Policy and Sustainability Committee

10:00am, Tuesday, 1 November 2022

Women's Safety in Public Places Community Improvement Partnership Progress Report

Executive/routine	**Executive**
Wards	**All**
Council Commitments	

1. Recommendations

1.1 That members of the Policy and Sustainability Committee note the progress of the Women's Safety in Public Places Community Improvement Partnership.

1.2 That members of the Policy and Sustainability Committee peruse and scrutinise the findings of the public consultation on Women's Safety in Public Places (June-September 2022) and consider the implications of interim recommendations (attached as Appendix).

1.3 That members of the Policy and Sustainability Committee consider the recommendations made in this report and associated Appendix against competing priorities in other areas, particularly Transport and Environment.

1.4 That members agree and recommend the frequency of reporting by the Women's Safety in Public Places Community Improvement Partnership regarding progress and the implementation of recommendations included in the Appendix of this report.

Amanda Hatton

Executive Director, Education and Children's Services

Contact: Jon Ferrer, Senior Manager, Quality, Governance and Regulation and Deputy Chief Social Work Officer

E-mail: jon.ferrer@edinburgh.gov.uk | Tel: 0131 553 8396

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Report

Women's Safety in Public Places Community Improvement Partnership Progress Report

2. Executive Summary

2.1 This report outlines the progress of the Women's Safety in Public Places Community Improvement Partnership (WSPP CIP) and some initial findings from the Women's Safety in Public Places public consultation that took place between July – September 2022.

3. Background

3.1 On 30 November 2021, a report on Women's Safety in Public Places was presented to the Policy and Sustainability Committee. This was in response to motions brought forward by Cllr. Watt on 29 April 2021 and Cllr Osler on 26 August 2021.

3.2 During the meeting on 30 November 2021, the Policy and Sustainability Committee approved a number of actions to commence a new workstream around women's safety in the public spaces around the city of Edinburgh.

3.3 These actions are:

3.3.1 A public consultation on women's feelings of safety in public places in Edinburgh

3.3.2 A campaign targeting men's attitudes, thoughts and behaviours towards women in public places in Edinburgh

3.3.3 Increased monitoring through CCTV in particular areas of concern

3.3.4 A review of risk assessments for licensing and regulation of public events

3.3.5 Increased joint working between the Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee and relevant teams and divisions within the Council

3.3.6 Regular messaging on Violence Against Women and Girls to the public from the City of Edinburgh Council

4. Main report

4.1 To implement the actions approved in November 2021, an implementation group was put together with colleagues from a range of divisions within the Council and Police Scotland in January 2022. The teams represented from the Council included 20 Minute Neighbourhoods, Community Safety, Communications and Smarter Choices, Smarter Places. Police Scotland is represented through the Public Protection Unit and the Prevention, Intervention and Partnerships Team.

4.2 In February 2022, the decision was made following communication with Cllr. McNeese-Mechan for the implementation group to become a Community Improvement Partnership (CIP).

4.3 By establishing itself as a CIP, the implementation group now directly reports to the Edinburgh Community Safety and Justice Partnership and is led by the Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee (ESEC).

4.4 Since its inception, the WSPP CIP has attracted considerable interest by partners within and outside the Council. To ensure that its work continues in a more focus and strategic manner, the CIP will commence quarterly meetings from October 2022, with four subgroups carrying forward specific pieces of work:

4.4.1 The Women's Safety in Public Transport subgroup will specifically address risks women face when traveling using public modes of transport

4.4.2 The Communications Subgroup will focus on public messaging around women's safety in public places, and will also undertake the delivery of action 3.3.2 on a public campaign targeted at men

4.4.3 The Evidence-based Practice subgroup will collate reports, research and evidence of interventions that we know are effective in making public places safer throughout Scotland, the UK and beyond

4.4.4 The Intelligence Mapping subgroup will focus on mapping public spaces where the public has reported feeling unsafe against areas where crime has taken place in a public space. This will allow us to come up with more focused interventions to improve both feelings of safety and crime reduction.

4.5 To date, the WSPP CIP has completed two actions:

4.5.1 Action 3.3.1: a public consultation on Women's Safety in Public Places was carried out between July and September 2022. It was followed by focus groups during the later half of September 2022. An analysis of the findings of this consultation is included as an Appendix in Section 9.

4.5.2 Action 3.3.3: In discussions with the Community Safety team within the Council, as well as in the November 2021 report, the Meadows was highlighted as an area of particular concern for people, particularly women and girls. The community safety team acted swiftly in installing two additional CCTV cameras in the Meadows, covering a larger area of the park, and collaborating with Street Assist who have increased their patrols

around the Meadows on Friday and Saturday nights. The CCTV infrastructure in Edinburgh will be upgraded in the autumn and winter of 2022, providing additional security and taking into consideration areas of concern as highlighted by the Women's Safety in Public Places consultation.

4.6 The remaining actions to be undertaken by the WSPP CIP and its subgroup are currently in progress.

5. Next Steps

5.1 The work currently undertaken in Edinburgh on Women's Safety in Public Places has been noted by the Improvement Service, the Coalition of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and the Scottish Community Safety Network. The Community Improvement Partnership has been invited to present its work at a National event during the 2022 '16 Days of Activism on Gender-Based Violence' campaign.

5.2 The Women's Safety in Public Places Community Improvement Partnership will update its report on the findings from the relevant public consultation once focus group data has been collated and analysed.

5.3 The Women's Safety in Public Places Community Improvement Partnership will continue to report to the Edinburgh Community Safety and Justice Partnership twice annually, and to the Policy and Sustainability Committee at a time and frequency decided by the Committee's members.

6. Financial impact

6.1 The recommendations included in this report (Appendix) as a direct result of the public consultation on Women's Safety in Public Places will have financial implications for the Council.

6.2 The implementation of recommendations will further require conciliation with competing priorities for the Council, particularly those relating to Transport and Environment.

6.3 The Women's Safety in Public Places Community Improvement Partnership would like to highlight that the recommendations provided which will incur financial costs are derived following direct engagement with the public, and particularly women and girls-which comprise the majority of Edinburgh's population.

6.4 Further, in view of competing priorities, the long-term benefits of prioritising women's safety measures will outweigh the costs involved in implementing them. For example, increased lighting levels will incur additional costs but will likely encourage more residents to travel actively rather than using privately own vehicles, which will reduce emissions.

6.5 The costs associated with the current report are specifically related to the estimated versus actual cost of running the public consultation and analysing responses, and are incurred in the financial year 2022-2023:

Activity:	**Estimated Cost**	**Actual Cost**	**Excess/deficit**
Communications and Marketing	£7,000	£7,894	-£894
Translation of the consultation documents (Polish, Punjabi, Mandarin, Arabic)	£5,000	£1,482	£3,518
Outsourcing support for data analysis & focus group creation	£12,000	0	£12,000
Focus group recruitment and additional support required *	£5,000	£6,838	-£1,838
Additional translation costs for responses provided in other languages	£6,000		£6,000
Estimated total	**£35,000**	£16,214	£18,786

** The total cost for this category was £7838.60 including VAT, which was paid through a different budget*

6.6 All recommendations included in the Appendix to this report (section 9) are the result of direct engagement and consultation with Edinburgh residents. The Women's Safety in Public Places Community Improvement Partnership wishes to highlight that implementation of the recommendations will directly positively impact residents' feelings of safety when out and about in Edinburgh

6.7 The budget required for implementing recommendations will be decided at a later date and following consultation with a range of divisions within the City of Edinburgh Council, following:

6.7.1 The completion of analysis of data gathered through focus groups

6.7.2 The completion of mapping analysis during the Women's Safety in Public Places Consultation

6.7.3 Discussions with colleagues in 20 Minute Neighbourhoods, Smarter Choices, Smarter Places, Transport, Environment, and Planning

6.7.4 Discussions with partners within Police Scotland and the third sector.

6.8 Budgets associated with the implementation of measures recommended following the public consultation will be made available to the Policy and Sustainability Committee in due course, at a time agreed by Committee members.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

7.1 The present report was compiled following direct engagement with Edinburgh residents through a public consultation

7.2 The impact of the proposed recommendations in the Appendix of this report, if implemented, is expected to be positive for Edinburgh residents, particularly

women, girls and people with other protected characteristics - and consequently the majority of Edinburgh's population

7.3 There further needs to be a recognition that some of the recommendations compete with other priorities set by the council, particularly regarding the environmental impact.

7.4 However, careful consideration and analysis is required to weigh the long-term benefits of implementing recommendations in the Appendix of this report against the costs of implementing them.

7.5 Further analysis of the associated costs and benefits can be presented to the Policy and Sustainability Committee at a time and date agreed by the Committee

7.6 Lastly, the recommendations included in the Appendix of the current report meet the Council's priorities as summarised in the following strategies:

7.6.1 Equally Safe: Scotland's Strategy for preventing and eradicating Violence Against Women and Girls

7.6.2 Business Plan: Our Future Council, Our Future City

7.6.3 The Edinburgh Partnership Community Plan 2018-2028

7.6.4 The Council Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Framework

7.6.5 The Edinburgh Local Development Plan

7.6.6 The Edinburgh Design Guidance

7.6.7 The Edinburgh City Plan 2030

7.6.8 The Edinburgh City Mobility Plan

7.6.9 The Active Travel Action Plan

8. Background reading/external references

8.1 Women's Safety in Public Places report to the Policy and Sustainability Committee, 30 November 2021.

8.2 'Getting Home Safe' report by Atkins

8.3 Public Health Scotland: Violence Against Women and Girls and the Public Health Priorities: Priority 1: Place and Priority 6: Healthy and Active.

8.4 Equally Safe: Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls.

8.5 City of Edinburgh Council Business Plan: Our Future Council, Our Future City

8.6 The Edinburgh Partnership Community Plan 2018-2028

8.7 The Council Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Framework

8.8 The City of Edinburgh Council's Edinburgh Local Development Plan

8.9 The Edinburgh Design Guidance

8.10 The Edinburgh City Plan 2030

8.11 The Edinburgh City Mobility Plan

8.12 The Active Travel Action Plan

9. Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1 – Analysis from the Women's Safety in Public Places consultation.

Women's Safety in Public Places:

Interim Analysis of public consultation

held between July – September 2022

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 The Women's Safety in Public Places consultation was planned, coordinated and delivered by the Women's Safety in Public Places Community Improvement Partnership. This is a partnership between the City of Edinburgh Council and Police Scotland, created to deliver the actions approved by the Policy and Sustainability Committee on 30 November 2021.

1.2 The Women's Safety in Public Places public consultation yielded responses from 1,461 residents in a range of areas in Edinburgh, overwhelmingly women and girls.

1.3 Most respondents reported feeling very safe or fairly safe in their own neighbourhood overall, but the majority reported feeling at least little unsafe in their neighbourhood after dark.

1.4 The most determining factor that contributes to feeling safe or unsafe in any particular area was reported to be lighting- with good lighting helping people to feel safe, and poor lighting contributing to feeling unsafe.

1.5 The secondary contributing factor relates to the busyness of an area in terms of high footfall, the presence of shops and hospitality venues, active frontages on buildings, and a sense of community. Contrary to this, an area's busyness can also contribute to it feeling unsafe when there is public drinking and antisocial behaviour, particularly by men and by young people.

1.6 Design and planning features such as traffic, active travel options and green spaces were also highlighted as important factors to people's neighbourhoods feeling safe, but less important than lighting or busyness. Similarly, a lack of active frontages, businesses, public transport and active travel route availability contributed to people feeling unsafe in particular areas.

1.7 Where respondents identified feeling safe in an area, they overwhelmingly responded that they feel safe there all the time – both during the day and after dark. Similarly, areas that were highlighted as unsafe, were reported to feel unsafe all of the time.

1.8 Over 95% of respondents reported taking additional measures to ensure their safety in public places. Although many of those may well be common for people of all genders, some of the identified measures were heavily gendered, such as carrying a rape alarm and paying particular attention to one's appearance for fear of being targeted for violence, abuse or harassment.

1.9 Only 17.7% of respondents stated they have never experienced violence, harassment or abuse in a public place in Edinburgh. 76% reported that they had, but this percentage could be much higher, possibly up to 82.3% if we include all response options aside from the negative responses to this question.

1.10 Out of all respondents who experienced violence, harassment or abuse, 89% decided not to report it or to seek support from a specialist agency. For a number of reasons, 95% of respondents stated that they did not/would not report a crime specifically to the police. These reasons included a lack of faith in responding, the reporting process in itself being traumatic, and most significantly, a lack of faith that anything would change as a result.

1.11 Through analysis of the consultation responses, we have come up with preliminary recommendations that could improve feelings of safety in Edinburgh.

1.12 Key recommendations include, but are not limited to:

1.12.1 reviewing and adjusting lighting levels in areas of Edinburgh where there are higher incidences of antisocial behaviour or crime occurring in public places

1.12.2 campaigns targeted at men addressing their behaviours and attitudes towards women in public spaces

1.12.3 The inclusion of Women's Safety and Equally Safe Principles in all Council business planning and decision-making processes and

1.12.4 Increased investment in community groups and initiatives focusing on work with young people and on community revival.

1.13 Please note that this report is the result of the analysis of data yielded by the public consultation alone. Six focus groups were also carried out to complement the consultation process, and the consultation itself will be repeated in targeted communities during the 16 Days of Activism on Gender-Based Violence between 25 November – 10 December 2022.

2. Introduction and Background:

2.1 On 30 November 2021, a report on Women's Safety in Public Places was presented to the Policy and Sustainability Committee. This was in response to motions brought forward by Cllr. Watt on 29 April 2021 and Cllr Osler on 26 August 2021.

2.2 During the meeting on 30 November 2021, the Policy and Sustainability Committee approved a number of actions to commence a new workstream around women's safety in the public spaces around the city of Edinburgh.

2.3 These actions are:

2.3.1 A public consultation on women's feelings of safety in public places in Edinburgh

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2.3.3 Increased monitoring through CCTV in particular areas of concern

2.3.4 A review of risk assessments for licensing and regulation of public events

2.3.5 Increased joint working between the Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee and relevant teams and divisions within the Council

2.3.6 Regular messaging on Violence Against Women and Girls to the public from the City of Edinburgh Council

2.4 To implement these actions, an implementation group was put together with colleagues from a range of divisions within the Council and Police Scotland in January 2022. The teams represented from the Council included 20 Minute Neighbourhoods, Community Safety, Communications and Smarter Choices, Smarter Places. Police Scotland is represented through the Public Protection Unit and the Prevention, Intervention and Partnerships Team.

2.5 In February 2022, the decision was made following communication with Cllr. McNeese-Mechan for the implementation group to become a Community Improvement Partnership (CIP).

2.6 By establishing itself as a CIP, the implementation group now directly reports to the Edinburgh Community Safety and Justice Partnership and is led by the Equally Safe Edinburgh Committee (ESEC).

3. The Women's Safety in Public Places Consultation

3.1. A public consultation on women's feelings of safety in the public spaces of Edinburgh was one of the first actions to be implemented by the Women's Safety in Public Places Community Improvement Partnership.

3.2. The consultation questions were formulated following discussions with organisations and professionals who had carried out similar consultations in other local authorities. This included Wise Women in Glasgow and the Community Safety Team in West Lothian. Police Scotland also supported the development of the consultation by sharing the questions used in the annual Your Police survey and contributing to the themes on which the consultation focused.

3.3. The decision was made that, although the title of the consultation focused on women's safety, anyone over the age of 13 would be invited to contribute their views.

3.4. The Consultation was approved by the City of Edinburgh Council's Consultation Advisory Panel on 24 May 2022 and it went live on the Council's Consultation Hub on 29 June 2022.

3.5. Aside from the main consultation, there was an option to respond to the questions in an additional four languages most spoken in Edinburgh. These include Mandarin, Urdu, Arabic and Polish.

3.6. To further ensure that responses were as inclusive as possible, we also decided to run six focus groups with participants with particular protected characteristics. Participants were remunerated for their participation, and the selection of participants was outsourced to a research company, 2CV, which was recommended by the Scottish Government's Market Research Framework. The focus groups included:

3.6.1. One group for women over 65
3.6.2. One group for younger women, aged 16-22
3.6.3. One group for men
3.6.4. Three generic groups with women with a range and spread of protected characteristics, including women residing in areas classed as high on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD).

3.7. Lastly, to capture the public's views on women's safety in public places at different times of the year and during seasonal fluctuations, an action will be carried forward to carry out a 'Women's Safety in Public Places Roadshow' during the 16 Days of Activism on Gender-Based Violence campaign (25 November – 10 December). This event will involve colleagues travelling to five key shopping locations across Edinburgh (we are proposing the Gyle, Cameron Toll, Ocean Terminal, Wester Hailes Plaza and St. James Quarter) to invite people to discuss their experiences and to provide them with an opportunity to respond to the consultation.

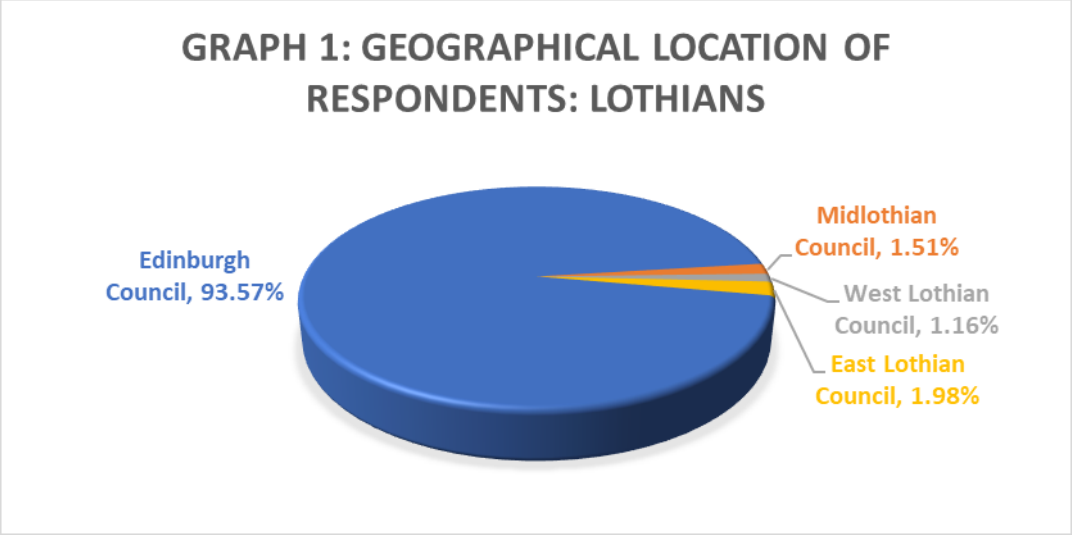
3.8. Unfortunately, in spite of the consultation being available in other languages, no responses were received in languages other than English. This may have been due to technical issues with the email inbox to which respondents were directed to email their responses in other languages, which were identified two days after the consultation had closed. The Community Improvement Partnership would recommend that this does not deter future consultations from being available in other languages, but that appropriate checks are carried out ahead of time to ensure that the IT infrastructure supporting such an exercise is fully functional.

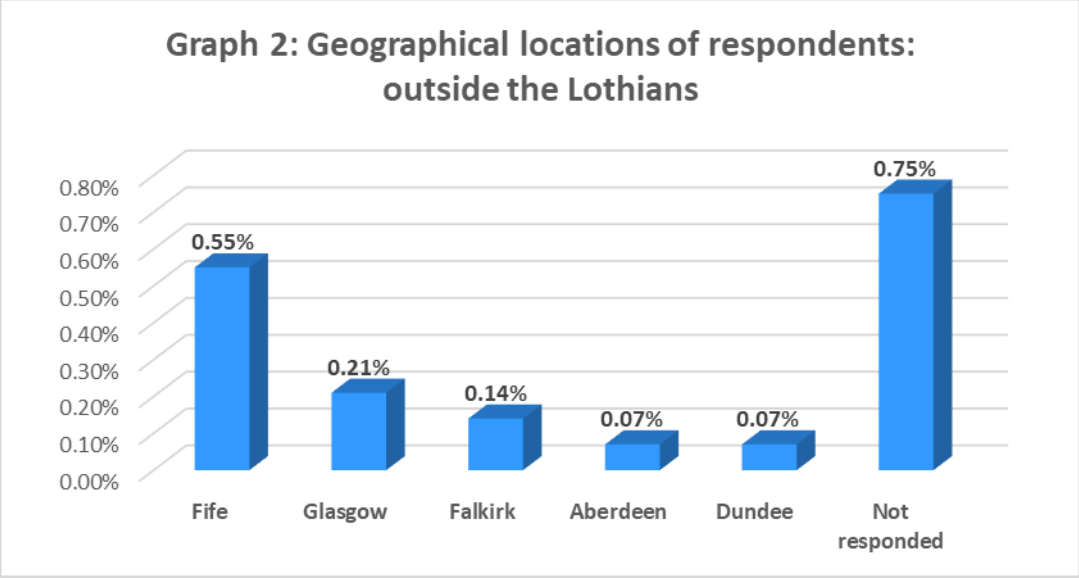
4. Women's Safety in Public Places Consultation Report

Where do respondents live?

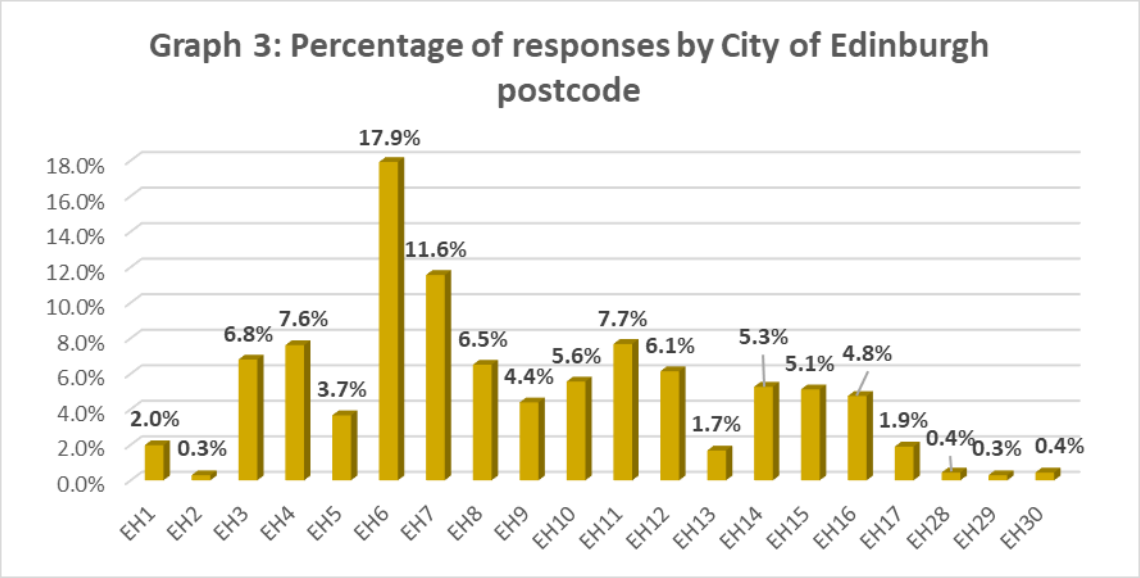
4.1. The overwhelming majority of people who responded to the consultation lived in Edinburgh (93.57%).

4.2. We also received responses from people who do not live in Edinburgh but who regularly visit Edinburgh for work, holidays, to visit family and friends or to study. Graphs 1 and 2 demonstrate the breakdown of respondents' location within and outside the Lothians:





4.3. Within Edinburgh, respondents resided in a range of locations, and they indicated these through the first half of their postcodes. Graph 3 shows the different postcode areas from which people responded to the consultation:



4.4. When asked whether they are responding on their own or on someone else's behalf, 98.4% of respondents stated they were responding as an individual, while 0.34% responded on behalf of someone else.

4.5. Out of all the respondents, 0.8% did not state on whose behalf they were responding, while 0.5% responded on behalf of an organisation. In total, 7 responses were received from the following organisations:

4.5.1. Bikes for Refugees (Scotland) (Charity)
4.5.2. Queen Margaret University (Higher Education institution)
4.5.3. Street Assist (SCIO)
4.5.4. Street Assist (Charity)
4.5.5. Arup (private sector organisation)
4.5.6. Living Streets Edinburgh Group (community group)
4.5.7. Water of Leith Conservation Trust (Charity)

4.6. Organisations who took part in the consultation had the opportunity to provide one overall response to the question of what contributes to a lack of safety in public spaces, as well as what could improve women's and girls' safety in public spaces. The responses provided are summarised below:

4.6.1. Bikes for Refugees (Scotland) reported that women have stated that fear of motorists and drivers, particularly aggressive drivers, is a major source of fear and a significant barrier to them cycling and using public spaces for commuting and accessing services. This is a human rights and equalities issue, leaving women and refugees with unequal access to public spaces and services. They add that 'current city cycling infrastructure is inadequate, unsafe and not fit for purpose'.

4.6.2. Queen Margaret University: The University highlighted factors that contribute to an unsafe commuting route to and from campus: the path on Newhailes Road by the estate and industrial estate has no lighting, is not visible from the road and is very dark. There are very infrequent transport links to and from campus, even though this is a necessary route for people working and studying at the campus.

4.6.3. Street Assist (SCIO): Street Assist already responds to calls regarding safety and vulnerability within the nighttime economy hours every Friday and Saturday between 10pm and 4am. Our focus of work is within the footprint of the city centre and 4 areas where footfall is particularly high, George St/Rose St, Grassmarket/Cowgate, Lothian Rd, Omni Centre, The Meadows and Newington. All areas where there is a need for our service, especially around the Cowgate area where the street is particularly dark, CCTV coverage is low and there are many side streets, alleyways and deep door recesses where people can effectively disappear from view. This is why we do patrols and respond to calls from many sources to try and identify vulnerability earlier. Our stats since 2017 tell us that the calls we receive are roughly 50/50 male/female split, 50% of the female calls are for females who are found alone which is a very worrying statistic.
There needs to be a conversation with all operators within the nighttime economy to make sure we are all following best practice and we can learn from other cities and other projects like Street Assist who have a focus on making places safer not just for females but for everyone.
Intoxication, spiking, people being separated from friends, lost possessions, unwanted attention from males are just some of the contributing factors to vulnerability and, in some cases, situations can escalate very quickly.
There needs to be a plan put in place where there is more effective partnership working, a way for pubs/clubs to be represented under one umbrella to ensure good practice is encouraged, executed and enhanced and that charities like Street Assist who are already operating within this area of work are better supported and better funded as with the right investment and support we could enhance our service and look to increase the number of nights delivery from the 2 we already do.
We also need better investment in improved street lighting and more CCTV coverage in areas that we already know are 'hotspots' and more public awareness of not just the issues but where vulnerable people can seek help.

4.6.4. Street Assist (Charity): The Meadows are probably the most unsafe because the area is so dark and isolated. Feelings of safety also depend on the general ‘vibe’ and who is around you in a nightclub or the wider environment. For example, a group of men walking behind a women, older men walking around, a loud group of people. It would help to have better lighting on route to student accommodations and popular student spots such as the Bruntsfield area and the Meadows.

4.6.5. Arup (Private Sector Organisation): Arup highlighted that safety can be enhanced through the adoption of open spaces with good visibility and busier areas. The further highlight that good lighting plays a key role in perception of safety at night, following 30 years of work experience in this area. They finally recommend a more holistic approach by the council to review main active travel routes at night across the city, working with stakeholders and design consultants to help curate these

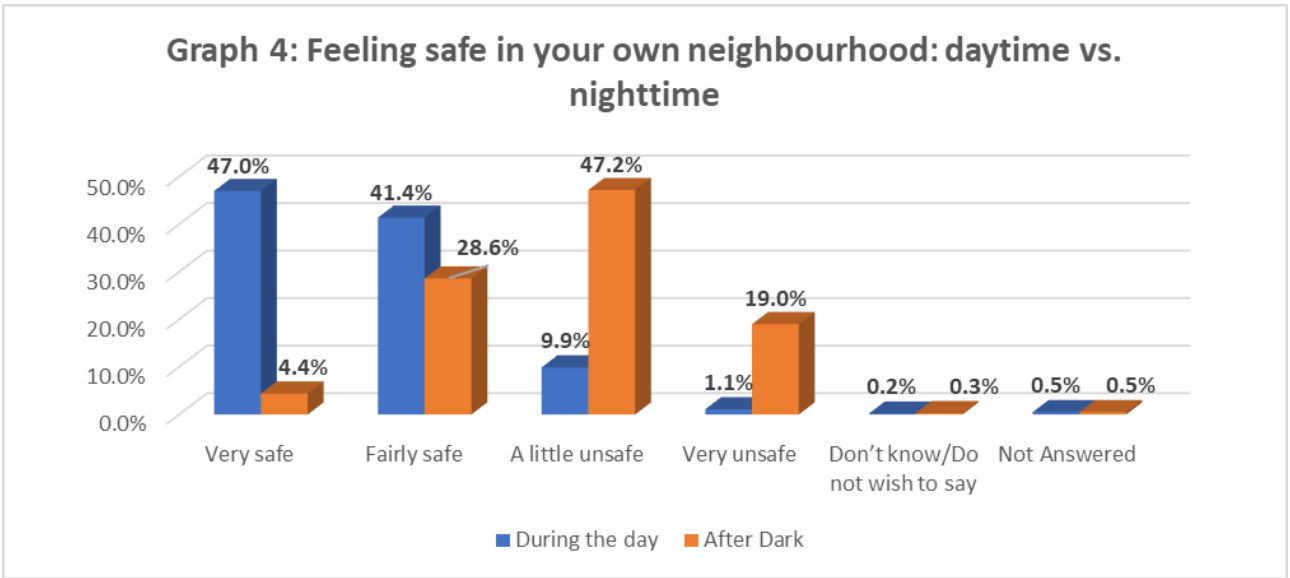
journeys to ensure they are used and they are safe for all. They comment that too often various departments deal with different aspects of projects, when what is needed is a safety champion to take on this role and oversee initiatives using best practice. Lastly, there is a recommendation for the endorsement and use of local safety apps and the adoption and recruitment of a 'Night Czar', a scheme already operating in London since 2016.

4.6.6. Living Streets Edinburgh Group (Community Group): The group comments that the safety of women is improved by good design and management of public space. Female pedestrians may be especially vulnerable to attack or harassment. Specific measures include good quality, wide pavements, good lighting and 'active frontages' (avoiding blank walls etc.) The importance of simple facilities such as seats/benches and toilets should not be overlooked. Noisy, over -trafficked streets should be reduced. Management is as important as design - removing fly tipping, rubbish, clutter etc - and presence of helpful personnel at key times/places including of course the police.

4.6.7. The Water of Leith Conservation Trust (Charity): The charity commented that a proposal to improve Coalie Park is currently under way and the charity would welcome opportunities to discuss an analysis of the responses to the consultation to support the shape of their project going forward.

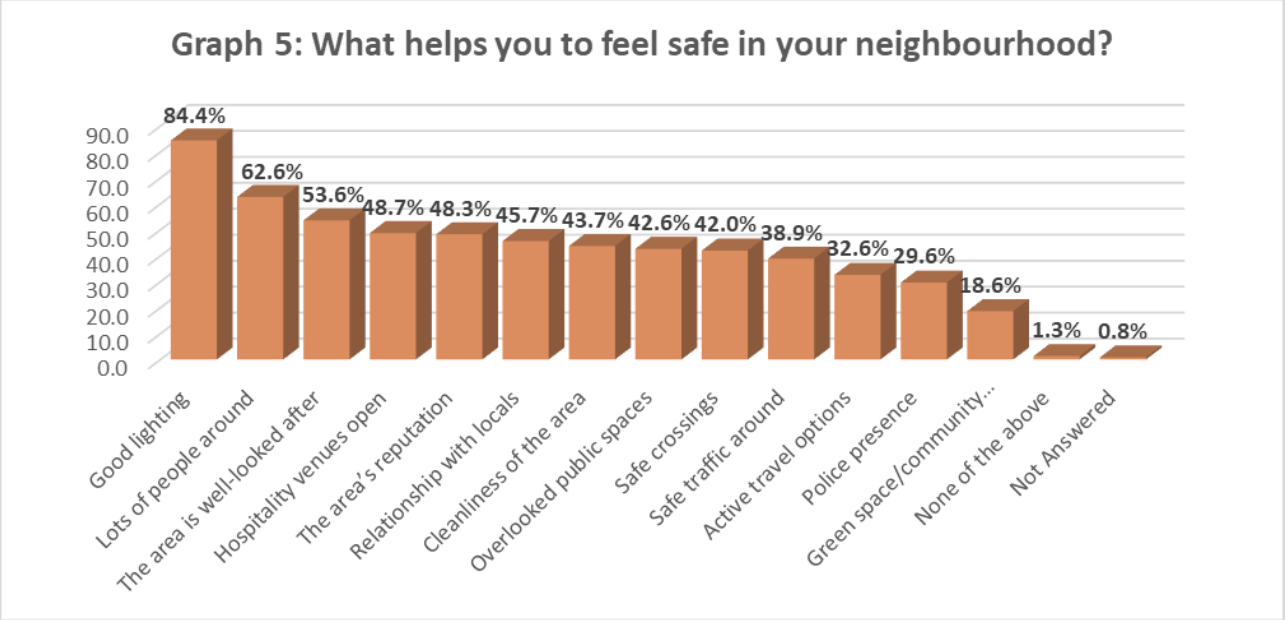
Feelings of safety in your own neighbourhood

4.7. For the purposes of the consultation, a 'neighbourhood' was defined as the area within a 20-minute walk from respondents' homes. The majority of respondents said they feel either very safe or fairly safe in their own neighbourhoods during the day (88.4%). However, this number changed when people were asked how safe they feel in their neighbourhood after dark, with the majority feeling a little unsafe (47.2%). Responses are summarised in Graph 4 below:



4.8. When asked what contributes to people feeling safe or unsafe, a number of trends emerged, as demonstrated by Graph 5 and table 1.

4.9. Feelings of safety were largely attributed to good lighting, the busyness and footfall in the neighbourhood, as well as people's behaviours and relationships with locals:



4.10. This question also offered people the opportunity to write in additional responses as to what helps them to feel safe in their neighbourhood, and 17.4% of respondents added in their own comments. It is important to note that these numbers are small so it would be challenging to generalise from them, however the table below summarises the comments respondents made to the question of 'what other factors help them feel safe in their neighbourhood':

Table 1: Responses to 'Other' category of factors that make people feel safe in their own neighbourhood

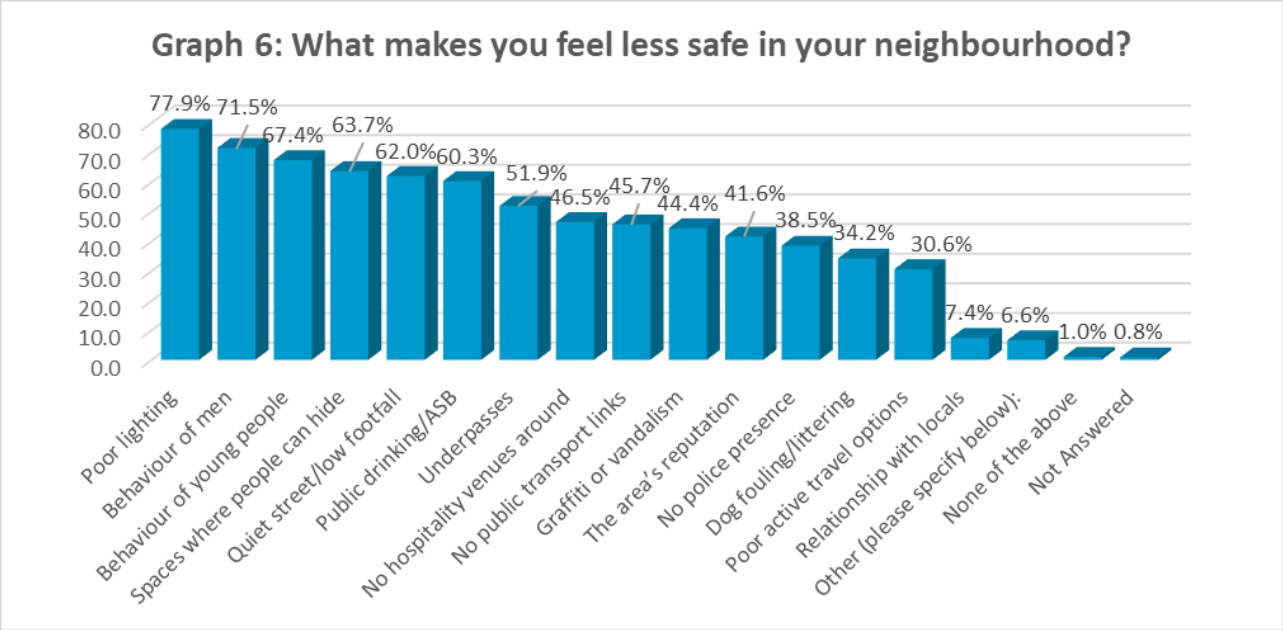
Other things that make people feel safe	**Number of respondents**
Good street/building design (e.g. no funnel paths for temporary building/ roadworks, safe pavements, escape routes, less bushes/vegetation.	31
Good public transport	11
Enforced good standards by police action (rather than police presence)	11
Community cohesion/events/schemes/apps	10
Other*	24

4.11. Under the 'Other' category, we classed responses such as: CCTV, single sex toilets, less drugs, men not harassing, good community public services, more women of all ages around, less student accommodation, familiarity, animal control, type of business/people around, lots of dog walkers around, positive experiences, 20 mile per hour zone.

Feeling less safe in your neighbourhood

4.12. When asked 'what makes you feel less safe in your neighbourhood', people respondent along similar lines to what helps them to feel safe. Lighting levels were highlighted as playing a critical factor in feelings of safety, as well as people's behaviour in the area (particularly the behaviour of men and the behaviour of young people).

4.13. Public drinking and antisocial behaviour, combined with design features which allow people to hide, or the quietness of an area and lack of active frontages all appeared to contribute highly to feelings of lack of safety in respondents' neighbourhoods, as indicated by Graph 6:



4.14. Respondents also had the opportunity to identify 'Other' factors that contributed to their feelings of lack of safety in their neighbourhoods. In total, 6.6% of respondents added information on other factors, and these are summarised in Table 2 below. Please note that again, due to the low number of responses, it is difficult to generalise from those statements, although it is crucial that they also be borne in mind:

Table 2: Responses to 'Other' category of factors that make people feel safe in their own neighbourhood

Other things that make people feel less safe	**Number of respondents**
Vehicle crime	17
Drugs	15
Overgrown foliage/trees / Neglect	12
Cycle paths	10
Unsafe roads	9

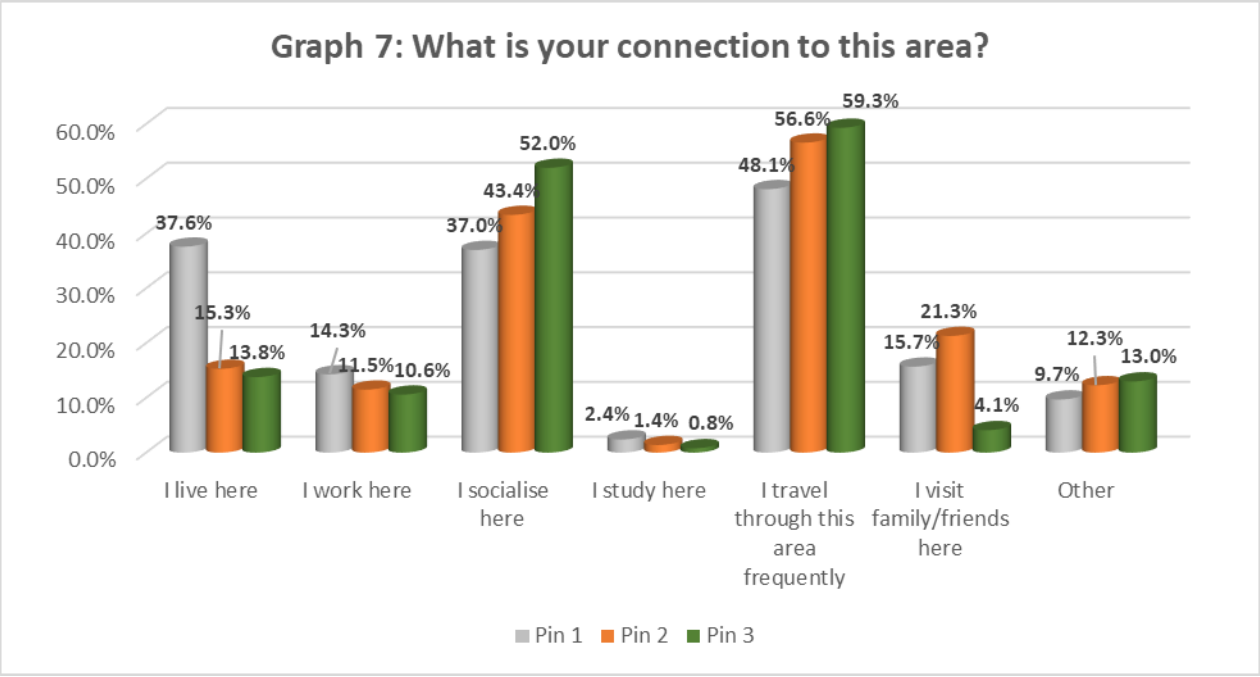
Lack of exits	7
Parks	7
Narrow streets/paths	6
Knowledge/experience of incidents	6
Other	42

4.15. Under 'Other', respondents identified a number of factors that did not neatly fit into any of the categories on Table 2, such as: lack of single sex facilities, lack of CCTV, racism/ homophobia/ transphobia, unsafe cyclists/e-scooters, places where people urinate, unattractive neighbourhood, sexual entertainment venues, built up places, lots of lighting, hiding places, noise, perceptions, litter, shoplifting, homelessness, and an increase in short term lets.

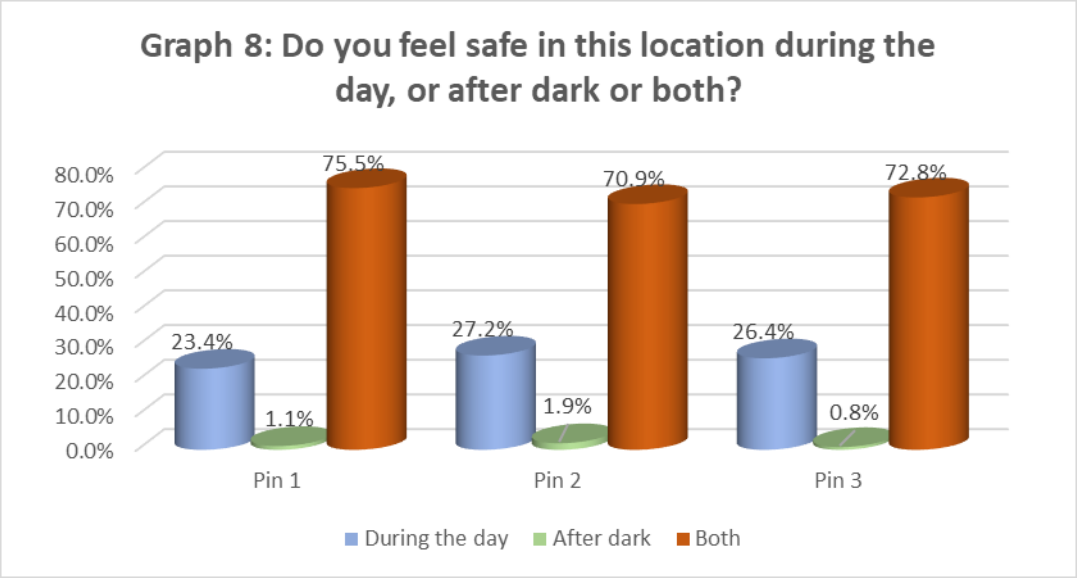
Areas where you feel safe

4.16. Respondents had the opportunity to select a public space by dropping up to three pins on an interactive map of Edinburgh to represent a location or area where they feel safe. If they wished, they could provide additional information to further specify the location the identified. Respondents were given the opportunity to do this up to three times.

4.17. Graph 7 shows respondents' connection to the areas where they identified feeling safe:



4.18. Following the placement of the pin on the map, respondents were asked about the time(s) of day when they felt safe in this area- during the day, after dark, or both. The results from this question are presented in graph 8:



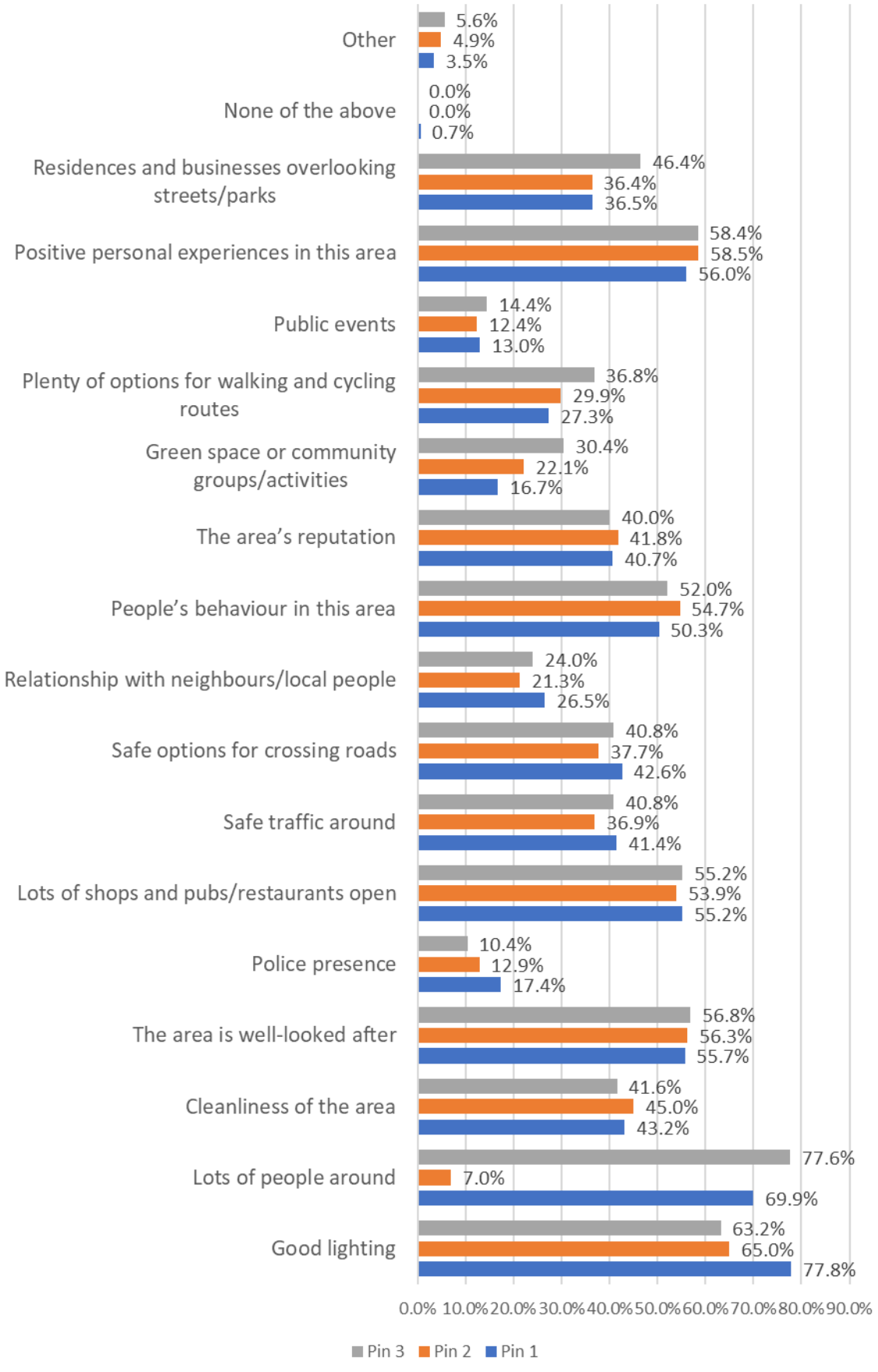
4.19. Respondents were then asked to explain their connection to the location they identified as well as the factors that contribute to their feeling safe in that area (any number of factors from a list could be selected from a list, but respondents were also offered the opportunity to add in other factors not included in the list).

4.20. A summary of the factors that contribute to people's feelings of safety in a particular area are summarised in Graph 9 (p.15).

4.21. Good lighting and high footfall were the two key factors that appear to determine whether an area is perceived as being safe.

4.22. This was followed by the overall appearance and upkeep of the area, the presence of businesses and hospitality venues and people's behaviour in the area, as well as active frontages overlooking public spaces.

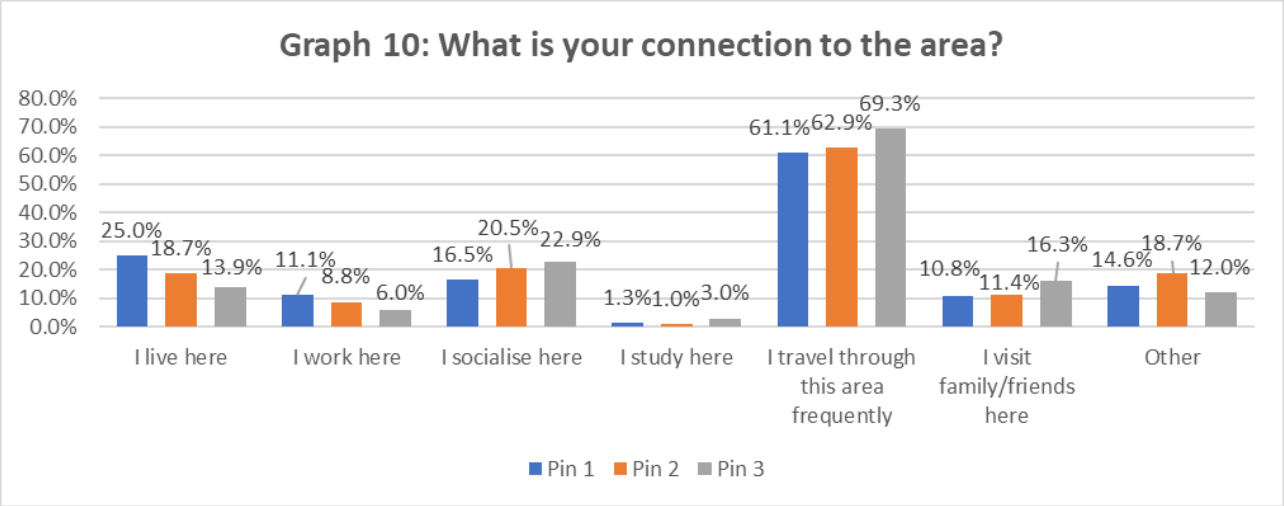
Graph 9: What helps you to feel safe in this location?



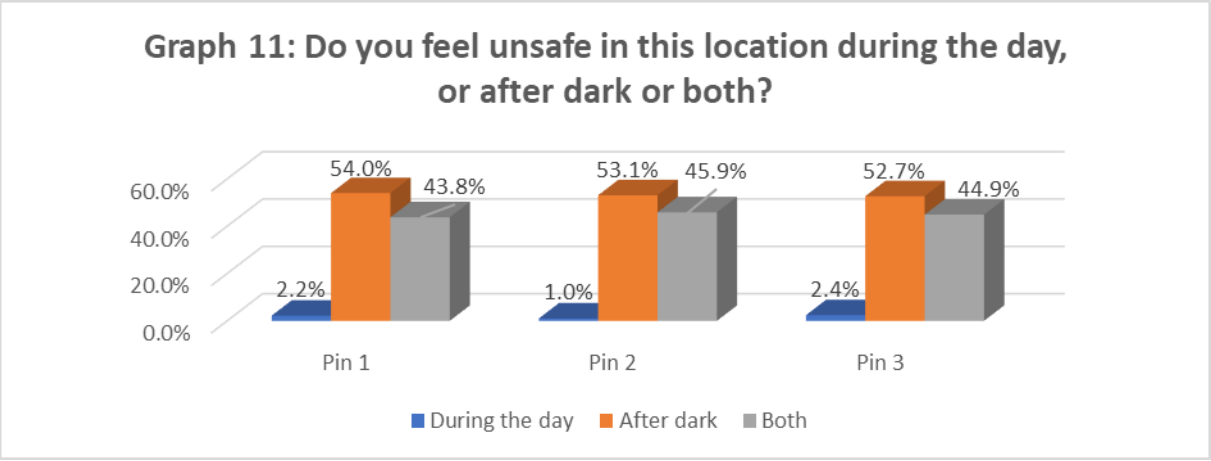
Areas where you feel unsafe

4.23. Respondents had the opportunity to select a public space by dropping up to three pins on an interactive map of Edinburgh to represent a location or area where they feel less safe. If they wished, they could provide additional information to further specify the location the identified. Respondents were given the opportunity to do this up to three times.

4.24. Graph 10 shows respondents' connection to the areas where they identified feeling less safe:

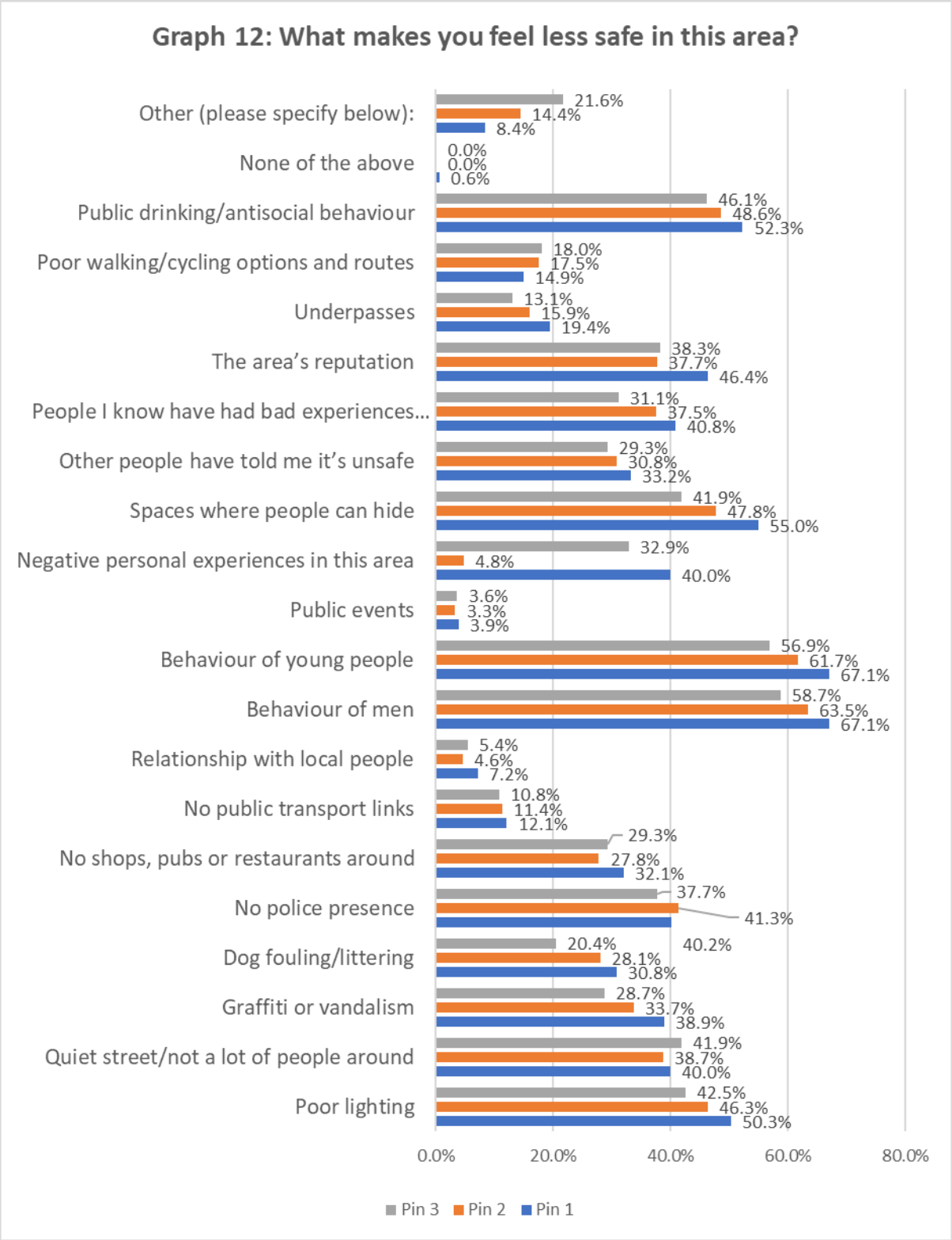


4.25. Following the placement of the pin on the map, respondents were asked about the time(s) of day when they felt safe in this area- during the day, after dark, or both. The results from this question are presented in graph 11, and they demonstrate that overwhelmingly, when people feel unsafe in a particular area, they feel unsafe there regardless of the time of day, but particularly after dark:



4.26. Respondents were then asked to explain their connection to the location they identified as well as the factors that contribute to their feeling less safe in that area (any number of factors from a list could be selected from a list, but respondents were also offered the opportunity to add in other factors not included in the list).

4.27. The list of factors respondents identified as contributing to them feeling less safe are summarised in graph 12:



4.28. Interestingly, when considering factors that made respondents feel unsafe in a particular area, the key contributing factors were the behaviour of men, the behaviour of young

people, with poor lighting following shortly thereafter, but close to public drinking and antisocial behaviour.

4.29. After these three key factors, respondents also identified design features that allow people to hide, the upkeep and cleanliness of the area, the area's reputation and an absence of businesses and hospitality venues.

Measures women take to stay safe in public spaces

4.30. As a Community Improvement Partnership, we firmly believe that the onus to keep safe from harassment and abuse in public spaces should not be on women. The source of women's fear of public spaces stems from male violence against women, which is a cause and consequence of systemic and endemic gender inequality in society.

4.31. The responsibility for reducing women's fear of public spaces will only be addressed by approaches that challenge the normalisation of male privilege which gives rise to 'rape culture': the patriarchal values embedded in society which trivialise and normalise the objectification and harassment of women and, further down in the continuum, the tacit acceptance and normalisation of abuse, harassment and violence of women by men as 'a fact of life'.

4.32. Responses received in this consultation demonstrate that sadly, this is not only a reality in women's lives, but one that women have internalised, and one that determines how they respond to incidents of abuse (see section 3.35)

4.33. The spirit in which this question was asked in the consultation was to explore how many respondents affirmed that they feel responsible for their own safety against male violence against women in public spaces, but also to highlight the lengths to which women will go to try to ensure their own safety when out and about in Edinburgh.

4.34. Under no circumstances does the Women's Safety in Public Places Community Improvement Partnership suggest that it is acceptable for women to experience fear in public spaces, or that they are solely responsible for keeping themselves safe, however responses serve to highlight that this is a live issue for women and girls throughout Edinburgh.

4.35. Approximately 95.1% of respondents to the consultation stated that they take measures to keep themselves safe when out and about in Edinburgh, and they described taking the following measures:

4.35.1. **Planning routes and sticking to busy well-lit areas** – Over half of respondents plan their routes whilst walking alone in the dark so that they avoid routes that are quiet and dark. Many will avoid parks, cycle paths and public walkways at night. Others like to ensure there is an escape route if needed. Some people prefer to take familiar routes when out alone, whilst others like to change their route regularly so that they aren't deliberately targeted.

- "I tend to avoid routes that are dark or have less people, I try to walk on main roads where there are traffic and people"

4.35.2. **Letting someone know where they are going** – Around half of respondents reported that they would let friends or family know where they were going, what route they are taking and rough timings of when they plan to get there. They also reported that they would check in with friends and family when arrived. In the event that their friend or family member don't hear from them within a certain period they would be able to raise the alarm. In addition, some people said that they use a tracking app on their mobile phone to share their location with friends or family.

- "I tell my family where I'm going/have a tracker on my phone"

4.35.3. **Having a mobile phone to hand or chatting to someone on the phone whilst walking** – a large proportion of respondents would ensure they had their phone in their hand ready to use in an emergency or would purposely call a friend or family member to chat to whilst walking alone at night to act as a deterrent to anyone looking to target them. On the other hand, there were a few people who would hide their phones/valuables so as not to attract attention.

- "If I am alone I am constantly checking in with family members and the same goes for when they are out in Edinburgh. There is a communication check in we do and if walking alone, we're on the phone and giving location updates."

4.35.4. **Carrying a personal alarm or keys in hand** – Many people would hold their keys in their hands, between their fingers for use in self-defense if need be. Some would make sure they had some sort of object that they could use in self-defense, e.g. an umbrella, metal water bottle. Some people would carry a personal alarm to make them feel safe.

- "I carry my keys in my hand, have a rape alarm and always tell someone where I'm going at night."

4.35.5. **Avoid walking alone** - A lot of respondents would try to make sure they walk with a friend in the dark or would purposely not go out at night alone. Others would try to walk close to other groups of females at night to feel safer.

- "At night-time, walk home with others"

4.35.6. **Aware of surroundings** – many respondents would ensure that they are alert and aware of their surroundings and who is around them while out and about alone in Edinburgh. A high proportion of people would avoid using headphones whilst listening to music or podcasts.

- "Mindful of where I am and who is around me."

4.35.7. **Drive, use public transport, taxis or cycle** – Some people stated that they would feel safer using transport to get to places when dark. Some preferred driving or getting a lift from friends or family and others would prefer to get taxis. Some felt safer using public transport and would purposely only go to locations that were on good public transport routes at night. However, a number of people would avoid public transport and private taxis if alone for safety reasons. Some people would like to cycle at night whilst others chose not to cycle for safety reasons.

- "Sometimes I will choose to take a taxi rather than walk, or take the bus rather than walk a route that is 20 minutes or less after 10pm"

4.35.8. **Walk fast, walk confidently or run** – Many people reported that they will walk fast or with confidence when alone, particularly at night. Others would run if they are in a place where they felt threatened or unsafe.

- "I always walk fast and look straight ahead and ignore comments."
- "Looks around and walk fast/run through scary spots."
- "Walk fast and confidently with keys in my hand"

4.35.9. **Appearance and clothing** – Quite a few people would consider their appearance and wear clothing that makes them feel safer, e.g. trainers/flat shoes when walking in case they need to get away quickly, clothes that won't attract male attention, or wearing hair up in a ponytail. Some people would wear their bags under their jackets so that they won't be seen. Others would use over the body bags so that they feel more secure.

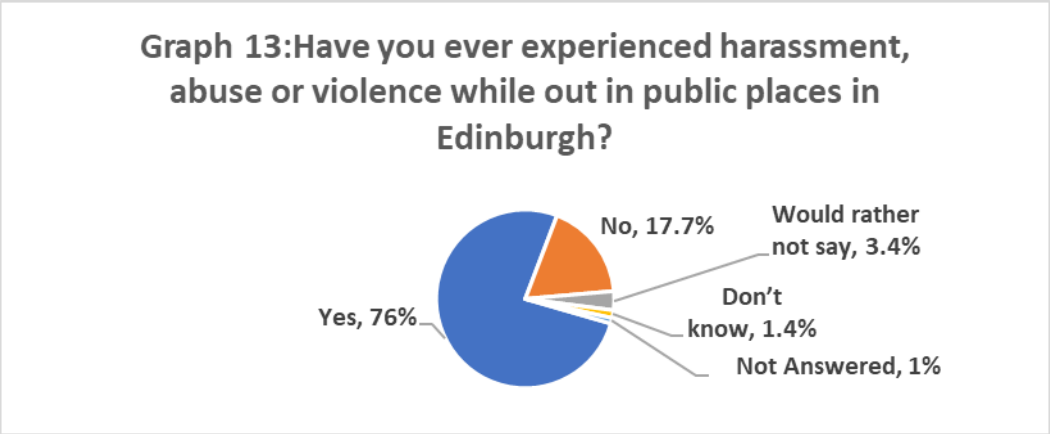
- "Wearing footwear and clothing that I can run in if I need to get away from someone"
- "I tie my hair up so no one can grab me from behind"
- "Feeling the need to be covered up entirely even after a night out (massive hoodie or jacket to avoid any 'encouragement' of remarks from men)"

4.35.10. **Other actions** that people take to make themselves feel safe include: taking self defense classes, ensuring their mobile phone is charged, using a bike light or headtorch, taking their dog with them. One person said "I also adjust my behaviours, e.g. I would never be holding hands with a same-sex partner in many areas"

4.36. Although a number of the responses could be considerable 'reasonable' measures that ensure personal safety, there are a number of responses that are heavily gendered. For example, the focus on personal appearance, clothing and footwear very much demonstrates the belief that a particular 'kind of appearance' could be responsible or inviting an attack in a public place.

Experiences of harassment and abuse in public places

4.37. An alarming finding of this consultation is the number of people who responded having experienced harassment, abuse or violence in Edinburgh's public spaces. The majority of respondents (76%) had some kind of experience of this nature, and only 17.7% said they did not, as graph 13 below indicates:



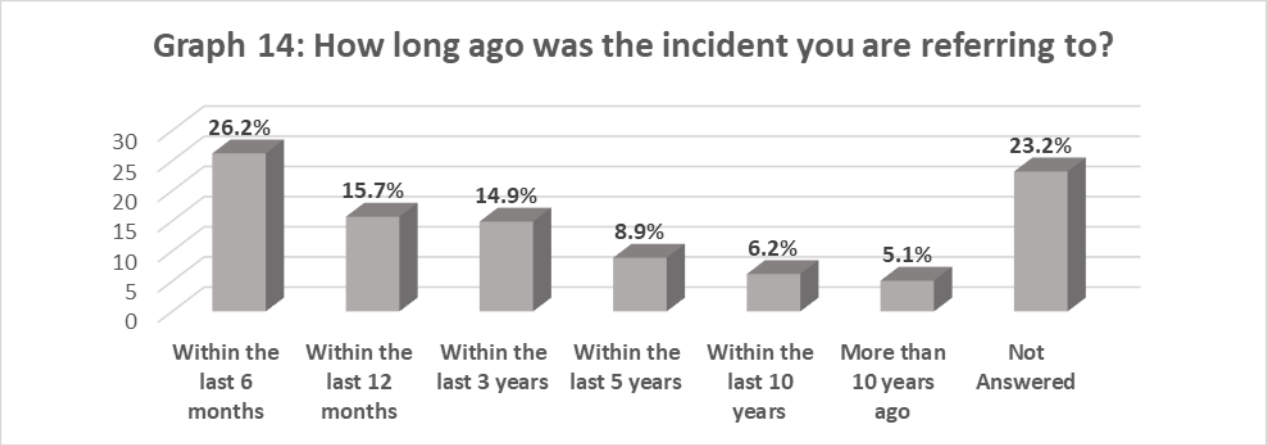
4.38. Considering that people who didn't answer, didn't know or would rather not say may have chosen those options to avoid disclosing their experience, it is possible that the actual number of people who have experienced harassment, abuse or violence could potentially total over 80%.

4.39. Further, considering that the overwhelming majority of respondents are women, it is safe to extrapolate that the majority of women in Edinburgh have experienced some form of harassment, abuse or violence in a public place in Edinburgh.

4.40. A further alarming finding was that over a quarter of respondents experienced some incident of harassment, violence or abuse within the last 6 months (26.2%), 15.7% had experienced in 6-12 months ago, while in total, almost half had had this experience within the last 12 months (41.9%). Given that a high percentage of respondents did not answer this question (23.2%), it is possible that this percentage is actually much higher.

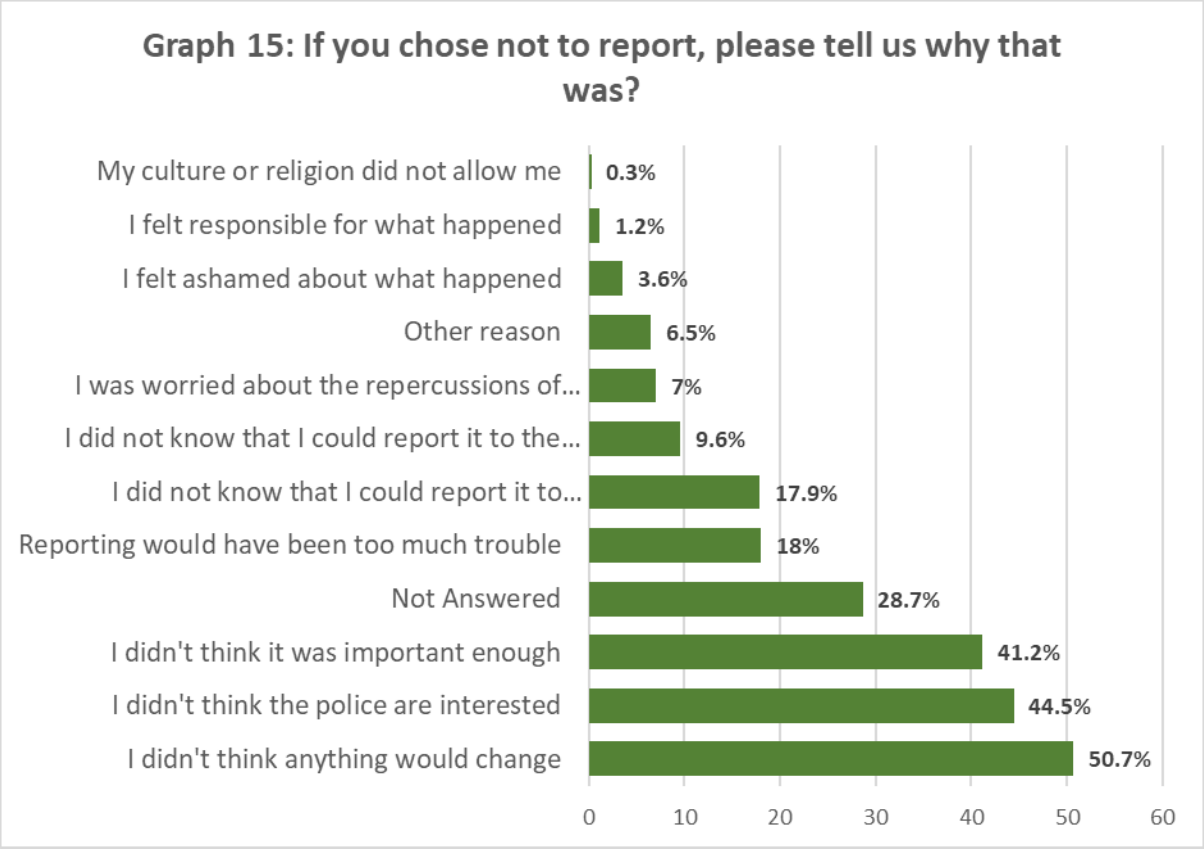
4.41. Excluding those who chose not to respond to this question, a sobering finding is that at some point in their lifetime, 77% of women who responded to the consultation had experienced some form of harassment, abuse or violence in a public space.

4.42. This demonstrates that despite progress and societal change, some of the attitudes that perpetuate misogyny and the objectification of women continue to persist to this day. Please see Graph 14 below for more details.



Decision to report, not to report and to whom

4.43. Respondents named a number of reasons that influenced their decision to report or not to report an incident to the police, or to seek support from a specialist agency. Sadly, the key reasons women identified behind their decision not to report harassment, abuse or violence in a public space all reflect a despondence around reporting: the majority (50.7%) felt that there would be no point in reporting an incident as nothing would change, because they did not think the police would be interested (44.5%) or because they did not feel that the incident was important enough to report (41.2%). A summary of the responses to this question is presented in graph 15 below:



4.44. Seeking Support from a specialist service/agency: Of 1,110 people that had experienced harassment, abuse or violence while out in public places in Edinburgh, 70 people (6%) reported that they sought support from a specialist agency/organisation. These agencies/organisations included:

i. NHS Lothian
ii. Instagram account 'catcallsofedi'
iii. Edinburgh Women's Aid
iv. Doctor
v. Accident & Emergency Department at the hospital
vi. Mental Health Team
vii. Citizen's Advice Bureau
viii. Stalking helpline
ix. Housing association
x. MSP
xi. Victim Support Scotland
xii. Councillor / Therapist
xiii. Support worker
xiv. Line manager
xv. The City of Edinburgh Council
xvi. Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre
xvii. Edinburgh Headway
xviii. Action on Stalking
xix. Privately accessed Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
xx. The University of Edinburgh
xxi. The city's antisocial behaviour reporting website.

4.43. Deciding not to seek support from a specialist service/agency: Of those that had experienced harassment, abuse or violence while out in public places in Edinburgh, there were 990 people (89%) that answered that they had not sought support from a specialist agency/organisation.

4.44. The majority of respondents who did not seek specialist support said it was because the incidents did not feel serious enough, e.g. catcalling, verbal abuse, and these types of incidents happen too frequently.

4.45. Many felt like there was no point in seeking help and that agencies or organisations would not provide support for this. some respondents did not feel they needed specialist support or they dealt with it themselves. A few people went to friends for support instead.

- "I've experienced a lot of verbal sexual comments from young men and catcalling. I didn't report this or seek help because it seemed like such an everyday occurrence."
- "It literally happens all the time. I would have to be consulting one of these organisations like every other day."
- "Didn't think it was that serious - just accepted it as being normal"
- "Don't feel that anything can or will be done about it."
- "Dealt with it myself, not unusual behaviour sadly."

4.46. There were a number of other reasons why respondents did not seek specialist support, including: incidents were difficult to prove, Agencies/Organisations do not always provide female only support which makes some women feel uncomfortable, not being taken

seriously, embarrassed/uncomfortable reporting non-violent incidents, and wanting to forget the incident. Finally, some people did not know where they could go to access help.

4.47. Reporting Incidents to the Police: Of all people who stated that they had experience an incident of harassment, violence or abuse in a public place, 95% did not report it to the police. The main reasons for not reporting an incident to the police included:

4.47.1. **Negative experience of the police** – 34% of those that commented did not report it due to previous negative experiences with the police or negative perceptions of the police. Some respondents did not report their incident due to a lack of trust that they would be taken seriously or that something would be done.

- "a policeman watched it happen and regarded it as boys being boys"
- "I do not trust police in general, but also specifically I don't trust them to take me seriously or treat me with any respect because I am transgender"
- "I don't trust the police. I reported before and they took no action"
- "My friend had an experience where she phoned the police and the officer talking to her was very dismissive and nothing got done in the end"
- "They can't be trusted, see Sarah Everard."

4.47.2. **Lack of evidence** - Two in 10 of those commenting did not report an incident to police because they did not feel that there would be enough evidence for the police to do anything.

- "The volume of these types of incidents and lack of detail /specificity (it is usually random people) would mean it was pointless"
- "It happened very fast and they ran off afterwards - couldn't really describe them as it all happened so fast."
- "As our law requires corroboration there was no point in following this through."

4.47.3. **Frequency of harassment/violence/abuse towards women** – Around 15% of those that commented did not report it to the police because they believe that abuse towards women happens too frequently. Some expect this behaviour and it has become normalised. Many didn't think the incidents were serious enough for the police to be able to do anything about it. Others felt that the police wouldn't take these types of crimes seriously or that they were wasting police time.

- "Most women do not report incidents because the bad behaviour of men has been normalised in our society and most women know that unless it is a seriously violent offence the police will do nothing."
- "Catcalling/whistling - feels common and everyday so didn't think it was a reportable offence."
- "If I reported every instance of homophobic/sexist abuse I worry that the police wouldn't take me seriously when I needed to report something serious."
- "Because if women reported every single "low-level" (ie harassing/unwanted) incident then the police would never do any other work. It's endemic out there."

4.47.4. **Not worth the trauma** – One in 10 of those commenting did not report it to the police because they were scared of the repercussions or did not think it was worth the effort or trauma. Some believed that they would be blamed by the police for the incident happening to them or that they wouldn't be believed.

Others believed they were too young and naive at the time or too embarrassed to report the incident.

- "Honestly doubt anything would have even happened if I did report it. Is it really worth the mental trauma and effort of doing this?
- "I didn't think I would be believed."
- "I was drunk so I felt like I was maybe overreacting"

4.47.5. **Other reasons** – Other reasons people didn't report an incident to the police included: they didn't think or know they could report it, they dealt with it themselves, they gave up waiting to get through to the non-emergency number (101), or they chose to forget.

Equalities information

4.48. The Women's Safety in Public Places consultation received 1461 responses.

4.49. Of those responses, the overwhelming majority was from women (94%), most of whom were cis-gendered (92.1%)

4.50. Most respondents were aged 25-54 (72.3%)

4.51. The majority did not belong to a religion (68.5%)

4.52. Most people who responded stated that they are heterosexual/straight (70%)

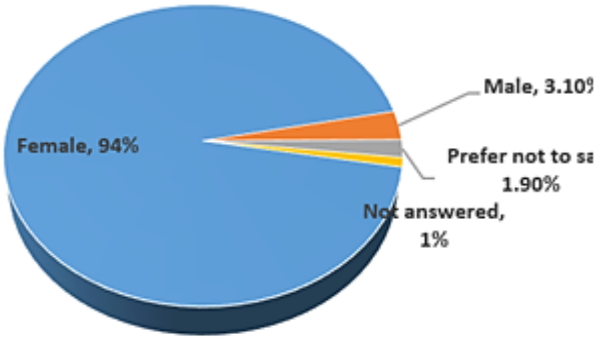
4.53. Most respondents (62.8%) did not have caring responsibilities, but over a third (34.3%) cared for a child, a person with a disability or an older person. 4.6% were also a secondary carer.

4.54. Almost half (45.5%) of respondents had never married or been in a civil partnership, but a third (33.6%) were married and 1.4% were in a civil partnership.

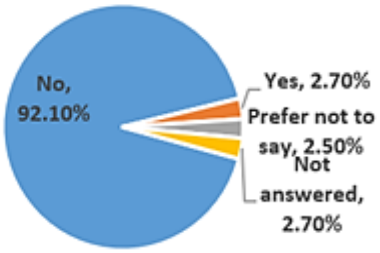
4.55. The infographics on the following two pages summarise a breakdown on respondents' protected characteristics.

Respondents' Equality Information

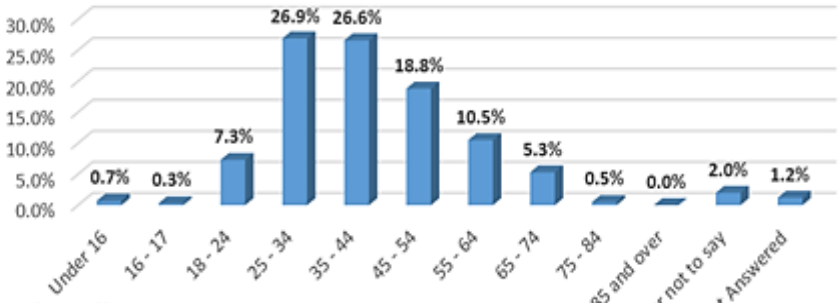
Percentage of respondents by sex



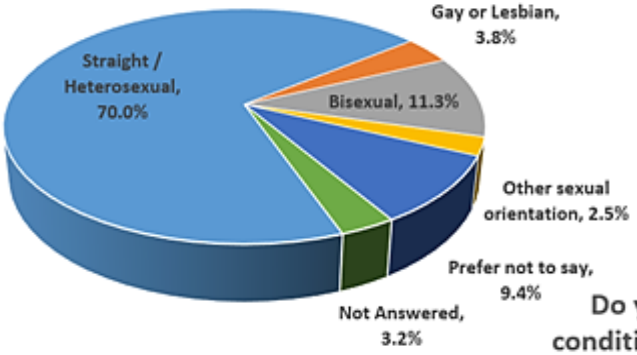
Do you consider yourself to be trans, or have a trans history?



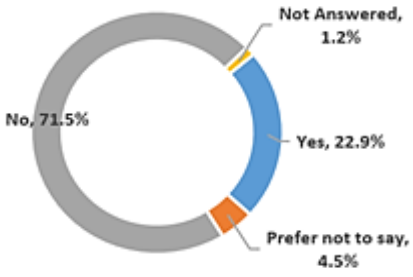
What is your age?



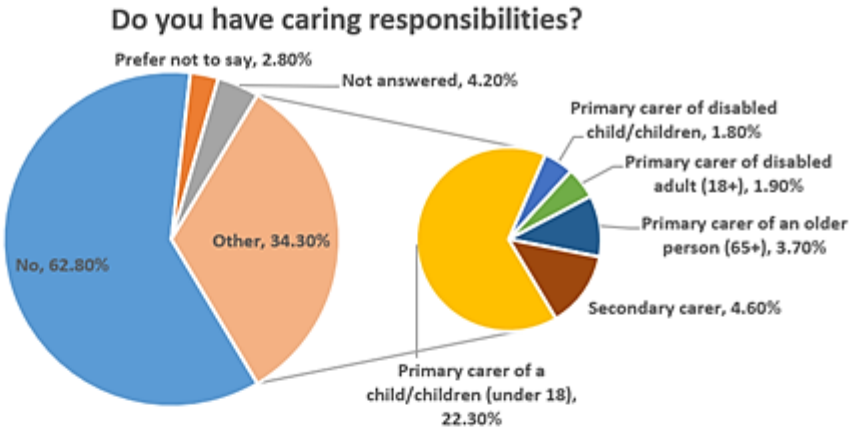
Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

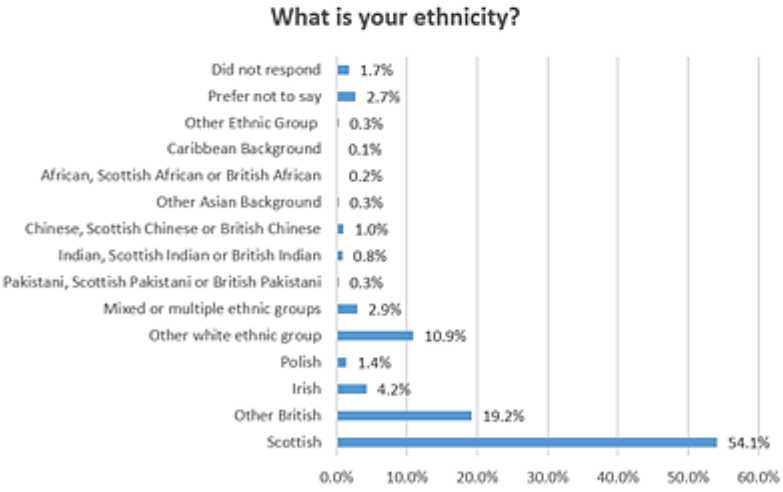


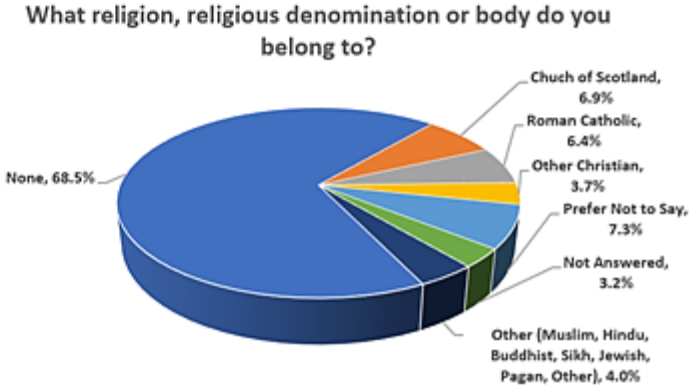
Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more?



Respondents' Equality Information (continued)







5. Focus Group Analysis

5.1 Beyond the consultation being available on the City of Edinburgh Council's consultation hub, an additional 6 focus groups were organised and run between 20-29 September.

5.2 Forty-eight participants were recruited to take part and 46 attended. Participants were selected citywide across a diverse range of protected characteristics. A quota was applied to include a quarter of the sample from ethnic minority groups and a quarter from areas classed high on the SIMD index. The final groups consisted of:

- One group for women aged 65 and over
- One group for younger women, aged 16-22
- One group for men
- Three generic groups for women with a range and spread of protected characteristics.

5.3 Four focus groups were run online via MS Teams and two were carried out in person.

5.4 Given the sensitive nature of the topic area, in addition to the facilitator a professional attended each group to provide emotional support to participants if required.

5.5 Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire after taking part to provide feedback on the focus group. Twenty-one participants completed the questionnaire and feedback suggests that the majority of participants found the focus group a positive experience, with 20 agreeing that this was a good way of engaging people on women's safety in public places. Further detail on this can be provided on request.

5.6 The aim of the focus groups was to make sure that people from seldom-heard groups were given the opportunity to be included in the consultation, and to elicit richer discussion around the various different aspects of women's safety in public places and what can be done to improve it.

Key findings from Focus Groups

5.7 *What makes people feel safe in public places?*

Good lighting, open and busy roads were key factors contributing to people feeling safe in pubic. Familiarity of a place and people, along with a sense of community also played a role. Police presence was a topic that arose in most groups. More specifically:

5.7.1. **Good Lighting and Road Layout:** All the female groups felt that well-lit streets and public spaces made them feel safe in their neighbourhood. The design of streets was also talked about in the female groups with bigger, wider streets making participants feel safer. The older female age group (65 and over) discussed feeling safer in areas that have good pavements without obstacles, such as potholes, cracks or additional cycle lane features.

- *"Centre of Edinburgh is well lit. I feel comfortable walking around"*
- *"[In] our neighbourhood when it gets dark, lights on front doors come on, you see that dotted along, spotlights in gardens, etc. I would be happy to walk through the road we live in. Lights help."*
- *"Well lit, widish pavements feel pretty good."*

"Down at the Shore, bit more cosmopolitan so don't tend to see kids. Upgraded streetlights have improved the area, it's brighter and safer."

5.7.2. **Knowing the neighbours / Sense of community / Familiarity –** All groups, including the male group, highlighted that the familiarity of their neighbourhood made them feel safe. They would know which streets to best use when on their own and alternative routes they could use. The general sense was that knowing their neighbours and recognising people who lived in the area gave them a greater sense of security. If people had grown up in an area, they were more likely to feel safe in that area. In addition, the younger female participants (16–22-year-olds) felt that the neighbourhood watch scheme and the way new build houses allows neighbours to look out onto each other more easily, made them feel safe.

- *"If I know it quite well and if one route doesn't feel good and I can go round a different route."*
- *"Knowing your neighbours, knowing your street, knowing people that live in your street."*
- *"I've lived there all of my life and I know people. You just feel safe. You know everyone or most folk. You wouldn't mind walking past people because you know them."*
- *"Everyone knows each other quite well, it's been there for centuries so families been there for generations, makes me feel safe, like a village. Less traffic, know people."*
- *"Think my own area, been here so long … known each other for years, receptive to new families."*
- *"I think recognising faces as well like…cos I've just moved into my flat and like…when you move in somewhere in the first place, your kind of more like wary around you but when you start recognizing people and recognising streets and actually knowing like shortcuts or whatever you start to feel more comfortable and safer."*

5.7.3. **Other people around / busy roads** – Participants felt safe on busier roads with shops open and roads used frequently by cars, buses, and people. Some felt that having bus stops nearby and having a frequent bus service helped them feel safe. However, others said that there being many people around in certain areas at night sometimes had the opposite effect.

- *"Feel assured because there's bodies."*
- *"If I saw someone else walking in front of me… that makes me feel safer, rather than it just being an empty street and me just walking along."*
- *"Roads that are used. Main road or with buses."*
- *"Cars passing feel safe"*
- *"Live quite near city centre, at weekend more buzz and prefer walking home when lots of people are out."*

5.7.4. **Police presence –** Female groups generally felt that seeing police officers walking about on the streets helps them feel safe. However, there was the perception that this does not happen now as much as it used to. Some participants felt that having CCTV cameras around their neighbourhood made them feel safe. Yet, others were strongly against the use of CCTV cameras for privacy reasons.

- *"Having police on the streets. We don't see that anymore. There is a sense that you can get away with things if it's not being monitored"*
- *"Living close to a police station. They're doing patrols. Sometimes makes you feel safe"*

5.8 *What makes people feel less safe in public places?*

Dark, quiet streets and areas were identified as a major factor which made people feel less safe in a public place. The behaviour of other people also played an important role, including motorists, cyclists, and young people. Unfamiliarity would add to the feeling of being less safe for some. The restrictions and rules associated with Covid has also played a part over the past couple of years. On the contrary, some felt the lockdown boosted community spirit.

5.8.1. **Dark, quiet places –** The female groups highlighted that dark, narrow streets and dark areas/parks, particularly at night make them feel less safe. They discussed that places where there is a lack of/problem with streetlights makes them feel unsafe. Some female participants would avoid streets or areas which have overgrown hedges or a lot of vegetation which made it difficult to see, especially at night. Quiet streets/areas would also make females feel less safe. The younger female age group were particularly cautious of underpasses, the old railway paths or pavements which have temporary construction work where there are no quick exits to escape.

- *"Tram station is very close and up until a certain point it's well lit, people about but then it gets quieter and darker. The road itself is quiet, no taxi rank, no people, I wouldn't walk down that road at night"*
- *"Dark and quiet roads make it quite scary."*
- *"Often problems with streetlights, …. feels different if darker, quieter."*
- *"Lots of parked cars, dark, narrow pavement – less safe"*
- *"Some streets quiet, no one there, disconcerting"*
- *"Vegetation that makes it difficult for people to be seen"*
- Places where there is construction/road works – paths are closed off, feeling of being *"enclosed".*

5.8.2. **Street design/layout** – The group with older people (aged 65 and over) felt that the new cycle lanes and features at the side of pavements were unsafe and caused accidents. It was difficult to see cyclists and walk beside/cross over these cycle lanes. The rubber strip that separates the lane was seen a safety hazard and had caused injury from tripping over them. They all felt that priority was given to cyclist over pedestrian safety on pavements. Yet, comments also highlight that there was perhaps a lack of understanding of the rational for the cycle lanes to encourage more people to cycle.

- *"The amount of focus they've [The City of Edinburgh Council] given to cyclists in terms of lanes and places where only they can go is way out for the number of cyclists there are actually around."*

5.8.3. **Behaviour of motorists/cyclists** – the speed of some private cab drivers was brought up by the older age group (65 and over) as making them feel less safe. They also reported that some cyclists can be quite aggressive, don't always follow the rules and have caused accidents resulting in them feeling less safe. Electric scooters being ridden illegally on pavements were also seen as a major problem by this group. These are seen as issues throughout Edinburgh rather than anywhere specific. Groups highlighted that there was a major problem with motorbikes being stolen and ridden by young people in balaclavas. This terrified participants and appeared to be a citywide issue. They explained that if the young riders are not wearing helmets, police won't chase after them due to safety reasons.

- *"Cyclists not using lights at night. If a motorist hits a cyclist, then it's the motorist fault."*
- *"Cyclist knocking people over."*
- *"Speed of Ubers/Private hire cabs driving round the town."*
- *"Motorbikes/scooters. Scary as hell. They don't care"*
- *"People riding bikes or scooters on the pavements. It's illegal. This is a problem everywhere in Edinburgh."*
- *Motorbike theft – "they are scaring people and I can't even take my dog for a walk. The Police have attended but they cannot identify them, they are not allowed to chase them, so it continues."*

5.8.4. **Behaviour of others** –Participants, including males, felt that certain places can feel unsafe due to the way people behave in those areas. For example, Princes Street might feel safe for many during the day whilst it is busy, but at night some find the busyness less safe as people are more likely to be drunk or behaving antisocially. This is particularly the case around areas which have bars or clubs. If someone is seen loitering by themselves, it can make people feel unsafe to walk past them. The lack of police presence was mentioned by some as a factor making them feel less safe. Racism was also highlighted as a serious issue that persists in Edinburgh making them feel less safe.

- *"If I go the other side (Queensferry Street) it's a different vibe – when I leave my home and go into the street there's bars and clubs – fine through the day – but as it gets darker, at weekends it gets quite raucous. 11pm – people been drinking quite a while – palpable danger. It doesn't feel easy. Cluster of nightlife, that alcohol encourages certain behaviour. Sick, fights and emergency vehicles."*
- *"Not comfortable passing aggressive drunks – groups of drunk people are worse – you're aware they're unpredictable – I wouldn't feel intimated crowd coming out of the theatre, café etc."*
- *"When I see someone by themselves not going anywhere and just loitering. Even if it's a woman sometimes. I'm scared to walk past them as you don't know who they're with and what they're planning. Especially near a park."*
- *"It can be even worse if you are not originally from here…if you are a foreigner and you've lived in Edinburgh for so many years …racists still exist."*

5.8.5. **Groups of young people** – this was a recurring theme that arose across all groups. Groups of young people congregating in areas such as outside shops, bus stops or parks, intimidating and displaying antisocial behaviour made people feel less safe in their neighbourhood. The older female age group (aged 65 and over) felt that it was also a citywide problem on busses. They felt that providing young people with free bus passes has exacerbated this issue. Participants thought that being caught by the police or having a police presence does not seem to deter some young people nowadays as there does not appear to be any consequences. Some participants, including the male group, highlighted that it has put them off allowing their children to travel alone in their neighbourhood.

- *"Not really a lot of places around here, take daughter to park – groups of youths congregating – intimidating, daughter would have to ask to use swings etc. Obviously, something lacking for them to do – therefore drinking in park, children see this."*
- *"Gangs of people and young kids - drinking and hurling abuse. I know you're only 13 but when there's a big group of them what could you possibly do. It's a bit intimidating. Older kids (late teens) are even worse. I try to avoid them cause you never know what might happen. They want to cause trouble."*

- *"Kids aren't bothered even if police are about. It doesn't seem to be a deterrent for them nowadays."*
- *"Threatening behaviour. Knife and balaclava on. Threats of "I'll kill you"".*
- *"When you see a lot of youths on the street hanging around. Maybe they could be dispersed. Puts you off from going out. Don't want to come across them. Don't want to intimidate them. It's anytime of the day. "*
- *"Groups of young people on buses. I've actually got off a bus and waited on the next one because of this." The youths getting free bus passes now has encourage them to use them more and is causes more problems. Smoking, drugs, cheek on the bus. They're bored and nothing else to do and showing off to their friends."*
- *"Young people have nothing to lose, unlike older people with families – we tend to be more cautious about where we go etc. Look at a young teenage group the wrong way and they may shout or attack. You need to be careful with what you do (especially with your kids around you)."*
- *"I cycle with my son to Scouts. You can hear the kids before you see them – shouting, smoking etc. Wouldn't like my son to cycle himself, so go with him and pick him up."*

5.8.6. **Less of a community feel** – The male group discussed certain areas of Edinburgh feeling less community like and less safe. They highlighted that some areas, which can be just round the corner in their neighbourhood, can feel unsafe due to turnover of tenants, people coming and going, and a lack of ownership. One person explained that living in their neighbourhood requires a level of acting "tough" and "rough" so as not to attract any conflict. Groups felt less safe in areas which were not well kept or dirty (with litter or graffiti) and also, certain places which have a reputation for being unsafe at times, e.g. the Meadows at night.

- *"Once round the corner it feels like that's where they're housing problem people – can't get housed anywhere else, tend to not have a sense of community, don't have a sense of ownership, don't take care of their property or neighbourhood maybe because they don't feel secure or that they belong. Within that area as well there's a historical mentality that this is our area, if you live here you have to be tough, rough and ready and that creates a bit of a conflict."*
- *"Kids congregate at NRS and people down on their luck. Sheltered and quiet area so they gather. Highlights safe areas can be unsafe depending on who is there."*
- *"Quite a lot of council housing – turnover of tenants, people who are homeless, people coming and going, people in stairwell makes me feel unsafe."*
- "*If no one's on the lookout, if no one cares about picking up the rubbish, why would they care about if I got kidnapped?"*

5.8.7. **Unfamiliarity** – It was apparent that unfamiliarity of a place is likely to contribute to feeling less safe. Many female participants said that they wouldn't feel comfortable walking in an area that they did not know in the dark.

- *"I tend to walk everywhere, out at different concerts / shows but never personally feel unsafe in areas. Going further out, towards Royal Infirmary etc – even those areas that are less common for me, I still don't feel unsafe during the daytime but when it gets dark and younger 12–14-year-olds are gathering, seem lost in our society. Where is the control for them? I'd never have been allowed out at that time when I was their age."*

- *"Prince's street would feel safe because it's really busy. But I wouldn't walk down your street as I don't know it."*
- *"I wouldn't feel safe going to Leith or the shore. But that might be because I don't know the place so well so it's out of my comfort zone."*

5.8.8. **Covid –** Groups highlighted that Covid-19 restrictions and laws contributed to make them feel unsafe, such as the forced wearing of face makes meaning you could not see people's faces, lockdown and being questioned about why you were leaving your house. There was less of a community feel due to people not being allowed to meet or talk, "people keep themselves to themselves" and are still learning how to interact now. There was a perception that crime was a lot worse during covid. Contrary to this, one group felt that lockdown strengthen community relationships.

5.9 *Actions People take to feel safe*

The focus groups highlighted that people feel the need to be prepared to defend themselves and carry keys in their hand, or similar. Some chat on their phone if out and about alone, particularly at night. Female participants tend to let someone know where they are going so they'll know when to expect them. Additionally, people will plan their journey to avoid unnecessary risks. Some will make sure they travel home with a friend or get a taxi at night. Females will be conscious about what they wear if they have to walk home at night, e.g., trainers, hooded jacket. Male participants recognised that females feel they have to take more action than males when out and about alone and discussed some of the things they do to be considerate of women's feelings.

5.9.1. **Carrying an object for self-defense or to deter others** – Female participants talked about carrying something to defend themselves, e.g. keys in their hand, spray, pointy umbrella. Some of the participants carry personal alarms to deter against attacks, while others have them but never carry them or forget about them. One of the male participants also highlighted that he was taught by his mother to carry keys in his hand at night.

- *"I bought one of these safety key chains for my 10 year old."*
- *"Carry my keys, my umbrella – carry it like a club, weapon – makes me feel better."*
- *"I walk a lot, have crutches (need to keep strength in legs) carry torch and whistle with me – so if I was attacked, I could raise awareness."*
- *"Carry hairspray in bag."*

5.9.2. **Chatting to someone on mobile phone / having phone ready** – The female groups also discussed phoning a friend or family member while out alone. They felt this would act as a deterrent to unwanted behaviour or targeting. On the other hand, there was also the opinion that a phone would attract unwanted attention so they would put it away instead. Another mentioned they would have 999 dialled and ready to call if need be.

- *"Mobile phone. If it's late, I'll phone my mum. It's like a deterrent. Pretending to be on the phone"*
- *"Being on a call with someone, talking so people avoid me – less likely to bother someone on their phone"*
- *"Putting my phone away as I think it attracts attention. Anything that's valuable, make sure it's hidden. It's the fear of mugging."*

5.9.3. **Letting someone know where they are going / Using a tracking app** – Female participants talked about letting friends or family know where they were going and when they'd expect to be back. A few also talked about sharing their location on mobile tracking apps, e.g. share my location, Life 360, Apple tags.

- *"If I'm going out at night I say where I'm going and when I'll be back. So hopefully if I'm several hours late my husband might think there's something going on."*
- *"I text friends and they text me when I'm home safely. So if I haven't received a text in a reasonable amount of time I would be alerted and vice versa."*
- *"Find my iPhone tracking."*
- *"One Scream app – connect to couple of people and you switch the app on, so if attacked then the app screams and your contacts are also alerted, sends location details etc. I've enabled it but never had to use it."*

5.9.4. **Planning journeys / Aware of surroundings / Avoiding unnecessary risks** – much of this discussion centred around avoiding unnecessary risks or using common sense. Participants, including some males, would plan their journey to ensure they are taking the safer route even if that means it is a longer route. For example, sticking to well-lit areas and main roads, avoiding unsafe short cuts, avoiding parks in the dark. The younger female group also talked about avoiding crowded areas with lots of men and knowing where escape routes are. However, mixing up routine was touched upon to avoid being targeted. One younger participant would use social media (Facebook Community Group) to keep up to date with the areas where there was active antisocial behaviour. Some talked about keeping their car door locked when in it. Having an awareness of who is around and crossing the road to avoid suspicious people or groups was also touched upon both by female and male groups. Female participants were more likely to avoid wearing headphones when out alone, especially at night. The male group recognised that females are likely to be more affected by this than men and men are perhaps, "privileged".

- *"If I'm not aware of my location, I plan how to move around – conscious that things could happen so prepare myself for it"*
- *"I wouldn't take any unnecessary risks. There are a few short cuts but if it's dark I wouldn't go there. Use your common sense as well."*
- *"I wouldn't dream of going round a park on my own in the dark. Although sometimes you have no choice, if you miss a bus and you just start walking."*
- *"Stick to well-lit areas even if it takes a bit longer" (Male participant)*
- *"[People] will post [on the community Facebook page] when there is anti-social behaviour, so you know what areas to avoid. They post quite regularly so it's an active page"*
- *"Before you get out of the car, you look left, you look right and if you don't feel safe, don't get out."*
- *"In my neighbourhood, if I see someone I don't know, and they look shifty in any way, I'll avoid them."*
- *"Avoid wearing headphones"*
- *"Conscious of who is at the front of me and at the back, especially the back." (Male participant)*
- *"I generally feel safe most places I go. If I do see large groups, I'd just cross the road to avoid the chance of anything happening." (Male participant)*
- *"I tend to walk everywhere too, don't feel massively unsafe. Always listen to music, the only time I'll turn it down is if I'm coming up to a group of people. Realise it's a bit of a privilege to walk around wearing my headphones without*

worry when a lot of other people (especially girls) can't consider it." (Male participant)

5.9.5. **Wearing certain clothing** – Female participants in all age groups were conscious of what they wear when out and about alone. They would purposely wear flat shoes or trainers, rather than heels, so they could walk faster or in case they need to get away quickly. One person said, *"The clip clap of heels makes me feel a bit more vulnerable, rather than if I was stomping down in Doc Martins".* Another mentioned they would wear their "*hood up*" to avoid attention. Male participants were instead more conscious of valuables they were carrying. Other comments included:

- *"If I think I'm going to be walking somewhere, I'd wear shoes where I could pick up the pace. I wouldn't wear heals where I would find it difficult to move away from a situation in. I think it just comes back to being sensible and using your common sense and thinking ahead."*
- "*I wouldn't carry a bag in the evening, I wouldn't keep my phone in my jean pocket at the back, maybe use a dark pod rather than an air bud to make it less obvious what I have on me*."
- *"What you wear. I would never walk back if I was wearing heals. I would only walk back if I was wearing trainers so I would know I could get away if I had to. Spare shoes after a night out. Doc martins".*

5.9.6. **Avoiding walking home alone -** Participants felt that safety in numbers was vital when out and about, particularly at night. Female participants would generally try and walk home with a friend at or get a taxi at night rather than walk home on their own. Others would choose to drive if they were going to be travelling back by themselves at night. Looking out for one another, particularly female friends, was considered important by both female and male participants. Participants would make sure their friends got a taxi home rather than walking home alone.

- *"Safety in numbers – make sure we taxi together, never leave a friend out, if one wanted to go home then make sure they get in a taxi."*
- *"From a young age, mum taught us never leave a friend, never walk alone"*
- *"Get a taxi back if I was by myself with the kids at night."*
- *"I do worry about my female friends leaving clubs at night etc. There have been a few attacks around here, so I try make sure they get a taxi or I'm more than happy to walk them home if they want me to." (Male participant)*

5.9.7. **Considerate of lone female walkers** – It was interesting to hear that most of the male participants were conscious of the safety concerns of lone female walkers. This was not only the case for women on their own but anyone on their own. Media reports have brought women's safety to the forefront in recent years. This, along with social media, has highlighted the perception of women when out and about alone in public places. Male participants talked about the steps they take to make women feel safer in their presence. For example, to avoid frightening them they would give women more personal space, cross the road rather than walk too closely behind them, or talk on their phone when passing.

- *"Used to do a lot of late nights at uni library, leaving 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning, I'm quite a quick walker and usually catch up on people and I never really thought how that could affect other people. Then after Sarah Everard, I saw a lot of things*

on Twitter about what people can do to make other people feel safer in your presence. You know you're not a threat, but other people don't. Simple things like crossing the road or being on the phone, I've worked that into my routine. Seems obvious now but I hadn't really given it thought before. It was a similar story for a lot of my friends – it's about awareness." (Male participant)

- *"A lot more conscious about giving space to people. Maybe it's something that's dawned on men recently, how vulnerable some people are, how women feel compared to a man in that situation." (Male participant)*
- *"Seen myself on the phone just chatting to someone to show I'm not a threat as I pass people. More aware over the last two years since things that have been in the press." (Male participant)*
- *"Told by my mum years ago, if you're walking home after a few drinks and there's a girl ahead of you, don't let the girl get scared at all – just cross the road. Whoever it is, just give them space." (Male participant)*
- *"Somewhere like the meadows / the links, I'd give people space, it's dark etc. Also, not just for their protection but mine. You never know whose around you either – they could be the lunatic." (Male participant)*

5.9.8. However, this opinion was not felt by all. In particular, one male participant said,

"I'd be more likely to cross the street if I felt threatened. Knowing that I'm not a threat to someone, why should I give space? I know for a fact I'm not a threat to them, I'll just pass them and go on my way."

He also explained that in his neighbourhood crossing the road because you're approaching someone could infer that you think they might be a threat to you and, therefore, be classed as rude. Interestingly, this view was challenged by other men in the group who stated that this is a small price to pay when considering how someone must feel when they believe that they are under threat.

5.10 Reporting an incident to the police/ seeking support from a specialist organisation

5.10.1. Perhaps unsurprisingly participants tended not to report incidents to the police if they did not think it was serious enough, e.g. catcalling, domestic argument. This might be because they did not think the police would take it seriously, there was a lack of police resource or lack of evidence to do anything about it.

5.10.2. Part of this stems from a perception people have built up of the police from others/the media and partly from other's more negative personal experiences. Some are frightened that they'll be blamed by police, some have a fear of retaliation, and some incidents are too traumatic to talk about and people want to forget.

5.10.3. There was a general sense that participants knew there were support organisations out there, however, not many participants were able to name any in particular. Participants made a number of suggestions which would urge people to report an incident or seek support, including sharing the outcome of incidents that are reported, understanding what can be reported and the process involved, and education.

5.11 *Factors that would encourage people to report an incident to the police/seek support from a specialist agency*

5.11.1. **Outcomes shared** - Groups felt that if they heard about successful outcomes of crimes that were reported this would encourage them to report future incidents to the police.

- *"Maybe if you hear stories of the person getting caught. You don't really get an update of what's happened. You don't have much trust in the police as you don't hear about the outcome."*
- *"If you heard about things that are getting done."*
- *"The feeling that at least you've done something, done your little bit."*

5.11.2. **Understanding of what should be reported** - Participants thought that it would be helpful to know the types of incidents that should and should not be reported to the police. It is not clear if certain incidents would be treated as "too petty". It would also help knowing where to report things if it's not an issue for the police and before it becomes an issue, e.g. broken streetlighting, disused needles, problems with neighbours. It is not always clear who deals with what.

- *"It would help people to know that they're not wasting police time"*
- *"Knowing that you're not wasting the police time and you're not reporting something that's too petty. Knowing where the line is or if it's going to be followed up."*

5.11.3. **Knowledge of the reporting process** – Participants thought that it would help to know the process involved when you report something. More clarity around how something can be reported would help. Also, what are the next steps after reporting something?

- *"Knowing the process would help. Do you phone and then do you have to go in for an interview? What actually happens. If I knew what was going to happen then I could outweigh over the stress of having to go in over what has happened."*

5.11.4. **Understanding the importance of being a role model** – It was felt important that people should report crimes, no matter how small they seem, as a good example to children. People should be encouraged to lead by example. Children will grow up knowing right from wrong.

- *"If you have children you need to teach them to step forward. For me personally, if I don't do all these things then my children will not do them too. For me, I feel I have to do this. Lead by example. If you have someone in your life to push you in the right direction."*

5.11.5. **Education** – One group talked about how school visits from community professionals, e.g. a doctor, police officer, fire officer, NHS professional, would help to educate and encourage children report crimes in future.

5.11.6. **Easier/Up-to-date way of reporting a crime** – One group talked about how it would be helpful to have a more modern way to report a crime rather than phoning, e.g. an app where you could pinpoint your location at the time and the incident. This might help show visually what's happening where. Another group suggested an easy access website to log issues and adding the severity level to help authorities monitor cases/incidents.

5.11.7. **Community police** – It was highlighted that having community police officers "*make a big difference*" when deciding whether to report an incident as there is a named person to go to. It is useful that they know the history. There appeared to be value in being able to go into police stations and report something face to face. However, it was noted that a lot of local police stations have now closed.

5.11.8. **Greater victim support/empathy from authorities** – The younger age group felt that if there was less questioning of the victim and more focus on perpetrators of crime this might encourage them to report incidents more.

5.12. Areas for improvement

5.12.1. There were many areas where participants thought action could be taken to improve women's safety in public places. Some of these included: educating both males and females from a young age, giving young people somewhere to go/something to do for free, improving public transport at night, having a greater police presence or community volunteers to help people get home safely.

5.12.2. More specifically, focus group participants expanded on the following:

5.12.3. **Education** – Both male and females should be educated at a young age on what is and is not appropriate. The younger age group thought that the "lad culture" misogynistic. It was felt that we should introduce 'consent' and how to respect others, women and the police at a young age. Schools could teach young people how it is not nice to be intimidated or bullied. This might influence the future culture.

5.12.4. **Give young people something to do/somewhere to go** – This was discussed at length by participants. The cost of living was raised as a barrier to families allowing their children to attend after school clubs or sports/leisure activities. "People can't afford it." The provision of free activities and places where young people can go would reduce a lot of the antisocial behaviour on streets.

- *"In one of the parks some evenings there are groups of young people. They're 14, 15, 16 and they've got alcohol, smoking and doing all sorts, and the litter that they leave is horrible. It's probably because there's nowhere for them to go. Police presence and give them something to do to improve that. If we value them a bit more and give them a bit more responsibility. If people used there skills to teach them, e.g. cars, joinery, classes."*
- *"Need to have places to go. If they had somewhere to go then that would take most of them off the streets. Although families can't afford to put them elsewhere. Free places to go, e.g. sports place or to play pool."*

5.12.5. **Parks designed for all ages of children and young people** – One person used Saughton Park as a good example of a park that is designed for older children and young people as well as

younger children. The skate park is a good feature - "*even if gangs are there you feel a lot safer*."

5.12.6. **Safe place where children can talk to someone** – One group talked about how it could be useful to have a safe place in schools where kids would be comfortable going to talk to someone about anything they wanted to. One person highlighted that young people aren't aware of support organisations or where they can go to speak to someone.

- *"Talking to younger people to see what's going on in their head."*

5.12.7. **Free travel for young people** – The older group thought it would reduce antisocial behaviour to restrict free travel for young people on busses at night. On the contrary, the younger age group believed that free bus travel for younger people should not have a cut-off time. This would make young people feel safer when out and about alone at night.

5.12.8. **More public transport at night to more areas** – Some suggested that more busses to make people feel safer travel alone at night would help. Participants also noticed a decline in taxis available at night since covid.

5.12.9. **Greater police presence / More power for police** – Participants felt that a greater police presence on the streets would help makes them feel safe. One person said "*there isn't any consequence for behaving like that*". Others thought that undercover police on the streets would also help. There was a feeling amongst groups that legislation needs to be changed or improved to allow the police to take action, e.g. against youths involved in antisocial behaviour.

- *"Police have to be given greater powers, they're so limited to what they could do"*

5.12.10. **Awareness raising** - Raising awareness of women's safety risks in public places, what can help and who you can go to for support would be valuable. Campaigns on bus stops and back of toilets would be useful. Using social media channels such as Ticktock to say "it's not ok" would reach young people. Make people more aware of the help they can get by the different support organisations.

- *"Unless people realise there is an issue, attitudes towards safety are never going to change. So people need to know some of the stats."*
- ***"****Drive more awareness around us – bring attention that things like this can happen – during this conversation it struck me how much* ***we*** *have to do to protect ourselves, conscious on how* ***we*** *need to keep us safe"*

5.12.11. **Community volunteers –** A couple of the groups talked about looking out for one another - perhaps, having community workers or volunteers on the streets or taking children to and from school to make sure they got there ok.

5.12.12. **Improve behaviour of cyclists –** Holding cyclists more accountable for their actions was raised in the older age group. The suggested issuing fines for cycling on pavements and introduce a bike registration system so cyclists can be tracked if committing traffic offences. Fines were also mentioned for people that rode electronic scooters on the pavements.

5.12.13. **Install more street cameras** – A couple of groups suggested cctv cameras would make them feel safer, as the police can't be around all the time. However, some people were

very against this idea for privacy reasons – "*It would feel like living in an oppressive organisation like Big Brother where everyone is watching*".

5.12.14. **Mobile apps** – The younger groups talked about creating more apps to help, e.g. to pair up with someone to walk home with, and emergency app that you can hit quickly in your pocket if you need help, or an app where you can report where and when incidents are happening and the police will be able to track live updates.

5.12.15. **Get more bars/clubs on board** – The younger age group suggested providing training for door staff and making more use of codes in pubs/clubs, e.g. "Ask Angela" at the bar so the staff can get people home safely.

5.12.16. **Other suggestions** to help make women feel safe in public places included:

- Improve street lighting – Install energy efficient lights that come on as you walk along the street.
- Safer street design – less bushes where you can see round corners.
- Locking parks at night.
- Emergency intercom system at bus stops in case someone needs help.
- Do not allow children out of school grounds during the school day.
- Improve cycle lane layout.

5.13. Other Comments:

5.13.1. It is important to note that a few of the participants wanted to ensure that we did not "demonise" Edinburgh by saying it's an "unsafe city". Some believed that there were particular people or sections of community that felt unsafe and that is where the focus should be. Some people questioned why females need to take action to feel safe when it is more than likely to be men causing women to feel unsafe,

- *"why do I need to buy all these self-defense tools to feel safe because the guys don't want to stop doing what they're doing."*

5.13.2. There was also a general feel that this behaviour has been normalised. One person highlighted that it is not only women that are targeted or feel unsafe. We should be considering all people, including those with mental health issues:

- *"My brother's got really bad mental health issues and he's got really long dreads and the amount of times I've had to pick him up and take him to A&E because he's been set upon…so it's not just a girl thing. The person I know who's experienced the most violence in this city is my brother because he looks different"*

5.13.3. Other comments touched on the social media culture. Although social media can help raise awareness and provide support, it was also seen by the younger age groups as an influential factor of antisocial behaviour amongst young people.

- *"Social media has meant people can say what they want and easily erase themselves. There's no respect."*
- *"Seeing things [antisocial behaviour] on TikTok has meant more kids being less frightened of repercussions."*

- *"Social media has made us more aware. People write about everything on social media and it goes viral. You assume that it's probably going to happen to you. A guy went viral for being aggressive in the street. Kids have been thinking it's fine and are lashing out copying the trend of the guy being aggressive. Younger kids are very influenced by what they see. TikTok especially, that's where all these trends start."*

6. Analysis of Mapping Data

6.1 A large part of the Women's Safety in Public Places Consultation included asking people to pinpoint specific areas where they feel safe or unsafe on an interactive map.

6.2 This yielded excellent visual data to help us understand where in Edinburgh the Council is upholding people's feelings of safety, and where we need to focus our attention in order to improve feelings of safety.

6.3 This question yielded a large number of responses (each participant had the opportunity to identify three areas where they feel safe and a further three where they feel unsafe), the analysis of this data will be carried out in due course. Additionally, the information provided was highly sensitive on some occasions.

6.4 As a result, over the next few months likely into the spring of 2023, we will be analysing this information and deciding on the most appropriate format to communicate findings, as well as the implications these findings will have for future practice.

7. Preliminary Analysis of Findings

7.1 This analysis has been titled 'preliminary' as it is only derived from the responses and written comments of respondents to the consultation. It does not include an analysis of the six focus groups, which will be carried out in due course and will be used to update the report.

7.2 The Women's Safety in Public Places consultation yielded responses from residents in a range of areas in Edinburgh, overwhelmingly women and girls. There was good representation from people with protected characteristics, as well as responses by people who do not live in Edinburgh but who travel or commute to Edinburgh.

7.3 Most respondents reported feeling very safe or fairly safe in their own neighbourhood overall, but the majority reported feeling at least little unsafe in their neighbourhood after dark.

7.4 The most determining factor that was highlighted as contributing to feeling safe or unsafe in any particular area was reported to be lighting- with good lighting helping people to feel safe, and poor lighting contributing to feeling unsafe.

7.5 The secondary contributing factor relates to the busyness of an area in terms of high footfall, the presence of shops and hospitality venues, active frontages on buildings, and a sense of community.

7.6 Unfortunately, this has also been linked to the potential for an area to feel unsafe: an area's busyness can also contribute to it feeling unsafe when there is public drinking and antisocial behaviour, particularly by men and by young people.

7.7 The overall condition of an area was also reported as playing a vital role to people's feelings of safety or lack of safety: cleanliness and good upkeep of public spaces was reported as demonstrating a sense of community, ownership and care of the area, leading to people creating positive associations with it. Conversely, littering, dog fouling and overall poor upkeep appears to create negative associations and a feeling of lack of safety in the area.

7.8 Design and planning features such as traffic, active travel options and green spaces were also highlighted as important factors to areas feeling safe, but less important than lighting, busyness or cleanliness and upkeep. Similarly, a lack of active frontages, businesses, public transport and active travel route availability contributed to people feeling unsafe in particular areas. This was particularly linked to respondents' feelings of safety or lack of safety in their own neighbourhoods, especially in relation to the use of public transport or active travel modes.

7.9 Where respondents identified feeling safe in an area, they overwhelmingly responded that they feel safe there all the time – both during the day and after dark. Similarly, areas that were highlighted as unsafe, were reported to feel unsafe all of the time.

7.10 Over 95% of respondents reported taking additional measures to ensure their safety in public places. Ideally, we would like to live in an Edinburgh where people can feel safe all of the time in all areas and where the need to take measures to ensure personal safety is unnecessary. However realistically, we know that this is unlikely to be the case.

7.11 Although many of the measures people take may well be common for people of all genders, some of the identified measures were heavily gendered, such as carrying a rape alarm and paying particular attention to one's appearance for fear of being targeted for violence, abuse or harassment.

7.12 These responses sadly highlight the perception that women are still considered responsible for their own safety and that if they are harassed, abused or otherwise subjected to violence, then they hold a responsibility for this.

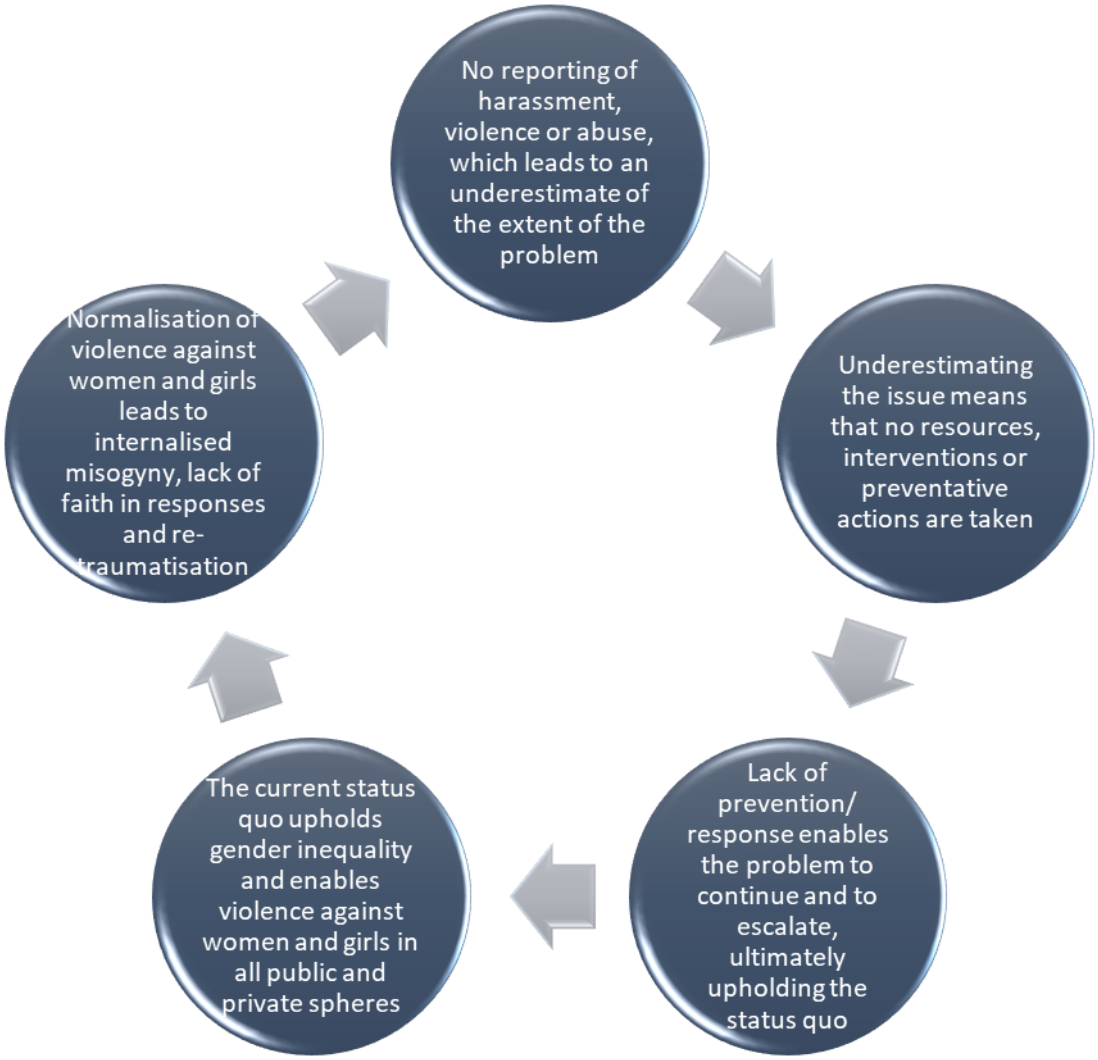
7.13 As a Community Improvement Partnership, we take these responses to heart and appreciate both their origin but also the impact of such beliefs on women and girls. However, we also need to emphasise in the strongest possible words that harassment, abuse or violence against women and girls in any private or public space is the responsibility and choice of the perpetrator-and nothing that a woman or girl could have invited or prevented.

7.14 When asked whether they had experienced harassment, abuse or violence in a public place in Edinburgh, only 17.7% of respondents stated they have never experienced violence, harassment or abuse in a public place in Edinburgh. 76% reported that they had, but this percentage could be much higher, possibly up to 82.3% if we include all response options aside from the negative responses to this question.

7.15 Given that only 1,374 women responded to this question, it is safe to assume that this percentage could potentially be a lot higher, should the response rate have been higher.

7.16 Out of all respondents who experienced violence, harassment or abuse, 89% decided not to report it or to seek support from a specialist agency. For a number of reasons, 95% of respondents stated that they did not/would not report a crime to the police. These reasons included a lack of faith in responding, the reporting process in itself being traumatic, and most significantly, a lack of faith that anything would change as a result.

7.17 The infographic below summarises women's answers to the question of why they decided to report/not report violence, harassment or abuse to the Police or to seek support from specialist agencies, services and organisations. It also demonstrates how gender inequality and the continuum of violence against women contributes to the vicious cycle that enables violence against women and girls, misogyny and gender inequality to continue to thrive:



7.18 The responses to this consultation seem to imply that the elements that contribute to women's and girls' feelings of lack of safety can be attributed primarily to behavioural and cultural issues, as well as to environmental, infrastructure, planning and design issues.

7.19 Some of those issues, such as lighting, planning and design can be addressed in more straightforward ways through research, identifying best practice, and making adaptations to existing public spaces while also embedding women's safety in any future planning and design activities.

7.20 A number of issues relating to the ownership of public space in a way that feels like a community that is cared for and where everyone contributes to its maintenance and upkeep will require a longer time to address. This is because they will require a joint effort by public sector and voluntary sector organisations, as well as local investment.

7.21 The most challenging aspect of improving women's safety, is also the most worthwhile and the one that requires a long-term consistent and persistent multi-agency approach: changing rape culture, and the patriarchal structures that act as barriers to women reporting abuse and violence, accessing support services and ultimately justice.

7.22 The Women's Safety in Public Places Community Improvement Partnership understands that there will be interventions outside of our control on which we cannot affect change. For example, the extremely long waiting times when seeking justice following a sexual assault or rape are beyond the power of the Council or Police Scotland.

7.23 Further, we recognise that we are living in unprecedented times – the combined impact of Covid and Brexit with the impending energy and cost of living crises means that priorities have shifted. However, we must also bear in mind that these events will not only have a gendered impact with women and girls most disproportionately affected, but that they will likely also contribute to an increase in women feeling unsafe.

7.24 However, there is a key message in this consultation exercise: the majority of Edinburgh's population, women and girls comprising 51%, live in fear of using public spaces. Their human rights of equality of access to public spaces are denied by the embedded patriarchal structures that normalise and perpetuate male violence against women and girls, regardless of whether this means catcalling, physical abuse, assault, rape or murder.

7.25 The same majority of Edinburgh's population has further disclosed that they have lost faith in public services and struggle to access support and justice following an incident of public harassment, abuse or violence; they now accept that these as a 'part of life'.

7.26 Simultaneously, male violence and abuse against women and girls continues to go unchallenged, further embedding gender inequality in our society. Although we recognise that anyone who has experienced harassment, violence or abuse should be able to access support to help them through the experience, our focus should be on ensuring that such incidents do not repeat.

7.27 It is imperative that we listen to the majority of the population of Edinburgh and proactively challenge rape culture, while ensuring that anyone who has survived harassment, violence or abuse can access the support they need to recover from their traumatic experience. The Recommendations in Section 8 highlight possible ways in which we can achieve this.

8. Preliminary Recommendations

8.1 The recommendations in this section are based on the analysis of responses currently available to us. Once focus group information has been analysed, this section may be updated to include further recommendations as a result. This is expected to be completed by the end of 2022.

8.2 The Women's Safety in Public Places Community Improvement Partnership would like to re-emphasise that, in order to improve women's safety when out and about in Edinburgh, there will be no quick or easy solutions. Redesigning buildings, parks, streets and neighbourhoods will help. However, we need to remember that harassment, abuse and violence against women stems from the abuse of male power and privilege and is a direct cause and consequence of deeply embedded gender inequality in society.

8.3 For women to be safe in public spaces, a concerted effort is required by a range of services, organisations, initiatives, as well as divisions within the Council. These need to coordinate improvement in the design of public spaces, as well as community revival, campaigning and direct interventions with men and young people.

8.4 The Women's Safety in Public Places Community Improvement Partnership further recognises that a number of the recommendations made in this section might contradict some of the Council's priorities and strategies, particularly those relating to the environment.

8.5 A relatively quick and 'easy' recommendation would be to review and adjust lighting levels across the city, particularly in areas where there is antisocial behaviour, or where we know women, girls and people with protected characteristics are most vulnerable.

8.6 This may be considered a challenge as it would increase power usage throughout the city and could impact on wildlife in certain rural areas and parks. However, this measure must also be counterbalanced against the impact on residents' wellbeing if it is not to be implemented.

8.7 Women have told us that to stay safe they avoid public transport and active travel, opting instead to use a private vehicle, public transport or not use public spaces at all. Both of these 'choices' will have a direct impact on the majority of the population's physical and mental health, as well as the environment.

8.8 Different departments of the council, including Policy and Insight, Licensing, Public Protection and Regulation should work together to address the collective responsibility of promoting women's and girls' safety both within and beyond the City of Edinburgh Council. For example, there needs to be an exploration of the responsibilities of hospitality venues and recommendations on what they can do to improve women's safety, especially in the nighttime economy.

8.9 Similarly, the Council and public transport stakeholders can work together to identify ways in which women's safety on public transport can be enhanced. The council already provides transport wardens on two taxi ranks in the city centre. There should be a consideration for similar resources to be made available outside the city centre, especially where bus and tram stops are located in quiet or poorly lit areas.

8.10 The City of Edinburgh Council can further invest in communications campaigns on three levels:

8.10.1 Efforts need to concentrate on addressing and challenging the abusive or violent behaviour of men and boys towards women and girls, both in public and private

spaces. Communication needs to be clear and direct and it must state that harassment, abuse or violence against women and girls is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

8.10.2 Any targeted campaigning activity needs to be complemented by front-line work aimed at changing attitudes and behaviours, at reviving communities, embedding a local sense of ownership of public space and at engaging young people in productive activities that promote safety in public spaces.

8.10.3 Given the numbers of women who reported being uncertain as to where they could access support following an incident, the Council, Police Scotland and their partners further need to invest in communicating this information as widely as possible to the public. This information is currently available on the City of Edinburgh Council's website; however, consultation responses clearly indicated that this is not adequate and more needs to be done to raise awareness of support services.

8.11 The Council must consider the recruitment of a 'Night Czar', following the example of the City of London, or an individual in an equivalent capacity, whose role involves action planning around improving women's safety in public places and in the nighttime economy. This could follow the example of Police Scotland who have appointed a Women's Safety officer within their Prevention, Intervention and Partnerships team, and it would send a strong message that the Council takes women's and girls' safety very seriously.

8.12 Planning should take into consideration best practice recommendations for spatial design that supports and promotes women's and girls' safety and consequently the safety of people with a range of protected characteristics. This can be sourced from other parts of the UK and throughout Europe and beyond.

8.13 The Council should further embed the Atkins 'Get Home Safe' report principles in all planning, design and community improvement activities. This is already underway in some areas, with the Atkins Women's Safety team actively participating in the George Street project for example.

8.14 Another recommendation would be for the Council to embed Women's Safety principles in all plans and business undertaken by the Council. To improve the safety of women and girls in Edinburgh, it is imperative that a gender analysis underpins all planning and decision-making processes to ensure that Edinburgh becomes 'safer by design', beyond the design of public spaces.

8.15 The Council must further embed the priorities of Equally Safe: Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls in all planning and decision making processes. The Vision of Equally Safe is 'a strong and flourishing Scotland where all individuals are equally safe and respected, and where women and girls live free from all forms of violence and abuse – and the attitudes that perpetuate it'. The strategy has four priorities which must be borne in mind when any decision or plan is considered that would impact the lives of citizens directly or indirectly.:

8.15.1 Scottish society embraces equality and mutual respect, and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls

8.15.2 Women and girls thrive as equal citizens – socially, culturally, economically and politically

8.15.3 Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and maximising the safety and wellbeing of women, children and young people

8.15.4 Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls, and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response

8.16 The Council must prioritise investing resources in improving public spaces for young people to ensure that their free time is spent constructively. Such resources could include physical spaces that are welcoming and appealing to young people, as well as the support of community and third sector initiatives primarily working with children and young people at risk of becoming involved with justice services.

8.17 There are numerous mentions of the hypervigilance women and girls experience in their daily life, as well as of the traumatic impact of harassment, assault or violence in public places. This is compounded by the traumatic nature of processes involved in reporting such incidents. We recommend that the City of Edinburgh Council, Police Scotland and the responses of all partners involved in public safety, community safety and violence against women and girls must be trauma informed. To this end, we would welcome a commitment from all partners to engage with the National Trauma Training Programme provided by NHS Education Scotland to improve interventions supporting survivors of harassment, abuse or violence.

8.18 Lastly, the Council should consider resourcing services and organisations concerned with community safety, public safety, and particularly safety in areas, situations and at times where we know the safety of women, girls and vulnerable people is more likely to be compromised. This could be for example in areas with a thriving nighttime economy, or areas where we know there is a higher frequency of antisocial behaviour.

8.19 In summary, it is critical for the Council and its public and third sector partners to enhance their work together to ensure that male harassment, abuse or violence in public spaces is prevented where possible, or otherwise disrupted and challenged. Simultaneously, those who have experienced harassment or abuse must feel confident in the knowledge that support is available to them and that they are able to access it when they are prepared to do so.

10. Next Steps

9.1 As mentioned in previous sections, this is a preliminary report of findings from the analysis of the Women's Safety in Public Places Consultation.

9.2 There have been additional sections to this consultation which have not yet been analysed: the data collected from focus groups and from mapping the locations where respondents identified feeling safe or unsafe.

9.3 The unexpected delay to the analysis of focus group data has been due to unexpected staff absences. It is expected that this analysis can be updated and include this information by the middle of November 2022.

9.4 The mapping information provided in the consultation is expected to commence towards the end of 2022 and finalised by the spring of 2023. This is due to the sheer volume of information provided in the consultation, as well as the sensitive nature of some of the comments made, which will merit a discussion as to the best way to analyse and share this information with stakeholders and elected members.