



Safety Survey at Western:

*A report from the Action
Committee on Gender-Based
& Sexual Violence*



Introduction

In September 2021, allegations of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) in residence prompted an investigation by London Police Services, an independent investigation initiated by Western University administration, and the implementation of a multifaceted action plan on sexual violence and student safety led by the University.

Among the plan's key initiatives were the creation of a task force (i.e., Action Committee on Gender-Based & Sexual Violence), consisting of students, staff, faculty, and community partners, to study safety concerns specific to GBSV, and activities and programming related to students' introduction and transition to university life.

The Action Committee developed the online Climate Survey, intended to collect self-reported feelings of safety among Western community members including students, faculty, staff and administration. This report is prepared with those community members in mind and with the spirit of transparency and sharing back the results of the survey with those who participated and to Western students, staff, administrators and faculty.

What Is Gender-Based and Sexual Violence?

Gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) is any sexual act or act targeting a person's sexuality, gender identity and gender expression, whether the act is physical or psychological in nature, that is committed, threatened or attempted against a person without the person's consent, and includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, indecent exposure, voyeurism, cyber harassment and sexual exploitation. (*POLICY 1.52 – Policy on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence*)

GBSV can happen without physical force. Words, manipulation or pressure may be used to coerce someone into doing something they do not want to do. GBSV occurs when there is a lack of consent, including where someone is incapacitated by drugs and/or alcohol.

Sexual assault refers to any form of sexual contact without voluntary consent. Examples: Non-consensual kissing, touching, fondling, penetration and oral sex.

Sexual harassment is a course of vexatious comment or conduct because of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, where the course of comment or conduct is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome.

It is important to note that unwanted touching, in other words sexual assault, can fall under the category of sexual harassment.

Intersectionality and GBSV

Factors such as age, race, disability, immigrant status and sexual orientation all intersect and can impact risk and protective factors, as well as access to support services. People who belong to historically and currently marginalized groups (including race, class, disability, sexual orientation, immigration status and gender identity) experience higher incidences of GBSV and have added challenges due to systems of discrimination that can impact access to appropriate resources.

Methods

In response to heightened concerns about student safety and sexual violence on Western University campus, the Action Committee on Gender-Based & Sexual Violence (ACGBSV) was created in October 2021 to study the issue and make recommendations for making changes at the University. The ACGBSV comprises Western students, faculty and staff and is co-chaired by Dr. Terry McQuaid and Prof. Nadine Wathen.

This report is based on research from a Western University-wide online survey. The survey launched on February 1, 2022 and was open until February 17, 2022 via Qualtrics. It was open to all Western community members, including students, staff, administrators and faculty. Respondents were recruited via emails distributed by the University to all student and employee groups on behalf of the ACGBSV. In total, 890 people participated in the survey. Survey data was analyzed and compiled by the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children at Western University and then shared with the ACGBSV. Responses where less than 20% of the survey was completed, or where respondents seemed to answer in bad faith (e.g., made disrespectful or irrelevant comments) were removed (6 bad-faith respondents in total).

Western is committed to repeating a version this survey at regular intervals to get a sense of how safe or unsafe Western community members feel on campus and what is needed to increase safety at the University.

Who Took Part in the Survey?

Of the 890 total Western community members who responded to the online survey, the majority (54.7%) of the sample were undergraduate students. The remaining participants were staff members or administrators (22.8%), graduate students, postdoc students, or professional students (11.9%), and faculty members (10.2%). Survey respondents were also asked to identify their Western University campus location. Most respondents (84.5%) were affiliated with the main campus, while others were affiliated with King's (8.0%), Huron (4.2%) and Brescia (2.8%).

Most survey respondents were women (70.6%); the remaining identified as men (24.8%), non-binary (2.8%), gender-questioning (1.7%), transgender (1.3%), gender fluid (1.0%), and two-spirit (0.6%). For reporting purposes, those who identified as non-binary, gender-questioning, transgender, gender fluid or two-spirit will herein be referred to as gender diverse. Respondents could choose more than one category relating to their ethnicity and results showed the majority of survey participants identified as white (70.7%); the remaining identified as South Asian (8.0%), East Asian (7.3%), West Asian or Middle Eastern (3.8%), Latina/o/x (3.7%), Black (2.7%), Indigenous (including First Nations, Metis, Inuit and additional/other) (1.8%), and Indigenous global (0.2%).

The racial and gender identities of the 890 respondents who participated in this survey are similar to those of the Western community at large, as described in the Western Equity Census Report from March 2022 that had 13,792 student, staff and faculty participants (Equity Census Report: <https://president.uwo.ca/equity-census>). One notable difference is that more women participated in the safety survey described in this report (70.6%) compared to those described in the Western Equity Census Report (56.5%).



Survey Results

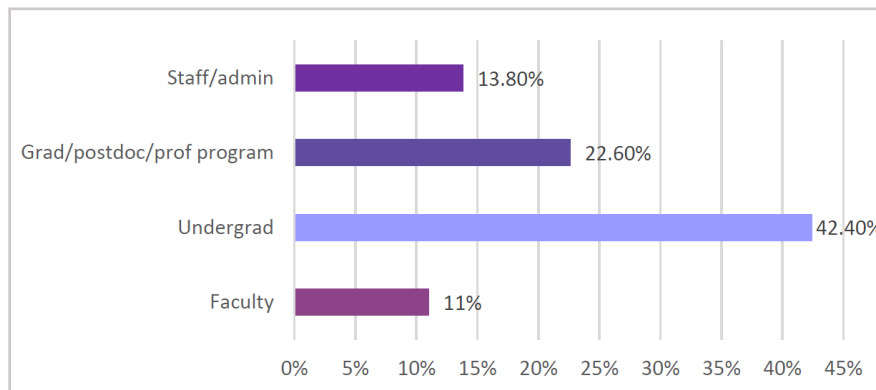
Experiencing or Witnessing GBSV

Gender-based and sexual violence was a significant issue reported and discussed by Western community members. Around 4 in 10 undergraduate students and 2 in 10 graduate and professional students reported having experienced or witnessed GBSV in the past year. Rates of sexual violence experienced or witnessed were lower for staff and administrators (13.8%) and faculty (11.0%), though still more than one in ten reported experiencing or witnessing GBSV [see Graph 1]. Clearly, GBSV is a problem that needs to be addressed on campus.

Western community members who identified as women were most likely to report having experienced or witnessed GBSV in the past year (44.8% of all women respondents), followed by gender-diverse individuals (36.4%) and respondents who identified as men (25.5%).

Graph 1.

Percent of Western Community Member Respondents Who Have Experienced or Witnessed GBSV in the Past Year



Survey respondents were asked to provide 1-5 words that describe their feelings or experiences with GBSV on Western’s campus. In total, respondents provided 1240 descriptors of their feelings or experiences. Table 1 shows the top 20 most common words or phrases provided by survey respondents, with the most common being variations of angry, scared, disappointed, frustrated and sad.

Table 1.

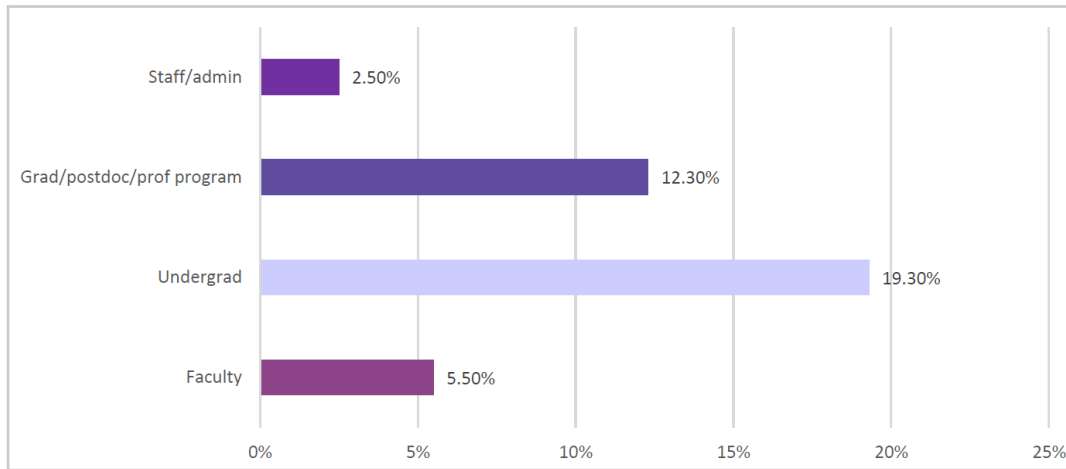
Words That Describe Feelings or Experiences with GBSV on Campus	Number of respondents
Anger/angry/infuriating/rage/enraged	62
Scared/scary/terrifying	53
Disappointed/disappointing	50
Frustrated/frustrating	47
Sad/sadness/sorrow	39
Disgusted/disgusting	38
Fear/fearful/afraid/frightened	21
Swept under the rug/hidden/buried/silenced/covered up	21
Anxious/anxiety	20
Unsafe	18
Ashamed/shame	17
Concerned/concerning	17
Common/frequent	16
Cultural	16
Upset	16
Unacceptable	15
Trauma/traumatic	14
Uncomfortable	13

Feelings of Safety on Western University Campus

Survey respondents were asked how safe they feel on campus. Of the different categories of Western community members, undergraduate students were most likely to report feeling unsafe or very unsafe on Western’s campus. Almost one in five undergraduate students (19.3%) reported feeling unsafe or very unsafe on campus. More senior students also reported feeling unsafe at fairly high rates, with 12.3% of graduate, postgraduate and professional students reporting feeling unsafe or very unsafe on campus. Far fewer faculty (5.5%), staff and administrators (2.5%) reported feeling unsafe or very unsafe [see Graph 2].

Graph 2.

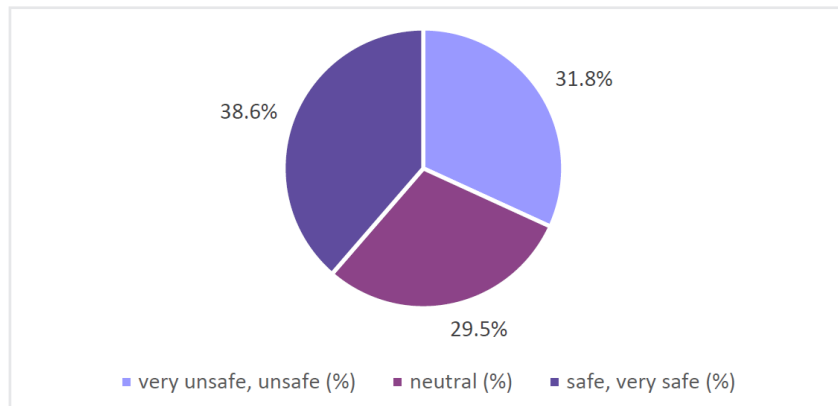
Percent of Respondents Who Reported Feeling Unsafe or Very Unsafe on Campus



Focusing on student respondents only and examining responses by gender revealed that gender-diverse students reported feeling the least safe on campus (31.8% reported feeling unsafe or very unsafe), followed by women respondents (22.0%) and men respondents (2.9%) [see Graphs 3, 4 and 5]. Women respondents were most likely to rate their feelings of safety as neutral (38.7%) compared to gender-diverse students (29.5%) or men students (14.5%).

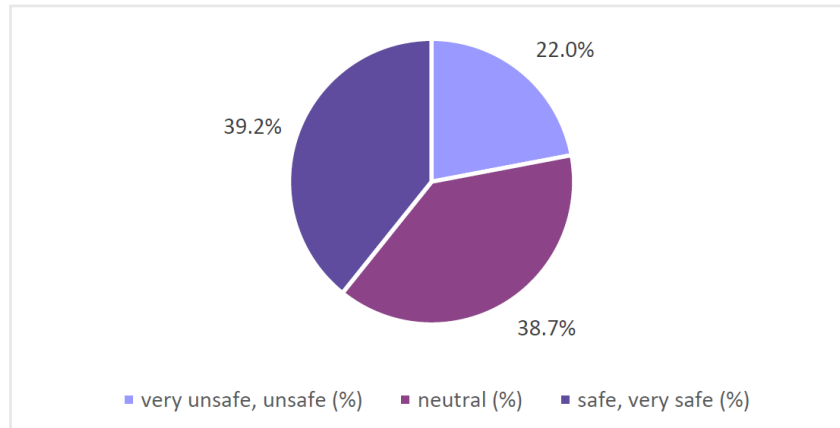
Graph 3.

Student Ratings of Safety on Campus by Gender: Gender Diverse Respondents



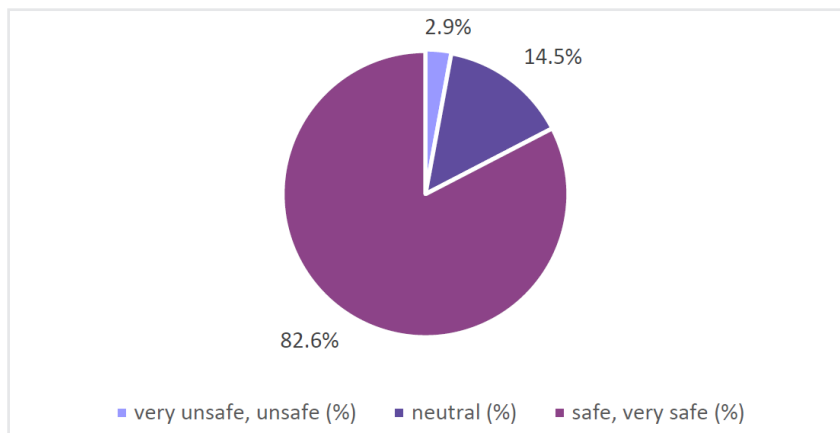
Graph 4.

Student Ratings of Safety on Campus by Gender: Women Respondents



Graph 5.

Student Ratings of Safety on Campus by Gender: Men Respondents



Survey respondents who reported feeling unsafe or very unsafe were asked open-endedly why, when or where they feel unsafe on Western campus. A total of 97 respondents answered this question, or 11% of those participating in the survey. One main reason why respondents felt unsafe was that they were a victim/survivor of GBSV that occurred on Western campus. Many of those who reported being a victim/survivor further specified feeling unsafe because of having reported GBSV on campus and having had a negative or traumatic experience doing so, and/or an inadequate outcome. Other reasons for feeling unsafe included because of the GBSV incidents that took place in September 2021 on Western campus, knowing about the GBSV experiences of others on campus, having a visible identity or appearance that increases one's risk of GBSV (for example, a particular race/ethnicity, sexual or gender identity) and a perception of a scarce security presence on campus.

Times when respondents felt unsafe included when on campus at night, when walking alone on campus (any time day or night), around men, and during long waits after requesting campus security and/or foot patrol services.

The locations on campus where respondents reported feeling unsafe included in residence buildings, parking lots, bus stops, secluded areas on campus, crowded areas on campus, gyms, libraries, anywhere a survivor/victim might see the person who assaulted them, and around people known to have committed GBSV.

“After hearing about the gender-based violence that occurred in the residence building and surrounding areas in the fall term (girls getting drugged and raped as well as many other small incidents occurring) as well as a mixture of previous feelings and fears of walking on campus alone or even in the residence building at night brings me fear. I feel that parts of the campus aren’t very well lit resulting in many women like myself feeling unsafe and or scared to go out even to attend my night classes.”

“I’m afraid of seeing people associated with the person that took advantage of me last year, as well as that person themselves. I’m always on edge when I come to campus and have repeatedly mistaken people for this person as well as his friends that know what happened and believe his version of the story. I always feel the need to cover up my face and try to make myself unidentifiable to those people.”

“Because of the recent sexual violence cases. It makes me fearful that something like that can happen again.”

“I feel the most unsafe at night or around the secluded areas on campus. I feel unsafe because it is not uncommon to hear stories of many women being sexually assaulted by men on and around campus. It is a very prevalent issue that has not yet been solved therefore, I remain alert at all times.”

“I am a queer woman of colour. I am constantly on edge regardless of how diverse the Western community claims to be. The fact of the matter is that I still stick out and have to work to convince people that I belong here too.”

“Anytime I am walking alone at night on campus or to my home nearby I do not feel safe, there are repeated incidences of attacks and harassment on campus. I lived in residence last year and I didn’t think it was possible to feel so unsafe in the place I lived especially in accommodations provided by the school.”

“At night when I am on campus alone, I feel unsafe, especially in dark areas.”

Knowledge of Campus Resources

Survey respondents were provided with a list of campus resources available to provide support to Western students. Of the student respondents, undergraduate, graduate, postgraduate, postdoc and professional students were most likely to know about health and wellness services (78.7%) and mental health counselling (68.0%). Very few students were aware of gender-based violence response services on campus (24.2%).

Other services that students were more likely to know about included the writing skills centre (63.2%); ANOVA (45.4%); and learning development and success services (43.5%) [see Table 2].

Services that students were least likely to know about included the First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness helpline (10.5%); new student success services (8.9%); Reach Out (15.7%); and Youthline (22.4%) [see Table 2].



Table 2.

Percent of Students (Undergraduate, Graduate, Postdoc, and Professional Program Students) Who Know About Resources Available at Western University		
Most Students (70% or more)	Some Students (30% to 70%)	Few Students (less than 30%)
Health and wellness services	Academic education <i>ANOVA</i> <i>CHMA Crisis Centre</i> <i>Good 2 Talk</i> Grad student association Learning development & success Mental health counsellor Peer mentor support Undergrad student association Writing skills centre	<i>First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness helpline</i> GBV support case manager GBV response coordinator New student success <i>Reach Out</i> <i>Regional sexual assault, domestic violence treatment centre</i> Student support case manager <i>Youthline</i>

Note: all resources listed in italics are off-campus resources, while those listed in non-italics are on-campus resources.

Faculty and staff were also most likely to know about Health and Wellness and Counselling services (82.8%) and unlikely to know about gender-based violence response services (31.3%). Western faculty, staff and administrators were more likely to be aware of sexual violence support services available off campus (i.e., ANOVA [57.4%] and the regional sexual assault and domestic violence treatment centre [40.7%]) than those available on campus [see Table 3].

Table 3.

Percent of Faculty, Staff, and Administrators Who Know About Resources Available at Western University		
Most Faculty, Staff and Administrators (70% or more)	Some Faculty, Staff and Administrators (30% to 70%)	Few Faculty, Staff and Administrators (less than 30%)
Health and wellness services	Academic education	<i>First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness helpline</i>
Mental health counsellor	ANOVA	
	<i>CHMA Crisis Centre</i>	GBV response coordinator
	GBV support case manager	New student success
	Good 2 Talk	<i>Reach Out</i>
	Grad student association	<i>Youthline</i>
	Learning development & success	
	Peer mentor support	
	<i>Regional sexual assault, domestic violence treatment centre</i>	
	Student support case manager	
	Undergrad student association	
	Writing skills centre	

Note: all resources listed in italics are off-campus resources, while those listed in non-italics are on-campus resources.

Strategies to Make Campus Safer

Survey respondents were asked open-endedly to identify strategies to make Western University campus safer. Of the 521 responses to this question, a number of themes emerged including hold perpetrators accountable, expand and improve upon GBSV training and education, improve Western University communications, expand support and resources, change the culture at Western, improve and enhance the process for reporting GBSV, and increase on-campus safety.

Hold Perpetrators Accountable

A clear and frequent strategy suggested by Western community members was to hold perpetrators of GBSV accountable. Respondents discussed wanting serious consequences in place for those perpetrating GBSV, including examples such as expulsion, withdrawal from classes, and bans on living in residence. Others also suggested offering mandated specialized services to perpetrators of GBSV that are responsive to a large spectrum of possible GBSV behaviours. Holding perpetrators accountable was further nuanced by respondents who also specified that the consequences must go hand-in-hand with clear communication from Western University. Respondents suggested that communications identify to all Western community members what the consequences are of perpetration, with the clear message that those who perpetrate GBSV will be held accountable.

“Hold perpetrators accountable to the FULLEST extent available. Change the message from ‘women need to be careful’ to ‘Perpetrators will be held accountable.’”

“There should be a zero-tolerance policy and anyone who commits gender-based or sexual violence should be expelled.”

“Make strict rules that who ever does anything related to what happened in the first week of university this year should be out of the university.”

“Literally just removing the students who are known to have committed acts (drugging, rape, etc.), especially on campus and in rez... For acts that aren’t as ‘serious’ (they are still serious, but you get what I mean), like comments or acts of gender-based discrimination, there should be consequences like mandated meetings with an individual who works within the gender-based violence service here at Western. Sometimes people really just need their attention called to their inappropriate behavior so that they can learn to do better.”

“One thing you could do though is believe the victims and actually take action against rapists, not move them to other residences!! Rapists need to be removed from residences and preferably expelled.”

“Hold perpetrators accountable, have a swift, severe and effect approach that removes the threat from campus immediately even if it may seem excessive to others (i.e., when multiple reports come out about a first-year student assaulting fellow residence members, the student should be removed as soon as there is any awareness of such reports).”

“Have harsher rules regarding sexual assaults on campus and regarding western students. No one feels safe knowing that their [sic] is an unnamed assailant still walking amongst them.”

“Help cultivate a zero-tolerance policy for all levels of gender based violence and have clear and serious repercussions for perpetrators.”

“Establish clearly outlined consequences for gender-based/sexual violence and ACT on them.”

Expand and Improve Upon GBSV Training and Education

Many respondents suggested improving upon and/or expanding GBSV education and training for all Western community members, including first-year students moving into residence, but also everyone else on campus too: undergraduate students, graduate, postgraduate and professional students, staff and administrators (including those in leadership roles at the University), and Western faculty. Respondents made suggestions about topics they would like to see covered in GBSV training, including examples such as consent, how to report GBSV, healthy relationships, what to do if you have experienced or witnessed GBSV, and GBSV within relationships.

Respondents also discussed the importance of offering education and training that is survivor-centered, or that is developed in partnership with survivors of GBSV, and includes survivor narratives and voices. Along with being survivor-centered, it was recommended by respondents that GBSV training and education should be centered on those most at risk of being victims of GBSV: women and gender minority individuals, those with disabilities, 2SLGBTQ+ Western community members, and Western community members who identify as Black, Indigenous, or people of colour. Further, respondents emphasized the importance ensuring diversity among GBSV educators and trainers on campus.

“Educate not only the first-year undergraduate students, but also the upper year undergraduate students, graduate students and faculty and staff. I think everyone has the responsibility to make this campus safer.”

“I think there should be more workshops. Workshops specifically tailored towards supervisors and professors to educate them on discrimination and

violence. And separate Workshops tailored towards students. Perhaps even separate those Workshops for undergraduate students and graduate students. Especially first year undergraduate students require mandatory workshops and follow up workshops.”

“Mandatory education. There needs to be a focus on consent education beyond students in residences/first year. This happens across all years of study and it happens to staff and faculty. This isn’t an issue that is just student to student.”

“Sexual violence and gender-based violence training for ALL students entering western at ALL levels and redoing it every year prior to admission in September. It isn’t just first year students or students in res that are experiencing this and it isn’t going to stop after one workshop.”

“Officers that specialize in preventing sexual violence spread out throughout campus especially in residence that will ensure that drunk students are taken care of, and ensure that parties don’t become a place for sexual violence. It would also be best if they were educated on specific topics that students feel make them safer.”

“Training on gender-based violence--and the attitudes that lead to it, such as misogyny, sexism, etc--should be extended to and mandatory for all staff and faculty as well, and should be enforced. In my experience as a past graduate student, TA, and now staff member, where I’ve encountered sexism the most is from faculty members during undergraduate courses (making ‘jokes’, for example). When those attitudes are expressed to undergrads by faculty members in positions of power, it legitimizes misogyny as an acceptable, even preferred, perspective to hold at Western. Back when I was a TA, there was no clear process to flag that a faculty member had said something objectionable, and you certainly couldn’t mention it yourself as a grad student who was reliant on keeping the job and keeping in the good graces of the department.”

Improve Western University Communications

Survey respondents also discussed the need to improve Western’s communications. Above all, respondents wanted to see more transparency within communications to Western community members, especially about what is being done about GBSV on campus. Many respondents voiced concerns that Western has communicated in ways that have failed to center the students and their safety, and that instead are about preserving the University’s reputation. Respondents recommended that the University focus on communications that build back trust with the student body and the Western community. Specific suggestions are to: acknowledge responsibility and mistakes, take accountability as an organization, assure the Western

community that survivors will be believed and protected, investigate incidences of GBSV, make visible that incidents have consequences for perpetrators, and consider trigger warnings on emails about GBSV.

“Make students aware of what’s going on on campus. After o-week many students were confused about what happened to leave them ill-informed and unable to protect themselves. transparency is required to move forward because the university’s reputation is nowhere near as important as people’s safety, mental health, and trauma.”

“Being more open and honest about situations that occur on campus and the action that is being taken towards it.”

“When an incident occurs there is usually no public resolution. Students only hear rumours but don’t understand the actual situation. Stories should be shared (anonymously) so that the student body can be assured that action is being taken. I still do not know if the drugging at med-syd has been delt [sic] with adequately or has resulted in actionable change.”

“Open communication about the occurrence of violence as necessary step in broader acceptance of an issue requiring attention from all of us.”

“Instead of making everyone attend MANDATORY meetings, please address the actual problem, and issue a proper statement. Make sure to properly punish the responsible students and make it known that proper action was taken. Also acknowledge the events and do not evade the topic because of negative publicity.”

Expand Support and Resources

Among the most suggested strategies provided by survey respondents was the recommendation to expand support and resources for the student body and Western community, in particular for survivors of GBSV, and to ensure that people know about them and find them accessible.

One such strategy is to expand professional counselling for survivors. Respondents described experiencing long waitlists for services. Respondents who were able to see a counsellor reported that the brief, solution-focused approach was not survivor-centred and was a poor fit to their needs. Respondents identified the need for services to be safer for survivors and for counselling staff to be better trained in GBSV and more survivor centred. There were also recommendations made to develop opportunities for peer support of survivors. Respondents suggested developing spaces on campus, formal and informal, that were open to discussions and disclosures of GBSV. These could be peer-led and less formal.

The suggestion was also made to expand support and resources specifically for those living in residence. Many respondents talked about the need for support within residences to prevent and address GBSV. There was a call to “bring back sophs,” and to provide training and support around GBSV to sophs. Sophs are Western’s orientation leaders who welcome new students to campus each school year. They are second-year students who either volunteer their time as leaders or are employed by the University to work within student residence buildings. Some respondents focused on peer supports while others spoke of the need for paid non-students to hold this role within residences.

Finally, respondents put forth the recommendation to engage perpetrators of GBSV in programs that promote accountability and change. Although this was a less frequent recommendation, some respondents spoke of the need for programs for those who had perpetrated GBSV (starting with incidents that might be perceived as “minor”) and for consideration of methods of responding based in survivor-led restorative justice.

“More resources need to be put into place to help these individuals because it’s a very traumatic experience.”

“Create a climate where survivors feel comfortable coming forward.”

“Hire more counsellors and make more appointments available.”

“More obvious and much more supportive/ally-ship signage for the LGBTQ+ community.”

“GBV on campus hardly ever focuses on or includes people with disabilities and how they are even more at risk than the general public. That inaccessibility makes it hard for us to access services, retreat when attacks are imminent, or feel safe in spaces meant for us.”

“Understand that it is incredibly hard for a survivor to reach out to a loved one for support, let alone a stranger who is associated with a service that has not really proven that action will be taken past taking note of the incident... help me and my classmates do that by creating an environment where I know that should anything happen to me, I won’t ever be left to carry the burden on my own.”

“From what I have heard from fellow students - especially from comments at the beginning of they year - is that a lot of people (from all girls) are nervous or feel intimidated to speak up - especially when a lot of the times things happen are ‘little’ or happen in ‘small moments’ which has lead people to doubt themselves or talk themselves out of speaking up as they justify it as normal or they feel like they don’t need to say something because they can handle it.

I think a lot of the conversation needs to be about girls supporting each other - because while they do not want to report what happened or get the person in trouble I think they still need support for their own wellbeing as it can be really difficult mentally on people.”

Change the Culture at Western University

Many respondents described the need for a major culture shift at Western in order to make campus safer and reduce/eliminate GBSV. Respondents shared that Western is known for its “party culture” and many also identified the culture at Western as patriarchal, misogynistic (including its alignment with toxic masculinity), racist, colonial and transphobic. The culture at Western, which many also named as perpetuating rape culture, supports and tolerates the existence of GBSV and change is essential.

Respondents discussed a need for Western to divest from the current culture, and to instead invest in creating a culture of being against GBSV where there is shared responsibility for campus community members, mutual support and transparency. Western must also do much more to increase equity, diversity and inclusion on campus among Western students, staff, faculty and University leadership. The safety and support of Western community members who experience oppression based on their identities must be prioritized.

Of particular importance to culture change at Western is that it must happen at *all* levels. Respondents specifically identified the need for change among faculty and leadership at the University on issues of culture relevant to GBSV.

A very common suggestion relating to culture change at Western was the urgent need for the University to consider eliminating, or at least problematizing and making major changes to fraternities. Many respondents identified fraternities as espousing a dangerous rape culture, and many shared having witnessed or experienced GBSV by fraternity members and/or at fraternity-related events. The University’s affiliation with fraternities was characterized as very problematic and as a significant contributor to the continued existence of GBSV at Western.

Other specific suggestions for culture change included changing the ways that the University communicates, making changes to hiring practices, planning Western events such as orientation week in ways that do not center partying, and making changes on campus (for example, to bathrooms and with signage) so that spaces are more inclusive.

“Reconsider traditional and historic events which promote rape culture and create unsafe environments for students.”

“Changing culture amongst student population related to misogyny and links to party culture.”

“Make GBV everyone’s issue in a meaningful way.”

“Keep pressure on all of us to keep this front and centre and see this issue as not isolated from all campus issues concerning power imbalance at all intersections of identity.”

“Build a culture of acceptance, welcome and support. Train staff at all levels to build connections and positive environments for all students. Share and promote repeatedly values of respect, safety, equity and inclusion.”

“Acknowledging the hard truths shared by students and working on dismantling the spaces on and off campus that foster environments where this is known to be accepted and normalized, such as fraternities. The supports are great that we have filled with amazing staff, but the root of the problem is not being addressed and cannot be simply through policymaking and no action planning.”

“Intersectionality imagery reflected more in campaigns/advertising, adding pronouns to all email signatures, gender inclusive bathrooms.”

“Continue equitizing the upper administration of Western university, not just hiring diversity at the lower tiers of command.”

“Re-think O-Week. A session on gender-based violence is not enough. Re-consider how all O Week events are set up & run. This is the first introduction students have when they come to the Western community. I’ve heard students share safety concerns for almost 20 years. I’ve also listened to students chanting statements that promote gender-based violence. This is NOT okay. We - particularly staff/administrators - need to do more to create a safer environment.”

“I would also like to address the culture that fraternities associated with western create. Sexual violence is normalized, laughed about, and expected in these organizations. The environment they create is harmful and the school needs to do something to shut them down immediately.”

“Gender-based violence on Western’s campus is deeply rooted in fraternities. It feels as if every week you hear of another story of someone getting drugged at a frat party. In my opinion the root of the incidents can be attributed to people continuously getting away with gender-based violence in social settings and not facing repercussions from the school.”

Improve and Enhance the Process for Reporting GBSV

Among the strategies provided by survey respondents, a recommended necessary change was to make reporting incidents of GBSV at Western easier, safer, clearer and more accessible. Respondents wanted to feel encouraged to report incidents of GBSV and they wanted *all* Western community members to know how to report, who they can report to, what happens next when they report, and what mandatory reporting means. There was emphasis on a need for a reporting process that is more survivor-centered, for example, by having a process that does not require survivors to verbally repeat what has happened to them over and over to new people, and by having staff and faculty on campus who are more knowledgeable about how to respond to survivors when receiving a disclosure of GBSV. Respondents suggested that the reporting process at Western also needs to focus more on responding promptly to reports of GBSV.

Many respondents suggested having an anonymous online reporting tool that allows students to share their experiences of GBSV and have the accused investigated, as well as a way to find out the outcome of their submission.

Among staff and faculty respondents, there were also suggestions for a similar reporting process for those who work at the university. Staff and faculty suggested more avenues for reporting GBSV outside of what is currently available, and more offers of support for staff and faculty when a report has been made.

“Straightforward reporting process where the victims feel well held and in control of the process - victims have told me their experience with reporting has led to multiple communications with multiple offices and service providers and find these communications difficult, triggering and distracting from their academics.”

“More importantly, have university staff actually believe these situations and not just name it an accusation or rumour, and ACTUALLY do something about it and have consequences for the assailants.”

“Sensitivity training and clear avenues for reporting GBV where the victim does not feel like he/she is being asked to look the other way.”

“Informal reporting processes and survivor centric protocols, especially dealing with in residence assaults.”

“I think we need to provide more clarity to students, especially those who are reporting, how they are in control of what happens once they report.”

“Easier and safer to report - have people you can go talk to who will actually listen and believe you.”

“Having more anonymous reporting tools or ways for people to reach out for help without give their information would also be a useful tool for students.”

Increase On-Campus Safety

Survey respondents discussed changes that could be made on campus to increase safety for Western community members. A very common suggestion was to increase lighting on campus, especially in parking lots, at bus stops and along walking paths. Respondents also emphasized the need for more accessible and available foot patrol services, better promotion of foot patrol services, expansion of foot patrol services to include walking to destinations that are off campus, and more stations on campus where foot patrol could be accessed. It was also suggested that the University increase the number of emergency blue light stations on campus so that they are more convenient to access.

A greater campus security presence was recommended by many respondents, but this suggestion was not shared by all, and was nuanced by respondents to include the need for careful attention to diversity and integration with community. While many people described a need for more security and campus police, others shared that increasing security and police presence can decrease feelings of safety for certain Western community members, such as those who identify as Black, Indigenous, or people of colour. Respondents emphasized the need for diverse campus police and security, including those in leadership roles. Several respondents also shared the suggestions that campus security be more integrated into the campus community and that they receive more extensive training on GBSV.

Survey respondents also make specific suggestions regarding Western residences. Many felt that more staff and supervision is required in residence to better support students. For example, respondents recommended designated, non-student, well-paid specialists be hired to provide support in residences, such as GBSV experts who are always available for students.

Other recommendations made by respondents included CCTV monitoring on campus, making more spaces on campus for women and gender-diverse individuals only, utilizing peer-based security (for example, at parties and events), making night classes virtual, free transit, and less cost prohibitive parking.

“Expansion of the foot patrol program to convert the volunteer positions to paid ones.”

“Better advertising for walk home services; I was not aware that western [sic] had these services until my second year here.”

“Providing night shuttles across campus at night to bus stops/close neighbourhoods free of charge.”

“Make safer places for students to study and transport too and from campus late at night.”

“More lighting on all pathways, walkways on campus.”

“The lighting on campus should improve at night. There are some dark areas that are quite spooky.”

“Easier accessibility to emergency buttons.”

“Train the special constables more effectively to deal with sensitive situations. As of now, I’ve spoken with many people wouldn’t ask them for any help because they are not equipped with the tools to deal with that type of situation effectively or with any care.”

“Officers that specialize in preventing sexual violence spread out throughout campus especially in residence that will ensure that drunk students are taken care of, and ensure that parties don’t become a place for sexual violence. It would also be best if they were educated on specific topics that students feel make them safer.”

“An increase in legitimate security that includes diverse intersectional identities, especially on Fridays and Saturdays when students go out.”

“To ensure campus safety I believe education, proactive policing involving patrols, interactions with students and visitors.”

“Campus police having a presence on campus as part of the community, not just driving around in cars and responding to situations, but riding bikes around campus, participating in events, interacting with the community as part of the community.”

Additional Comments

As a final question on the survey, respondents were invited to open-endedly provide any additional comments they might have. Qualitative analysis of the comments provided revealed a continuation of the themes described in the “Strategies to Make Campus Safer” section of this report, with a number of novel areas emerging, described below.

Disclosures of GBSV

In this final area of the survey, many respondents disclosed their own personal experiences of GBSV. Among these disclosures, respondents spoke of surviving GBSV, many of which involved incidents occurring on Western University campus. Other disclosures were about having witnessed GBSV or knowing someone who was a survivor of GBSV. A subset of these disclosures involved perpetration of GBSV by Western University staff or faculty to other staff or faculty, or to students. Finally, others discussed having received a disclosure of GBSV from a survivor (for example, as a staff or faculty member). Disclosures were both recent and historical in nature. A number of disclosures included negative or traumatic experiences with reporting what happened to them on Western campus.

Feeling Unsafe on Campus

An additional theme present in the comments section of the survey was more in-depth descriptions of feelings of unsafety on Western campus. Respondents described their concerns and anxieties relating to GBSV on Western campus and expressed feelings of fear, discomfort, frustration, and urgency for change. They also described how they have had to adjust their behaviour on campus in order to feel safer – such as avoiding registering in night classes and avoiding certain building or community groups and group members such as fraternities. Some respondents also commented about their awareness of continued incidents of GBSV on campus, and how this adds to the lack of safety.

“I had to leave London and go home after O-week because I was traumatized as a soph dealing with the... number of sexual assaults. I should not be fearful of campus and the people here. We need the problem to be taken seriously and stop rape culture, toxic party culture, misogyny, and homophobia. I once felt safe here, but I couldn't feel further from safe now.”

“I have not directly witnessed any gender-based violence on campus, but I have heard about many instances. These situations have made me and many others feel unsafe on campus, especially in the evening. I intentionally avoid taking night classes and this was a factor in me choosing not to stay in residence.”

“As a woman, I have chosen to avoid evening classes at all costs (which impacts my education) just to avoid having to walk at night in fear.”

Perception of Inaction or Inappropriate Action Taken

Finally, in response to this last question on the survey, a number of respondents voiced their concerns regarding Western University's inaction or inappropriate action taken following the GBSV incidents in September 2021. Respondents expressed frustrations that more has not been done to make changes in the many months following the events, or that change is not

happening quickly or visibly enough. This theme had parallels with the aforementioned theme regarding a need for better and more transparent communications by Western University that goes beyond mass emails. Respondents wanted to see more concrete and discernible action taken by university leadership, and more expressions acknowledging the seriousness of the situation and of commitment to change.

“Western needs to step up. It’s common knowledge sexual assault is occurring within the fraternities, in the residences and amongst students in everyday settings. Wake up and hold student [perpetrators] accountable.”

“Listen to your students and react faster and earlier than you did this time. We knew it was happening and were screaming for you to do something while you continued to claim no one was coming forward with information.”

“I wish that Western chose to be more proactive leading up to the current academic year, and more responsive during the year. Western failed it’s [sic] students in September, and it feels like we’ve hardly heard from Administration on the matter since. Not enough was done, and enough is still not being done.”

“The situations involving gender-based violence that were happening on campus in September 2021 were extremely upsetting. I was not expecting the University to be so unprepared to handle such situations, considering that the previous years when O-week was happening there was also talk circulating around the campus about gender-based violence situations.”

“Please make this more than optics this time. Thousands of faculty/staff/students took a stand on UC hill, where is the action?”



Conclusions

This survey was developed to collect a snapshot of how safe Western community members feel on campus that will become part of a larger collection of data detailing the climate of safety in relation to GBSV at Western University. This report details how nearly 900 Western students, staff, administrators and faculty rated and described GBSV and their feelings of safety on campus in February of 2022.

Results revealed that many Western community members reported having experienced or witnessed GBSV in the past year, including almost half (42.4%) of undergraduate student respondents. Undergraduate students were most likely to report feeling unsafe or very unsafe (19.3% of undergraduate respondents) compared to other groups of Western community members. Among all students at Western, those who identify as gender-minority individuals were most likely to feel unsafe or very unsafe (31.8%), followed by women (22.0%) and then men (2.9%). Respondents described why, when or where they feel unsafe on Western campus, reported on their knowledge of campus resources, and provided many strategies for increasing safety on campus. Strategies provided included hold perpetrators accountable; expand and improve upon GBSV training and education; improve Western University communications; expand support and resources; change the culture at Western University; improve and enhance the process for reporting GBSV; and increase on-campus safety. Survey respondents also shared additional comments, many of which mirrored the themes that came up in the strategies provided. Comments further included disclosures of GBSV, descriptions of feelings of unsafety on campus, and perceptions of inaction or inappropriate action taken by Western following the incidents of GBSV on campus in September 2021.

It is important to note again that this survey sample may not represent all members of the Western community in terms of identity including factors such as gender, race and ethnicity, sexuality, and others. The survey sample was large, but the representativeness of the sample in relation to the larger Western community needs to be considered.

The Action Committee on Gender-Based & Sexual Violence used the results of this survey to better understand safety concerns related to GBSV at Western University and to help direct recommendations for change. The committee advises, further, that Western continue collecting and considering data like this from students, staff, administrators and faculty.