

SAFETY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN PUBLIC SPACES SURVEY REPORT



**Kingston
2021**

CREATING A SAFER KINGSTON FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS ENGAGEMENT

Background

The council is carrying out a year long programme of work to address the safety of women and girls in the borough. The safety of all women and girls has always been a high priority for us and that's why we are committed to safeguarding and preventing harm. This included a public survey that ran for nine weeks in the summer of 2021, as well as a series of focus groups and 1 to 1 discussions were run with women's support groups to ensure the survey was accessible to those who may not have access to an online survey.

The areas looked at were:

- Extent of harassment taking place in Kingston
- Different forms of abuse
- Times of the day where people have felt unsafe
- Barriers to seeking support
- Who did they ask for help
- Social barriers towards harassment
- Male perspective

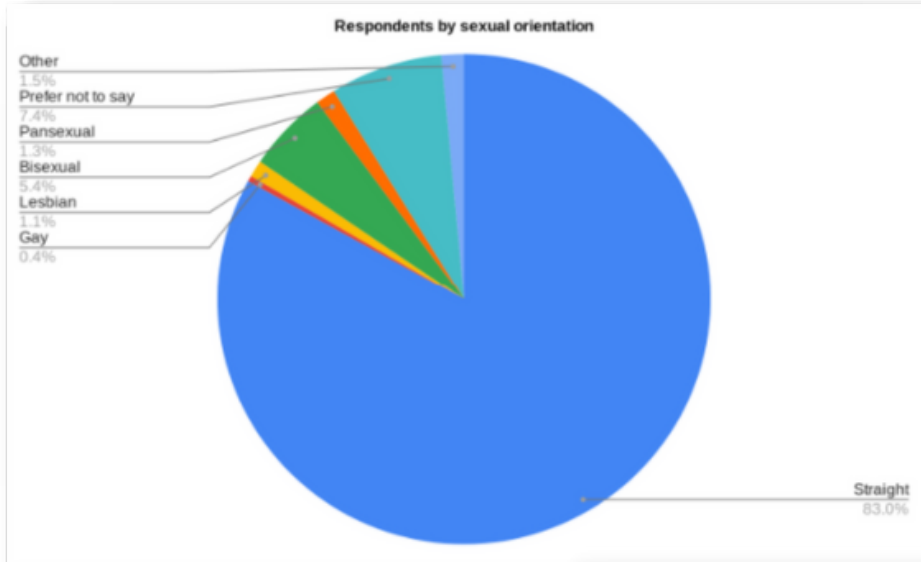
Engagement

The survey engaged with all members of the public in Kingston, including residents, those who work in the borough, business representatives, members of a community group, those who visit regularly for shopping, elected members and staff. Our online survey was open for nine weeks on the council's Let's Talk portal, and there were a further 3 months of focus groups run within the community.

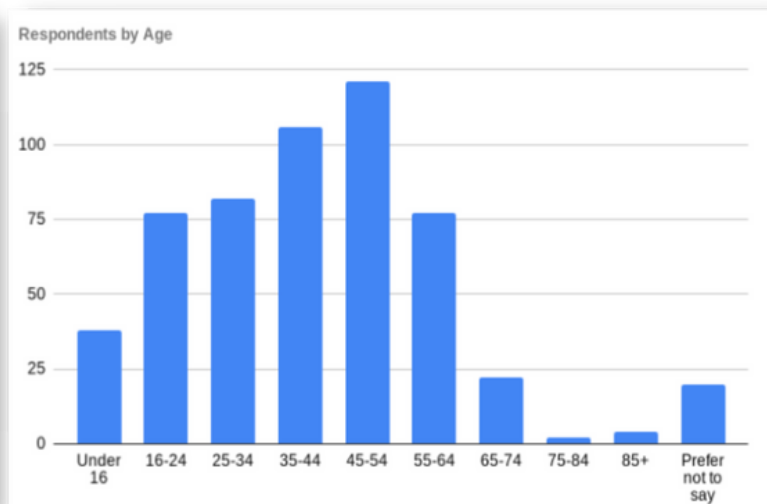
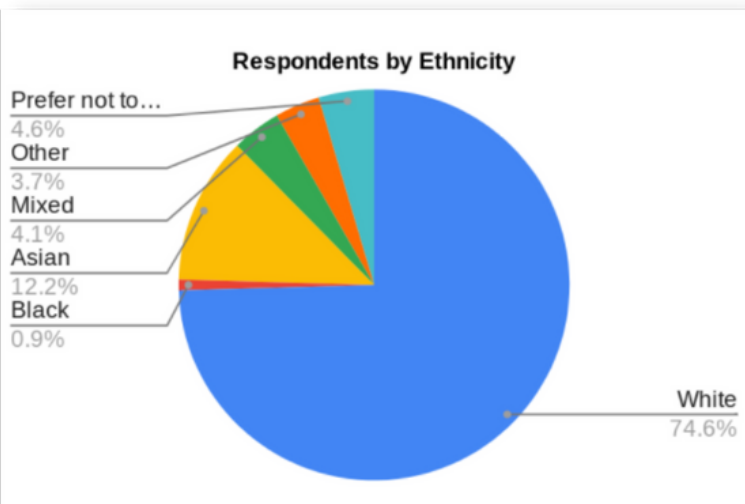
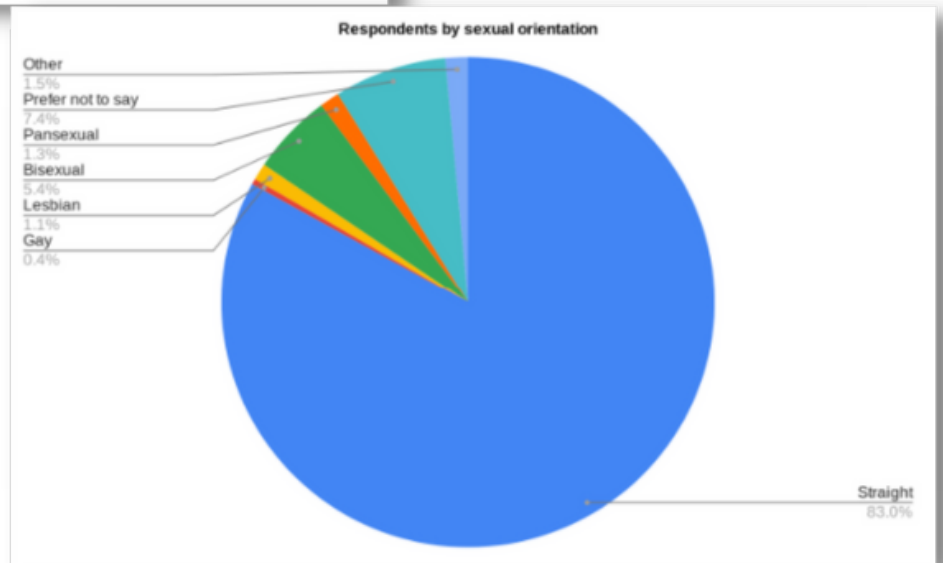
The survey was shared through posters in libraries and vaccination centres, JCDecaux boards in Town Centre, Newsletters (residents, staff & businesses) and social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor and LinkedIn). An Easy Read Version of the survey was created as well.



DEMOGRAPHICS



92% OF RESPONDENTS WHO ANSWERED THE SURVEY IDENTIFIED AS FEMALE



KEY FINDINGS

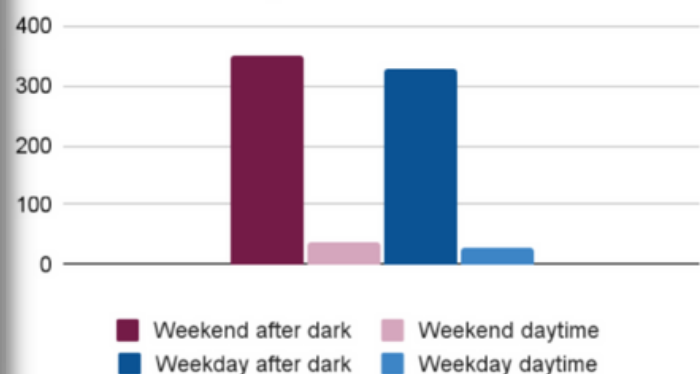
Perception of Kingston as a safe place

- Over half of the respondents identified that they sometimes feel worried about people they don't know causing them to feel unsafe
- A majority of respondents said they felt unsafe after dark on weekends
- Almost half of the respondents indicated that they have felt unsafe on public transport
- While a majority of respondents said they have never experienced indecent exposure, just under half said they have been stared at in a way that makes them feel unsafe or uncomfortable.
- Focus groups identified concerns of multiple forms of harassment on public transport including sexual harassment and derogatory/racist comments
- Respondents felt that the most important women's safety issues that needed to be addressed were:
 - Better lighting
 - Better Police presence
 - Women's perceptions of feeling safer at night - increase in confidence and knowing where to access help
 - Education around women's safety
 - Safety on public transport
 - Visibility and awareness raising of support services

Are there any particular times in the day or days of the week where you feel unsafe in public places in Kingston?



Times respondents felt most unsafe



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A MAJORITY OF FOCUS GROUP RESPONDENTS SAID THEY MODIFY THEIR BEHAVIOUR AFTER DARK TO FEEL SAFER' (CHANGE ROUTES, AVOID PUBLIC TRANSPORT IF VERY LATE, AVOID PARKS AND AREAS THAT ARE NOT WELL LIT)

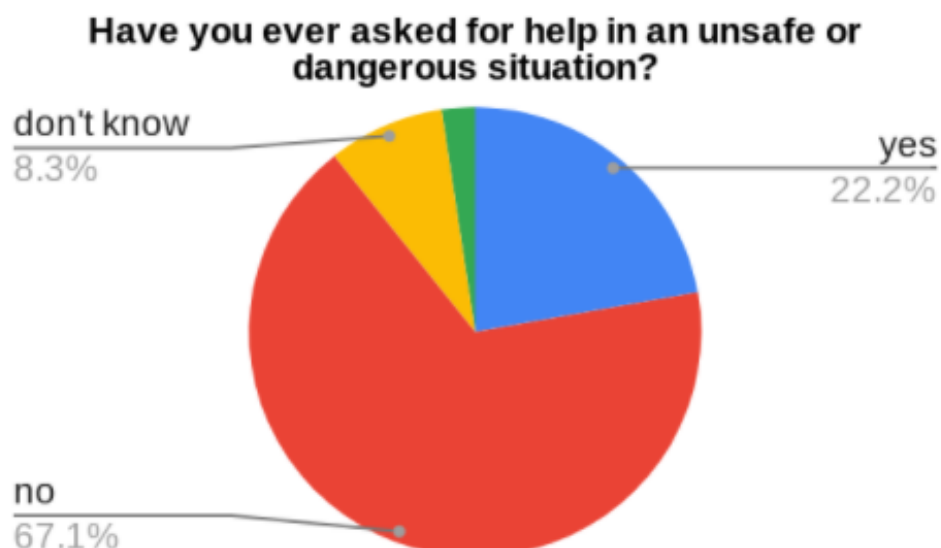
KEY FINDINGS

Feeling safe and seeking support

- Over half of respondents did not ask for help when in a dangerous situation (of which 63% said they did not report to police because they didn't believe a crime had occurred)
- 72% of respondents said the biggest barrier to seeking support is the fear of not being believed
- 58% of respondents said not knowing where to access support is a barrier to seeking support
- Majority of male respondents indicated that they would not know where to signpost women and girls if they needed to access support
- 72% of male respondents said that they have not contacted the Police when they have seen harassment or abuse towards women in public spaces
- Focus groups highlighted lack of understanding of the role of Police particularly in Black and Minoritised Communities and language being a barrier
- Focus groups highlighted a need for training for professionals to be more sensitive to those with additional support needs
- A majority of focus group respondents said they modify their behaviour after dark to feel safer (change routes, avoid public transport if very late, avoid parks and areas that are not well lit)

Social Attitudes

- Majority of respondents (98%) were in agreement that where consent was not given by the individual, a crime had occurred
- 75% of respondents believed that a person's race or religion can make them more likely to suffer harassment and abuse
- A majority of respondents disagreed that people may be partly responsible if they were sexually assaulted when they had too much to drink



ONGOING WORK/NEXT STEPS

- Kingston Council White Ribbon Accreditation to tackle male violence against women and girls
- Met Police introduction of a Town Centre Team with increased visibility of officers
- Met Police working closely with schools and colleges to deliver safeguarding presentations, advice and support
- Met Police increased licensed visits to Night Time Economy businesses to provide training and support to delivery the 'Ask for Angela' initiative
- Spiking and safeguarding training delivered to Night Time Economy Businesses
- Visible comms on campaigns such as 'Ask for Angela' and VAWG Support services
- Launch of the Kingston Women's Hub for holistic support to women and girls in the borough including a Coffee Morning Support Group for Black and Minoritised Women
- Development of a Night Time Strategy which is Kingston specific
- Further engagement with Kingston University and College
- Support to review and take forward recommendations from a Secondary School Survey around sexual harassment in schools and public spaces
- Women and Girls safety in public space to be reviewed as part of Riverside redesign
- Kingston Council signed up to Women's Night Safety Charter
- Initiate discussions with relevant partners in relation to Public Transport and Transport Hubs to review safety of women and girls
- Targeted work with Black and Minoritised Communities to raise awareness around Support and role of the Police
- Community Engagement Plans
 - Introduction of Bystander training for members of the community
 - Ongoing Focus Groups to capture feedback
 - Introduction of VAWG/Survivor Forum
- Review of locations and CCTV as well as Lighting