting, punching, or kicking, throwing objects at someone, or holding someone down or physically restraining them, and non-physical harassment, such as threats, bullying, making offensive or humiliating comments or gestures, or following or repeatedly contacting a person when they don't want contact.

¹² Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. Government of Ontario. (2019). Let's Stop Sexual Harassment and Violence. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/lets-stop-sexual-harassment-and-violence#section-0>

¹³ In this report, sexual assault refers to an unwanted sexual act, while sexual harassment refers to sexual comments, threats, jokes, or discriminatory remarks about someone's gender.



Further, in this report, criminal violence has been included as a type of violence that is non-sexual and refers to crimes committed against another person and that involve the use or threatened use of violence.¹⁴

To read more detailed descriptions of incidents of violence experienced and reported by participants of the scoping study that were non-sexual, please see **pages 24-26**.

2.3 National Trends

Statistics Canada and the Research and Statistics Division of the Department of Justice regularly collect self-reported and police-reported data on criminal violence, including sexual violence, across the country.

According to the most recent General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization, Canadians self-reported 640,000 sexual assaults in 2014.¹⁵ Further, sexual assault represented the third most frequently reported violent crime in 2014, following physical assault and theft of household property.¹⁶ The GSS on Victimization also showed that between 2004 and 2014, while the rates of all other types of violent crime measured by the survey were declining, the rate of self-reported sexual assault remained the same.¹⁷

Sexual assault and harassment are forms of gender-based violence, meaning violence that is committed against someone based on their gender identity, gender expression, or the perceived gender of another person.¹⁸ Although people of all genders, sexual orientations, and ethnic backgrounds experience violence, research demonstrates that certain populations in Canada are at greater risk for experiencing gender-based violence, including women and girls, Indigenous women and girls, women and girls with disabilities, newcomer women and girls, and individuals who identify as LGBTQ2+.¹⁹

¹⁴ Moreau, G. Statistics Canada. (2019). Police-Reported Crime Statistics in Canada, 2018. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/85-002-x/2019001/article/00013-eng.pdf?st=tw9rGUN>

¹⁵ Perreault, S. Statistics Canada. (2015). Criminal Victimization in Canada, 2014. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2015001/article/14241-eng.htm>

¹⁶ Perreault, S. Statistics Canada. (2015). Criminal Victimization in Canada, 2014. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2015001/article/14241-eng.htm>

¹⁷ Conroy, S., & Cotter, A. Statistics Canada. (2017). Self-Reported Sexual Assault in Canada, 2014. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2017001/article/14842-eng.htm>

¹⁸ Status of Women Canada. (2018). About Gender-Based Violence. <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/violence/knowledge-connaissance/about-apropos-en.html>

¹⁹ Status of Women Canada. (2018). About Gender-Based Violence. <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/violence/knowledge-connaissance/about-apropos-en.html>



Women and Girls

According to police-reported data from the incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Survey and the Homicide Survey, in 2017, 53% of the victims of violent crime in Canada were female.²⁰ Research also demonstrates that women are more likely to experience sexual assault than men. According to self-reported data, of all sexual assault incidents in Canada in 2014, 87% were committed against women.²¹

Younger women are at even greater risk of experiencing a violent crime and sexual violence. Police-reported data indicates that compared to their male counterparts, girls and young women experience higher rates of violence, with this pattern continuing until women reach the age of 45 years old.²² Further, women aged 15-24 years old comprise almost half, 47%, of all reported sexual assault incidents and have the highest reporting rate of sexual assault in Canada.²³ Results from the 2014 GSS on Victimization show the reporting rate of sexual assault among women aged 15-24 was two times higher than women aged 25-34 years old, eight times higher than women aged 35-44 years old, and 12 times higher than men of the same age.²⁴ Additionally, according to police-reported data, sexual offences were one of the most common types of violence committed against girls and young women in 2017, comprising 29% of offences.²⁵

Indigenous Women

Research demonstrates that Indigenous women experience disproportionately more violence. For example, according to self-reported data, the overall rate of violence against Indigenous women in 2014 was 220 violent incidents per 1,000 people, which was two times higher than Indigenous men (110 incidents per 1,000 people), almost three times higher than non-Indigenous women (81 incidents per 1,000 people), and almost four times higher than non-Indigenous men (66 incidents per 1,000 people).²⁶

²⁰ Conroy, S. Statistics Canada. (2018). Police-Reported Violence Against Girls and Young Women in Canada, 2017. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2018001/article/54981-eng.htm>

²¹ Conroy, S., & Cotter, A. Statistics Canada. (2017). Self-Reported Sexual Assault in Canada, 2014. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2017001/article/14842-eng.htm>

²² Conroy, S. Statistics Canada. (2018). Police-Reported Violence Against Girls and Young Women in Canada, 2017. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2018001/article/54981-eng.htm>

²³ Conroy, S., & Cotter, A. Statistics Canada. (2017). Self-Reported Sexual Assault in Canada, 2014. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2017001/article/14842-eng.htm>

²⁴ Conroy, S., & Cotter, A. Statistics Canada. (2017). Self-Reported Sexual Assault in Canada, 2014. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2017001/article/14842-eng.htm>

²⁵ Conroy, S. Statistics Canada. (2018). Police-Reported Violence Against Girls and Young Women in Canada, 2017. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2018001/article/54981-eng.htm>

²⁶ Boyce, J. Statistics Canada. (2016). Victimization of Aboriginal People in Canada, 2014. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2016001/article/14631-eng.htm>



Indigenous women are also more likely to report being sexually assaulted than non-Indigenous women. According to the 2014 GSS on Victimization, the rate of sexual assault reported by Indigenous women was approximately three times higher than that of non-Indigenous women.^{27,28} Additionally, Indigenous women experience higher rates of sexual assault when compared to other types of crime. Overall, one-third (33%) of all crimes committed against Indigenous women are sexual assault, whereas sexual assault accounts for 10% of crimes committed against non-Indigenous women.²⁹

In 2019, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls released a report called *Reclaiming Power and Place*. The final report presents stories and testimonies of family members and survivors of violence, which were gathered through a Truth-Gathering Process. Many who participated in the discussion identified they had experienced repeated acts of physical, sexual, and emotional violence that prevented them from experiencing any sense of safety from childhood onward throughout their lives.³⁰

Further, the report identified that violence against Indigenous women and girls is rooted in colonial violence, particularly through four common pathways, including: 1) historical, multigenerational, and intergenerational trauma; 2) social and economic marginalization; 3) maintaining the status quo and institutional lack of will; and 4) ignoring the agency and expertise of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQA people.^{31,32}

Women Living With a Disability

Several Canadian studies have indicated that individuals living with a disability of any type are more likely to have experienced violence and are overrepresented among victims of violent crime.³³ This is particularly true for women.

²⁷ Research and Statistics Division, Department of Justice. (2017). Just Facts: Victimization of Indigenous Women and Girls. <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/jr/jf-pf/2017/july05.html>

²⁸ Government of New Brunswick. (2018). Preventing and Responding to Sexual Violence in New Brunswick. https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/eco-bce/WEB-EDF/Violence/PDF/en/preventing_responding_to_SV_NB-e.pdf

²⁹ Canadian Women's Foundation. (2016). Fact Sheet: Sexual Assault and Harassment. <https://canadianwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Facts-About-Sexual-Assault-and-Harassment.pdf>

³⁰ National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. (2019). Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry Into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1a. https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Final_Report_Vol_1a-1.pdf

³¹ 2SLGBTQQA refers to people who identify as two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, and asexual.

³² National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. (2019). Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry Into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1a. https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Final_Report_Vol_1a-1.pdf

³³ Cotter, A. Statistics Canada. (2018). Violent Victimization of Women With Disabilities, 2014. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2018001/article/54910-eng.htm>



For example, results from the 2014 GSS on Victimization show that of all violent crimes self-reported by women, 45% of incidents were reported by women living with a disability.³⁴ Further, women living with a disability represented a greater proportion of self-reported violent incidents than their male counterparts, who by comparison, were the victims of 33% of all violent incidents reported by men.³⁵

Women living with a disability are also more likely to experience sexual assault. For example, compared to other women, women living with a disability are approximately two times more likely to have been sexually assaulted.³⁶ Additionally, 88% of sexual assault incidents reported by individuals living with a disability were reported by women.³⁷

Newcomer Women

There is little data available about the prevalence of violence and sexual violence among newcomer women in Canada. For example, while the GSS on Victimization suggests experiences of violence are comparable between newcomers and the general Canadian population, sufficient sample sizes are not available to report the incidence and prevalence of sexual assault among newcomer women.³⁸ Further, Canadian research has been primarily focused on newcomer women's experiences of domestic or intimate partner violence rather than experiences of sexual violence; however, this research has shown higher rates of gender-based violence for immigrant and refugee women compared to the general population.³⁹

Language barriers, experiences of isolation, not feeling comfortable reporting violence to police, and experiences of racism can also act as barriers to newcomer women accessing information regarding their legal rights and available justice or social services.^{40, 41}

³⁴ Cotter, A. Statistics Canada. (2018). Violent Victimization of Women With Disabilities, 2014. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2018001/article/54910-eng.htm>

³⁵ Cotter, A. Statistics Canada. (2018). Violent Victimization of Women With Disabilities, 2014. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2018001/article/54910-eng.htm>

³⁶ Cotter, A. Statistics Canada. (2018). Violent Victimization of Women With Disabilities, 2014. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2018001/article/54910-eng.htm>

³⁷ Cotter, A. Statistics Canada. (2018). Violent Victimization of Women With Disabilities, 2014. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2018001/article/54910-eng.htm>

³⁸ Benoit, C., Shumka, L., Phillips, R., Kennedy, M.C., & Belle-Isle, L. (2015). Issue Brief: Sexual Violence Against Women in Canada. <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/svawc-vcsfc/index-en.html>

³⁹ Benoit, C., Shumka, L., Phillips, R., Kennedy, M.C., & Belle-Isle, L. (2015). Issue Brief: Sexual Violence Against Women in Canada. <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/svawc-vcsfc/index-en.html>

⁴⁰ Canadian Council for Refugees. (n.d.). Violence Against Newcomer Women. <https://ccrweb.ca/en/violence-against-women>

⁴¹ Immigrant and Refugee Communities – Neighbours, Friends and Families. (n.d.). Violence Against Women. <http://www.immigrantandrefugeenff.ca/violence-against-women>



Individuals Who Identify as LGBTQ2+

In alignment with the United Nations Woman initiative, although Safe Cities London focused on the experiences of women and girls, it is important to recognize that individuals along the gender and sexuality spectrum are also more likely to experience violence, including sexual violence.

Results from the 2014 GSS on Victimization demonstrate that Canadians 18 years or older who identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual were more likely to have reported experiencing a violent crime than their heterosexual counterparts.⁴² Further, even after controlling for other factors, the likelihood of experiencing a violent crime was twice as high among lesbian, gay, or bisexual Canadians.⁴³

Data also demonstrates that sexual minorities in Canada, individuals who identify other than heterosexual and cisgender, are two times more likely to be sexually assaulted than those who identify as heterosexual.⁴⁴ Rates of sexual violence are particularly high for bisexual individuals, with women identifying as bisexual being seven times more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to self-report experiencing sexual assault.⁴⁵

⁴² Simpson, L. Statistics Canada. (2018). Violent Victimization of Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals in Canada, 2014. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2018001/article/54923-eng.htm>

⁴³ Simpson, L. Statistics Canada. (2018). Violent Victimization of Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals in Canada, 2014. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2018001/article/54923-eng.htm>

⁴⁴ Conroy, S., & Cotter, A. Statistics Canada. (2017). Self-Reported Sexual Assault in Canada, 2014. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2017001/article/14842-eng.htm#a4>

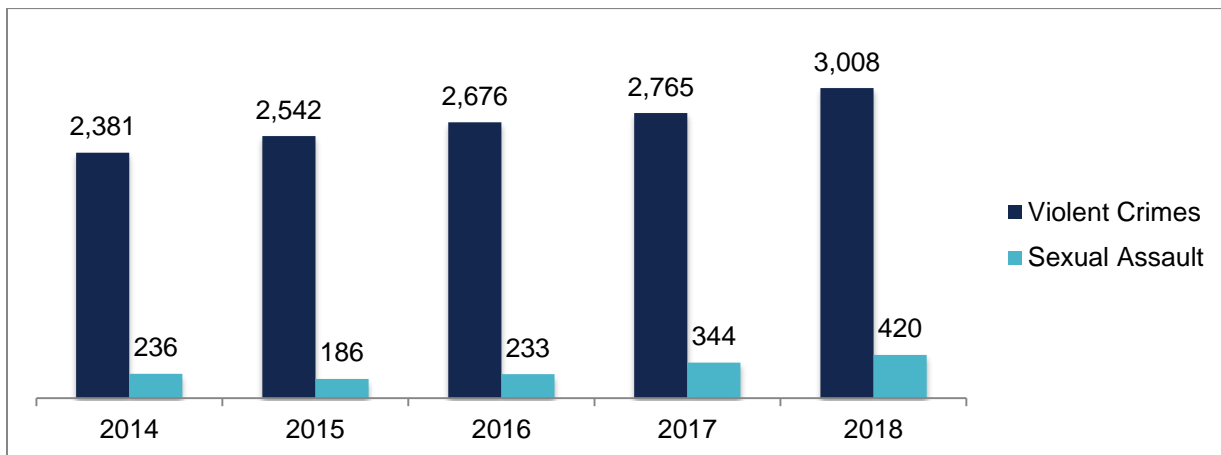
⁴⁵ Simpson, L. Statistics Canada. (2018). Violent Victimization of Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals in Canada, 2014. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2018001/article/54923-eng.htm>



2.4 The Local Context

According to the most recent census profile conducted by Statistics Canada in 2016, the population of London was approximately 383,822 people, of which 52% (n=198,215) identified as female.⁴⁶ Further, 9,725 people in London identified as Indigenous in 2016, representing approximately 2.5% of the population, and 11,595 people identified as newcomers who arrived in Canada between 2011 and 2016, representing approximately 3% of London's population.^{47,48} Additionally, in 2006, data from Statistics Canada indicated approximately 21% (n=73,080) of London's population was living with an activity limitation or disability.⁴⁹

Figure 1: London Police Service Crime Statistics, 2014-2018⁵⁰



In 2018, according to London Police Service records, a total of 3,008 incidents of violent crime in London were recorded. Records also show that incidents of violent crime have been increasing in London since 2014. Data from Statistics Canada also demonstrates a trend of increased incidents of self-reported violent crimes, with a total of 4,678 violent crimes reported in London in 2018.⁵¹

⁴⁶ City of London. (2020). City of London Community Profile. <https://www.london.ca/About-London/community-statistics/city-profiles/Pages/City-Profile.aspx>

⁴⁷ City of London. (2020). City of London Community Profile. <https://www.london.ca/About-London/community-statistics/city-profiles/Pages/City-Profile.aspx>

⁴⁸ City of London. (2020). City of London Community Profile. <https://www.london.ca/About-London/community-statistics/city-profiles/Pages/City-Profile.aspx>

⁴⁹ City of London. (2015). Statistical Profile of Persons With Activity Limitations in London. <https://www.london.ca/About-London/community-statistics/population-characteristics/Pages/Disabilities.aspx>

⁵⁰ London Police Service. (2019). Crime Statistics. <https://www.londonpolice.ca/en/about/Crime-Statistics.aspx>

⁵¹ Statistics Canada. (2019). Table 35-10-0177-01. Incident-Based Crime Statistics, by Detailed Violations, Canada, Provinces, Territories and Census Metropolitan Areas. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3510017701&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.23&pickMembers%5B1%5D=2.16>

With respect to sexual violence data, internal reports by the London Police Service reflect an overall increase in police-reported cases of sexual assault between 2014 (236 incidents, 10% of all violent crimes recorded) and 2018 (420 incidents, 14% of all violent crimes). Statistics Canada reported a similar incidence rate of 437 police-reported incidents of sexual assault in London in 2018.⁵²

Data from local services supporting women and girls who have experienced sexual violence provides additional insights related to the experiences of women and girls in London. For example, between April 1, 2018 and March 31, 2019, 434 women received sexual assault counselling from Anova, an organization in London that provides safe places, shelter, support, counselling, and resources for abused women and their children. Further, 75 women were on the waitlist with Anova for sexual assault services.

⁵² Statistics Canada. (2019). Table 35-10-0177-01. Incident-Based Crime Statistics, by Detailed Violations, Canada, Provinces, Territories and Census Metropolitan Areas. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3510017701&pickMembers%5B0%5D=1.23&pickMembers%5B1%5D=2.16>



Section 3.0

Scoping Study Methodology

3.1 Participant Recruitment

Social media, radio, email distribution lists from some partner agencies, and community events such as the Pride London Festival and Take Back the Night were used to invite community members to participate in the scoping study. Invitations to participate were also distributed through digital billboards, local magazines and newsletters, posters at post-secondary school campuses, and the websites of local counsellors and agencies whose work focused on addressing sexual violence.

3.2 Data Collection

Two data collection methods were used to gather information relating to women and girls' experiences of violence in London. These methods were chosen by the Safe Cities London Research Sub-Committee and were approved by the full Community Advisory Committee. A description of each data collection method is provided below.

Participative Mapping

A geography-based, interactive online mapping tool called *CrowdSpot* was used to provide women and girls with an opportunity to identify locations across London where they either felt safe or unsafe and to share information about their experiences at those locations, including factors that negatively impacted or promoted their sense of safety. Promotional recruitment tools provided participants with a description of the study and a link to the online interactive map.

Between July 1, 2018 and December 31, 2018, 1,825 pins were created on the online map of London at locations where self-identifying females felt safe or unsafe. After creating a pin, participants were asked to answer questions about that particular location. Participants were asked to provide a description of what happened at the pinned location, how it made them feel, when the incident had occurred, and demographic information related to their age and gender identity.

To help alleviate barriers to participation for individuals who may not have had easy access to the Internet, paper copies of the mapping tool questions were made available at community organizations and events. Further, additional contact information for the scoping study Project Coordinator was provided for participants seeking additional assistance with entering their responses, such as providing responses verbally for the Project Coordinator to enter into the mapping tool.



Focus Groups

Four focus groups were facilitated with individuals from specific target populations, which were chosen by the Community Advisory Committee based on research conducted about groups that are known to experience high rates of sexual violence. These groups include women with disabilities, Indigenous women, newcomer women, and members of the LGBTQ2+ community. Focus group participants self-identified as being a member of one of the specific population groups. All focus groups were facilitated by an Anova staff member.

In total, 36 individuals participated in the focus groups. Seven participants attended the focus group for women with disabilities, 10 attended the focus group for Indigenous women, 14 attended the focus group for newcomer women, and five attended the focus group for members of the LGBTQ2+ community.

During each focus group, a semi-structured method to asking questions was implemented to encourage participants to freely share their experiences and provide facilitators with an opportunity to ask additional questions as they emerged from dialogue with the participants. Through the focus group process, participants were asked to discuss where in London they felt safe and unsafe, specific experiences at the identified locations, factors that contributed to the location feeling safe or unsafe, whether specific factors related to their identity (e.g., identifying as Indigenous, living with a disability, being a newcomer, or being a member of the LGBTQ2+ community) impacted their experiences related to safety or violence, and what they would do if they had no fear of sexual violence or harassment. Facilitators recorded notes from the discussion for each focus group.

3.3 Data Analysis

Quantitative responses from the participative mapping tool were collated and analyzed by question to prepare descriptive statistics.

Qualitative data from both the participative mapping tool and focus groups were analyzed to identify themes about the nature and types of violence occurring in public spaces in London, factors that promote or negatively impact feelings of safety, perpetrators of violence, and the types of locations where violence occurred.

For quantitative data in this report, the variable “n” is used to indicate the number of respondents who selected a particular response. For the qualitative data, “n” is used throughout the report to indicate the number of unique responses that were used to inform a particular theme.

Participating in a focus group or the participative mapping process was optional. Therefore, the results of the analysis reflect the information individuals chose to share and were comfortable disclosing.



3.4 Data Limitations

Data limitations are common with any research project and defining data limitations provides context for understanding the results. While the data limitations outlined below should be considered when interpreting the results of this scoping study, they should not be considered to negate the findings in this report.

- **Self-Reported Data** – The results presented in this report are based on self-reported data from focus group participants and respondents who used the participative online mapping tool. Depending on their level of comfort discussing their experiences, some respondents may have provided a response they believed to be more socially acceptable and may not have felt comfortable sharing a detailed description of their experience. To mitigate this limitation, respondents were not asked to share their name and were informed their responses would remain anonymous.
- **User Anonymity** – To promote anonymity and encourage candid responses, respondents using the participative mapping tool were not asked to provide identifying data, such as their name or contact information. However, without identifying information, it is not possible to determine whether each pinned response represents a unique individual or whether a respondent is double counted in the results. To help address this limitation, a process was implemented by the website developer of the online mapping tool to ensure an IP address, a unique identifier associated with a single device on a network, could only be used to create one pin per day at a particular location.
- **Study Sample** – Individuals identifying as female were invited to participate in the focus groups and respondents using the participative mapping tool were asked to self-identify their gender. In total, 13% (n=277) of respondents did not report their gender. As the focus of the scoping study was to understand the experiences of women and girls, only responses from individuals identifying as female, including trans women, were included in the analysis. Responses from those who did not identify their gender were removed from the data set. Further, while the results provide insights into the experiences of respondents who identified as female, the results represent a sample of the population and may not fully represent the experiences of all individuals in the community who identify as female.



Section 4.0

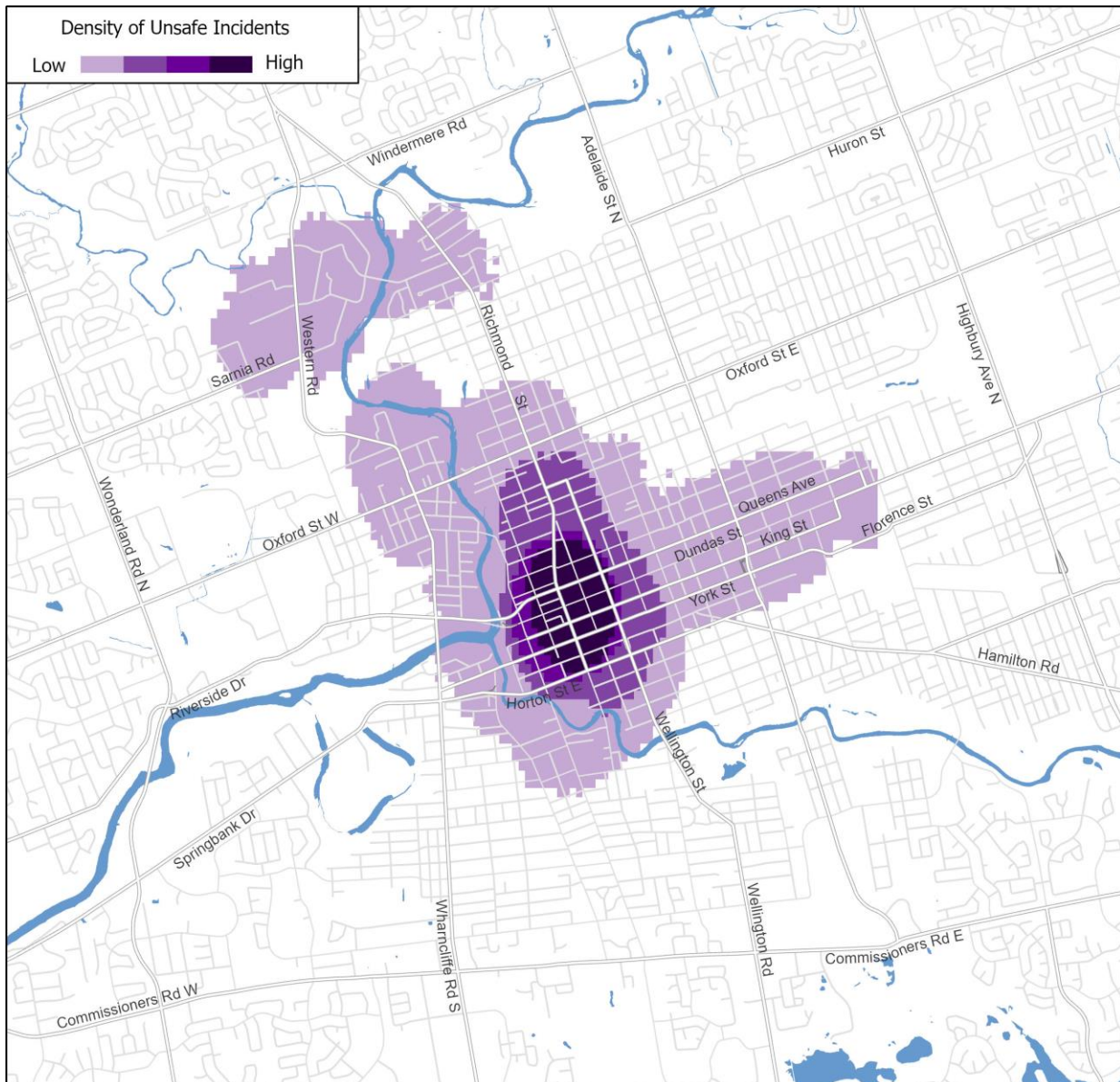
Results

This section provides the results from the participative mapping tool and focus groups.

4.1 Number of Pins

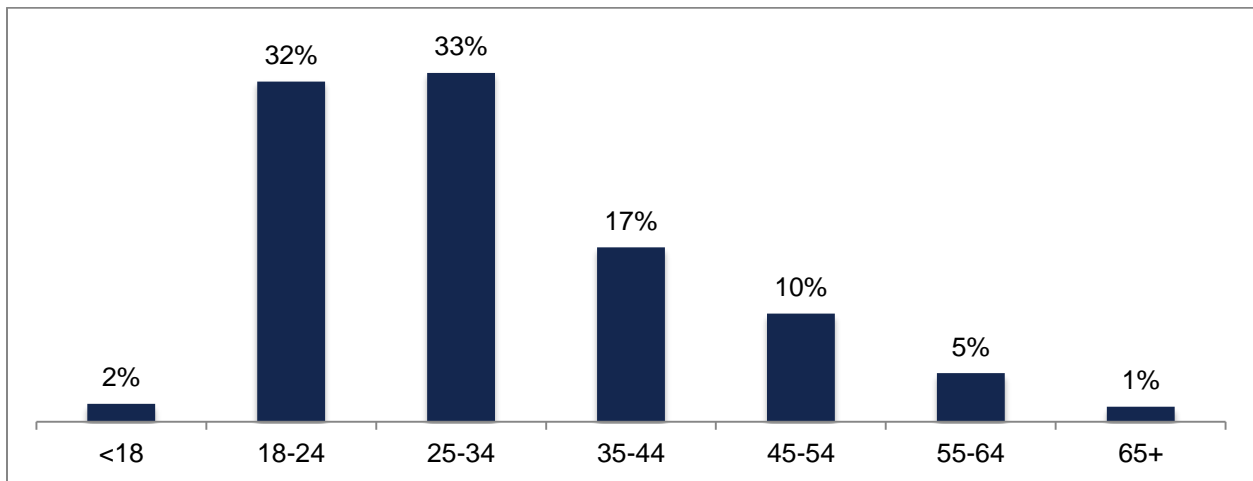
Between July 1, 2018 and December 31, 2018, a total of 1,825 pins were created by participants using the online mapping tool to identify either safe or unsafe locations in London. The map below illustrates the locations and density of unsafe incidents.

Figure 2: Map of Unsafe Pin Locations and Density



4.2 Age of Respondents

Figure 3: Age of Respondents (n=1,800)



Respondents between 18-24 years old and 25-34 years old comprised the largest age groups of participants in the scoping study, representing approximately two-thirds (65%, n=1,177) of respondents. Further, 17% (n=298) of respondents were between the ages of 35 and 44, 10% (n=185) were between 45 and 54 years old, and 5% (n=83) were 55-64 years old. Additionally, 2% (n=31) of respondents were under 18 years of age and 1% (n=26) were 65 years of age or older.

4.3 Extent of Violence and Harassment

Table 1: Number of Locations Identified as Safe and Unsafe (n=1,825)

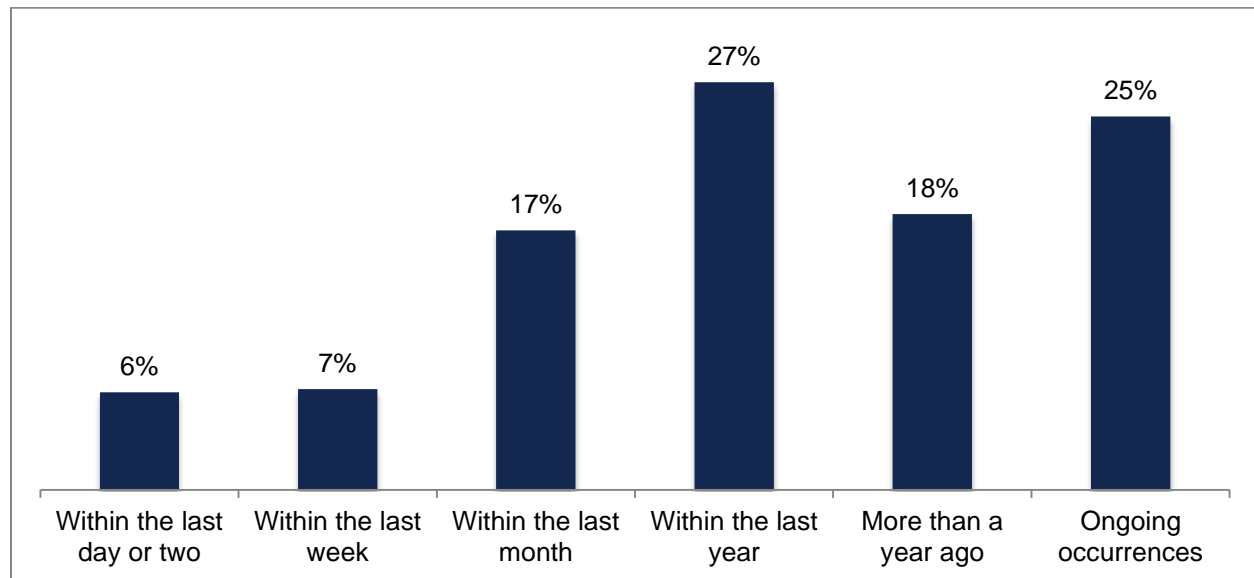
Type of Location	Number of Respondents
Unsafe	1,567 (86%)
Safe	258 (14%)

Overall, respondents using the participative mapping tool were more likely to identify a pinned location as unsafe rather than safe, with 86% (n=1,567) of pinned locations being identified by respondents as unsafe and 14% (n=258) being identified as safe.



4.4 Length of Time Since an Unsafe Occurrence

Figure 4: Length of Time Since an Unsafe Occurrence (n=1,484)



According to the results from the online mapping tool, when respondents were asked to identify when an incident they were reporting as unsafe had occurred, 27% (n=396) of respondents reported the unsafe experience occurred within the last year, 17% (n=255) within the last month, 7% (n=99) within the last week, and 6% (n=96) within the last day or two. Further, 25% of respondents (n=367) experienced situations that made them feel unsafe on an ongoing basis. A total of 18% (n=271) of respondents were reporting an unsafe incident that had occurred more than a year ago.

4.5 Who Is Perpetrating Violence in Public Spaces

Outlined below are findings from respondents who shared their experiences of violence or described incidents of violence they witnessed in public spaces. The following themes relate to the most commonly reported gender of the perpetrator as identified by respondents and the type of relationship between the perpetrator and respondent.

Reported Gender of Perpetrators

In total, for 621 of the reported incidents, respondents described the perceived gender of the perpetrator of violence. For 97% (n=601) of these incidents, the perpetrator was identified as male. Females were identified as the perpetrator of violence for 2% (n=13) of the reported incidents, and for 1% (n=7) of the reported incidents, both a male and female perpetrator were involved.



Relationship to the Respondent

No Relationship to the Respondent (n=519) – Respondents commonly reported incidents of violence where the perpetrator was a stranger. For example, respondents described the perpetrator as a “random” person, “strange” person, or by referring to the perpetrator in a way that implied respondents were not familiar with or did not previously know the perpetrator.

“I was followed home by a strange man who continuously asked me questions about me and my life while walking shoulder-to-shoulder with me.”

“Men shouted harassing things at me from a commercial truck, honked at me, and followed me. They became angry when I tried to ignore them by walking away.”

Owner of a Business, Staff, or Other Personnel (n=13) – Some respondents indicated they had experienced violence from an owner of a local business, an employee at a business or institution, or someone working in a professional capacity. Further, one respondent also reported they had witnessed inappropriate actions from another customer, but that staff were “complicit” and did not address the behaviour.

“Employee repeatedly attempted to touch me, would follow me, ask me invasive questions, etc. despite myself and others repeatedly telling him to leave me alone.”

“I have watched male bouncers enter the women’s washroom with no warning.”

Neighbour (n=8) – Respondents also identified some perpetrators of violence as being their neighbours. Respondents described incidents involving individuals, couples, or families who lived in the same building, across the street, or in their general neighbourhood. Some of the reported incidents with neighbours involved threats, following or stalking, verbal harassment, dangerous driving, trespassing, robbery, and property damage. Additionally, one respondent suspected there was domestic violence occurring in their neighbour’s home and called the police to report it.

“I was grabbed by a neighbour who started kissing me against my will. The same neighbour would make sexually suggestive comments whenever he ran into me in the building and around the area.”

“I have a homophobic neighbour. He spent some time following me and he cornered me in the grocery store to loudly say homophobic things and tell everyone in the store that I am gay. He would put his tongue between his hands (in a ‘V’) and make lewd gestures at me.”



Classmate, Friend, or Acquaintance (n=8) – Some respondents shared experiences of violence involving a perpetrator who had been a classmate, friend, or acquaintance. For example, one respondent reported experiencing sexual assault by a classmate with whom they had to spend the remainder of the school year after the incident, while other respondents described incidents where the perpetrators were a group of students who went to their school, a “close friend,” or another person their friend knew.

“I was sexually assaulted by a fellow student. I was too scared to tell anyone what happened. Every time I saw him in our mutual class, I would feel anxious and disgusted.”

“My roommate’s ex followed us and tried to break into our apartment building where he knows tenants tend to leave security doors propped open. Luckily that night they were closed.”

Employer (n=4) – A few respondents also reported experiencing or witnessing verbal and sexual harassment by an employer or someone in a position of authority at their workplace. Respondents noted being subjected to sexist, sexualized, and/or racist comments made by their employer. For example, one respondent said her employer made comments about the size of her breasts and sexual jokes about her “getting lucky.” Another respondent explained their employer made openly racist comments and would “rant” at work, making other employees feel uncomfortable.

“Sexist comments by a person in a leadership position.”

“Unwanted kissing and hugging by men at work, sexual jokes (‘did I get lucky last night?’) from my boss, boss making gestures and remarks about the size of my breasts.”

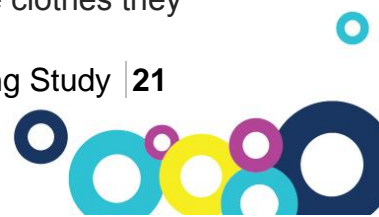
4.6 Nature and Type of Violence Experienced in Public Spaces

The following section summarizes the results from respondents’ descriptions of unsafe locations where violence was either personally experienced or observed.

Sexual Violence

The most common themes from respondents about incidents of sexual violence included non-physical sexual harassment, physical sexual harassment or aggression, and being followed, restrained, or restricted in a sexual manner.

Non-Physical Sexual Harassment (n=387) – One of the most common types of sexual violence reported by respondents was non-physical sexual harassment, particularly in the form of sexual comments. For example, respondents shared stories about being catcalled, receiving unwanted sexual comments about their physical appearance, and being the target of “obscene” or “vulgar” language, including sexually derogatory comments. Experiences of verbal sexual harassment also involved receiving demeaning comments based on the respondents’ gender expression or the clothes they



were wearing. Further, respondents explained they had experienced or witnessed other women being “leered at,” “ogled,” or “stared at.” For example, one respondent described an incident where, “At this bus stop, a man whistled and leered the entire twelve minutes I was stuck standing there with only him.”

Witnessing or being the target of indecent exposure was another type of non-physical sexual harassment commonly experienced by respondents. Forms of indecent exposure experienced by respondents included public nudity, public masturbation, and public sexual acts. Additionally, many respondents described incidents where men they did not know offered to drive them home, invited them to their home, and/or solicited them for sex. In some of these incidents, respondents described the perpetrator as being persistent, despite having been told “no.” Non-physical sexual harassment also occurred in the form of sexually suggestive gestures or threats of sexual violence.

“I’m constantly propositioned for sex, catcalled, and threatened for not responding.”

“These guys told me I was a whore for wearing pants and a bad mother for working at my job instead of being with my kids.”

“I was verbally harassed by two men who yelled sexually explicit threats as I was jogging midday.”

*“I was walking on the bridge and a male yelled out to me. When I looked over, he had his pants down and told me to ‘s*** it’.”*

“I was approached by a man in broad daylight. He spoke to me and immediately started asking if I wanted to go for a drive with him. After saying no, he continued to try pressuring me into going to his vehicle.”

“A man approached me and made sexual comments asking me ‘how much’ I was. When I brushed him off and continued walking, he followed behind me, smacking his lips and hollering at me.”

Followed, Restrained, or Restricted (n=145) – Respondents reported being followed, restrained, or having their movements restricted at the same time as receiving non-physical sexual harassment, such as catcalling, leering, solicitation of sex or being told to “get in” to a vehicle, sexual threats, or public masturbation. Some respondents explained they had been followed home by another person or by an unknown vehicle, “chased,” or “stalked,” and many respondents described incidents where someone had followed them while making degrading comments, “lewd” remarks, calling them names such as “sweetheart” or “beautiful,” or trying to grab them.

Additionally, incidents where respondents had their movements restricted included having someone intentionally block their path trying to force the respondent to engage or talk, or being “cornered” while also being threatened or “hit on.” Further, respondents described several incidents where another person came very close to them and invaded their personal space.



“I was exiting the store and two males going into it blocked my way and made disturbing comments like, ‘Hey beautiful, you should come for a ride in my truck’ and, ‘Wow, look at this one.’ Luckily a male also exiting the store made them get away from me.”

*“One time a carload of men actually turned around, pulled up beside where I was walking, and slowly followed me home. The whole time they were saying things like, ‘There’s three of us in here. How would you like that? Think you could handle three c**** at one time?’ It was terrifying.”*

“I was followed and yelled at by a man threatening to rape me.”

“Men following me and attempting to pay for sex.”

“One night when I didn’t respond to two men on bikes who shouted something very lewd at me while I was stopped at a crosswalk, they became angry with me. They then split up, one in front of me and one behind, and followed me all the way down through the underpass where I ducked into a retail store so I’d be safe. When I thought they were gone, I continued on my way home, but they came back out from behind a building and continued following me until I got to a convenience store and notified the cashier there. They disappeared after that.”

“While waiting for the light to change, a man crossed towards me and stood uncomfortably close in front of me for a moment and looked me up and down and thankfully moved on.”

Physical Sexual Harassment or Aggression (n=131) – Respondents described incidents of sexual harassment or aggression that involved non-consensual physical contact from another person. These incidents included being grabbed, slapped, raped, forcibly kissed, hugged, forced to touch another person in a sexual way, or generally being touched without consent. Specifically, respondents commonly reported experiencing another person grabbing or touching their breasts or buttocks. In some instances of sexual assault, respondents noted being forced or pulled into a secluded area or being drugged and unable to provide consent.

Being verbally harassed while also witnessing or experiencing physical sexual harassment or aggression was also discussed by respondents, such as receiving unwanted comments about their appearance or body and then subsequently being grabbed. Some respondents described an incident as “sexual abuse” or “sexual assault.” Further, some respondents reported experiencing an attempted sexual assault, but that they were able to get away from the perpetrator or someone intervened.

“I was walking home from the bar and a group of guys walked by. One of them slapped my butt very hard.”



“I was waiting for a bus when a strange man came up from behind me and wrapped both his arms around me, grabbing my breasts. He let go and laughed to his friends as he walked away.”

“A man tried to grab my hand and hold it as I was waiting on the corner. When I pulled away, he yelled at me and then proceeded to grab my butt.”

“Person came up behind me and grabbed my breasts and made remarks at me while I was walking along the path.”

“I was drugged, taken to another location, and sexually assaulted.”

*“I was on a lunch break from work. I was followed by a man who grabbed my arm and tried to get me to come with him. When I broke away and refused, he called me a ‘b****’.”*

Violence That Is Non-Sexual

The most common types of incidents involving violence that is non-sexual reported by respondents included being approached, restricted, and/or followed, non-physical harassment, physical harassment or aggression, and criminal violence.

Being Approached, Restricted, or Followed (n=202) – Many respondents described instances where they had been approached by another person in a way that made them feel unsafe, but did not specifically describe the occurrence as including harassment of a sexual nature. For example, respondents explained they had been approached for money, drugs, or cigarettes or received unwanted attention from a stranger while walking, eating or working in a public space, or sitting in their car. In some cases, respondents suggested they did not immediately feel intimidated or threatened when approached, but that when they ignored or dismissed the individual, the person became angry, verbally harassed them, or followed them. Further, some respondents reported the individual approaching them appeared to be under the influence.

Respondents not only directly experienced instances of being followed, but some also witnessed other people being followed or chased. For example, one respondent recalled seeing “an older woman being chased down the street by a group of middle aged men who were laughing.” Respondents also described incidents involving verbal harassment while being followed or people getting “too close” and appearing to be physically threatening. Additionally, other comments about being followed or restricted included being blocked from exiting the bus, being followed after taking money out from a bank, and being unable to access a building due to individuals blocking the entryway.

“I was walking and a car pulled over, asking for directions at night. I ignored them and walked away, and they slowly followed me down the street until I made it into my house and they drove away. I never went outside after dark alone after that.”

“A man rushed my car and was reaching in the window, mumbling incoherently. Many other men were watching and laughing from the sidewalk.”



“Twice I was approached by grown men trying to participate in some form of protest. One in particular followed me down the street yelling into a megaphone because I had fur on my winter jacket. I was terrified, but luckily had a few male coworkers with me.”

“A man approached me while I was waiting for a bus, asked me for change, and when I had none, he started yelling obscenities and threats at me. I started walking away and he followed me until I ducked into a store.”

*“I was coming out of the grocery store and a man and his wife started yelling at me. They had been in front of me in line. They called me a ‘b****’ and were acting aggressive. They followed me in their car. I drove to a side street so they wouldn’t follow me home and then they drove away.”*

“After getting cash from the bank, I was followed by a man. I hid out in a store. He still followed me. He only left when I took out my phone to take his picture. He finally left the store.”

Non-Physical Harassment (n=188) – Experiences of non-physical harassment that were not sexual in nature were also commonly reported, such as witnessing disruptive behaviour or verbal altercations between other people, as well as being the direct recipient of verbal harassment or bullying. Respondents also described incidents involving verbal threats. For example, one respondent commented, “I smiled at a young man and he freaked out, threatening me, saying he was going to harm me for smiling at him.” Further, some respondents provided general comments about experiencing verbal harassment, such as being yelled at, “hollered” at, insulted, and/or cursed at.

Experiences of non-physical harassment also included receiving or hearing offensive or racialized comments and slurs. For example, one respondent who identified as Chinese described an incident where they were harassed by another person who continued to yell “Konichiwa” and “Ni hao ma” at them. Additionally, a few respondents reported feeling unsafe at a location where “anti-abortion” or “pro-life activists” were seen with “graphic” and “disturbing” images on their signs.

“I was walking down the street with my boyfriend to the bus stop and a random man started shouting at us.”

“A man loitering as I was walking my dog asked if I had a problem with him, completely unprompted, and then threatened to hit me.”

“A young woman outside the Tim Hortons threatened me when I smiled and said she killed people for a living.”

“[I was] harassed about my skin colour (ethnicity) by a male and a female.”



Physical Harassment or Aggression (n=113) – Witnessing physical assault, such as seeing someone “tackling,” hitting, pushing, or shoving another person, was reported by respondents. Several respondents also described incidents of other people being “jumped,” with some respondents identifying concern that this type of physical violence could happen to them. Witnessing physical fights between two or more individuals was also commonly discussed, with one respondent noting that “fights break out pretty often.” Additionally, a few respondents reported witnessing or hearing what they believed to be domestic abuse occurring in their apartment building.

Respondents also identified instances where they were the direct recipient of physical harassment or aggression. Some respondents stated they had been “abused” or “physically assaulted” without providing additional details. Other respondents shared incidents where they had been spat on, egged, attacked by a dog, touched in a non-sexual manner without consent, or had objects thrown at them, such as water bottles, beer cans, or cigarettes. Additionally, incidents of dangerous or aggressive driving where pedestrians were almost hit were witnessed by a few respondents.

“A man walking the opposite way to me along the sidewalk approached me without warning, deliberately pushed me hard enough that I fell over, then walked away.”

“I witnessed a man hit his female companion and continue to yell and scream at her for ‘being stupid.’”

“A man almost hit my car because he was going too fast. He chased me two kilometers in his car.”

“This place constantly feels unsafe. I have seen physical fights twice.”

Criminal Violence (n=50) – Several incidents of criminal violence were also described by respondents, primarily in the form of theft or breaking and entering. Specifically, respondents indicated their own cars and homes had been broken into or that their neighbours had experienced theft and break-ins. For example, one respondent said, “I live in the area and my cars are broken into continually and even my house!” A few respondents reported being home when someone had attempted to or had successfully broken in. Other incidents of criminal violence included robberies at local convenience stores or stolen phones and bicycles. Vandalism and “gun violence” were also reported by a few respondents.

“I’ve had two locked vehicles stolen from my parking lot.”

“I lived here for one year and had my house broken into twice, once while I was home.”

“There were numerous instances of damaged building property from people trying to break in.”



4.7 Risk Factors and Protective Factors

This section of the report summarizes respondents' descriptions of safe and unsafe locations in terms of factors that influence perceptions of personal safety and/or risk of experiencing violence. Some of the factors outlined below were described by respondents as being either a protective factor or a risk factor, while some were identified as both a protective and risk factor.

Structural Factors

Themes from respondents about risk factors and protective factors that are structural in nature included public illumination, the built environment, police presence and response, security conditions and measures, having strong communities, and traffic and driving.

Public Illumination (n=111) – Respondents identified that having good lighting in an area helped them feel safe. Specifically, respondents appreciated having “well-lit” streets, paths, parks, bus stops, and parking lots, as well as good lighting around the outside of buildings. As such, adequate illumination in public spaces was considered a protective factor that promoted safety in these contexts.

Conversely, respondents reported feeling unsafe in dark areas without sufficient lighting and identified poor lighting in public spaces as a risk factor for violence. Specifically, respondents explained that darkness made it more difficult to see if people were following or watching them. One respondent said that “dark, isolated places are always scary for women” and that women are “easy targets” in such spaces. Another respondent suggested that more lighting “would be very helpful to deter people from hanging out” in certain areas. Several respondents recommended that lighting in public areas should be increased and properly maintained to ensure safety and promote feelings of increased security. Locations respondents felt lacked adequate lighting included some parking lots, parks, areas of construction, underpasses, and bus stops. Further, some respondents identified specific paths, sidewalks, and neighbourhoods where more lighting could be installed.

“I always feel comfortable walking my dog at night in this neighbourhood. It is quiet and well lit.”

“The park is a large, dark space at night where it is impossible to see if there is someone hiding in the dark. It feels unsafe and I never enter the park at night.”

“This is a dark alleyway. Hundreds of students every day walk through this path and the light that is supposed to keep the very dark path a little brighter is broken and has been for years. Many of my friends and I have expressed feelings of anxiety walking through this dark path alone at night. We need to cross this path to get home and it feels horrible to be forced into a space that could easily be made safer by just fixing the light. I hope this can get done!”



Built Environment (n=85) – Many features of the built environment helped to promote feelings of safety for respondents. For example, locations characterized by green space, dog parks, large sidewalks, cleanliness, open fields, and areas with high visibility and open businesses were considered to be safe spaces by respondents. Additionally, respondents noted that having shelters at bus stops, mirrors installed in buildings to see around corners, and washrooms with accessibility features increased feelings of safety in those spaces.

By contrast, some respondents identified there was “nowhere to flee” or go when they felt threatened in isolated areas with few houses or open businesses. Further, one of the most commonly reported features of the built environment that made respondents feel unsafe was an object or built structure that obstructed their line of sight. For example, respondents reported reduced visibility within an area due to construction, structures such as tunnels or bridges, bushes, overgrowth, or tall grass. Other environmental factors that made respondents feel unsafe included graffiti, litter and debris, narrow or uneven sidewalks, and sidewalks situated far from the road. Additionally, several respondents discussed feeling unsafe in more isolated, “concealed,” or “secluded” areas.

“[There are] many store locations that are open late.”

“I am a runner. I live about three blocks from the entrance to a bike path, but never run here on my own, even in daylight. There are numerous places with very tall foliage, including long grass, and short gravel paths leading off the main path in the woods. I’d like to run here because it is so close, but choose roads and busier pathways because of the structure and isolation of this path.”

“I think the issue for me is the narrow sidewalks in such a busy area, especially at the bus stops. It’s impossible to walk around people and preserve personal space.”

“This particular spot has no houses. There just isn’t really anywhere to run except further down the street.”

Police Presence and Response (n=76) – Police presence in public spaces was discussed by respondents as contributing to feelings of safety. One respondent noted that their campus police office was open 24 hours a day and they felt it was a safe place to go for support. Some respondents also described times when police had intervened and helped them after or during an incident, were involved with gathering evidence, or were able to arrest the individual who had committed the violent act.

Whereas a strong police presence made people feel safe, several respondents explained that not having enough police officers visible in public spaces contributed to feeling at risk of experiencing violence or feeling unsafe. Respondents identified some areas where a greater police presence is needed, including parks, near schools and colleges, bars, and in the downtown area.



Several respondents felt that police response time was slow or that they were not supported after reporting an incident, which for some, discouraged them from reporting incidents of violence. There were also concerns from a few respondents who felt some incidents of verbal harassment were not taken seriously and felt there was a lack of consequences for those who verbally harass and intimidate women and girls.

“The police presence contributes to this feeling of safety as well.”

“I didn’t feel like this was something I could report to anyone who would actually be able to do anything about it.”

“Frequent police presence would help in case something physical actually happens.”

“Reporting needs to be more accessible when assaulted. I have had instances where no one comes after a report. There needs to be an immediate response. I would like to have a report back that things have been dealt with for reassurance.”

Security Conditions and Measures (n=65) – Respondents identified the presence of different security conditions and measures that made them feel safe in public spaces. For example, having security guards and staff in and around public buildings, bars, and private residences was identified as a protective factor. Security cameras and controlled entry into buildings were also identified as security measures that made women and girls feel safe and protected.

A few respondents reported occurrences of physical or sexual violence being captured by security cameras, which could be used as evidence of the incident. Further, one respondent who described being followed explained they were able to get away by entering a building with controlled entry. Additionally, respondents noted seeing emergency phones they could use to call for help if needed, and further explained these phones are especially helpful for people without cell phones.

Respondents also discussed being in areas with poor security conditions, which made them feel unsafe. There was concern that some places did not have enough security guards or staff presence, which one respondent said made them feel “helpless and vulnerable.” A few respondents also noted security staff were available, but felt they could be more responsive to reported incidents. Additionally, respondents expressed concerns about a lack of working security cameras in some public spaces, which limited their ability to provide evidence of a violent act. Respondents also recommended adequate security measures be put in place for entry into some buildings, such as ensuring door locks are properly maintained and any damaged doors are repaired. A few respondents also stated that having “emergency buttons” in taxis and transit vehicles would help to increase feelings of safety.

“There are several emergency buttons scattered around campus.”



“Parking lots are monitored by security. I always feel safe walking in this area. [There is] lots of security.”

“I really appreciate that there is a security guard stationed here. They are there when I ride through in the early morning and when I come back after work. This park does seem a lot safer with their presence and I do feel it is a justified expense.”

“Does not seem to be enough surveillance or police presence in this area with a lot of foot traffic and hanging out late at night.”

“They couldn’t get video surveillance footage, as the apartment building has cameras that don’t record anything.”

Strong Communities (n=50) – For some respondents, certain spaces felt safe because there was a sense of belonging or because it was a residential neighbourhood where they knew families lived. Common descriptions about factors that made a neighborhood feel safe included seeing people walking their dogs, the presence of children playing and riding bikes, the aesthetic of the neighbourhood, and a sense of neighbours watching out for each other. For example, one respondent explained that “it’s a beautiful neighbourhood, with mostly friendly people,” while another said that “the neighbours all help each other and keep their eye out for unwanted behavior.” Neighbourhoods considered to be safe were also described by respondents as being “calm,” “quiet,” and “peaceful.”

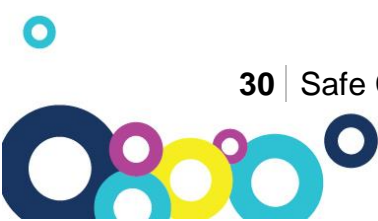
Respondents also described places where they had been supported and included, as well as spaces where diverse people could come together, as being safe locations. For example, one respondent described the location they pinned as a “safe space for people of different races, sexual identities, disabled folks, and all genders.” Additionally, one respondent mentioned a location with a wall of graffiti and explained that “it feels good to be around art and it’s not hard to feel connected to the city here. [It] feels like home.”

“[It is a] family-friendly community that looks after each other. I walk here in the evenings with my dog and have never felt unsafe.”

“I live in the neighbourhood and it is very welcoming and friendly.”

“[This is] a place where I can go to receive support and feel like I belong. A lot of my peers are there and it is a safe space to hang out.”

“[There are] lots of stores and neighbours are involved in the community. People are interested in each other and there is a sense of community. People seem to look out for each other.”



Traffic and Driving (n=17) – Some respondents indicated feeling safe in areas with less vehicle traffic and where drivers are “generally cautious.” By contrast, as pedestrians and bicycle riders, some respondents described feeling unsafe in areas with high vehicle traffic and where there are more “aggressive” or “reckless” drivers. For example, respondents reported witnessing speeding, drivers not obeying traffic signs and lights, vehicles pulling out in front of pedestrians, and illegal parking or stopping. Further, some respondents felt some drivers were not considerate of pedestrians, which they identified as a factor that contributes to the area feeling less safe for people in the community who walk or ride bicycles.

“The traffic is not too busy.”

“Cars speed north toward oncoming traffic travelling south so they can turn left and avoid waiting for the light. This is an awful spot to wait for the bus. The road rage at this corner is a daily occurrence. And as a pedestrian, there’s no protection from this. The median needs to be extended so cars cannot make this turn.”

“Vehicles do not remain stopped at the red light when pedestrians get the signal to cross. Vehicles proceed to turn right and cut me off as I start to cross the road.”

“No one obeys the stop signs in this entire area.”

Social and Cultural Factors

Common themes from respondents about risk factors and protective factors that are social or cultural in nature were also identified, including alcohol and drugs, culture related to street involvement, the presence of people, bystander intervention and receiving help from others, knowledge of previous incidents in an area, disruptive behaviour, social norms and discrimination, and education and training.

Alcohol and Drugs (n=225) – Respondents commonly identified the presence or use of substances when describing an unsafe location. For example, observing public substance use, driving under the influence, and being approached by a person who appeared to be under the influence were reported by respondents. Further, respondents discussed seeing needles and other drug paraphernalia in public areas and parks, which decreased their feelings of safety in these spaces. Respondents also reported witnessing the buying and selling of substances in public spaces, with some indicating they had been approached and offered substances by another person.

Additionally, alcohol and drugs were identified as a risk factor for violence in relation to “party culture,” including using drugs to harm others. For example, respondents shared their personal experiences of being “drugged” or “roofied” and subsequently sexually assaulted, overhearing others discussing plans to “drug women” at a party, and witnessing groups of people who had been consuming alcohol at a party harass pedestrians walking by.



“This corner and the streets close to it make me feel unsafe. Drug deals happen in broad daylight, catcalls, and there is drug paraphernalia laying around.”

“I have been followed and approached by men asking me if I want ‘some drugs.’”

“There have been multiple times I have been yelled at or followed by grown men who seem to be high on something.”

“Whenever I see someone high on drugs, it makes me very scared, especially when they are behaving erratically.”

“I overheard male students talking about drugging women at parties the coming weekend.”

“I was roofied, drugged at a bar close to this location. I was totally incapacitated.”

Culture of Street Involvement (n=106) – Respondents identified activities they associated with a culture of street involvement that influenced their perceptions or experiences of safety. For example, in locations marked as unsafe, respondents referred to occurrences of “loitering” or people “hanging out” on the street, often in large groups. Further, some respondents were concerned about the presence of “gangs” or “gang activity” and feeling “vulnerable to crime.”

“Lots of men loitering, yelling obscene things, staring, taking up space on the sidewalk, leaving you no space to walk, brushing up against you.”

“Men loitering on the corner making suggestive comments and noises at me. When I turned and crossed to take an alternate route, they started following me. I then ran back to a friend’s house. They walked by looking for me and yelling.”

“I still encounter people, mostly men, on the bike path on my way to work in the early morning who are sleeping along the trail who rant as I ride by.”

“Lots of people loitering, staring. Sometimes catcalling.”

Presence of People (n=99) – The presence of people in public spaces was discussed by respondents as contributing to feelings of safety and as a protective factor for preventing harassment or violence. Several respondents described feeling safe in busier areas where there were typically other people around. For example, one respondent identified feeling safe in an area where there were always “eyes on the street” and “pedestrians out and about.” Respondents felt safer with others around, as they felt other people could offer help if needed and could intervene if they experienced harassment or assault. Further, several respondents recalled experiences where they felt unsafe due to being followed and harassed, but were relieved when another person walked by, interrupting the incident or deterring the perpetrator. Some respondents also felt the presence of other people acted as a preventative measure by discouraging acts of violence or harassment from a potential perpetrator.



While the presence of people was identified as promoting feelings of safety and protection, being in a more isolated area or having few people around was identified as a risk factor for violence or feeling unsafe. For example, respondents reported feeling “vulnerable,” “scared,” “uneasy,” and that they were at a greater risk of experiencing violence in less populated areas. Further, several respondents who reported experiencing harassment or assault explained these incidents had occurred because they were alone and that no one had witnessed the violence or could intervene. Additionally, some respondents who discussed being approached by a stranger felt they would not have been approached had there been more people around.

“The people in this building are always available to help, whether or not you know them. It is really reassuring to know there is someone there if you ever need them.”

“Even when I’m approached or followed, there are so many caring people during the day that if I ever felt threatened, it would be extremely easy to get the help I need.”

“I’m often walking alone, which makes me feel more vulnerable. I think men are more likely to shout at women who are alone.”

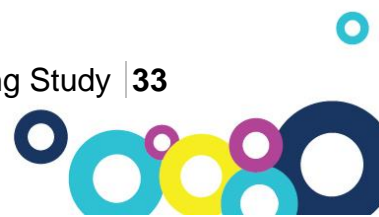
“I was sexually assaulted in a car on a weekday evening for a very long time. No one walked by. No one heard me.”

“Going under this bridge is really scary. At night, with not many cars going by, it’s easy to feel like no one can see you. I have had men approach me under this bridge that I don’t think would have done so in a more open area. I avoid going under whenever possible.”

Bystander Intervention and Receiving Help From Others (n=60) – Respondents discussed the role of bystanders or other people in preventing violence and intervening when violence had occurred, which impacted their feelings of safety in public spaces.

Several respondents shared experiences where others had intervened or offered support during an instance of violence, indicating bystander intervention can act as a protective factor against violence. For example, one respondent described being followed by a man in a car and was relieved when others noticed and offered to wait with her at the bus stop, noting, “I was so happy that they were there to wait for the bus with me, because that was really scary.” Further, some respondents also recalled instances where they had intervened after noticing a woman being harassed or followed.

Respondents also discussed being able to get help from a staff person in a local business. For example, respondents described instances where they felt unsafe walking outside and entered a local business to ask for help, as well as seeing posters in washrooms informing women how to let staff know if they felt unsafe and needed help.



Additionally, some respondents identified organizations and programs that support women and girls, such as walk-safe programs, and offer helpful services or resources for those who have experienced violence.

By contrast, a lack of bystander intervention was identified as a risk factor for violence, with many respondents describing incidents where they had not been supported and where others had not intervened or helped. For example, one respondent reported being noticeably followed and sexually harassed, but that “not a single other person came to my aid.” Further, some respondents noted incidents where they had asked for help, but felt they were dismissed or that adequate support was not provided.

“When a bouncer saw a couple of drunk men follow a friend and I down the street, he told us to come inside and wait until the men stopped bothering us and walked away. He kept an eye out for us and informed us when they had walked past.”

“There are signs in the women’s bathroom with instructions that if you are on a ‘bad date,’ how to let the bartender or servers know and they will help to get you out of that situation.”

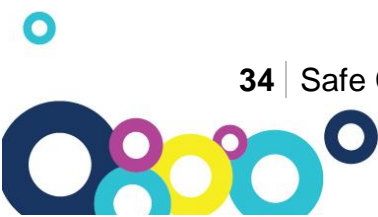
“We were being stalked by a guy and ran into this shop. The guy followed us in, but the woman inside kicked him out and scolded him for harassing women. It was late at night and nothing else was open. We really felt scared until she came to our rescue.”

“It happened in broad daylight surrounded by so many people and no one did anything.”

“A stabbing occurred in the parking lot of the apartment building. Many bystanders witnessed what happened and did not help.”

Knowledge of Previous Incidents in an Area (n=41) – Another risk factor for feeling unsafe in a specific location discussed by respondents was having knowledge of or hearing about a previous incident of violence that had occurred there. For example, respondents most commonly reported hearing about incidents of assault in certain areas, including sexual assault, theft, and gun or knife violence. Also, some respondents knew friends or family members who had been assaulted in the identified location. For some respondents, they felt particularly uncomfortable being approached when walking in areas where they knew incidents of violence had occurred or where there were many calls for police support. Additionally, a couple of respondents noted they felt unsafe because they had seen or heard about an individual who had been convicted of assault and released from custody.

“I had been walking back home at night from a bar. Nothing in particular had happened to me, but I was on edge the entire time. A friend of mine had recently been assaulted on the bridge when he was walking home at night. I didn’t have the money to cab and taking the bridge was the quickest way home.”



“Hearing of incidents happening in this area has made me feel unsafe to wait for the bus by myself in this area.”

“I feel unsafe walking on the path, since I heard about an attack on a young woman riding her bike through there.”

“My neighbour was sexually assaulted while running on the paved path in the ravine.”

Disruptive Behaviour (n=27) – Some respondents who reported violent incidents or occurrences where they felt unsafe identified the incidents were related to disruptive behaviour, such as “public outbursts,” people “acting erratically,” and people “freaking out.”

“The street preachers with megaphones yelling at women of all ages, myself included, while walking to Starbucks with my 6 year old. They called us sluts, me for wearing makeup and having short sleeves.”

“A man unlocking his bicycle from the rack was threatening to ‘slaughter every last one of [us].’ He was yelling at the top of his voice, shouting obscenities, and threatening violence to anyone in the area. It was the first time I ever felt genuinely unsafe in this city.”

“I was walking home from my friend’s place at about 10:30 p.m. A man who was talking to himself followed me and started talking to me too. He walked beside me for about 2 or 3 blocks and said strange ‘paranoid sounding things’ until he wandered across the street yelling to himself.”

Social Norms and Discrimination (n=27) – Respondents expressed concerns about social norms and forms of discrimination that increase the risk of women and girls experiencing violence or feeling unsafe. In particular, respondents noted incidents and risk factors relating to racism, sexism, and discrimination, particularly against Indigenous women and girls, newcomer women and girls, women and girls with disabilities, and members of the LGBTQ2+ community. A couple of respondents noted the negative impacts on women and girls that occur as a result of sexist comments, with some specifically identifying feeling uncomfortable by the presence of “street preachers” and the comments they make. Incidents of racism experienced by respondents included having racial slurs yelled at them and being the target of harassment and intimidation because of their skin colour. One respondent also explained that as a newcomer woman, she had been the target of harassment due to language barriers. A few respondents identifying as Indigenous also discussed their concerns about the extent of racism experienced by Indigenous women and girls in the community.

Discrimination and safety issues for members of the LGBTQ2+ community were also discussed by respondents, including harassment when walking in public with their same sex partner or feeling some spaces were not LGBTQ2+ inclusive. One respondent reported they try to present as “less visibly queer” to reduce the likelihood of harassment. Women and girls who self-identified as living with a disability also



discussed the discrimination they had experienced, including being targeted for harassment and receiving demeaning comments. To help promote feelings of safety, respondents identified a need to create more accessible and inclusive spaces.

“The experience of lesbian couples and their harassment by males are so often ignored or dismissed as creepy, but not dangerous. In fact, we are very frequently attacked by them.”

“I was demeaned for my disability and men felt they could get away with it.”

“I am an obviously disabled, ‘visible minority’ woman. The constant racial slurs and attacks made for a really bad situation.”

“The ‘street preachers,’ I’ve never had a direct interaction with them, but when I see them, I purposefully avoid them.”

“Older men are targeting younger girls because they think they are ‘delinquent’ Indigenous women. Indigenous women are now starting to find their voice. Men still think they won’t fight back. Men still don’t listen to them.”

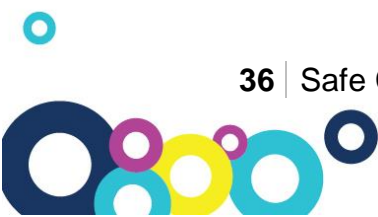
Education and Training (n=11) – To help promote safety and prevent violence, respondents discussed a need for more education and training on how to identify, respond to, and support people who have experienced sexual or physical violence and aggression. Respondents recommended increasing public knowledge and awareness about sexual harassment and violence, including strategies for how to address and prevent sexual violence, as well as available resources or options for seeking help. Educational programming for men was also recommended to engage more men in discussions about violence against women and girls. Additional education and training regarding how to support victims and improve the experience of reporting was also recommended for service providers and police who respond to incidents of violence.

“Education and workshops about how to deal with harassment.”

“Places where men can learn why it’s not okay to prey on women and abuse them, and deal with their own issues.”

“More police is not the issue. Better training of the men and women on the front line (e.g., cops, paramedics, etc.) about what to look for as aggressive behaviour and how to treat a person who is saying there is an issue or that they feel unsafe, or that they have been violated in some way. More ‘I believe you’ and less ‘prove it.’”

“I wish the school had more support services for people who have been sexually assaulted. It would be especially helpful to have professors and academic counsellors receive training on how to deal with students who have been sexually assaulted.”



4.8 Places and Spaces: Where Violence Is Occurring

The following section outlines the most commonly identified types of public places and spaces where respondents reported experiencing or witnessing an incident of violence.

In Transit (n=286) – Respondents commonly described being in transition from one place to another when they experienced violence. For example, several respondents reported experiencing violence or harassment when using public transit, either while waiting at a bus stop, riding the bus, or after getting off the bus. Some respondents expressed feeling “stuck” when they were harassed at a bus stop, since they would miss their bus if they walked away from the situation. Further, several respondents mentioned being followed, chased, and/or verbally harassed once they left the bus and started walking. Respondents also commonly reported experiencing harassment and being followed while walking to and from work, school, or an event, walking in a parking lot or walking to their car, driving or sitting in a parked vehicle, and while riding a bike.

“I was harassed while getting into my car by one young man who was very rude and threatening and also took my picture with his phone. The parking lot was well lit and I was parked close to the building, but had to walk to the second row of parking. I was on my own.”

“I was followed off the bus by a man. I was aware and tried to stop in an area to force the guy to ‘go where he was going,’ but he stopped as well. Luckily I had a cell phone and called my friend to come walk towards the bus stop.”

“While walking home from work, I was followed and accosted by a man asking me personal questions – ‘Do you have a boyfriend? Can I be your boyfriend? Are you a lesbian?’ Luckily my boyfriend worked nearby, so I ducked into the office to avoid this man. I didn’t want him to find out where I lived. I watched him continue down the street to begin pestering another woman.”

Parks, Paths, and Green Spaces (n=81) – Incidents of violence, including verbal harassment, being followed, public indecency, and physical assault, were also commonly identified by respondents as occurring in parks and other green spaces, such as forested areas, as well as along bike paths, bridges, trails, and pedestrian pathways.

Further, some respondents expressed overall concerns about the safety of parks and felt that additional safety measures could be put in place so that parks can “be enjoyed by all.” Additionally, running, jogging, and walking pets were commonly identified outdoor activities respondents were engaged in when an incident of violence had occurred.

“[We were a] lesbian couple holding hands. [We were] chased by men the entire length of the park while they threatened rape to ‘convert’ us.”

“While walking my dog, one man came up from behind me and aggressively pushed me, and then he ran off down the bike path.”



“I was raped by the river because nobody hears or sees anything.”

“A man followed me along the walking path, repeatedly telling me I was pretty and asking me to go out with him. He was considerably larger than me and made me very physically uncomfortable (e.g., walking too close to me, too much staring).”

Residential Areas (n=70) – One of the public spaces where respondents reported incidents of violence had occurred was residential areas, with some respondents reporting incidents of violence that had occurred within their own homes. For example, one respondent reported being abused by their roommate. Other respondents had experienced a break-in or physical assault in their home. Respondents also indicated incidents of violence had occurred in and around the residential buildings or the buildings where they lived, such as “fights” outside on the sidewalk, harassment while using building amenities like the laundry room or elevator, and being followed into their apartment building.

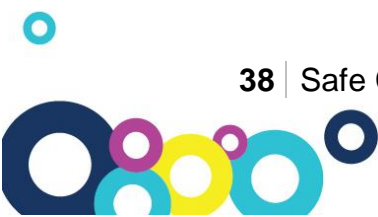
“A random man was waiting in the apartment entrance and came through the door with me when I opened it. He rode the elevator and told me all the things he would do to me ‘better than my boyfriend would.’”

*“I was walking my dog around 6:30 p.m. and there was a man sitting on the grass in front of a house. He was muttering obscenities to himself and as we approached, he started yelling that I’m a ‘b****,’ I work for ‘the man,’ I’m rich, and that I’m a ‘whore who was on my way to give b*** j*** to men at the park.’ As I walked by, I said, ‘Excuse me?’ and he started yelling more, saying how I ‘need to be raped.’”*

“I used to live in this area and constantly had to walk past my building, as there were men following me or yelling obscene things. There were always people around and outside my building that made me feel unsafe, would be asking personal questions, and made me feel very unsafe that they knew where I lived.”

Local Businesses, Shopping Areas, and Service Centres (n=66) – Another identified location where respondents reported sexual harassment and non-sexual harassment or aggression had occurred was in and outside of local businesses and shopping areas, such as malls and plazas, restaurants and coffee shops, stores, and pharmacies. For example, some respondents discussed experiencing violence while waiting in line to make a purchase, eating at a restaurant, and entering or exiting a store. Additionally, a few respondents noted they had experienced an incident of violence or had witnessed behaviours that made them feel unsafe when accessing a service or support, including the library, medical services, and emergency rooms.

“A man followed me in his car from the convenience store after I refused to give him my number.”



“There was a man sitting at the table near the entrance/exit of the library calling out to me and making comments. It made me feel uncomfortable, especially because I had to go by him again in order to leave the library.”

“Someone who appeared to be intoxicated grabbed my butt in front of my three kids outside of the plaza. He told me I was a ‘beautiful momma.’”

“[I was] groped while standing in line to buy coffee.”

Downtown (n=54) – Respondents often referred to “downtown” or identified specific intersections and locations in the downtown London area when describing incidents of violence. Respondents also commonly reported locations in and around downtown buildings or shopping areas where they felt unsafe or an incident of violence had occurred. Overall, some respondents expressed concerns about the downtown environment, describing the area as “unwelcoming” and “unsafe” due to “fighting,” “aggressive panhandling,” and incidents of sexual harassment.

“[I experienced] catcalling and abusive language. I don’t want to go downtown as a result, in case it happens again.”

“Walking downtown, I often need to pass a collection of men who holler at women walking alone. They yell vulgar comments, but also make gestures, noises, and comments of displeasure if you walk confidently past. They appear upset that you ignore them.”

“I have been mugged and repeatedly harassed around this area of downtown.”

Nightlife Entertainment Spaces (n=50) – According to several respondents, incidents of violence also took place in spaces where people typically enjoy nightlife entertainment. For example, respondents described violence occurring in bars and clubs, especially during busy times, and while walking to and from these locations. One respondent noted they were “groped at [a] club.” Another respondent explained they used to go to a local bar, but stopped since “men would stand around the perimeter of the dance floor, watching women dance, often groping us when they walked by.” Respondents also identified incidents of “drugging” and sexual assault that had occurred at a house party. Additionally, some respondents described incidents of violence that had occurred at live music festivals, street festivals, and movie theatres.

“Often when walking down the street at night going to or from a bar, I’ve been catcalled.”

“A lone man at a festival followed me around the park. At first he just passed by me and muttered some suggestive, mildly inappropriate comments, then later approached me directly with an inappropriate proposal.”

*“A man I didn’t know grabbed me at a bar and called me ‘baby.’ When I pushed him away and told him not to call me that, he called me a ‘b****.’”*



“I was grabbed and touched inappropriately while at a house party.”

Campuses and Schools (n=20) – Respondents described incidents of violence that had happened in and around schools or post-secondary campuses, including being stalked, followed, sexually harassed, or assaulted. For example, one respondent reported being harassed and chased as they walked toward their car after a night class. Additionally, a few respondents explained they knew about a past incident of sexual assault that had occurred in a residence building or on campus.

“Male students from campus like to run past the residence naked and yell at us.”

“[I was] sexually harassed on campus. A boy slapped my butt.”

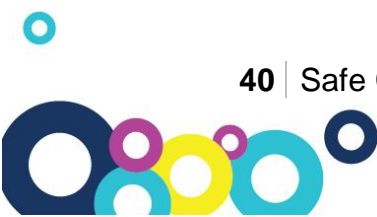
*“Guys sent around pictures of girls. Grade twelves ‘meowed’ at grade nines to allude to ‘wanting p****.’ I personally overheard guys in class describe forcing girls into having sex and bragging to their friends.”*

Workplaces (n=16) – Some respondents also reported violence, particularly sexual violence, occurring at their place of employment or where others worked. Further, respondents noted incidents of violence they experienced while on the job or upon entering and exiting their workplace. Respondents also identified factors that made them feel unsafe at their job, including working alone and receiving inappropriate comments or attention from a customer. Additionally, some respondents explained they witnessed harassment occurring at other places of work where they were not employees.

“[I was] verbally harassed walking into work.”

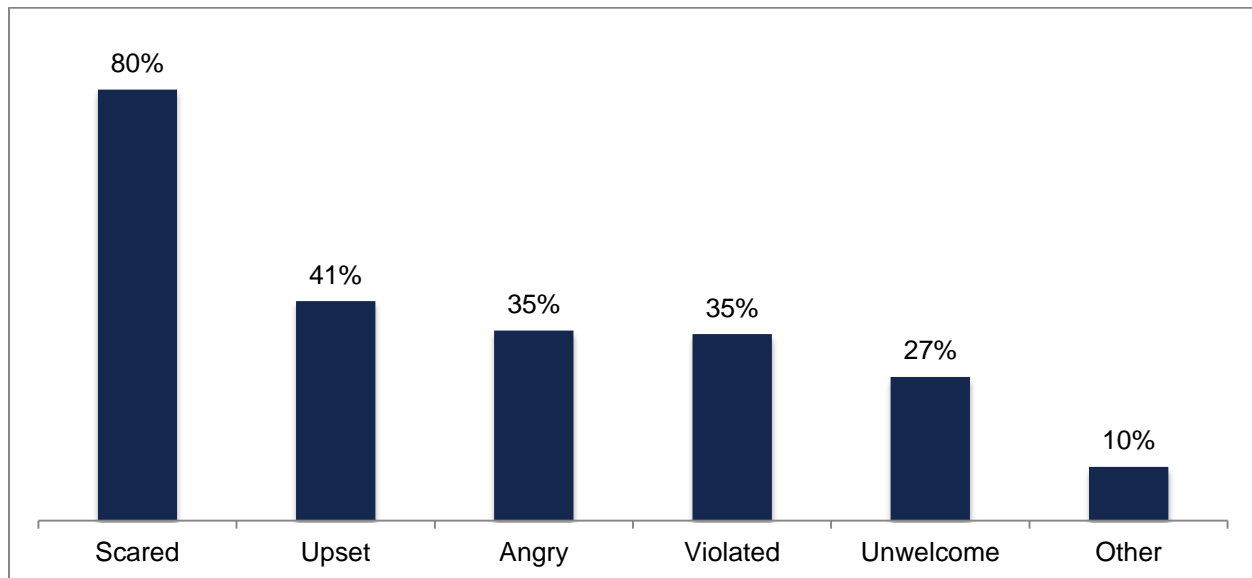
“I have had multiple instances at my work where men say inappropriate or sexual things, ask for pictures of us. There is only ever one girl in the store at a time and we work alone, so this makes all of us feel unsafe.”

“I was at work. This guy was staring at me, then walked up to my male colleague and said some things before leaving. Later, my colleague came up to me and asked if I had a ride home. He told me to wait for him before I left the store and he would wait with me for my ride because that guy had said something that made him worried for my safety. I was terrified and am now a little paranoid every time I leave work. That being said, it felt good to know that I have friends who will look out for me.”



4.9 Impact on Women and Girls

Figure 5: How Respondents Felt at Unsafe Locations (n=1,511)⁵³



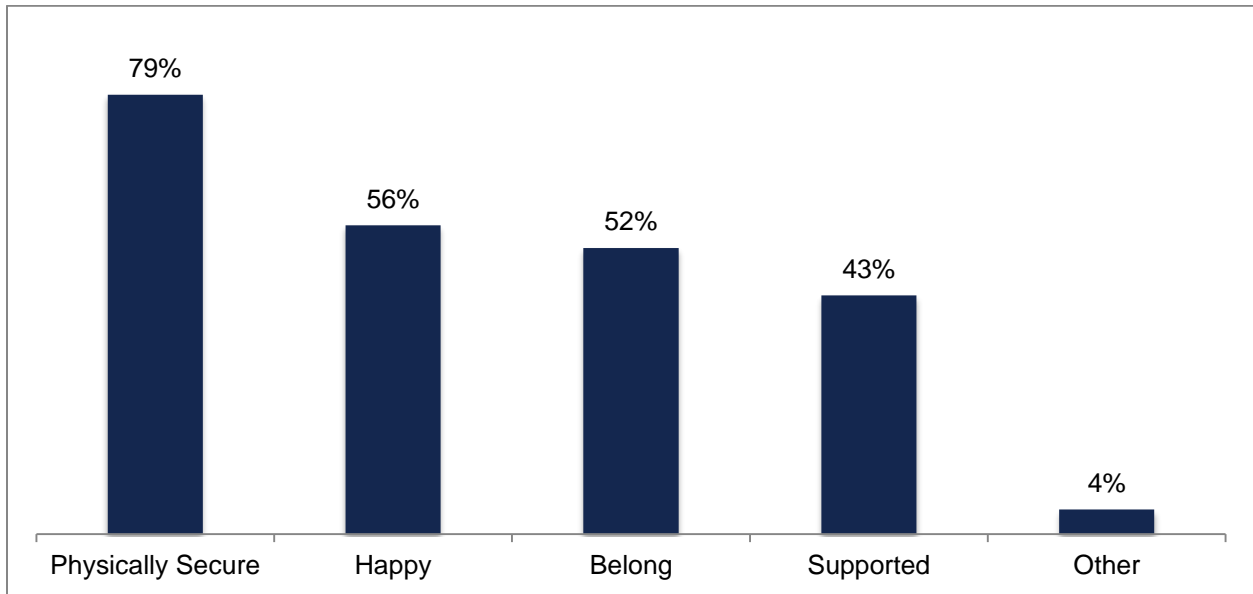
Respondents were asked to describe how they felt at locations they reported as unsafe and were provided with a list of response options to choose from. Feeling scared was the most commonly reported feeling, which was selected by 80% (n=1,212) of respondents. Further, 41% (n=617) of respondents reported feeling upset, just over one-third of respondents felt angry (35%, n=534) or violated (35%, n=524), and 27% (n=404) indicated feeling unwelcome. Additionally, 10% (n=151) of respondents identified feeling another emotion or feeling.⁵⁴

⁵³ Respondents were able to select more than one response to this question, therefore, the percentages in this chart do not sum to 100%.

⁵⁴ Descriptions of “other” emotions included feeling confused, hated, sexualized, insignificant, afraid, humiliated, ashamed, disappointed, alone, uncomfortable, traumatized, worried, anxious, nervous, overwhelmed, terrified, disgusted, uneasy, irritated, sick, annoyed, hopeless, startled, threatened, frustrated, exhausted, paranoid, disturbed, and embarrassed.



Figure 6: How Respondents Felt at Safe Locations (n=246)⁵⁵



When asked to choose from a list of responses about how they felt at locations they identified as safe, 79% (n=195) of respondents reported they felt physically secure. Additionally, 56% (n=137) of respondents reported feeling happy at safe locations, 52% (n=127) reported feeling like they belonged, and 43% (n=106) reported feeling supported. In total, 4% (n=11) of respondents selected “other” for this question.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Respondents were able to select more than one response to this question, therefore, the percentages in this chart do not sum to 100%.

⁵⁶ Some respondents who selected “other” for this question described the location as “peaceful,” noted that “nothing dangerous will happen,” explained that they enjoy nature and green spaces, or stated that people in their community care about others.



Section 5.0

Next Steps – Moving to Action

5.1 The Development of the Safe Cities Action Plan

The results of this scoping study provide insights into the nature and type of violence women and girls experienced in public spaces, risk factors and protective factors, and the places and spaces where women and girls experienced violence.

The findings in this report will be used to inform the development of strategies to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls in public spaces through the development and implementation of a Safe Cities Action Plan.

Create a Community-Based Governance Structure (Timeframe: April 2020 – June 2020)

The scoping study was led by the Safe Cities Community Advisory Group. Members of the advisory group had specific expertise that supported a robust and rigorous scoping study. The Safe Cities Action Plan will continue to require strong leadership from the community. A backbone organization, steering committee, and working groups will need to come together to deliver on the actions in the plan.

Terms of reference will be created to articulate the roles, responsibilities, and expertise required to operationalize the Safe Cities Action Plan. A strong governance structure will ensure appropriate systems, processes, and resources are in place to effectively implement the plan.

Develop Recommendations and an Action Plan (Timeframe: July 2020 – March 2021)

Violence against women and girls is a community issue that requires a community response. Diverse perspectives, ideas, and experiences will be sought to ensure solutions are meaningful and actionable.

Communities of practice will be formed in alignment with the most commonly identified places and spaces where respondents report experiencing or witnessing violence, including: in transit, parks and green spaces, residential areas, gathering spaces (including local businesses, shopping areas, and service centres), downtown, and campuses and schools. Communities of practice will bring people together with specific expertise and knowledge, including those with lived experience, to co-develop recommendations and solutions.

Local, national, and international experts will share practices that have been proven to effectively prevent or respond to violence against women and girls. Solutions will be considered based on whether they are appropriate and/or applicable to London.



For solutions to be implemented effectively, they require a strong plan of action. This includes setting out specific initiatives, timelines, expected outcomes, and goals. The action plan will set the foundation for future monitoring and reporting of progress and results. The Safe Cities Action Plan will be comprehensive and will address multiple risk and protective factors.

Implement the Safe Cities Action Plan (Timeframe: April 2021 – March 2024)

Once the Safe Cities Action Plan is prepared, the next step will be the implementation of the plan. Specific details related to implementation will be available once the Safe Cities Action Plan has been developed.

5.2 Resources and Investment

The development and implementation of the Safe Cities Action Plan requires strong leadership from the City of London, community agencies, and private sector partners. This is important work that will also require financial investment, dedicated staff, and committed volunteers.

It is important to note that there is already great work being done in the community that is having a positive impact. This work will continue.

