

Students' experiences of sexual assault, unwanted sexualized behaviours and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender

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Delivering insight through data for a better Canada

PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- Background and context for the new Survey of Individual Safety in the Postsecondary Student Population (SISPSP)
- Contextualizing the measurement of gender-based violence at Statistics Canada
- SISPSP content
- SISPSP Methodology
- Main results
- Other reports of interest and upcoming reports

NEW SURVEYS FOCUSING ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

New stand-alone survey as part of Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-based Violence, funded by the department of Women and Gender Equality

The goal of the Strategy is to address key data gaps among different populations – women and girls, Indigenous women and girls, LGBTQ2 people, nonbinary people, those living in northern, rural, or isolated areas, persons with disabilities, newcomers, children and youth, and seniors.

Survey of Individual Safety in the Postsecondary Student Population (SISPSP)

- Contributes to the collection of the nature and prevalence of a broad range of types of gender-based violence in Canada
- May be conducted every 5 years on an ongoing basis

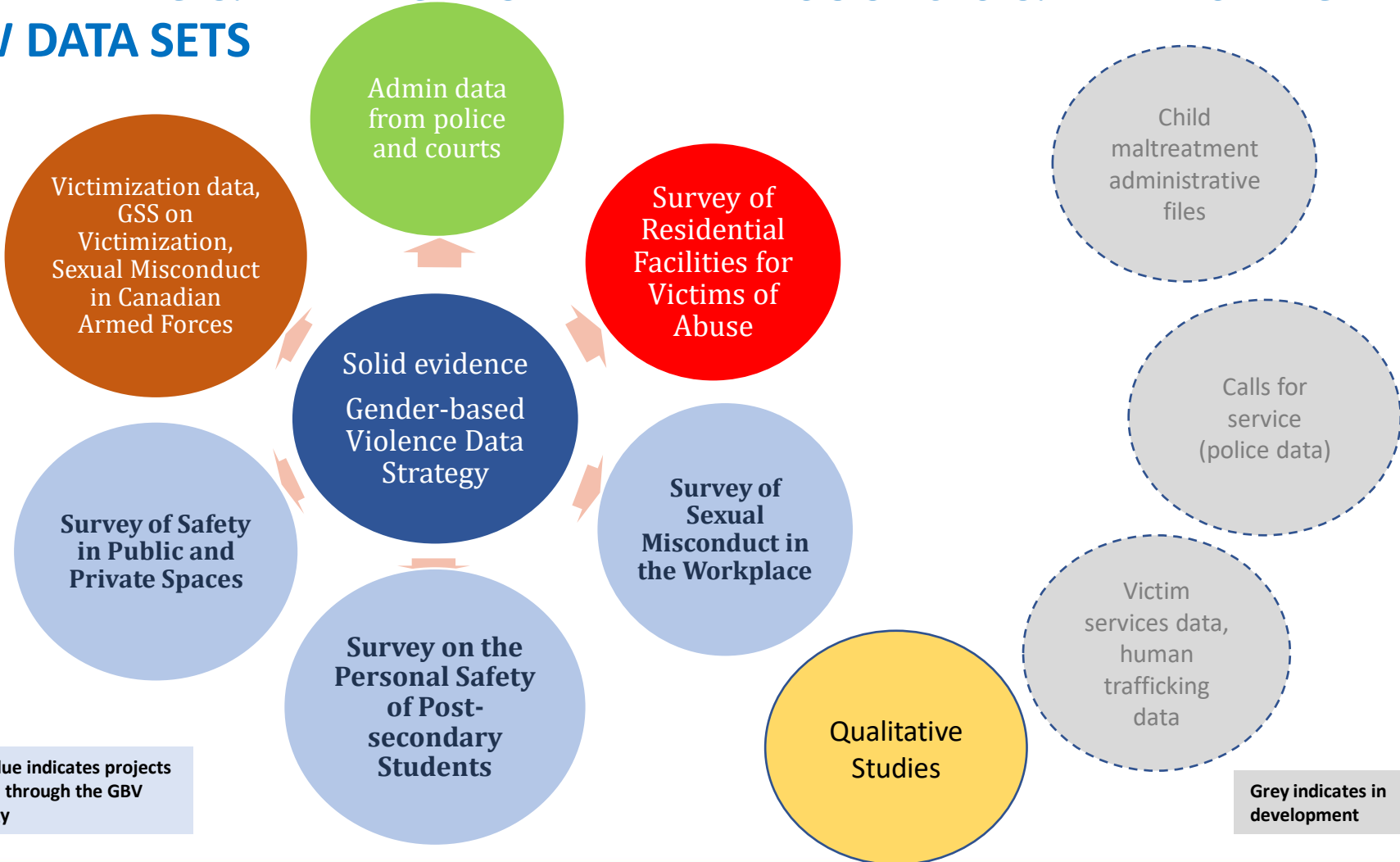
Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces

Survey of Sexual Misconduct in the Workplace

MANY WAYS THAT STATISTICS CANADA MEASURES GBV

- Use **existing data** to address key statistical gaps
 - Data from police services, courts, and corrections
 - Data from the General Social Survey on Victimization
 - Data from the Survey of Sexual Misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces
- **Linking data files** from **different areas** to understand the short- and long-term impacts of gender-based violence on victims
 - Linking police data with court data to understand how cases of intimate partner violence and sexual assault are processed in the criminal justice system

MAXIMIZING & LINKING MULTIPLE DATA SOURCES & HARVESTING NEW DATA SETS



Light blue indicates projects funded through the GBV strategy

Grey indicates in development

SISPSP CORE CONTENT

- Sexual assault, unwanted sexualized behaviours and discrimination based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender or gender identity witnessed and experienced in the past 12 months
- In a postsecondary setting: **on campus, off campus** (if they occurred during travel to or from school, during an official or unofficial event organized by someone affiliated with the school, or during paid or unpaid employment, work placements or volunteer work associated with postsecondary studies) **or online** (where some or all of the people responsible were students, teachers or other people associated with the school).
- Details provided by type of behaviours or sexual assault
 - Where did it happen, who was responsible, who was present (bystanders)
 - Did students who witnessed behaviours intervene?
 - Institutional responses to reporting and disclosure
- Impacts on mental health, school-related impacts (e.g. missing class)
- Perceptions related to gender roles
- Perceptions related to the school's response to sexual assault, behaviours and discrimination

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

- Target population: Individuals aged 18 to 24 (17 to 24 for Quebec residents) living in the Canadian provinces, who were attending a postsecondary school in Canada at the time of the survey or had attended such an institution in the past.
 - Includes universities, colleges CEGEPs and other postsecondary institutions
 - Excludes people living in institutions
- Collection period: February to July 2019
- Voluntary survey
- Electronic questionnaire
- There were 14,882 responses to the survey, for a response rate of 37%.
- “Women” and “men” include cisgender and trans women and men
- Two step approach to capture gender employed

KEY INDICATORS

- Total sexual assault in a postsecondary setting (past 12 months and earlier)
- Unwanted sexualized behaviours witnessed OR experienced (past 12 months)
- Unwanted sexualized behaviours personally experienced (past 12 months)
- Discriminatory behaviours witnessed OR experienced (past 12 months)
- Discriminatory behaviours personally experienced (past 12 months)
- Proportion of students who did something in response to what they witnessed
- Proportion of students who sought help to deal with victimization
- Proportion of students who feel safe during activities associated with their studies (e.g. travelling around campus)

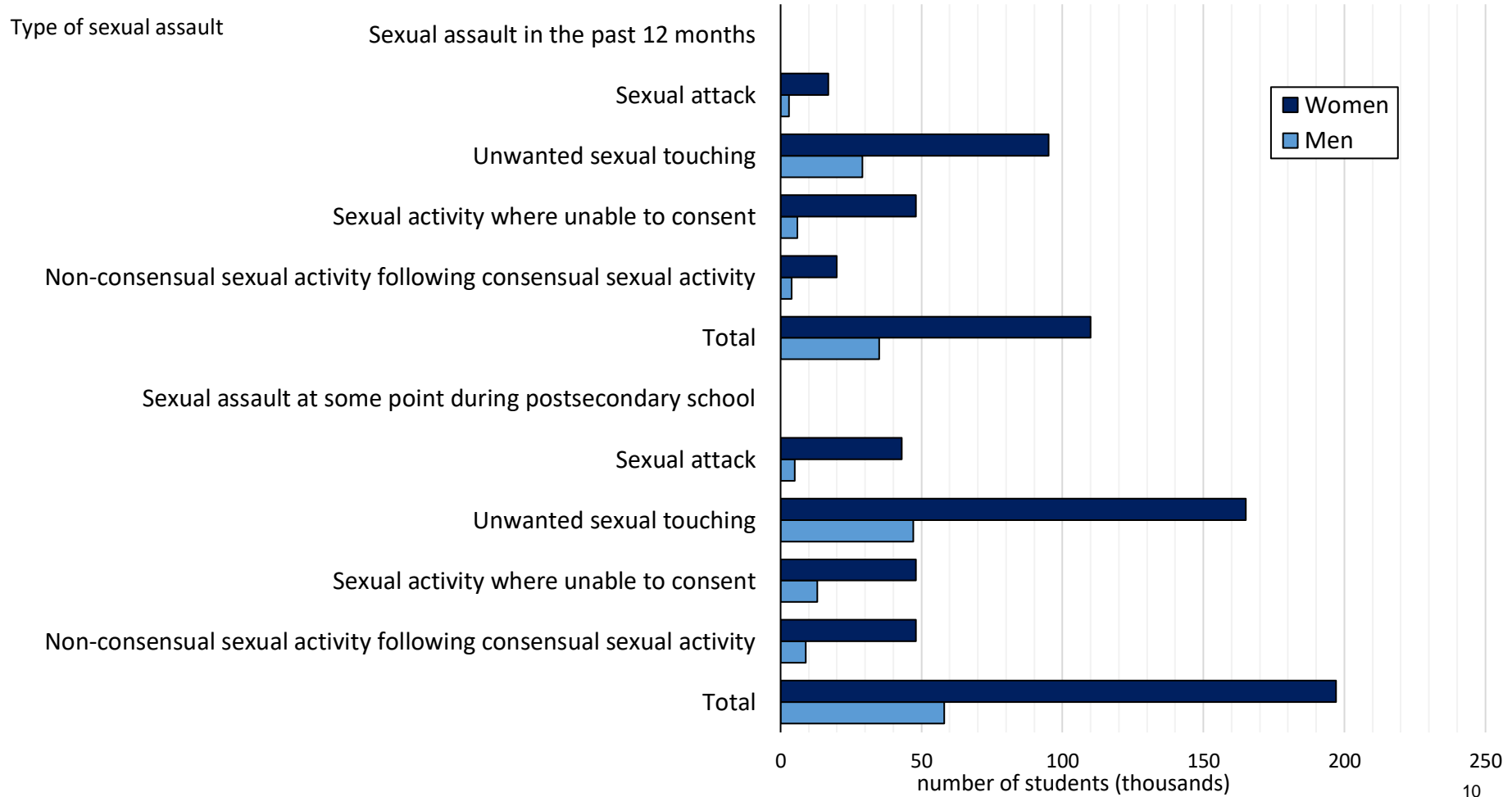
Sexual assault: 4 types

1. **Sexual attack:** Includes being forced or attempted to be forced into any unwanted sexual activity, by threatening, holding down, or hurting in some way.
2. **Unwanted sexual touching:** Includes being touched against one's will in any sexual way, including unwanted touching or grabbing, kissing, or fondling
3. **Sexual activity where unable to consent:** Includes being subjected to a sexual activity to which one was not able to consent, including being drugged, intoxicated, manipulated, or forced in ways other than physically.
4. **Non-consensual sexual activity following consensual activity:** For example, unprotected sex after consenting to protected sex.
 - **NEW measure** of sexual assault, developed through consultation with WAGE stakeholders and student groups

Students who were sexually assaulted

- **One in ten** (11%) women students were sexually assaulted during the previous year.
 - **15%** had been sexually assaulted at some point during their postsecondary career
 - **Among men:** 4% in past year, 5% during their postsecondary career
- **Unwanted sexual touching** was most common
 - **9%** of women, 55% of whom said it happened more than once
- **2%** of women experienced a non-consensual sexual activity after she had consented to something else
 - E.g. consenting to protected sex, then learning it had been unprotected
- **2%** of women experienced a sexual assault where she was unable to consent because of manipulation, intoxication or another non-physical form of coercion
- **2%** of women experienced a sexual attack – the most severe type of sexual assault measured by the SISPSP

Students at Canadian postsecondary schools who were sexually assaulted in a postsecondary setting, by time frame and type of sexual assault, and gender, 2019



Characteristics of sexual assaults

- Most sexual assaults happened **off-campus**
 - **77%** of women and **70%** of men who had been sexually assaulted
 - For women, **half** (51%) happened at a restaurant or bar
- Most (**77%** of women and **79%** of men) said **one perpetrator** was responsible
- Most perpetrators were **fellow students** (60% of women and 61% of men who were sexually assaulted)
 - Relatively few women reported that the perpetrator was **in a position of power** or authority, like a teacher (**2%**)
- **90%** of women who had been sexually assaulted said the perpetrator was **always a man**, while **63%** of men said the perpetrator was **always a woman**
- As with sexual assaults in other settings, men and women in **vulnerable populations** were at increased risk.

What are unwanted or inappropriate sexual behaviours?

- Behaviours that are not necessarily criminal in nature, but that can serve to make people feel unsafe or uncomfortable in their day-to-day lives and impact physical and mental well-being. These behaviours can create barriers to fully participating in society.
- Some may not be ‘unwanted’ in an explicit sense, but their occurrence can add to or create an environment in which people may feel unvalued, uncomfortable or unsafe.

Sexualized behaviours: 10 grouped into 3 types

I. Inappropriate verbal and non-verbal communication

1. Sexual jokes
2. Unwanted sexual attention (e.g. whistles)
3. Inappropriate sexual comments about appearance or body
4. Inappropriate discussion about sex life

II. Sexually explicit materials

5. Displaying, showing or sending sexually explicit messages or materials
6. Taking or posting inappropriate or sexually suggestive photos or videos without consent

III. Physical contact or suggested sexual relations

7. Indecent exposure or display of body parts in a sexual manner
8. Repeated pressure for dates or sexual relationships
9. Unwelcome physical contact or getting too close
10. Being offered benefits for engaging in sexual activity or mistreatment for not doing so

Students who witnessed or experienced unwanted sexualized behaviours in the past year

- **Overall**, women more likely than men to witness or experience unwanted sexualized behaviours: **women 73%, men 69%**
- Women more likely than men to witness or experience each of the three types of unwanted sexualized behaviours:
 - Inappropriate verbal or non-verbal communication: **women 70%, men 68%**
 - Physical contact or suggested sexual relations: **women 39%, men 26%**
 - Sexually explicit materials: **women 21%, men 17%**

Students who personally experienced unwanted sexualized behaviours in a postsecondary setting in the past 12 months, by gender, 2019

Type of behaviour	Men [†]	Women
	percent	
Unwanted sexualized behaviours	32.2	44.6*
Inappropriate verbal or non-verbal communication	29.3	40.2*
Sexual jokes	24.9	27.2*
Unwanted sexual attention, such as whistles, calls, etc.	5.5	26.6*
Inappropriate sexual comments about their appearance or body	7.9	17.7*
Inappropriate discussion about their or someone else's sex life	13.5	19.3*
Sexually explicit materials	5.6	7.1*
Displaying, showing, or sending sexually explicit messages or materials	5.5	6.8*
Taking or posting inappropriate or sexually suggestive photos or videos of them without consent	0.5	1.1*
Physical contact or suggested sexual relations	10.5	25.5*
Indecent exposure or inappropriate display of body parts in a sexual manner	2.7	3.5*
Repeated pressure from the same person for dates or sexual relationships	3.0	11.4*
Unwelcome physical contact or getting too close	7.4	20.8*
Being offered personal benefits for engaging in sexual activity or being mistreated for not engaging in sexual activity	1.4	3.5*

* significantly different from reference category (p < 0.05)

† reference category

Note: For definitions, see full report.

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on Individual Safety in the Postsecondary Student Population.

Characteristics of unwanted sexualized behaviours

- Unlike sexual assault, most happened **on campus**
 - Inappropriate verbal or non-verbal communication: **73%** of the women and **78%** of the men who experienced it
 - Unwanted physical contact or suggested sexual relations: **60%** of the women and **57%** of the men who experienced it
 - Behaviours related to sexually explicit materials most often occurred in a school-related online environment (**62%**)
- **80%** of women and **86%** of men who had experienced behaviours stated that in at least one instance, **the perpetrator was a student**
- Person of the **opposite gender** often the perpetrator
 - Unwanted physical contact or suggested sexual relations: **85%** of women said the perpetrator was a man, while **42%** of men said it was a woman
 - **Overall**, men were most often the perpetrator, since women were most often the target

Discriminatory behaviours: 6

1. Suggestions that a man does not act like a man is supposed to act
2. Suggestions that a woman does not act like a woman is supposed to act
3. Someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored or excluded because of their gender
4. Comments that people are not good at or should be prevented from being in a particular program because of their gender
5. Someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored or excluded because of their sexual orientation or assumed sexual orientation
6. Someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored or excluded because they are or are assumed to be transgender

Students who witnessed or experienced discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender and gender identity in the past year

Type of behaviour	Men [†]		Women	
	number	percent	number	percent
Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity	374,000	42.0	520,000	51.9*
Suggestions that a man does not act like a man is supposed to act	280,000	31.5	344,000	34.3*
Suggestions that a woman does not act like woman is supposed to act	219,000	24.6	362,000	36.1*
Someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because of their gender	125,000	14.0	241,000	24.1*
Comments that people are not good at or should be prevented from being in a particular program because of their gender	130,000	14.6	277,000	27.7*
Someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because of their sexual orientation or assumed sexual orientation	107,000	12.0	193,000	19.2*
Someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because they are or are assumed to be transgender	67,000	7.5	127,000	12.7*

* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

† reference category

Note: For definitions, see full report.

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on Individual Safety in the Postsecondary Student Population.

Students who personally experienced discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender and gender identity in the past year

- Discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation was prevalent among **LGB+ students**:
 - **31%** of gay or lesbian students
 - **34%** of bisexual students
 - **34%** of students with a different sexual orientation
 - Compared to **15%** of heterosexual students

Characteristics of discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender and gender identity

- Most discrimination happened **on campus**: **73%** of women and **71%** of men who had experienced it
 - Discrimination in a **learning environment** was more common for women (**52%**) than men (**43%**)
 - Discrimination that happened at an **off-campus residence** was more common for men (**59%**) than women (**41%**)
- Most women (**72%**) and men (**73%**) who experienced discrimination said a **fellow student** was responsible
 - More women (**12%**) than men (**7%**) said it was a teacher or professor
- For men, discrimination was more common in **programs** where most students were women (**19%**)
 - For women, there were **no differences** based on the gender makeup of programs

Bystanders present and taking action

The survey examined the issue of bystanders—that is, **people who were present** when an incident took place, and may have witnessed what happened and possibly taken action before or after the event.

1. Students who had personally experienced sexual assault or sexualized or discriminatory behaviours were asked **whether there were others around** when it happened, and if so, what (if any) actions those people took in response;

and

2. Students who stated that they had witnessed sexual assault or sexualized or discriminatory behaviours were asked **whether or not they took some sort of action** as a result (and why / why not).

Bystanders: were they present?

Many sexual assaults and sexualized and discriminatory behaviours **happened with others present**:

- **60%** of women and **65%** of men who experienced unwanted sexual touching at least once
- **31%** of women and **42%** of men who experienced sexual activity to which they were unable to consent at least once
 - Neither difference was statistically significant
- **74%** of those who experienced inappropriate communication
- **65%** of those who experienced physical contact or suggested sexual relations
- **70%** of women and **66%** of men who experienced discrimination based on gender, gender identify or sexual orientation

Bystanders: did they take action?

Less than 4 in 10 students who said others had been present during these incidents said that others had **done something in response**:

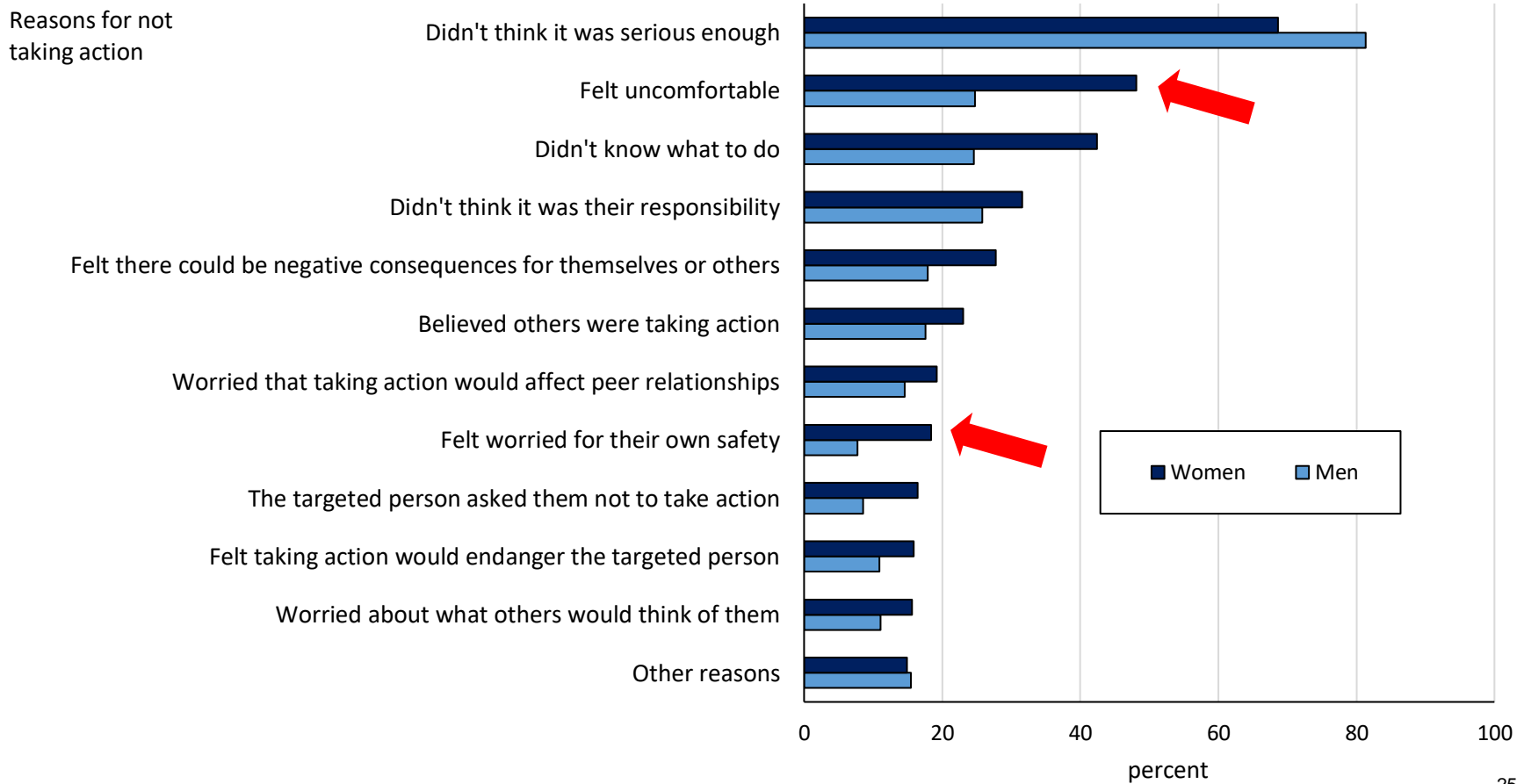
- **36%** of women and **19%** of men who experienced unwanted sexual touching with other people around
- **35%** of students who experienced inappropriate communication and **30%** who experienced unwanted physical contact or suggested sexual relations
- **39%** of women and **28%** of men who experienced discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation

Some actions were negative: **10%** of women who were sexually assaulted in the presence of others who took action said that the action taken was to **encourage the sexual assault**

Witnesses: what actions did they take?

- More women (**55%**) than men (**41%**) said that they **did something** in response to sexualized behaviours that they witnessed, in at least one instance
 - Spoke to those targeted: **68%** of women, **60%** of men who took action
 - Spoke to those responsible: **67%** of women, **80%** of men
 - Reported to school: **12%** of women, **9%** of men
 - Spoke to a service provided by the school: **10%** of women, **7%** of men

Students who witnessed unwanted sexualized behaviours in a postsecondary setting in the past 12 months, by reasons for not taking action and gender, 2019



Emotional and mental health consequences

- Many consequences of sexual assault and sexualized behaviours were **similar**:
 - **38% of women** who had been sexually assaulted became fearful (**15% of men**)
 - **23% of women** who had experienced sexualized behaviours became fearful (**4% of men**)
- These consequences were **less common** among students who experienced discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation – **except LBG+ students**
 - Becoming anxious: **24% of LBG+** students (**10% of others**)
 - Becoming depressed: **14% of LBG+** students (**5% of others**)

Consequences on school life

Impacts of sexual assault and sexualized behaviours were more often on **routines**, less often on **learning activities**:

- **18%** of women who had experienced sexualized behaviours and/or sexual assault **avoided specific buildings** at school as a result
- **11%** of women who had experienced sexualized behaviours and/or sexual assault **changed the time they travelled** to and from school

meanwhile

- **Less than one in 10** stopped going to classes, tried to change a class schedule or asked for extensions on assignments

No type of impact on school life or routines was reported by more than one in 10 students who experienced discrimination

Telling others what happened

Students were asked if they spoke to anyone about what happened:

- A person or group associated with the **school administration**
- A person or group associated with a **student group**
- Someone **outside of the school**: friend, family member, doctor, the police
- More students spoke with someone outside of the school than to someone associated with the school
- Common reasons for speaking to someone at the school: **receiving mental health support, receiving informal mediation**
 - Desire for formal interventions less frequent
- Common reasons for not speaking to someone at the school: **not serious enough, resolved it themselves.**
 - For behaviours: did not know it could be reported, school would not take it seriously
 - For sexual assault: did not want anyone to know, felt embarrassed



Women students who experienced sexual assault or unwanted sexualized or discriminatory behaviours in a postsecondary setting who did or did not speak to someone about their experience, 2019

Who students spoke to and reasons for and against doing so	Unwanted sexualized		
	Sexual assault	behaviour percent	Discrimination
Yes, spoke to someone associated with the school	7.9	9.4	7.2
Spoke to a group run by the school administration	F	59.5	65.0
Spoke to a group run by a student group	F	20.1	17.7
Reasons for speaking to someone associated with the school			
Receive mental health support	65.4	48.4	37.7
Pursue an informal resolution, e.g. mediation	F	22.9	18.9
Receive protection	29.8	21.3	F
No, in at least one instance	94.1	95.0	91.4
Reasons for not speaking to someone associated with the school			
Was not serious enough	59.2	74.5	64.8
Did not need help	51.5	62.2	48.8
Resolved the issue on their own	38.6	50.3	37.2
Yes, spoke to someone else	69.8	70.6	56.3
Friend	90.3	91.8	90.0
Family member	32.0	39.5	47.3
Another student or peer	20.6	37.6	31.4
No, in at least one instance	37.0	42.7	42.4

F too unreliable to be published

Note: For definitions, see full report.

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on Individual Safety in the Postsecondary Student Population.

Trans students

Trans: people who identify **with a gender other than the one that they were assigned to at birth**, including individuals who do not identify with either of the binary genders, or who identify with a binary gender in addition to another gender.

- **0.8% of students:** 0.1% were trans women, 0.2% were trans men, and 0.4% were gender diverse (about **19,000 students**)
- **Sexual assault and sexualized behaviours:** no statistically significant differences between trans students and cisgender students
- **Discrimination:** more common for trans (**40%**) than cisgender (**17%**) students
- Trans students also **more likely to say that they felt unsafe** in situations associated with school life, such as walking on campus alone after dark

Students who personally experienced sexual assault or unwanted sexualized or discriminatory behaviours in a postsecondary setting in the past 12 months, by transgender status, 2019

Type of behaviour	Cisgender ¹	Transgender
	percent	
Sexual assault during postsecondary studies	10.3	18.1
Unwanted sexualized behaviours	38.8	46.9
Inappropriate verbal or non-verbal communication	35.1	42.3
Sexually explicit materials	6.4	F
Physical contact or suggested sexual relations	18.4	22.3
Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity	16.9	40.1*
Suggestions that they don't act like a man or a woman is supposed to act	13.9	27.4*
Being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because of their gender	5.5	22.2*
Comments that they are not good at or should be prevented from being in a particular program because of their gender	5.4	F
Being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because of their sexual orientation or assumed sexual orientation	2.2	F
Being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because they are or are assumed to be transgender	0.5	22.5*

F too unreliable to be published

* significantly different from reference category (p < 0.05)

† reference category

Note: For definitions, see full report.

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on Individual Safety in the Postsecondary Student Population.

Perceptions of safety

- Most students feel safe in and around their campus, though **women were more likely to feel unsafe**
 - Using **public transit** alone after dark: **40%** of women did not feel safe
- People who had **experienced** sexual assault or sexualized or discriminatory behaviours were less likely to feel safe
 - Regardless of personal experiences, using transit alone after dark was **more likely than other situations** to cause students to feel unsafe

Knowledge and attitudes

- Most students (**about 60%**) said that their **school had provided them with information** related to sexual assault and harassment:
 - School policies
 - How to recognize sexual assault
 - How to recognize sexual harassment
 - How to prevent sexual assault and harassment
- A smaller proportion (**30% to 50%**, approximately) said that they were **aware of specific policies and practices**:
 - School's procedures for dealing with incidents
 - Services available to victims
 - Off-campus resources for victims
 - Where at school they could take a friend if they had been assaulted or harassed

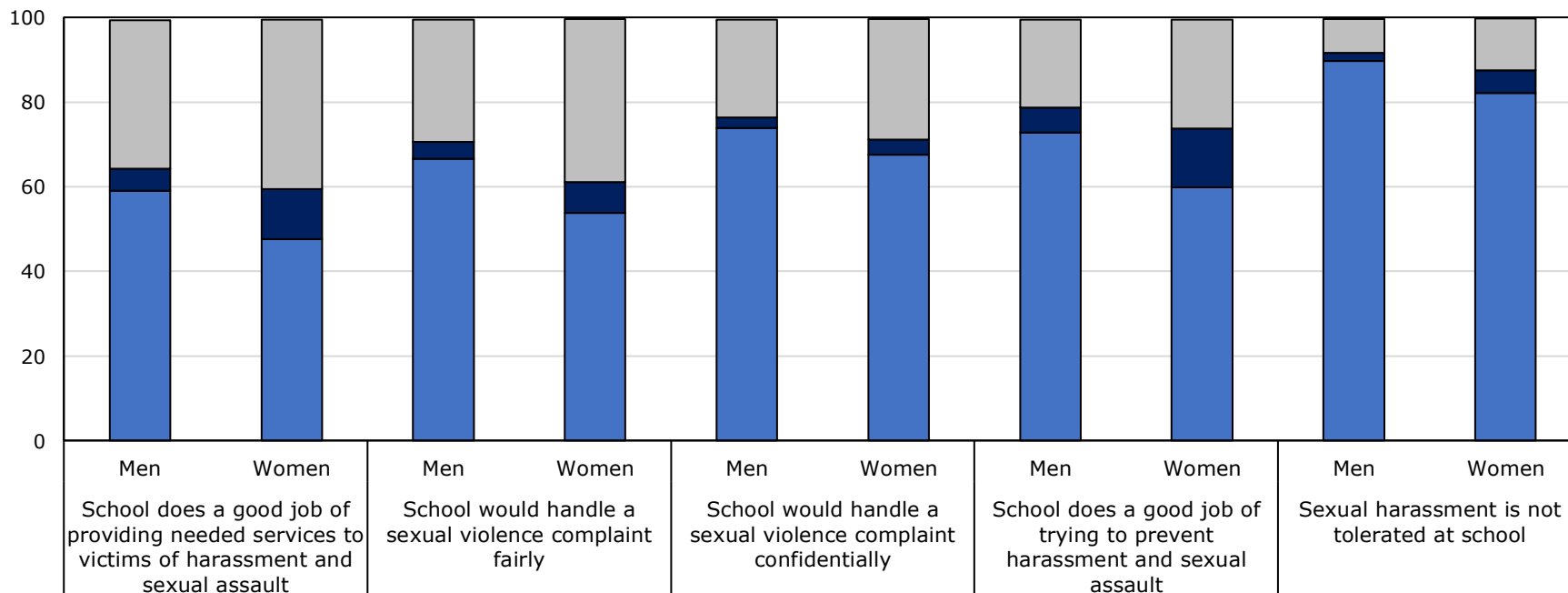
Attitudes about school's policies and procedures

- **Overall, most students had positive opinions** about their schools' approaches to addressing sexual assault and sexualized behaviours
- Women were **less likely** than men to have positive opinions
 - “my school does a good job of trying to prevent harassment and sexual assault” : **14% of women** and **6% of men** disagreed
- Students who had experienced sexual assault or behaviours were **particularly less likely** to have positive opinions
 - “my school does a good job of trying to prevent harassment and sexual assault” : **23%** of students with these experiences and **8%** of those who did not disagreed

Attitudes about school's policies and procedures on unwanted sexualized behaviours and sexual assault, by gender, 2019

percent of students

■ Agree or strongly agree
 ■ Disagree or strongly disagree
 ■ Don't know



Attitudes about school's policies and procedures

Source: Survey on Individual Safety in the Postsecondary Student Population.

Additional reports of interest

- Gender-based violence and unwanted sexual behaviour in Canada, 2018: Initial findings from the Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces (2019)
- Gender-based violence: Unwanted sexual behaviours in Canada's territories, 2018
- Perceptions related to gender-based violence, gender equality, and gender expression (2019)
- Police-reported violence among same-sex intimate partners in Canada, 2009 to 2017
- Violent victimization of lesbians, gays and bisexuals in Canada, 2014
- Public perceptions of the police in Canada's provinces, 2019
- Sexual and physical assault in the territories, 2018

Forthcoming reports

- Intimate Partner Violence Fact Sheets (to be released in Spring 2021) (SSPPS)

Research Data Centres

- Researchers can access a number of data files related to gender based violence (SSPPS, GSS, UCR) through a network of universities

Thank you!

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For more information on the Survey

<https://www.statcan.gc.ca/sispsp>