



Reclaiming the Right;

Women and public safety in a Feminist City



Article 1 : All human being are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

(United Nations Human Rights Convention)

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1. Executive Summary.

Executive Summary

Who contributed?

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

Human Rights Issue.

Women's safety is a human rights issue protected by the Istanbul convention, CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) and the Equality Act 2010. Women with protected characteristics have additional rights.

Statistics.

In 2021 / 22 Police Scotland recorded 2176 rape or attempted rapes. This resulted in only 78 convictions. For young women the situation is even more urgent. The Girls Guides found 66% of girls and young women aged 11 to 21 had experienced sexual harassment at school or college in the past year (Girl Guides Attitudes Survey 2022).

Where women feel safe.

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., with 119 living in the area.

When do women feel safe?

41% of women reported avoiding areas of Glasgow after dark, 10% when alone. 32% of the women they indicated they felt unsafe in Glasgow at anytime.

Freedom of movement.

Public Transport was a major issue for women. All forms of transport were highlighted as problematic at times. This included infrastructure as well as direct experiences.

Some of the solutions.

Participants across the project emphasised the need to educate men and achieve cultural change through campaigns. This indicates that whilst infrastructure can help women, the attitudes and behaviour of men is the issue.

Article 1 : All human being are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

(United Nations Human Rights Convention)

2. Introduction.

In 2021 Wise Women with partners, Glasgow Violence Against Women Partnership, Glasgow Girls Club and Commonplace, appealed to women to raise their voice and tell us about their experiences of public safety in Glasgow.

This report outlines the outcomes of this project.

The purpose of this report is to appeal to partners across the public and private sector to work alongside the violence against women voluntary sector services to increase women's safety together.

Wise Women values all the contributions from women and therefore all contributions are included in a Quote Pack that accompanies this report. The inclusion of some quotes in this report is no a reflection of value given to each contribution, but was merely due to limited space.

3. Background.

Wise Women was established in 1994 to "... address women's fears of crime and violence by taking positive action through self-defence and personal safety course."

The impact of the Scottish Government's response to Covid 19, lockdowns, meant that Wise Women temporarily could not provide groupwork. Not only that but it was quickly realised that the lockdown procedures made women more vulnerable, both to violence in the home and in streets with less footfall.

The number of rapes reported to the police increased by more than a third in 2021. (Recorded Crime in Scotland, 2020-2021, Police Scotland)
Contact with the Scottish Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriages helpline doubled during lockdown. (Scottish Women's Aid)

The lockdown did however offer Wise Women the opportunity to become more involved in Strategic Work. This opportunity not only allowed us to begin the process of supporting women to attend strategic meetings, shifting the organisation's thinking. It became apparent during this time that although Glasgow City Council and partners were openly supportive of approaches to reduce and address violence against women, the statistics remained depressingly consistent. Women were continuing to experience male violence at the same rates and access to protection through criminal justice systems remained low.

In 2021 Wise Women contacted Commonplace, who were marketing a "heatmap" that allowed participants to highlight where they felt unsafe in their cities, towns, and villages. This combined with an App, developed with Glasgow Girls Club, was used to undertake a survey with women from 10th December 2021 until 8th March 2022. This generated huge interest in the media. This interest was not so forthcoming however when a second survey was attempted to encourage men to identify where they witnessed the public abuse and harassment of women in Glasgow, (see detail below)

4. What is a feminist city?

In 2021 Glasgow City Council adopted a motion to declare Glasgow a feminist city. This motion agreed that;

“In order to create public spaces that are safe and inclusive for women, and accessible for all members of the community, it is fundamental that women are central to all aspects of planning, public realm design, policy and development and budgets.”

The recognition of urban life as male centric is gathering pace across the globe. Glasgow is seeing major structural change in response to the climate crisis. Ensuring the voices of women residents, and in particular the most vulnerable, are heard will not only ensure greater safety for women, as required by international conventions, but will also offer women the opportunity to lead fulfilling lives.

“Adopting a feminist perspective in urban planning makes you be able to walk through a city and feel like in some way or another your city has been kind of shaped for you.” Sorcha MacIntyre, University of Groningen.

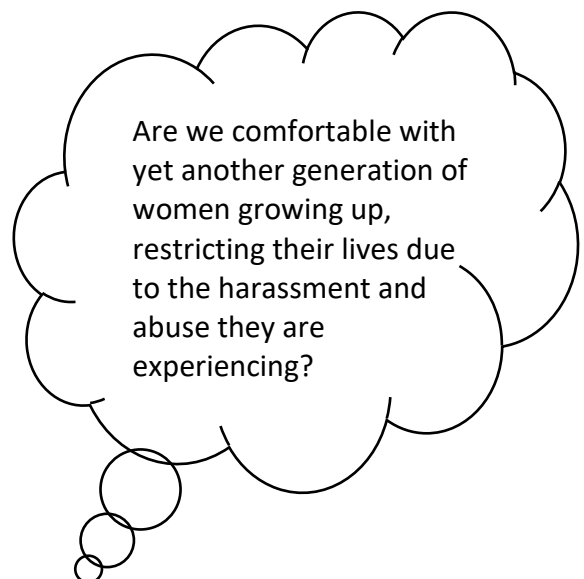
What Glasgow as a feminist city will ultimately look like has still to be decided. We hope the women’s voices in this survey will contribute to this discussion.

5. Increasing Women’s Safety Together?

It is alarming that in 2023 we continue to not only see high numbers of reported sexual harassment and abuse, but also that women continue to experience this often on a daily basis and from a young age. The Girl Guides attitudinal survey in 2022 found that;

- 64% of girls and young women aged 13 to 21 have experienced sexual harassment at school or college in the past year.
- More girls and young women aged 11 to 21 see or experience sexism in their daily lives at school, college, university, or work in 2022 (66%) than they did in 2018 (58%).

This intergenerational experience of violence and abuse continues despite millions of pounds and numerous national and local strategies being put in place. Women and girls continue to experience harassment and abuse in plain sight and nothing seems to change.



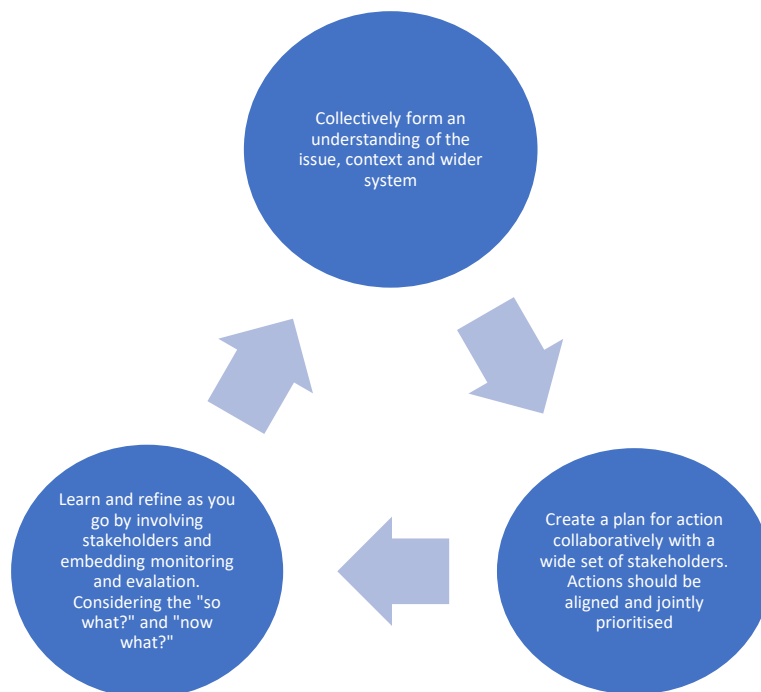
“Every women is (very likely) at risk when surrounded by a group of older man.”

“There is prostitution in the area which makes it unsafe for women and children.”

“Whilst females may feel particularly vulnerable in this area you cannot dismiss that children and any young male or female may also experience intimidation due to groups of adult men lingering in intimidating and sexual prowess manner.”

Contributions to survey

The final quote is an example of why making public spaces safer for women will only be achieved through a whole system approach;



Public Health Scotland

Only by having a comprehensive approach to violence against women, which includes Criminal Justice changes, more resourcing for women’s services and awareness raising campaigns, led by women, will we make any inroads to increase women’s safety.

The continuing situation is not only a disaster for women and girls, and the wider community, but also financially for Glasgow City Council. The Glasgow Standing Group on Violence Against Women (SGVAW), in partnership with Glasgow Violence Against Women Partnership, (GVAWP), commissioned a review into the financial costs of violence against women to the city. The findings were stark. The cost of violence against women to Glasgow City Council is £1,189,203,000 per annum. “This sum is made up of the human and emotional cost, the cost to the public sector and the cost of lost economic output.” Glasgow City Council however invests only £3,166,537 into the protection and support of women who experience violence. The vast majority of this money greatly benefits individual

women, but does not impact on the continuing culture of violence against women. (Williams, H. (2022) 'It shouldn't take a pandemic to see that these services are essential.')

Glasgow City Council has had a proud history of supporting women who have experienced violence. Since the first Women's Aid was established in Glasgow in 1973, a range of specialist services have been supported in Glasgow. Furthermore, Glasgow City Council has a clear definition of violence against women through the GVAWP;

"Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, within the general community, or in institutions including: domestic abuse; rape; sexual assault; stalking and sexual harassment and intimidation at work and in the public sphere; commercial sexual exploitation, including prostitution, trafficking, and pornography; child sexual abuse and adult survivors of child sexual abuse; dowry related violence; female genital mutilation; forced and child marriages and 'so called honour crimes."

This definition reflects Liz Kelly's continuum of violence against women, which recognises that all forms of violence against women are linked by the fact that the vast majority of perpetrators are men. It is essential that this root cause of violence against women is tackled to reduce the need for support services in the future. This requires cultural change. A change that will no longer look for reasons why a particular woman was vulnerable to abuse, but as to why a man would choose to use the vulnerability of a woman to harass, torture, rape and sometimes murder her.

This requires institutional change. While our institutions cannot protect or support women adequately, abusers are given the message that they are free to abuse at will. When this abuse happens in plain sight, with no intervention, the message is even stronger.

6. Technology for good.

This project could not have been undertaken without the partnership working relationships with Commonplace, but in particular Glasgow Girls Club. Wise Women relies on the IT expertise of other organisations, and this is often beyond our financial reach.

Glasgow Girls Club is committed to promoting technology for good and was key to Wise Women undertaking this project. The App has allowed the survey not only to be accessible and available to women on their mobile phones, but has also allowed us to offer women information at point of contact.

The flexibility of the App has allowed us to adjust in response to identified difficulties, for example we have moved from the heatmap to an online survey due to concerns about access to the survey for women who live with sight impairment.

7. SURVEYS.

The project undertook two surveys.

Women's Survey

Aim: to collate information of women's experiences of harassment and abuse in public spaces in Glasgow.

Men's Survey

Aim: to collate information on men's experiences of witnessing the public and harassment of women in public spaces in Glasgow.

The information from these surveys was to be used to influence strategic, policy and planning groups to increase women's safety across the City. The women's survey was well received with over 600 contributions. There was high level interest in the media, however we struggled to engage some of the larger institutions, including the three main football clubs in the city, hospitals, large entertainment venues. The survey was also affected by a further lockdown being imposed by the Scottish Government in December 2022 and a lack of community gathering spaces due to delays in reopening venues, reducing the opportunity to display information.

Wise Women also organised 3 focus groups with women, in partnership with Glasgow Girls Club. We had attempted to organise a vital focus group with women experiencing homelessness, but unfortunately this was delayed due to unforeseen circumstances. Two groups were held with Rights and Choices, a project connected to the Women's Support Project that supports migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women who are socially isolated and / or have experienced violence or abuse. We also held a focus group with women from Possibilities, "a fully purpose-built centre designed to cater for people with disabilities".

Due to the groupwork nature of the focus groups we reduced the amount of questions and encouraged women to contribute their own ideas.

The sessions were split into 2 sections. The first section ask women for their comments on;

- What makes you feel unsafe in Glasgow?
- What makes you feel safe in Glasgow?

The second section offered women the opportunity to choose from multiple choice lists. We Then finished the sessions asking women for their suggestions for solutions.

Section 1

What makes you feel unsafe in Glasgow?

Public Transport	4
Police / security	4
Structure of city	5
Lighting	2
Skills and confidence	5
More information	6
Other people helping	4

The women in the Rights and Choices group identified the structure of the City (6), in particular over grown foliage as some of the issues and Public Transport (5), including unreliable timetables and locations of bus stops as their main concerns. For the women in Possibilities lack of clear complaints procedures was their main concern.

What makes you feel safe in Glasgow?

Rights and Choices participants valued improved skills and confidence (4) when it came to feeling safe, whilst those from Possibilities valued supportive communities (3) and a police / security presence (3).

Public Transport	5
Police / security	2
Structure of city	6
Lighting	4
Skills and confidence	1
More information	2
Other people helping	0
Complaints procedures	3
Men's behaviour	4

Section 2

This section included multiple choice questions. This allows us to combine and compare findings from the survey.

Do you avoid areas of Glasgow?

Always	3
After dark	8
On weekends	2
Never	2
If alone	6
Daytime	

Participants from Possibilities raised concerns about going out in the dark the most, whereas Rights and Choices were most concerned about being alone. Rights and Choices participants, however, indicated that all areas were concerning to them.

Reporting experiences

Women were asked if, where they had experienced public harassment and abuse, had they reported this to the police. Across both groups 5 women indicated they had contacted the police, whereas 6 had not. Possibilities participants were slightly more likely to have reported (4).

When asked for reason why they did not report Rights and Choices participants did not think it would be taken seriously (3) or were frightened to approach the police (3). Only 2 women from Possibilities responded to this question, with 1 indicating that she did not think it was a crime and 1 did not think it would be taken seriously.

If you have experienced an incident did you report this to the police?

Yes	5	No	6
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If no, why did you not report?

it was not a crime	2
I did not think it would be taken seriously	4
I did not know how	1
I am frightened to go to the police	2

When asked how Glasgow could improve safety for women, as with the survey results women across the 2 groups valued education of men, campaigns about women’s safety and lighting. There were however other areas that reflected the groups membership of protected characteristics.

Although both groups valued free public toilets, Possibilities participants emphasised the need for hoists to aid access. A similar indicator was highlighted in public transport, where Possibilities participants emphasised the need for ramps to be available.

How could Glasgow be improved?

Improved infrastructure	8
Cleaner Streets	6
Community events	3
Educating men about vaw	7
More lighting	8
Free toilet facilities	4
More support for people who are homeless	7
More public transport	3
People you can go for help to in venues	2
Spaces for young people / youth groups	4
Campaigns about women's safety	8

Although both groups valued similar improvements, it needs to be recognised that Rights and Choices did not emphasise access requirements, even though a number of the women were using buggies. This would indicate that it is not enough to have one woman representing groups of women in decision making groups as the experience of communities can understandably be missed.

Finally the women from both groups were given the opportunity to identify some solutions to the challenges they were experiencing.

What can Glasgow Do?

More police presence
More call boxes / check in points
Safe space if you are feeling unsafe - do they have phone chargers
Information where safe spaces are
Advertising for services
More education for people to understand
Safety website
Work in Schools
Adverts on social media
Safety buttons in communities not just motorways
Free charging points for phones
Electric car points could be used
Could be sponsored by businesses
Better accessibility to venues - particularly for wheelchair users
Information on who to complain to
Access points should be safe and lit. Shouldn't be down lanes

Service lifts for access not good enough
Lifting and handling training and PVG for staff being asked to lift wheelchairs
All paths should be lowered for wheelchairs etc
Not comfortable with unisex toilets. "would rather use bookies"
Accessible toilets should not require a key
Videos about accessibility should be on [venues] websites
Free internet
Glasgow City Council should consult communities on all budgets and how money is allocated.

The men's survey was extremely disappointing. There were only 7 responses, one of which was from a woman who had witnessed an incident whilst out walking with her husband. There was virtually no media interest, again no interest from the football clubs or larger institutions and entertainment venues, with the exception of SWG3.

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.

Women were asked why they were in the area they had highlighted. Our concern was that women were feeling unsafe in areas they could not leave, for example if they lived there, unfortunately this was the case, suggesting that not only were women experiencing harassment and abuse, or were fearful of it, but that this was unavoidable in everyday life.

Reason for being in the area.	
Live there	119
Education	12
Work	42
Travel	114
Leisure	94
Socialising	203



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

Incidents reported were from across Glasgow, and there was a balanced representation from North, South, West and East Glasgow. We do have concerns that in some local areas, due to covid restrictions and lack of public meeting space, adequate poster publicity was not possible.

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.

“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.”

“Far too dark to walk down just to go to the shops. Have been cat called multiple times which is harassment. Also lots of groups of young men/older teens who live in Ballindalloch Drive hanging about the bus stops drinking a lot making women feel unsafe. Paths are bumpy and full of pot holes which makes it impossible for a disabled woman like myself to be able to travel safely.”

“I generally feel safe, it’s a well populated, well lit area with not much crime. However I would not go for a run in the parks in the dark and friends of different ethnicity have experienced harassment and racial slurs despite it being a racially diverse area.”

“All public parks need to be lit better even if it was part of an area in the park. 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.”

Contributions to survey

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. The men’s survey asked them to highlight where they seen 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.

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

“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.”

Contributions to survey

Freedom of movement

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.

Travel and Transportation

Glasgow has the lowest level of car ownership in Scotland, 374 vehicles for every 1,000 people aged 17+, (Scottish transport Statistics 2021, Transport Scotland). Whilst this is beneficial for the environment, it can have major implications for women’s safety.

Women consistently raise concerns about safety on public transport, and this survey was no different. Finding statistics on women’s experience of harassment and abuse on public transport is challenging as Hate Crime reporting tends to be used to assess safety. Women are not included in Hate Crime legislation. This limits our understanding and impacts on policy development and structural considerations.

A total of 41 women indicated that they had safety concerns in relation to public transport.

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%



Trains

"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."

"Very badly lit area. This road is a busy route from the train station and needs better lighting."

"I was on a train going back home. There was a group of men (3) (probably over 40 years old) very loud and clearly drunk. I was sitting on the aisle and they stood up and started pushing each other and one of them pretended to fall (yes, he got pushed but nothing too hard) and he could have held on to the back of the seat or the table in front of me but instead he decided to grab my thighs THAT WERE UNDER THE TABLE, basically at my crotch! I had no reaction at the time but to grab his hands and try to make him let go of me. He didn't apologise and just stared at me with nasty eyes. I got off the train and when I got home I called the police to report it. Days later the police contacted me to say that they had watched the security video and said that everyone that watched the video agreed that that was an accident!! They also said that because I was looking at my phone at the time, I didn't see that he got pushed. Well, I saw when they started getting rough, but who on earth would make eye contact with a bunch of drunk men in such confined space? It was very disappointing how the police dealt with this. I felt like they didn't take me serious but I know exactly what happened at that night. I was there!"

"Broomhouse area in Baillieston, especially waling routes to the Baillieston Train Station."

Contributions to survey

Taxis

"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. There are often a lot of homeless people also asking for money and occasionally men taking drugs on the street."

"The past 3 times I've got in taxis every single driver has changed the fare to be more expensive - took longer routes (as a driver I kind of know my way home from most places), made inappropriate sexual comments the last time I tried to tell a driver something he said to me "least your getting home safe" in a very threatening manner

2I've left complaints and the company never get back to you."

"Inappropriate questions from driver who asked to see pictures of me, asked if I would be his boyfriend and why not when I said no, asked for a kiss "at least" and hung around outside my flat until I got in."

"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."

Contributions to survey

Buses

"I was on a very busy late night bus home one December (pre Covid)I was with friends, we were all jam packed like sardines at the front of the bus, a stranger was behind me and was rubbing himself against me, I could tell he had an erection and was swaying back and forward as if he couldn't balance but he was essentially masturbating by rubbing against me , I had no space to move away from him."

"There was a men who was threatening and trying to get us to tell him where me and my other female friend stay. He didn't take no for answer. I had to say loudly that he is creep until some other men waiting at bus stop helped us and told him to leave us alone."

"There are no public transport routes here, and to walk to the closest bus stop there is no lighting on some of the streets."

"I was traveling back home at around 7pm on bus route 6 after some shopping, it was me and my friend on the bus and a man exposed himself to me. Even after reporting the incident to first bus and the bus driver, nothing was done about it."

Contributions to survey

Cars

"Car park always feel unsafe when you're walking up and down the stairs yourself. It feels very isolated and smells of urine."

"I had a recent experience when a young man called abuse to me from his car then turned his car around and followed me around the corner and parked with his window open and just stared angry looking and threatening towards me ...he drove away when I continued walking and walked behind 2 teenager schoolchildren".

"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 so you know this is someone whose behaviour is out of control. It is not uncommon to experience harassment from men when driving locally. I worry these men will take out their anger on the next female they come across who is on her own. 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."

"I wouldn't ever consider getting out of my car in Allison St irrespective of being on my own or with company, I would love to be able to walk round all of Crosshill."

Contributions to survey

Cycling

“Lots of aggression from male car drivers about using the 'bike lane' which is actually a poorly managed area partially segregated by 'hedgehogs' which isn't fit for purpose. 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. He drives a silver/blue Ford focus and asks if you know where the nearest petrol station is as a way to start the conversation before asking to take you for a drink etc. Seemed innocent enough the first time but as this has now happened more than once I don't think it's a coincidence.”

“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 - which means I have to cycle out of my way to get home. Which I shouldn't have to do!”

“There are a group of men who stand here drinking in the morning when I'm cycling to work. They stare, it's frightening.”

“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.”

Contributions to survey

8. Safety is a human rights issue.

Women's safety is a human rights issue. In 2022 the UK ratified its commitment to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, commonly known as the **Istanbul Convention**.

The Istanbul Convention definition of violence against women is, “violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violation that result in, or are likely to result in the physical, sexual, psychological, or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats or such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.”

The public harassment and abuse of women contravenes this commitment on every level. The Istanbul Convention has 4 priorities;

- Prevention
- Protection
- Prosecution
- Policies.

Too often women are left to negotiate the first two, (prevention and protection) alone. This results in shame, guilt and victim blaming. Only a robust and effective response through Prosecution and Policy will prevent this. It is essential if Glasgow is to achieve its requirements to the Istanbul Convention that change is achieved in these areas.

In 2021 / 22 Police recorded 2176 rape or attempted rapes. This resulted in only 78 convictions.

Rape Crisis Scotland

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.

“Try to avoid this route if alone!”

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.

“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.”

“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.”

Contributions to survey

CEDAW – right to safety

In 1981 the UK instituted its commitment to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, (CEDAW). In 2020 the Scottish Government accepted in full the recommendation of the National Taskforce for Human Rights and Leadership, which included “Recommendation 3: Incorporation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).”

CEDAW defines discrimination as, “... any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex, which has the effect or purpose of nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women irrespective of their marital status, on abuses of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.”

Fear and the experience of public harassment and abuse is a “distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex”. A lack of safety restricts women’s movement, employment, recreational activity, and social connections, regardless of whether or not she actually experiences violence, harassment, and abuse. Those women who do experience violence, harassment and abuse are often left with a legacy of anxiety, fear, and isolation. These experiences, a normal reaction to violence and abuse, are then often diagnosed and medicated. Whilst the women attend counselling and support and experience long term impacts, the male perpetrators carry on regardless. This is a violation of women’s rights and cannot continue.

Furthermore, CEDAW recognises the discrimination women experience reduces access to their human rights, in particular;

- The right to life
- The right to equal protection
- The right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

There can be no disagreement that the public harassment and abuse that women experience is contrary to CEDAW’s aim.

“Lived here 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.”

“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.”

Contributions to survey

Failure to address these concerns violates our responsibility under the Human Rights Act, our commitment to CEDAW and the Glasgow City's duty under the Equality Act 2010.

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Duty has three aims.

It requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. Having due regard means consciously thinking about the three aims of the Equality Duty as part of the process of decision-making.

As Glasgow City Council funded organisations the members of the Standing Group on Violence Against Women recognises their role in supporting this duty. This is particularly relevant as women who experience violence are directed to Glasgow City Council's specialist voluntary organisations, if there are no child protection or adult support and protection issues. The violence against women sector embraces this responsibility to support Glasgow to support the most vulnerable women in our communities.

The Right to Education

Economic wealth is highly dependent on access to education. There continues to be a gender divide in subjects chosen by girls and boys at higher education level, with girls choosing subjects associated with health and social care and the arts, whilst the majority of those participating in science, technology, engineering, and maths are boys. There are several reasons for this, including stereotypes and ingrained sexism, but Engender also found that girls experience of sexual harassment in the classroom discouraged them from choosing male dominated subjects. They also found that girls felt that teachers seemed "ill-equipped to tackle misogyny in the classroom."

This not only limits girls education, but makes access to further education for adult women all the more important, not only for wellbeing, but also for economic stability. "Adults in lower socio-economic groups are twice as likely to not have participated in learning since leaving full-time education than those in higher socio-economic group, (Adult Participation in Learning Survey 2021).

It is therefore concerning that women reported experiencing public harassment and abuse in relation to educational institutions.

“Easy wins of improving lighting and frequency of university security patrols, at least at peak commuting times of day in winter when dark e.g. 7-9am and 5-7pm.”

“Female students frequently scream for a laugh with their friends on way back to student accommodation so if someone was in genuine trouble I doubt the local residents would be concerned as they would assume it was the students.”

“Not enough done by the university to make this walking route safe for female students walking alone.”

“There are rumours that a girl was killed and dismembered on this bridge. Being young, female and often alone coming back from class I always think about it and feel scared. It is narrow and dark and there are often people hanging around the canal. Bikes chained up here are almost always stolen and there is rubbish everywhere.”

“There have been previous sexual attacks on women in this area, better lighting would help women feel safer walking home.”

Contributions to survey

The Right to Work

“States shall ensure that women the same opportunities as men in employment, promotion, training, equal remuneration, social security and safe working conditions.” (Article 11, CEDAW)

Access to employment is essential not only to increase women’s equality, but also to improve their life opportunities. If a woman is economically independent, she can choose communities that are safe, where she has social networks and support. Economic independence also allows women to escape violence and abuse should they experience it.

Women reported structural concerns for safety, such as lighting, as well as incidents of direct harassment and abuse. Travel to and from the workplace was reported as a connection to the area being reported on 42 times.



Structural Concerns

“There is almost no lighting in this area, which means that at winter it is not a good route after about 4 pm (so after work).”

“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.”

“Feels very unsafe walking to staff car park at 10pm at the end of my shift - there is no security presence and it is a very isolated area.”

“It’s a shortcut, but used often by many. it has some lanes running off it, and some railway arches - when travelling to appointments by public transport I use it to get to the various bus stops and back to office. during the day it is okay, ish, depending who is using this area. at night it has a different atmosphere, I have seen people under the influence of something standing about in this area. I avoid it when walking alone (at night) but ideally it should be as accessible as during the day.”

“The streets surrounding Glasgow Royal Infirmary have expensive parking meters on them meaning staff need to park a 10-15 min walk away in surrounding neighbourhoods. In the winter this means they are walking to work in darkness and walking back to their car alone in darkness and at least a few times a year there is communication of staff being assaulted either in the morning or evening, or being approached from behind. There is the multistorey car park which is free to park in at the moment however there is nowhere near enough spaces for the number of staff working on site during day shifts. If you are not in work before 7:30am you have little chance of getting parked in the multi. I don’t know any other public sector staff working in Glasgow who need to pay to park safely at work. Glasgow City Council makes an obscene amount of money from parking charges each year, second only to London. The residents in the surrounding area's aren't happy either with how many cars are parked on their streets, cars get keyed and one car got a tin of paint thrown over it. My car got stolen a few years ago from surrounding streets in broad daylight and was recovered by the police vandalised in nearby Milton. 70% of NHS staff are women.”

“Feels very isolated at night, very long and loads of side streets. Not many shops etc to provide escape points or feel less vulnerable.”

Contributions to survey

Direct harassment and abuse

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

“Got followed home from here after work when I was alone by a very drunk man who asked who I was what I was doing etc. He said he was going to the train station but decided to continue to walk next to me instead. had to hide in a shop that was thankfully open late for him to leave me alone.”

“I have been physically assaulted twice by teenaged boys on my way to work on this street.”

“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.”

Contributions to survey

The Right to Recreation

The right to rest and leisure is enshrined in the Human Rights Convention. For women this is particularly relevant. As the providers of the majority of unpaid care, housework and childcare, women’s lives are often dominated by the needs of others. Furthermore over 72% of women over 16 years old are in employment.

This combination of paid and unpaid labour means it is essential for women to access recreation. This is for a variety of reasons, including;

- Physical wellbeing.
- Connections to others in their community.
- Cultural growth.
- Lifelong education.

The restriction of this right through fear risks women’s health and wellbeing.



"The canals around this area generally feel very unsafe for women, have heard a few female friends say they just won't walk on the canals alone."

"Kelvingrove park is too dark, it is actually a cruising area for men and so some male students are also at risk of sexual assault here... as well as women. Safest not to enter alone after dark I would say...."

"There are too many alleys, small side streets, dead ends etc - all poorly lit - which contribute to a sense of unsafety. Lot of empty shops and not many houses with main doors - so if you felt at threat while on your own, there seems to be nowhere you can jump into to seek refuge or help."

"There is zero lighting between the riverside path from Oatlands to the Kings bridge. Even then the lighting in Glasgow Green onto the city centre is patchy and there are always numerous lights not working. With thousands of flats and houses recently built in Oatlands it's a shame to see that the only lit way to the city centre is through the football pitches and crossing a busy road which is again patchy lit at best. I prefer walking the direct route along the river. Lights (even small directional lights) would help this route."

"One night I got followed home when alone, a guy started trailing me, about 3 / 4 paces behind, he was outside a chip shop on Sauchiehall Street and followed me to the front door of my flat in Charing Cross (across from Mitchell Library). He then tried to get in the front door as I got my keys out but when I asked what he was doing and said my boyfriend was in, he fled."

Contributions to survey

The Right to Wellbeing

"The right to health is a fundamental part of our human rights and of our understanding of a life in dignity. The right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health" Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Since the lockdowns associated with Covid-19 people have found independent ways to improve / maintain their health. Although services are still essential, physical, and mental health can be positively impacted by a variety of activity, including running, walking, dog walking and accessing green space.

In 92 contributions to the survey women reported that they used the area they were highlighting as feeling / being unsafe for exercise. In a city like Glasgow wellbeing is not only essential to residents' quality of life, but in a city where women have a healthy life expectancy of just over 57 years, independent routes to wellbeing are also more cost effective, both for the women and the city. Equal access through reducing the risk of harassment and abuse is essential.

“This park has been the site of a rape & murder in the time that I have lived here, and there are common reports of men exposing themselves to women even in daylight.”

“There are a couple of green areas that are not taken care of, there is fly tipping going around all the time and there is no good lightening, making it unsafe for anyone, especially women if you have to walk back that way.”

“Queen's Park is on my doorstep, but for a large part of the year I can't use it after dark. I would love to run through it at after 4pm in winter.”

“I cannot walk my dog in the park after dark - it feels isolated, eerie and unsafe; during COP26 when roads were closed, the park was a gateway to places otherwise not accessible emphasising the potential danger of this area. If attacked, there is nowhere to go to, no one to call out to for help.”

“It's a well known area as well as the Kelvin walk way beyond the Wyndford for drinking and drug use which is out of site. I've never been for a walk around here that hasn't resulted in coming across large groups of young men drunk and drinking, being shouted at, or being asked about my dog or weird vibe questions. I've had my car broken into at the Burgh Halls and the feeling round the area has really changed over lockdown as it's quiet and isolated.”

“For my mental health and wellbeing I walk the round the canal everyday. This is really difficult in Winter as I don't feel safe, the lighting isn't great, there are too many ' nooks and crannies' where men could lurk. I'm angry because I am told by people I love not to walk at night, those conversations are never had by men.”

“Path to Bellashouston park – cutting off the triangle – if you walk along PWR you feel exposed over the bridge but if you walk along this shortcut lots of bushes and feels isolated, is dark and muddy in particular and it dips when it joins with Dumbreck Road making it feel even more secluded.”

Contributions to survey

9. 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.”*

This was reflected in women's suggestions for change. When asked to choose from a list of options for change, 142 women chose “Educating men about gender-based violence” and

141 chose "Campaigns about harassment and women's safety issues". This would indicate that women recognise that abusive men will take advantage of any situation that makes women vulnerable and therefore cultural change in male attitudes towards women is key to women's safety.

"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."

"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."***

Contributions to survey

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).”

Contributions to survey

Recommendations

Responding to concerns about lighting should be a priority in Glasgow. New and innovative ways to promote good lighting should be embraced and inform any structural changes being made in response to the climate crisis.

Many of the women, despite frustration at lack of action by authorities, had suggestions as to how to improve their communities. Since the completion of this survey Glasgow City Council has responded to some the maintenance needs highlighted by participants to the survey.

Some women reported positive experiences of Glasgow’s communities. This would indicate that the current situation for the majority of women is not inevitable.

“I think the lighting in the area is fine and people are overly worried about a one off incident that happened 14 years ago and should just get on with things and enjoy the park.”

“I think people get fixated on this area being unsafe because of their own internalised views of people as ‘other’ and therefore somehow threatening. I have lived on this street and now just off it and I personally find the business makes me feel safer.”

“I live in this area and have never had any problems. There is a police presence and lots of community activity and things happening all the time that make it feel like a good community where people take care of each other, including women.”

“I have lived here for over 6 months now and generally felt safe. I was cat called and followed by a man once at the Co Op bus stop but haven't seen another incident since then. I don't feel uncomfortable walking here at night or in the evening.”

“I feel mostly safe here. I walk my dog at night and very rarely feel uncomfortable.”

“Overall good experience on public transport. Limited anti-social behaviour.”

“I have never felt unsafe in Queen's Park or any of Glasgow's parks. This park would benefit from being cleaner but that is up to the public and park users to remove their own litter. I don't think any of Glasgow's parks should have increased lighting, there are street lights in the routes around the park that can be used if people prefer a well lit area.”

Contributions to survey

Some of these comments however criticised women for being fearful over incidents that happened many years ago. Each woman has her own experience of Glasgow communities. This will be informed not only by the immediate environment, but also by past experience, knowledge and current living circumstances. For example just as age and frailty may impact on a woman's self of safety, someone experiencing ongoing domestic violence or exploitation through prostitution may be dealing with the impact of trauma.

1 in 4 women have experienced rape or sexual assault and 36% of adults report having experienced sexual abuse in childhood. This however does not include grooming and does not reflect online abuse.

“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.”

Contributions to survey

One woman did comment; “To be honest I don't know. You can't have someone watching CCTV for the entire tunnel 24/7”. We would agree with this comment. Although there are structural changes that may improve women's safety, we should also be honest about what can be achieved. For many women parks can be lit up 24 hours a day, but they still would not walk through one at night alone. The structural changes highlighted are only part of the

solution. Awareness raising, cultural change and robust criminal justice responses to perpetrators are also required.

“Women’s safety generally needs focus and intervention, not just in this area.”

In 2018 the Scottish Government invested in a Trauma Informed Training Programme to ensure staff are responsive to the needs of those who have experienced trauma, including violence against women and children. Any development of Glasgow as a feminist city will need to recognise the impact of trauma in structures of the city, as well as the services. Trauma is prevalent across our communities, with girls and women being particularly vulnerable. Any feminist city must consider this in all policy and strategy.

“I’ve had wonderful experiences of the support staff on the streets of Glasgow (not sure if Street Aid or Community Safety staff?) but was once waiting alone and a man was hassling to get a taxi with me and a man with an armband came and intervened. He also went to get a female member of staff and ensured I got to a taxi rank safely.”

“Be safe. Find a walking buddy.”

“The Pavements need to be much wider, at some points you need to walk single file which makes you feel uneasy.”

“No lighting, but I feel it would be a shame to light such a wildlife corridor. Having a safer alternative via Carmunnock Road would be welcome (which is now lit, which is great, but motorists and road surface still a danger whilst on a bike).”

“I think this area is generally safe as people are quite well connected to each other. I am also now in middle age so do not feel as at risk as I did 15 years or so ago.”

“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.”

Contributions to survey

“The public space in Maryhill isn’t designed for walking and community visibility. The canal walking network needs to be safe for all and the approaches to and from the paths need to be too. Patrolled and occupied by activities will change the culture of the space over time.”

“I visited the Doublet Bar on Woodlands Road. While in the toilet there was a female who was upset as a result of the abuse she was subjected to from her partner. I had observed them previously in the street when the partner was having a hostile discussion with three other males who had confronted him in response to how he had treated her. This clearly triggered him in to engaging in further abusive behaviour. I asked the bar staff if they had any leaflets or any helplines that they could give her which they didn't. I was able to record a number of help lines and attempted to give her them, however, by the time had them she had left. I think it's worth noting that the bar staff were open and accepting that they did not know what to do in this situation and were open to learning and training. 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.”

“Area has some pubs, take aways and lots of businesses. I would not socialise in this area at night. the next bus stop is quite far away to talk to (along a desolate, dark area) In train stations we have HELP points we can press, why can't we have these at desolate Bus stops?”

“I wish more venues would have posters up in what to do in the incident of sexual assault on their nights out. I was sexually assaulted by a man in a crowd grabbing my breasts here one New Year's Eve. His female friend apologised and said he was drunk, I was too in shock to say anything (I tend to freeze) and walked away before it dawned on me what had happened and by that time I wasn't really sure what I was meant to do. The crowds were big enough they wouldn't be able to locate/identify the person. It's also a regular occurrence for all females - not just in this club, but all clubs - and has been so normalised that it often goes without reporting. It isn't SWG3's fault - it could have happened anywhere, but 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 arises.”

Contributions to survey

Wise Women would like to thank all the women who contributed to the survey. We will continue to use your comments to influence decision making in Glasgow and beyond.

