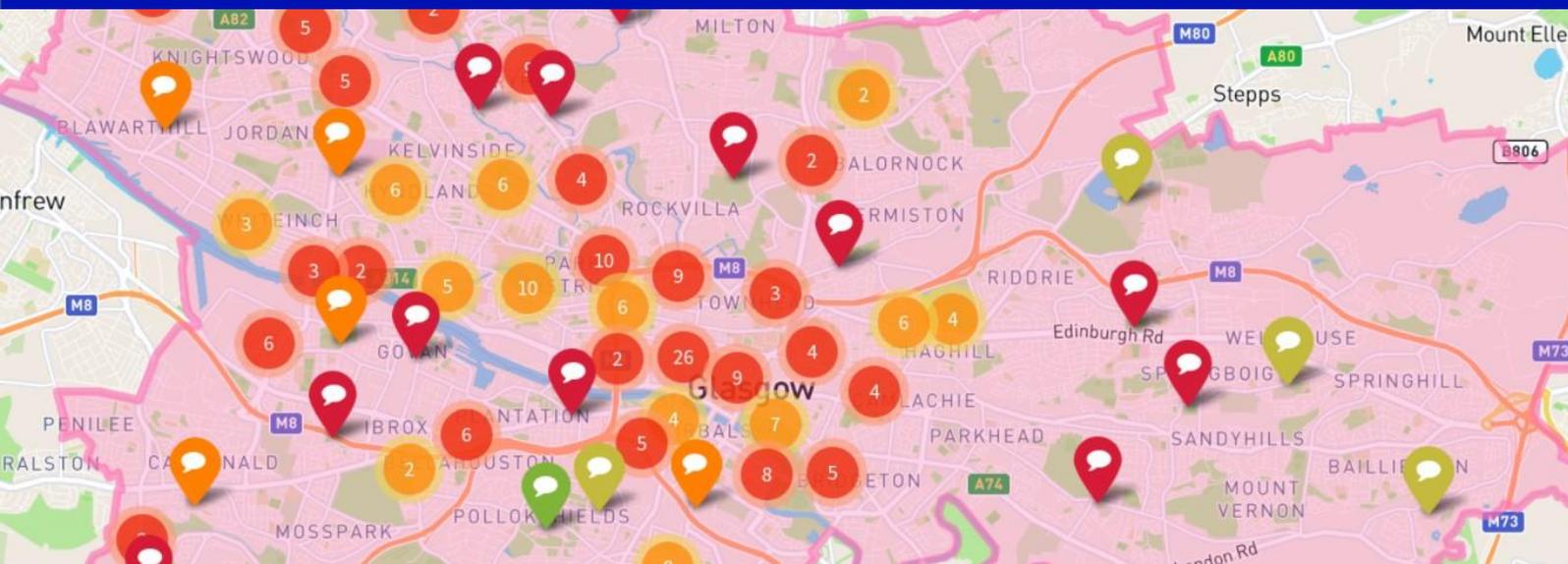


I feel trapped

Women living with public harassment and abuse in Glasgow



The following report highlights some of the contributions of women to Glasgow women's safety app. The app included a map of the city where women could indicate where they

experienced / were fearful of harassment and abuse. The map was open from 10th December 2021 until 1st March 2022.

This is the first stage of this project. Focus groups will follow and findings will be presented to working groups and decision-makers to influence policy and strategy in Glasgow.

March 2022

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1. Background.

Wise Women, in partnership with Glasgow Girls Club, Commonplace and Glasgow Violence Against Women Partnership, developed a women's safety app, that contained Commonplace's heatmap, to consult with women about their experiences of harassment / abuse in public spaces. Glasgow Girls Club, committed to finding IT solutions to social issues, were central in improving the accessibility of the heatmap by developing an app to hold it.

The app has now become a core element of the project and will be developed further over the next few months.

The idea behind the Project was that women would download the app and then if they, or a woman they knew, experienced a relevant incident they would add it to the map.

It was essential to the partnership that this would not be yet another consultation but would be a tool for change. Glasgow Violence Against Women's Partnership have shown commitment to the Project and is working with the partners to explore future work, including focus groups, a men's survey and embedding the findings in the City's strategy and policy.

Some women reached out to us whilst the survey was open with concerns that this would be yet another consultation with women or that the purpose was to highlight how women could mitigate against ongoing harassment and abuse. This is not the case. Wise Women, alongside the partner agencies, is committed to improving women and girls' safety in Glasgow. From the beginning of this Project the partnership has been determined that the survey is the first in a four-stage process for change.

- Stage 1: Women's Survey.
- Stage 2: Focus Groups for additional information.
- Stage 3: Embedding information gathered into strategic working groups.
- Stage 4: Decisions for change putting women's safety at the centre of strategy and policy in the city.

2. Who has raised their voice?

We would like to thank all the women who contributed to this survey. In total there were 609 contributions to the survey with a wide demographic of participants. Most women contributing were over 44 years of age (64%) with the highest age range represented being 45 – 64 (31%). 100% were women, with 5 preferring not to say gender identity and 5 describing as an alternative to identifying as a woman.

Incidents reported were from across Glasgow, and there was a balanced representation from North, South, West and East Glasgow. We do have concerns that some local areas, due to covid restrictions and lack of public meeting space, adequate poster publicity was not possible. More detailed analysis of the survey will highlight the impact of these challenges.

Women also recognised the intersectional nature of the harassment and abuse they and others experienced. They recognised the risks to women experiencing multiple discrimination depending on social and personal characteristics. Unfortunately, we did not include being older in our options. We thank the women who contributed for highlighting this and will include this in future surveys.

Intersectionality	
Being a woman	30%
Being alone	24%
Being young	6%
Being LGBTQ	8%
Race / Ethnicity	7%
Being gender non-conforming	7%
Having children with you	4%
Being pregnant	3%
Having a visible disability	6%
Elderly	2

“As a woman of colour, the group of young boys that sometimes loiter on the streets is very intimidating and these boys sometimes pick on a lone walking woman of colour with hijab for no reason, making racial remarks and laughing.”

3. What women said about their communities.

Women were offered the opportunity to choose from multiple choice answers and to include their own comments. The multiple-choice sections guided women’s contributions, and this will be evaluated and reviewed for any future survey. A section specific to lighting may have influenced high levels of concern around lighting in areas, however women indicated several challenges in the vast majority of the contributions.

Significantly where women identified “intimidation” and “threats” as factors the vast majority also included “groups of men” and “groups of young people”. The presence of groups appears to have increased the risk of intimidation of threats. Many of the women identifying these issues also indicated a lack of police presence in the area. This issue will be analysed more for the final report, due to be published in November 2022, following a survey with men. The men’s survey will ask

Number of times women indicated the following was factor in her fear.	
Poorly lit	187
Feeling isolated	112
Anti-Social Behaviour	105
Groups of men in area	94
Run down area	81
No police presence	81
Intimidation	76
Groups of young people in area	76
Loitering	73
Area known for violence	71
Fly Tipping	68
Previous experience of crime	48
Feeling trapped	40
Infrequent public transport	29
Threats	26
Religious tensions in area	13
Racial tensions in area	13
Discrimination	7
Inappropriate behaviour	4

them to highlight where they see harassment and abuse of women in public spaces.

It was not only groups of local men who caused fear and anxiety for women. Several women spoke of men entering the area to exploit women through prostitution. This increased not only fear, but also the risk of being approached by the men looking for sex for money.

“When I walk in this area to and from meetings, cars often slow down beside me as the area has been known for men to pick up women in prostitution.”

“I [live] around this area and don’t even feel safe walking my dog here after dark. There is rubbish everywhere and bad lighting, there are also many Air BNBs in the building and some are used as brothels, this brings many men who don’t live here to the area which is a large cause for concern.”

“Was asked from sex by a man on the street he walked behind me on way to work.”

Women had many connections to the area where they had experienced the incident they were reporting. Of all the contributions 199 (47%) connections to the area were unavoidable. This included living (17%) and / or working in the area (5%), having friends and family living in the area (8%) or it being part of their travel route (13%), their child went to school or college in the area (3%) and / or the woman cared for someone in the area (0.7%).

Furthermore 6% of those contributing had experienced a previous incident in the area. This may have influenced the 40 women who said they felt trapped in the area where the incident / s took place.

For many women their response depended on their circumstances. In only 14 contributions did women report not avoiding an area due to fear. Women discussed a range of responses to avoid the fear of / further incidents.

- After dark (41%)
- If alone (10%)
- Always (7%)
- On weekends (9%)
- Daytime (6%)
- Late at night (0.4%)

For 25% women, however, they could not avoid this area and one can only assume are repeatedly subjected to fear and anxiety when they are in these areas.

When asked how safe they felt in Glasgow there was a varied response	
Neither safe nor unsafe	43%
Unsafe	32%
Safe	22%
Very unsafe	2.5%
Very safe	0.4%
In response to the same question regarding where the women lived indicated,	
Neither safe nor unsafe	20%
Unsafe	39%
Safe	35%
Very unsafe	2%
Very safe	2%

4. Mitigating Harassment and Abuse.

Women made many attempts to avoid and mitigate against harassment and abuse, often feeling alone in their attempts. Of 295 contributions, only 38, (12%), said they had or were intending to report the incident to the police. It is concerning that women are dealing with sometimes daily harassment and abuse, but feel unable to request support. Some women had complained to the relevant authorities but were left feeling unprotected and having to mitigate to ensure their safety.

“The level of anti-social behaviour on Sauchiehall Street is so bad that, if I’m on my own, I will cut along one of the worst lit, more isolated streets that runs parallel to get to somewhere on Sauchiehall Street rather than walk down it in the dark.”

“This harassment was very scary and different from anything I had experienced and I feel the police did not understand my feelings and fears about the incident and will not police the area.”

“I was followed from town here by a maleI eventually crossed the road to the bus stop to avoid the underpass, and he sat at the opposite side keeping an eye. Another member of the public commented ‘you have an admirer’... It was reported to the police, but all they could do was keep an eye out for man matching the description – nobody came out to speak to me, and I’ve never walked this direction alone again.”

“The lighting is really poor and often doesn’t work meaning commuters are forced to walk in darkness. I use my torch on my phone but it doesn’t provide enough visibility to see someone approaching.”

“Lived her for around 6 months, ended up moving due to feeling unsafe. Constant groups of men on the street once it gets dark. Twice (during the daytime) I had to walk past two men with their hands down their pants rubbing themselves, right next to the entrance to my building.”

“Women are left to look after one another..... I have lost count of how many times I have had to nod and smile at men ... and listen.”

“This [public urination] is disgustingly common in this area and the police have little or no response when it is reported.”

“I have repeatedly asked the council to improve the lighting in this area but no action has been taken.”

“I never feel safe walking from the train station or from events at hotel or restaurant on the main road. I often walk with my key between my knuckles when I can’t get anyone to come meet me.”

“Anti-social behaviour on trains, particularly men who are drunk and in groups, harassing lone women and there is no police presence, even on the busiest routes.”

Options to mitigate however were limited. Women spoke of being harassed in their car and whilst cycling.

“Lots of aggression from male car drivers about using the ‘bike lane’ which is actually a poorly managed area Honking, threatening, close passing and then continuing aggression when I catch up to them at the lights.”

“I’ve been followed by men in cars several times in this area and actually sometimes the same man more than once over time.”

“After parking, a man in a rage tried to kick the car and pull me out. It is really frightening when there is no obvious trigger ... I am looking in to having a dashcam to begin to capture this behaviour in the future. I am fed up with people thinking it is acceptable in some way to threaten, intimidate and be violent towards women. Think our culture is going backward in this area.”

“This is my main cycle route to/from work – however, in late autumn / winter I cannot cycle this route on my way home as it is too unsafe to do so in the dark and have to adapt my route.”

For women who work there are particular issues when working shifts. One unexpected issue highlighted was the challenges for shift staff in the hospitals across Glasgow. Lack of lighting, inappropriate approaches from men, sexual assault and lack of protection were raised. This was all the more concerning as there was a suggestion that the challenges were common knowledge. If this is the case this would suggest an employment health and safety issue.



“Towards King’s Park From Queen’s Park, Glasgow” by Loz Flowers”

“Going to work on dark mornings alone is tough.”

“Staff frequently have to walk through the hospital campus alone, when it is dark and they often feel vulnerable. Frequent stories of antisocial behaviour around the hospital campus and incidents of vandalism and theft from the car parks and hospital itself.”

“It is very near the hospital and there are often people coming through at odd times of night due to shift work – their needs need to be catered for.”

“Approached in daylight by a man waiting by my car who inappropriately exposed himself when I was working at Yorkhill Hospital.”

“No security presence after dark on Queen Elizabeth campus. Lighting is poor. Nothing has been done to address this. Feels very unsafe walking to staff car park at 10pm after my shift.”

“The streets surrounding Glasgow Royal Infirmary have expensive parking meters on them meaning staff need to park 10 – 15 min walk in surrounding neighbourhoods. In the winter this means they are walking to work in darkness and walking back to their car alone ... there is communication of staff being assaulted either in the morning or evening, or being approached from behind.... 70% of NHS staff are women.

“I was walking home from Glasgow City centre one summer evening in broad daylight, I had earphones in, a cyclist mounted the pavement and slapped my buttock as he cycled past.”

“It is my route to work however I avoid this area after dark because it is so poorly lit.”

5. Structural challenges in communities.

Women identified structural issues that exacerbated their fears and experiences of harassment and abuse.

“You need to walk single file which makes you feel uneasy.”

“Very narrow pavement on the road walking down to Stobhill. Would avoid if I had a pram or kids or any kind of visual impairment.”

“Coming out of the station at both of the above is concerning as there is a patch where you come under a concealed bridge and it is not particularly well lit or covered by cameras.”

Some women recognised however that these structural issues should not mean that they cannot use streets and parks due to men’s behaviour.

Women were keen to point out that they should be able to live their lives regardless of lighting and lack of routes to escape. For the majority however these caused very real fears.

Wise Women’s position is that whilst men continue to abuse their power and privilege communities must respond to women’s safety needs and offer increased protection where possible. Unless women’s safety needs are put at the centre of strategy and policy in relation to city structures, as well as services, Glasgow, as with other cities, will remain male centric, and sometimes dangerous places for women to live.

Lighting in the area.

Too dark	144 (46%)
Patchy lighting coverage	94 (30%)
Lighting is not the issue here	36 (11%)
The right amount of lighting	26 (8%)
I don’t know	10 (3%)
Not applicable	4 (1%)
Too bright	1 (0.3%)

“The area has no lights. That’s despite the known crime in the vicinity.”

“In the day time it is a very commonly used path, but the poor lighting as it gets darker and the areas history of violence make it unsafe at night. Some women may not realise how poorly lit it is because on some of the entry ways to the path it is better lit.”

“Since the lights have been changed to the LED ones on the road they do not cast enough light back to light this path.”

“We also need the council to regularly inspect lighting and fix it. Relying on public reports means lights can sit dark for months.”

“This is where you’d enter the Stockingfield aqueduct / viaduct on Lochburn Road. Although there is lighting, I don’t feel the lighting is bright enough. The area is lined with bushes etc so I’d feel endangered if I had to walk here alone at night when it’s dark.”

“Railway bridge, opposite Bridge Street Underground, near Laurieston Bar. This street is poorly (or not at all) lit, often has water overflows, can’t access part of the pavement. It is only way to the bus stop nearby. Lots of traffic. Feels really isolated and unsafe.”

“Paths are bumpy and full of pot-holes which makes it impossible for a disabled woman like myself to be able to travel.”

6. Men’s behaviour is the danger.

At the end of the day harassment and abuse is the responsibility of the perpetrators. The women who have contributed to this survey have tried to live their lives in peace and safety, but time and again perpetrators have exploited their position of power to intimidate, threaten and humiliate women just for being in public.

As one woman stated, *“The issue isn’t the location but a complete lack of respect and regard for women.”*

"I had an experience – there was a guy with his dog, who followed me when I was doing community pick up, near the canal, asked where I lived and all these personal questions. He walked on a bit and waited to see if I was going in his direction, I turned back and he came back the same way and made an excuse."

"I was sexually assaulted inside the actual take away (named) and I was loud and screamed and told the staff and they just ignored me other customers helped me and we called the police."

"I have been drugged and sexually assaulted in one of the pubs here, as well as faced years of sexual harassment as a bartender here."

"Woodlands Road. I was followed by a man along the whole length of Woodlands Road shouting 'hey sexy .. hey lady ... why are you ignoring me sexy...' etc/ I was on my own when it was dark. Very quiet street."

"Men intimidating you on the street and hearing things in people's houses when you pass by or in neighbouring flats. There's deprivation, drug and alcohol issues which all contribute to gender inequality and general feeling so of being unsafe in the area."

"(named street) is known amongst my friends as a hub for harassment. This is unfair as it is one of the busiest streets in Glasgow and good place for a night out. Women shouldn't have to restrict their movements, and socialising due to the actions of males."

"There is little to no police presence despite this being a main route of transport from the station and also from local bars and clubs. There is without fail daily antisocial behaviour. I've never stood in this taxi queue without some form of intimidation or worry of intimidation."

"If you walk from top to bottom (named street) you'll receive some sort of harassment, cat calling, wolf whistling or just straight up being unwantingly approached. Although being with a friend makes you feel less scared, that does nothing in terms of reducing the chances of it happening so it's not even like there is power in numbers. It seems like this is something we have to just accept is going to happen."

*"I was followed into the ice cream shop with my 14 year old daughter by a man in his 50s shouting that I was a ***** as he believed I stole his parking space, he parked his car and followed me into the shop shouting. After I threatened to call the police he shouted at me more, he was very aggressive, there was 3 other male customers who sat and watched and also 2 men serving. No-one said a word, me and my daughter were the only two females here and felt threatened."*

"Can wait in a taxi queue for over an hour at the weekends to try and get home. Drunk men can often approach and harass you and you can't leave because you need transport home."

Not only does this affect women directly, but also creates communities of fear. Women spoke of historical incidents that heightened their anxiety and continued to impact on their everyday choices

Women also spoke of their fears for the safety of others, including their children.

“My child was touched and mocked by a middle-aged man while my child was right next to me waiting to cross the road in broad daylight.”

“My daughter experienced two incidents during which she was raped by three different people. I didn’t learn about them until she began having severe PTSD symptoms after we moved away. She was walking in her own neighbourhood after dark.”

“There has been a woman killed her – sexual assault, and constant comments when you walk by large groups of men that stand around from day to night. I am scared for my mother passing in their care as she has had men try to come in her window whilst in car.”

“Pedestrian tunnel from my street (street named). I use this tunnel to go to the park, local shops and visit friends. There are no mirrors at either entrance. Therefore, once you commit to enter the tunnel, it’s too late if there are people with a criminal intent inside the tunnel. I have to avoid this tunnel at night and take a much longer route to my house. My son walks through this tunnel to go to school also.”

“Behaviour of fans going to football matches needs to be looked at. Families and my son live in fear and anxiety as so-called fans congregate behind their flats on (named street).”

7. Suggestions for change

Many of the women, despite frustration at lack of action by authorities, had suggestions as to how to improve their communities.

“Clear the pavements of overhanging hedges.”

“Better infrastructure to enable walking at night.”

“I wish more venues would have posters up in what to do in the incident of sexual assault on their nights out..... there needs to be more support by councils to venues to provide the right harassment training to staff and to raise awareness to women what to do when something like this (sexual assault) arises.”

“In train stations we have HELP points we can press, why cant we have these at desolate bus stops.”

“While in toilet (named bar) there was a female who was upset as a result of the abuse she was subjected to from her partner.... I asked bar staff if they had any leaflets or any helplines that they could give her which they didn’t. I think in the first instance it would be a step forward to having helpline numbers available in female toilets in this bar and others.”

8. Conclusion.

There is no doubt there is much work to do. Not only to address the issues raised by the women, but also to embed women's safety into the strategy and policy of Glasgow and beyond.

Behind all the statistics and comments in this report there is a woman's life. A life restricted by fear and the reality of their communities.

This fear and reality prevent women from fulfilling their destinies. This is not to deny the strengths and achievement of all the women who contributed to this survey, but to recognise the barriers they overcome every day, whilst undertaking everyday tasks, connecting with others, and protecting those around them.

These are just some of the voices. All the contributions will be analysed alongside future focus groups and will support decision makers to understand the unacceptable epidemic of the harassment and abuse of women in public spaces.

We thank all the women. We value all their contributions.

INCREASING WOMEN'S SAFETY

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