

# HRM'S SAFE CITY & SAFE PUBLIC SPACES SCOPING STUDY

The first output of HRM's Safe City & Safe Public Spaces program

**Content warning: the following infographic discusses sexual and other forms of gender-based violence. Please take care in reading this.**  
For resources and help, visit: [breakthesilencens.com](http://breakthesilencens.com).

## THE PROGRAM

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) joined UN Women's Safe Cities & Safe Public Spaces Global Flagship Program Initiative in 2019. This initiative supports cities in developing locally owned solutions to end sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence in public spaces.



## THE SCOPING STUDY



The scoping study helps us better understand sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public spaces in the municipality. It will also help shape how the HRM's Safe City & Safe Public Spaces program (HRM SC SPS) moves forward in response to these issues.

## WHAT DID WE LEARN?

**94%**

**of sexual assaults are not reported to police**

In 2019 in Canada, only 6% of sexual assaults were reported to the police (2019 General Social Survey)

**5x**

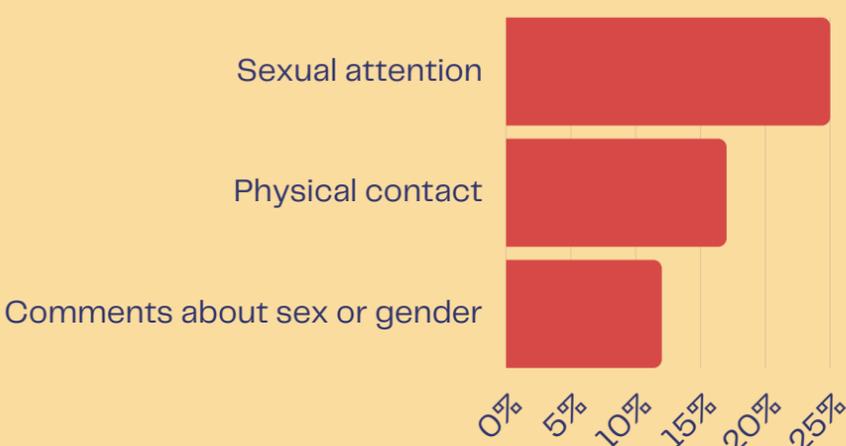
**In 2019, Canadian women were five times more likely than men to be victims/survivors of sexual assault.**

(2019 General Social Survey)



**1 IN 3 WOMEN IN HALIFAX EXPERIENCED UNWANTED SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR IN PUBLIC IN 2018**

The 2018 Canadian Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces asked about people's experiences of unwanted physical contact, indecent exposure, comments about sex or gender, comments about sexual orientation and sexual attention in public.



**Women who experienced unwanted behaviours in public said sexual attention, physical contact and comments about sex or gender were the most common.**

Other forms of systemic discrimination and oppression intersect with sexism, meaning women girls and non-binary people who are young, racialized, Indigenous, newcomers, 2SLGBTQ+ (particularly trans women and trans feminine people), who have disabilities and who are experiencing homelessness are put at higher risk of experiencing sexual and other forms of gender-based violence in public.

**3x**

Sexual assault is committed against Indigenous people in Canada at a rate that is three times higher than non-Indigenous people. (Conroy & Cotter, 2017)

Data shows that being younger and 2SLGBTQ+ are among the factors that most significantly increase the odds of experiencing sexual violence in public spaces (Cotter & Savage, 2019, p. 3).

We also know that diverse women, girls and non-binary people have long been sharing solutions to these issues. Their voices and experiences must guide and shape this program.

Limited government responses to well-documented historical and inter-generational trauma and ongoing institutionalized racism and marginalization are serious barriers to African Nova Scotian and Indigenous women trusting and accessing mainstream support services (Creating Communities of Care, 2021).

## HRM SC SPS INITIAL PROGRAM PRIORITIES

The following were identified through the scoping study as key areas of focus for the HRM SC SPS program. The program is meant to be flexible and responsive to our local context, so these priorities may shift, expand and evolve over time.



Work with and across HRM business units to support and catalyze projects, plans and services that impact women's, girls' and non-binary people's safety in public spaces.



Collaborate with grassroots and community organizations, networks and groups to ensure the program is informed by women's, girls' and non-binary people's voices, lived experiences and knowledge of solutions.



Support efforts to make transit and other important transportation methods in the municipality safer and more accessible for all women, girls and non-binary people.



Integrate a gender-safety lens into the municipality's housing and homelessness efforts.



Support work to prevent and respond to human trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth in the HRM.