WHAT MAKES A PARK FEEL SAFE OR UNSAFE?

The views of women, girls and professionals in West Yorkshire

West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Tracy Brabin Mayor of West Yorkshire

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

FOREWORD

The safety of women and girls in West Yorkshire is a top priority. Along with the Mayor of West Yorkshire, Tracy Brabin, I have a strong sense of personal responsibility to ensure women and girls' safety is the heart of the policing and community safety agenda and this important research will continue to help create the conditions that enable women to feel safe in our county, and boost trust and confidence to report any form of abuse, wherever it occurs.

Funding for safer spaces is crucial to the development of our region. We know that the safety of public spaces, especially parks, is vital to ensure we eliminate barriers that disproportionately affect women and girls too often. Taking longer routes to travel home or denying ourselves opportunities to go outdoors should not be the choice we have to make. There should never be limitations to women and girls socialising, improving our wellbeing and fitness, or having equal opportunity to enjoy green spaces.

We know that there is not one solution. Whilst we must acknowledge the personal responsibility of all individuals to be part of the solution, we also need to consider the role education, prevention, behaviour change, and the wider sector play in influencing change. Applying a multi-dimensional approach, maximising the learning from this research, and working with partners, means we will achieve a greater understanding of how we can innovate, share great ideas, and aid the safety of women and girls in public, including how we can take this learning into the private and digital spaces to ensure we accelerate societal change.

We all benefit from a cleaner, safer environment, and this is imperative to achieving a safe, just and inclusive West Yorkshire. Parks are the main place of leisure and physical activity for so many of West Yorkshire's communities, whether they live, visit or work here. Utilising the findings of this University of Leeds report to improve the safety of these spaces will impact the positive perception of safety for all parks users and encourage us all to love our parks.

Alison Lowe OBE
Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, West Yorkshire

CONTENTS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When women and girls feel unsafe, they are less likely to use, enjoy and benefit from parks, particularly when alone and after dark. Parks and play spaces should be better designed and managed to be well-used, sociable places that offer activities and facilities that are welcoming to women and girls. Changes should support women and girls to feel safe throughout the day and all-year round. Changes to parks must be part of an holistic approach that tackles threats of violence against women and girls, to address root causes of women and girls' unsafety.

The threat of harassment and violence restricts and inconveniences the everyday lives of women and girls, curtailing their freedom to use, enjoy and benefit from public spaces. This underscores the importance of listening to women and girls' views and lived experiences in designing safer and more welcoming public spaces.

This research aimed to better understand what women and girls perceive makes parks feel safe and unsafe, and why. It sought professionals' views too, providing a comparison. The research was conducted across West Yorkshire, in 2022, with 67 women aged 19-84 years, 50 girls and young women aged 13-18 years and 27 professionals from parks and urban design services in local government and police.

Participants rated their agreement or disagreement with 49 statements relating to feelings of safety in parks. They rank ordered the statements on a grid, from +5 ('most like my view') to -5 ('most unlike my view'). The middle position (0) reflected ambivalence or neutrality towards a statement. Afterwards, participants reflected on reasons for their views in interviews and focus groups, adding a rich qualitative understanding. Factor analysis was used to identify participants who ranked statements in a statistically similar way, and who share a viewpoint.

The viewpoints, outlined below, capture the dominant perspectives that exist in relation to how women, girls and professionals perceive safety in parks, alongside areas of consensus in views.

Women's views on feeling safe in parks

Viewpoint 1: Design parks for women's safety and independence

According to this viewpoint, parks should feel safe for women to use by themselves, but they are not designed that way. For this reason, if women are alone they feel safer in familiar parks. Authorities must do more to support women's independent use of parks – better lighting, visible security, help points, and more staff presence would assist. Nevertheless, sexist attitudes and gendered violence are the root cause of women's feelings of unsafety. Men can be allies by giving women physical space in parks and standing up to harassment.

Viewpoint 2: Lighting parks won't deter predatory men, change society

According to this viewpoint, women are not safe anywhere, and risks feel amplified in parks, particularly after dark. Lighting parks will not make parks feel safer as it won't stop men hurting women. Lone men in parks are a

potential threat, especially given the level of violence against women in society, and aspects of women's identities, such as age and sexuality, makes them more at risk. But we must shift the burden from women to stay safe; authorities need to do more about harassment, and men's behaviour has to change. For now, it feels safer using parks with friends or family, ignoring unwanted comments and avoiding secluded and thickly vegetated areas of parks.

Viewpoint 3: Safety in familiarity, danger spotters

According to this viewpoint, some parks are safe for women, but not secluded or thickly vegetated areas and not after dark as they are designed for daytime use. Women avoid parks with bad reputations for drinkers, drug users or groups of men and boys. More staffing and police could help tackle anti-social behaviour and harassment, but ultimately it feels safer using larger well-maintained, busier parks with more facilities and staffing that are known for 'legitimate' users and have good visibility to spot 'risky' users.

Areas of consensus among women

There were eight areas of consensus across the three viewpoints. Women agree:
1. Well-used parks feel safer because of increased passive surveillance and opportunities to seek help. Facilities, activities, mixed uses and staffing throughout the day support busyness.
2. The presence of other women in parks is reassuring and signals a safer place, but women-only areas are not the solution.
3. Organised group activities support women to feel safer and extend their use of parks, though choice and timing of activities should be expanded.
4. Fences or walls around the edges of parks limit escape and visibility, whilst openness feels safer by helping women to spot dangers and take action.
5. It is safer to ignore than challenge unwanted comments and attention in parks, so as to avoid escalation and unsafe situations. Yet, leaving male harassment unchallenged perpetuates injustice.
6. Seeing other users of a similar identity in parks feels reassuring, though a diversity of users suggests parks are inclusive.
7. Women can't rely on other park users to intervene in instances of harassment, but well-used parks increase the probability for bystander intervention.
8. Mobile phone apps where women can allow trusted contacts to track their journeys may be useful in parks but trade freedom for safety.

In addition, there was general agreement among women that parks feel unsafe after dark, but women differ as to whether they think something can be done to parks to make them feel safe enough to use at these times, with diverse views on lighting.

Girls' views on feeling safe in parks

Viewpoint 1: People in parks

According to this viewpoint, it's the people in parks that make girls feel unsafe, and hearing about other women suffering bad experiences. Groups of teenage boys make girls particularly uneasy as they dominate park space and harass girls, although other users can be intimidating too. Harassment happens regularly and girls' identity makes them a target, yet authorities don't take it seriously. Secluded and thickly vegetated areas are hiding places for attackers, so openness is better for escape and visibility. Sexist attitudes and behaviours must change, and telling girls what not to wear/do is victim blaming.

Viewpoint 2: Familiarity and security

According to this viewpoint, some parks are safe for girls, but it is still safer to avoid secluded areas and thick vegetation unless with others. There's much that can be done to make parks feel safer, such as more security, lots of exits, visible staffing and policing, better facilities and fostering busyness. Parks feel safer with similar users, family and friends or in an organised group because there is safety in numbers and trusted people will intervene if something happens. Familiar parks also feel safer as their layout and exits are known. Other park users aren't generally intimidating, although 'unpredictable' drug users or drinkers do make girls feel unsafe.

Viewpoint 3: Men and patriarchy

According to this viewpoint, all public spaces are dangerous for girls because of harassment and the threat of predatory men. Hearing about other women suffering bad experiences makes girls fearful of going to parks. Lighting, help points and safe spaces for girls in parks might help, but they won't tackle harassment or stop sexual assault. Authority figures aren't always trustworthy – police can be predatory too. Men must change their behaviour, and schools need to educate boys on acceptable behaviour. Until then, it is safer to take personal safety measures, ignore unwanted comments and avoid secluded areas or thick vegetation in parks.

Areas of consensus among girls

There were five areas of consensus across the three viewpoints. Girls agree:
1. Help points in parks would be reassuring if they provided access to assistance quickly.
2. Being near the edges of parks feels safer because it is easier to escape and you can be seen by people in surrounding streets and buildings.
3. Like other public spaces, parks do not feel safe after dark. But fears are heightened by a lack of lighting and limited sightlines in parks as well as secluded areas or dense vegetation.
4. Secluded or hidden areas of parks feel unsafe because they can conceal threatening people, provide places to be trapped and impede being seen or seeing others.
5. Parks feel safer during daylight hours, but not always due to unsafe situations and knowledge of attacks or harassment in certain parks.

Girls' views on play space design

A photo elicitation activity of play spaces revealed:
- Girls preferred open play spaces with good outlook in contrast to enclosed spaces, typified by fenced courts/Multi Use Games Areas (MUGAs), where they could be 'trapped'.
- Girls generally perceived MUGAs and skate parks as male-dominated and exclusionary.
- Girls liked 'sociable' and active play equipment such as swings and hammocks, which allow them to hang out with their friends.
- Girls liked park designs perceived as 'mixed' and 'equitable' with space 'for everyone'. Parks and play space designs that were age- and gender-sensitive were preferred, underscoring the need for co-design with teenage girls.

Professionals' views on women feeling safe in parks

Professionals have similar views on how to support women and girls to feel safe in parks, and what makes parks feel unsafe. This was reflected in 29 areas of consensus and two slightly different viewpoints.

Professionals disagree with the idea that no parks are safe for women and girls, but think more can be done to make parks safer and feel safer. Recognising the importance of feelings of safety as well as crime reduction, changes can be made to make parks both safer and feel safer. Signs of disorder, people behaving inappropriately or unpredictably and using drink or drugs make women feel unsafe in parks. Busier parks are safer and feel safer because there is more passive surveillance. Parks should be designed with facilities and amenities that appeal to women, girls and families, thereby signalling parks as safe places. Visible staffing helps by providing opportunities for support, reporting and reassurance. Physical interventions, such as lighting and CCTV, can be pursued where there is budget and opportunity. Security should be well-designed and subtle to fit the purpose and atmosphere of parks and minimise fear. Visibility and openness can be maximised in certain areas of parks, including cutting down overgrown vegetation to reduce hidden areas, raising canopies and lowering shrubs. This can be accommodated alongside natural or wooded areas that provide diversity of experiences and are important for biodiversity.

Viewpoint 1: Change society, do not blame victims

According to this viewpoint, we need to target society as a whole, not just the park. Women feel unsafe because of harassment and violence against women and girls, yet the park environment with secluded, isolated, thickly vegetated and dark spaces also heightens those fears. Personal safety measures are ineffective at keeping women safe; moreover, this is victim blaming. Instead, men's attitudes and behaviour must change, particularly amongst younger generations. Men need to be more aware of how their presence and behaviour in parks affects women.

Viewpoint 2: Gender-sensitive design for maximum use

According to this viewpoint, parks are safer when they are well-used, particularly with women and families. To get more women and girls into parks and feeling safer, parks should look well maintained with a reassuring presence of visible staff and improved park design, such as more family-friendly and mixed-use facilities, organised activities and greater openness and visibility. Safety is everyone's responsibility, so women should take sensible precautions and avoid obvious hazards, such as unlit paths.

Comparisons

Whilst 89% of professionals interviewed think parks in their area of West Yorkshire are very or fairly safe for women and girls, this compares with only 37% of women and 22% of girls interviewed. Yet, professionals' views on what makes parks safe and unsafe for women and girls were not outliers, compared to the views of women and girls.

Recommendations

The viewpoints outlined should be listened to and reflected upon, and can aid decisions about the design and management of parks to support women and girls to feel safe and welcome in them, with areas of consensus a starting point for policy and practice. A full list of recommendations can be found in chapter 8.

2. INTRODUCTION

Feeling unsafe and fearful of crime in public spaces is a longstanding problem that disproportionately affects women and girls, particularly after dark.

Whilst women are most at risk from violence in the home and by men they know (Stanko, 1995), violence occurs on a 'continuum' (Kelly, 1988) and sexual harassment in public is routine and normalised. 71% of women of all ages in the UK have experienced some form of sexual harassment in a public space and only 3% of 18-24 year-olds have not experienced harassment (UN Women, 2021). Moreover, other aspects of identity intersect with being a woman to shape the nature of harassment and violence women encounter (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 1998). The pervasive threat of harassment and violence impacts women in personal and societally harmful ways, by restricting or inconveniencing their everyday lives and curtailing their freedom to use, enjoy and benefit from public spaces (Allen et al., 2022). Finding 'the right amount of panic' (Vera-Gray, 2018) is a constant struggle, embodied in the routine precautions women and girls take to feel safe.

Creating safer public spaces

Following a series of high profile violent crimes against women in public, women and girls' feelings of safety have become central to policy and public debate about creating safer public spaces.[1] Yet, research shows that different approaches to creating safer public spaces may be driven by different assumptions and values with contradictory, contested and unintended consequences (Barker, 2017). Criticism has been directed at approaches that have excluded the views of women and girls, require the ability to pay for private security, reduce sociality and spontaneity, create bland, 'sanitised' or highly regulated spaces that are exclusionary towards marginalised groups, and where 'too much security' perpetuates fear by 'scattering the world with visible reminders of the threat of crime' (Zedner, 2003: 163; Kerns, 2021; Davis, 1990; Barker, 2014, 2017; Mitchell, 2003).

Both by design and unintentionally, approaches to creating safe spaces can serve to foster or constrain the conditions that sustain women's presence in or exclusion from public spaces. It is increasingly recognised that public spaces designed by and for the 'default male' can feel fearful and exclusionary (Walker and Clark, 2020; Perez, 2019), undermining women's right to the city and everyday life (Beebeejaun, 2017). Public space design that lacks a strategic focus on gender may leave power differentials untouched, such that public spaces become claimed and dominated by to the detriment of women and girls who are more likely to avoid using spaces if deemed unsafe, unmonitored or unmediated (Kerns, 2021; Barker, 2017; Valentine 1990). Public spaces designed with a gendered perspective may be perceived as safer, more inclusive and welcoming to women and girls (World Bank, 2020).

Feeling unsafe in parks

4 out of 5 women | 2 out of 5 men — in the UK felt unsafe walking alone after dark in a park or open space (ONS, 2021).

In the UK, a higher proportion of women report feeling very or fairly unsafe when walking alone, compared with men (Office for National Statistics, 2022). The disparities are greater after dark than during the day, and more pronounced in parks and open spaces than in streets, busy public spaces

and on public transport (Office for National Statistics, 2022). In the UK, 4 out of 5 women (82%) feel very or fairly unsafe walking alone after dark in parks or open spaces, compared with 2 out of 5 men (42%) (Office for National Statistics, 2022). Whilst many people feel safer in parks during the day, women are three times more likely to feel unsafe (16%) than men (5%) when visiting parks alone during the day (Office for National Statistics, 2022).

While there are no comparable national statistics for teenage girls and boys, research shows that over half (53%) of girls aged 11-21 years do not feel safe outside when alone (Girlguiding, 2022) and a higher proportion of girls (31%) feel unsafe in Yorkshire parks than boys (17%) (Yorkshire Sport, 2022). Girls begin reporting higher levels of fear than boys by the age of 12 (Goodey, 1997), which affects levels of physical activity and walkability (Risova et al., 2020; Yorkshire Sport, 2022). Moreover, there is known to be a drop off in girls' use of parks by age 8 (White Arkitekter, 2018) and mid-teenage years are associated with a 'breakpoint' in nature and green space connectedness (Hughes et al., 2019). Whilst safety concerns are a key barrier stopping girls from using parks, there are wider issues relating to how well parks are designed to cater to the needs and preferences of girls, affecting belonging and inclusion (Walker and Clark, 2020).

If parks feel unsafe or unwelcoming, women and girls are less likely to spend time in them, reducing the health and well-being benefits associated with green space use (Lorenc et al., 2012). The latest data shows that 37% of women in the UK stopped using parks and open spaces after dark because of feeling unsafe (Office for National Statistics, 2022). A recent review of existing research by the Green and Gender-just Cities project shows that women and girls use parks less, take fewer green journeys and their use of the space within parks is more constrained than men's.[2] Yet, benefits to women and girls' health and wellbeing from exposure to green space are greater than for men and boys (Sillman et al., 2022; Piccininni et al., 2018).

Determinants of perceived safety in the built environment

This research builds on an already large evidence base on women's fear and perceived safety in public spaces. This literature tells us that there is no simple relationship between feeling unsafe or fearful of crime and risk of victimisation in public spaces (Warr, 1984). Yet, women have particular fears in contrast to men, notably a fear of rape and sexual harassment, and live with a 'shadow of sexual assault' (Ferraro, 1996). Women's greater feelings of unsafety need to be situated in patriarchal gender relations and the sexual violence women experience in private as well as public spaces (Valentine, 1990; Stanko, 1995; Vera-Gray, 2018).

A starting point for this research is that feelings of safety are influenced by a more complex set of drivers than crime and risk of victimisation, and by factors ranging in scope from broad societal phenomena to immediate, tangible features of parks themselves. Perceived safety is broader than a fear of crime, and may be understood on a 'spectrum' of experiences from being 'inconvenienced', feeling 'ill-at-ease' to feeling 'endangered' (World Bank, 2020). Safety may therefore be understood as freedom from (intolerable) danger or risk[3], but also feeling comfortable in space. Systematic reviews of existing research illustrate that a wide range of social and physical environmental factors, personal or intersectional

characteristics and experiences, and broader social context shapes determinants of fear and perceived safety in the built environment and urban green spaces (Lorenc et al., 2013 Maruthaveerana and van den Bosch, 2014; Pain, 2000), as summarised in Figure 2.1.

Our research approach and methodology, described in chapter 3, is distinctive. It considers how this wide range of factors feature holistically in women and girls views on safety, and which factors women and girls' rank as being of greatest importance to their feelings of safety in the specific context of parks.
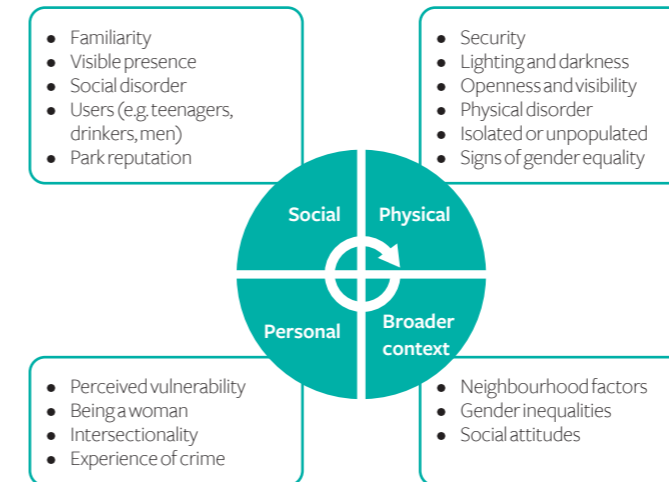

Figure 2.1 Determinants of fear and perceived safety

Research aims

The research outlined in this report was conducted in 2022 by a team of researchers at the University of Leeds, with funding and support from West Yorkshire Combined Authority as part of its award from the Home Office Safer Streets Fund round three to support women and girls' safety in West Yorkshire's parks.[4] A priority of *The Mayor of West Yorkshire's Safety of Women and Girls Strategy* is to promote the use of parks by women and girls, by understanding and responding to the barriers to feeling safe.[5]

'Take the learning from the Safer Streets Fund safety in parks research and the understanding of barriers to feeling safe, and implement in wider public spaces and shared areas.'

(Delivery action from The Mayor of West Yorkshire's Safety of Women and Girls Strategy, 2022: 20).

As outlined in Figure 2.2, the research brings the views and experiences of women and girls to the fore, aiming to better understand their perceptions of what makes parks feel safe and unsafe, and why. Within this primary aim, we sought to identify areas where there is similarity or difference in views, recognising that women and girls are not a homogeneous group and may perceive safety in parks in different ways. A secondary aim of the research was to understand the views of professionals who work in, manage, design and police parks.

Figure 2.2 Research questions

Of the 117 women and girls we interviewed, a higher proportion felt very or fairly unsafe in their local parks, compared to quiet streets close to home or busy public places both during the day and after dark (see Figure 2.3). In our sample of interviewees, approximately 1 in 5 women and girls felt unsafe in parks during the day, and nearly all women and girls felt unsafe after dark. This underscores the importance of engaging with women and girls to better understand their views and lived experiences, and explore what they think might be done to make parks feel safer, more welcoming and more accessible spaces.

West Yorkshire area

West Yorkshire has a large and growing population of 2.35 million, according to the 2021 Census, which is relatively young: 19% of its people are aged under 15 years old (17% in England) and 38% are aged under 30 (36% in England). Covering an area of 783 square miles, West Yorkshire has a population density of 1,159 people per km2, 2.7 times more densely populated than England as a whole. It is a predominantly urban area, but has more than 200,000 people living in rural locations, equivalent to 9% of the total population of the region. The region has a highly diverse population with many ethnicities, backgrounds and lifestyles represented. People from ethnic minorities make up 36% of the total population in Bradford. West Yorkshire has a large amount of public open space (11.5% of total land area), and just over a fifth of West Yorkshire's population has easy access to local natural greenspace using Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard.[6]
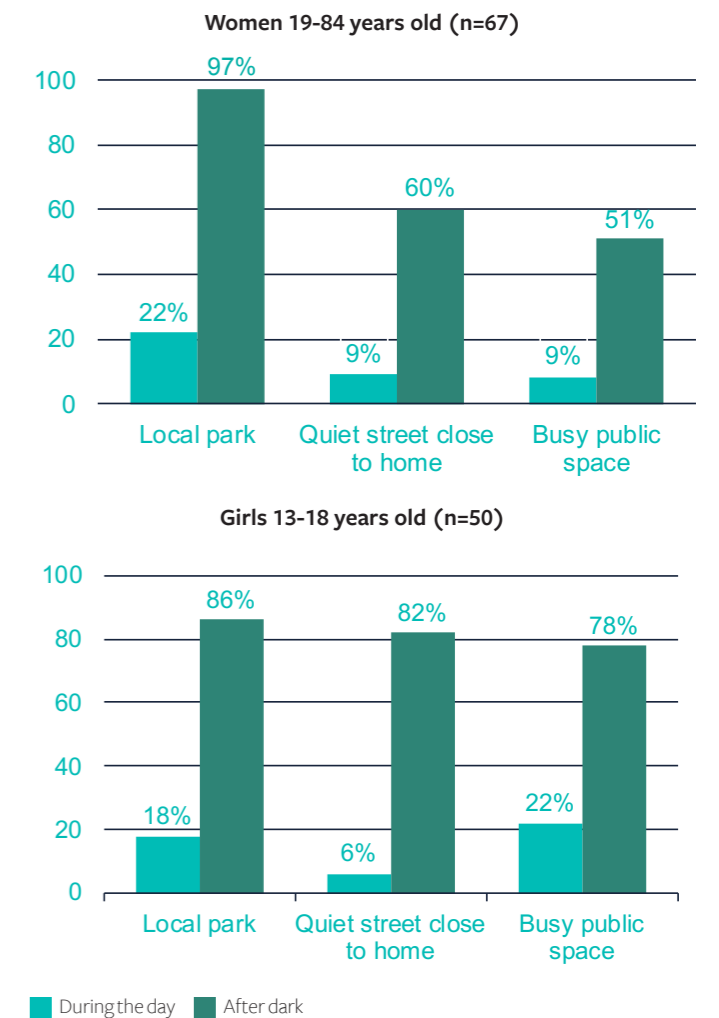

Figure 2.3 Proportion of women and girls who felt "very or fairly unsafe" walking alone by public setting

3. METHODOLOGY

We used Q methodology to identify the main perspectives held by women, girls and professionals on women and girls' safety in parks.

Q methodology

Q methodology is an approach to studying people's subjective views, opinions or beliefs, and involves sorting or ranking statements about a topic on a grid (Watts and Stenner, 2012). There may be lots of views or opinions about a topic but people's views tend to cluster to create shared viewpoints. The process for a Q-study is shown in Figure 3.1.

The purpose of Q methodology is to identify the range of shared viewpoints that exist on a topic and provide rich descriptions of them. Descriptions include issues that define and distinguish one viewpoint from another, as well as areas of similarity or consensus across viewpoints. Whilst Q methodology is good at describing holistic viewpoints, it is less suitable for exploring how these are distributed within society, for example which view is most common overall, or whether different views are more prevalent in different ethnic groups (Watts and Stenner, 2012).
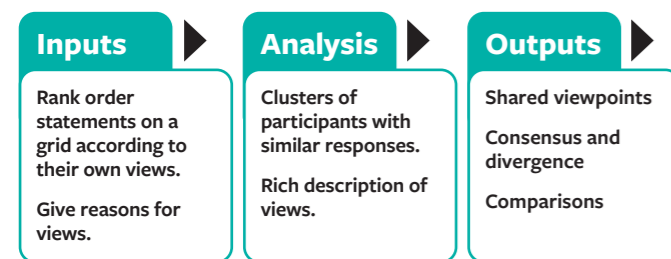

Inputs	Analysis	Outputs
Rank order statements on a grid according to their own views. Give reasons for views.	Clusters of participants with similar responses. Rich description of views.	Shared viewpoints Consensus and divergence Comparisons

Figure 3.1 The process for a Q study

Developing the statements

Q methodology involves participants rank ordering a set of statements about the topic under study, according to their own subjective views. To develop the set of statements for this study, we searched for and collated a wide range of sources on women and girls' safety in parks and public spaces. This included sources from: (i) academic literature (n=108); (ii) civil society and intergovernmental organisations (n=15); (iii) women's campaigns and petitions (n=18); (iv) governmental, parliamentary and official sources (n=34); (v) public space safety and gender inclusive design guidance (n=10); (vi) newspaper, online articles and press releases (n=38); (vii) mapping tools and safety apps (n=4); and (viii) market research firms and consultancies (n=3).[7] This resulted in the collation of a total of 230 sources available in English spanning varied issues from park design to sexual harassment to patriarchal social structures. The majority of sources had a European, UK or other Anglophone geographical focus, with around two fifths of sources specifically discussing parks, and green and open space, including play spaces.

The collated sources were reviewed by the research team for relevance, and 1,451 verbatim statements were extracted from 197 relevant sources, with the direct voices of women and girls extracted from around half the sources. All statements were then coded, resulting in 27 themes covering women and girls' safety in parks and public spaces.[8]

The 1,451 statements were reduced to a final set of 49 statements (Appendix A). Using the 27 themes to guide the selection of statements for the final set, the aim was to ensure a 'balanced' sample that covered the full range of opinion and issues. While some themes could be represented by one statement, others required between two to five statements to reflect the array of views. For example, the theme of 'familiarity' required only one statement, whereas the theme of 'capable guardians' required five statements to represent views on different kinds of guardians in parks (police, park staff, security staff, other park users etc.).

Throughout the process of selection, verbatim statements were reformulated for clarity and brevity. The aim was to produce succinct, unambiguous and simple statements, which would allow participants to respond instinctively. Statements were phrased in the first person singular in the women and girls' set (using 'I'), for example S40 ('I feel safer in more secluded areas of parks that are hidden from view'), whereas 'I' was replaced with 'women and girls' in the professionals' set ('Women and girls feel safer in more secluded areas of parks that are hidden from view').

We further refined and validated the statements through piloting with women and professionals. This involved checking that participants could adequately express their views on safety in parks with the statements, whether there was anything important to their feelings of safety missing from the statements, and whether participants could read and sort the statements with ease. Following piloting, minor revisions were made to improve the clarity of some statements.

Rank ordering statements

Participants in the study rank ordered the statements on a grid (see Figures 3.2 and 3.3), from +5 ('most like my view') to -5 ('most unlike my view'). The middle category (0) reflects where participants felt unsure or neutral towards a statement. Whilst women and girls were asked to rank the statements thinking about parks in their local area, professionals were asked to think about parks they work in, manage or have designed. This approach enabled participants to think about and discuss the spaces *they* define as 'parks'.

First, participants completed an initial sort of the statements into three piles: 'most like my view', 'middle/unsure' and 'most unlike my view'. Second, participants rank ordered them on the grid. To do this, participants selected two statements they agreed with most from the 'most like my view' pile and placed these in the +5 column, then selected the next three statements they agreed with most and placed them in the +4 column, and so on. The same process was repeated for statements in the 'most unlike my view' pile, starting with the -5 column. Finally, the statements in the middle pile were placed on the grid. Participants were given the opportunity to review their rank ordering of statements and, if necessary, to swap and change positions of the cards.

As shown in Figures 3.2 and 3.3, the grid shape structures participant responses by requiring them to place fewer statements towards the outer columns, to capture the most important statements where participants had

strongest feelings. Ranking requires participants to order statements by relative, not absolute agreement. As such, participants could agree or disagree to varying degrees with all statements, but they will agree/disagree with some more than others.

Afterwards, participants reflected during one-to-one interviews (women and professionals) or group discussions (girls) why the statements were 'like' or 'unlike' their views, giving reasons for their views. For this, we used a set of semi-structured interview questions tailored to each set of participants (Appendix B). Whilst women and girls were invited to reflect on their own personal and individual experiences, professionals were asked to think about women and girls as a general category.
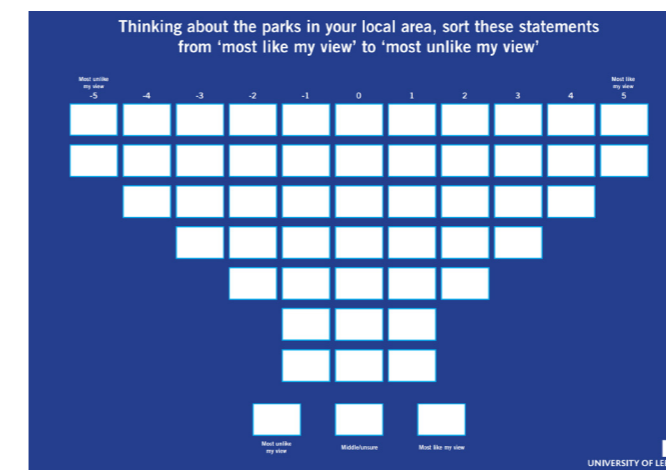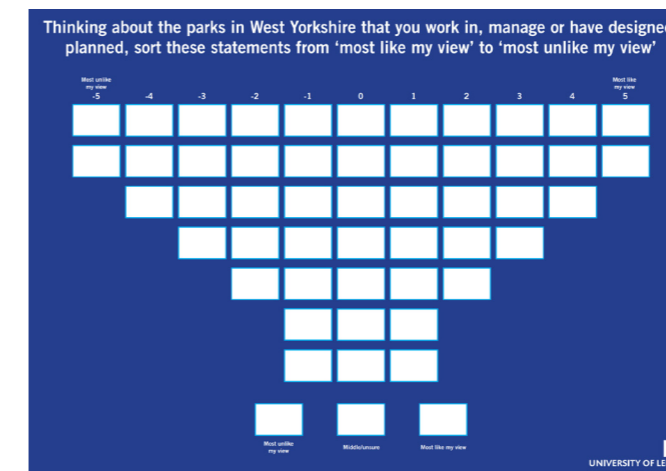

Figure 3.2 Grid used by women and girls

Figure 3.3 Grid used by professionals

Data collection

The fieldwork took place between February and June 2022 in all five districts of West Yorkshire (Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield) with 67 women aged 19-84 years, 50 girls and young women aged 13-18 years (henceforth 'girls') and 27 professionals working in parks services, urban design and policing. Whilst women and professionals participated in the study in one-to-one interviews, girls participated in the study across 10 focus groups (two per West Yorkshire district). Informed consent was gained from all participants, and from parents prior to focus groups with participants under 16. Ethical approval was granted by the School of Business, Environment and Social Services Committee (AREA 20-169).

Women and girls with diverse backgrounds in terms of ethnicity, disability, age, gender identity[9] and frequency of park use were recruited to the study by a variety of women's organisations and youth services across West Yorkshire,

and interviews and focus groups took place in the comfort and safety of these locations. Support was provided by women's organisations and youth workers during focus groups, to aid girls' engagement with the research activities in an inclusive and supportive manner. They were also available to provide support to women and girls after the interviews and focus groups. All participants were provided with a leaflet containing the details of relevant support services in their district. While the majority of fieldwork was carried out February to March, a small number of interviews were undertaken in May-June with women students aged 19-25 years, as this age group was not represented in the earlier fieldwork.

A purposive sample of professionals were recruited to participate in the study. West Yorkshire Combined Authority supplied an extensive list of professionals working in local government parks services (strategic and frontline/operational), urban designers/landscape architects, neighbourhood police and Designing Out Crime Officers in each of the five districts of West Yorkshire. We contacted a purposive selection of professionals from this list, aiming to achieve a diverse sample of professionals covering all districts.

Data analysis

Following data collection, we used Ken Q software to undertake 'by-person' factor analysis on each set of participants – women, girls and professionals – to identify clusters of participants with statistically similar response patterns. Using a variety of standard statistical tests we identified 3 clusters of women, 3 clusters of girls, and 2 clusters of professionals who rank ordered the set of statements in a similar way, and comprise a shared viewpoint. Viewpoints capture the dominant perspectives that exist in relation to how participants perceive safety in parks, and reveal insights into how they see the world in general. We used Ken Q software's automatic flagging to identify which participants aligned with each viewpoint at a statistical significance of 95% or higher,[10] and linked this to the demographic profile of our sample (see Appendix C for a breakdown of participants aligned with each viewpoint).
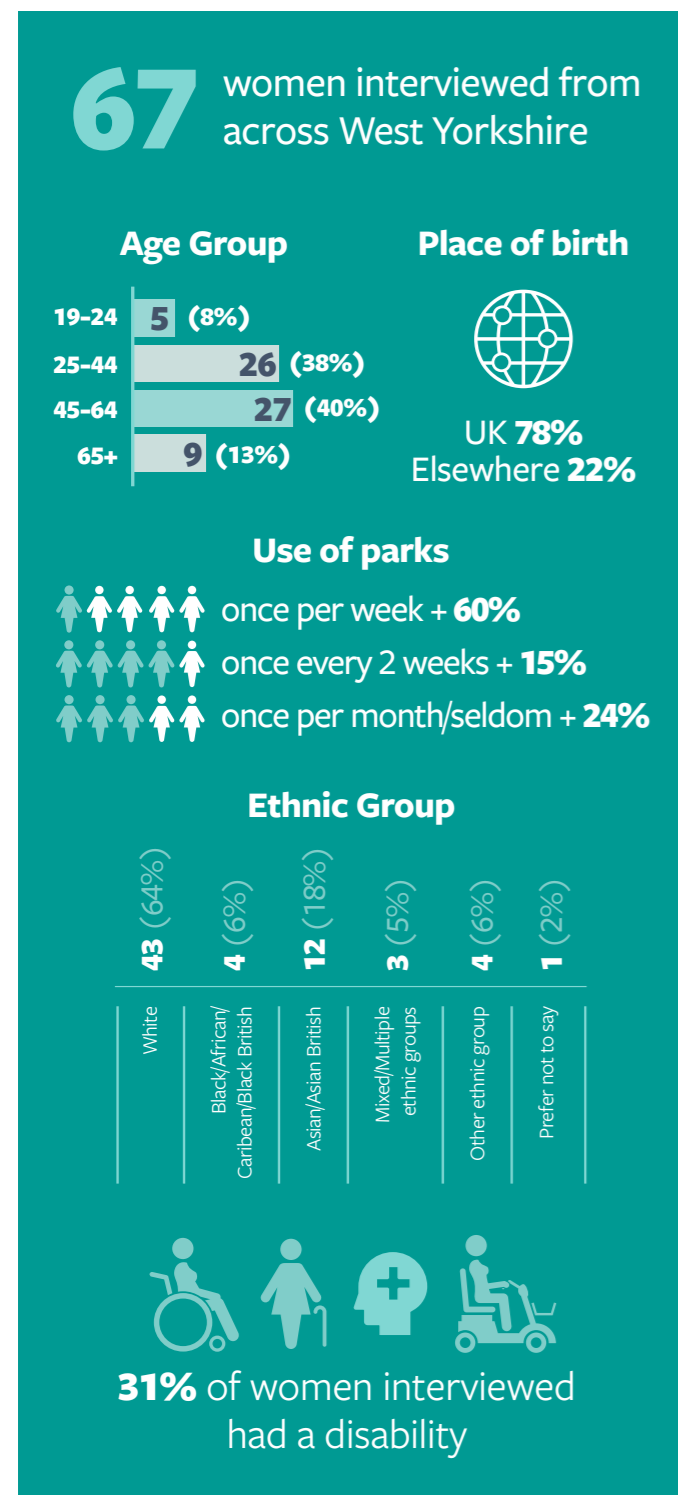
We used statistical techniques to identify the highest ranked statements (+4/+5 and -4/-5) for each viewpoint and the statements which 'distinguish' one viewpoint from another at a statistical significance of 95% or higher, to illustrate how and why viewpoints differed. We also identified 'consensus' statements, which are those ranked in a statistically similar way by participants across viewpoints, and are an indicator of similarity in views.

We used the qualitative data gathered in the interviews and focus groups to understand and interpret the shared viewpoints and areas of consensus. In relation to women and professionals, we coded the individual interview responses for all the highest ranked statements (+5/+4 and -5/-4) to understand how these statements were being interpreted by the clusters of participants aligned with each viewpoint, and to understand why these statements were ranked with strongest feeling, providing depth, richness and explanation to the quantitative analysis. For example, where a viewpoint gave prominence to increased lighting as enhancing feelings of safety, we were able to explore whether this was because it increased women's ability to see and avoid potential threats, or whether this was because lighting would deter potential attackers because it would allow onlookers to spot any attacks. In addition, where viewpoints are distinguished by a particular statement (e.g. S2 'nothing could be done to parks to make me feel safe enough to use after dark'), the qualitative data was used to make sense of the reasons for different perspectives. We also coded and analysed the interview responses to consensus statements.

For the girls, as the qualitative data was gathered in focus groups, it was more difficult to link the voices of individual girls to particular viewpoints. We were able to work this out in several instances. We have used the focus group data to illustrate areas of consensus and divergence in views as well as some key themes within each viewpoint.

4. FINDINGS – WOMEN'S VIEWS ON FEELING SAFE IN PARKS

During one-to-one interviews, 67 women aged 19-84 years from West Yorkshire rank ordered 49 statements on a grid relating to feelings of safety in parks, from 'most like' to 'most unlike' their views. Afterwards, women reflected on the reasons for their views and what might make parks feel safer and more welcoming.

67 women interviewed from across West Yorkshire

Age Group

19-24	**5**	(8%)
25-44	**26**	(38%)
45-64	**27**	(40%)
65+	**9**	(13%)

Place of birth

UK **78%**
Elsewhere **22%**

Use of parks

once per week + **60%**
once every 2 weeks + **15%**
once per month/seldom + **24%**

Ethnic Group

White	Black/African/ Caribbean/Black British	Asian/Asian British	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups	Other ethnic group	Prefer not to say
43 (64%)	4 (6%)	12 (18%)	3 (5%)	4 (6%)	1 (2%)

31% of women interviewed had a disability

We found that women do not have a singular view of what makes parks feel safe, although there are some areas of general agreement. Using factor analysis, we extracted three clusters of 21, 16 and 18 women with statistically similar response patterns who share a viewpoint on feeling safe in parks.[11] Eight statements were ranked in statistically similar ways by women across the three viewpoints, identifying areas of consensus.

In what follows, we summarise each viewpoint, the differences between them and areas of consensus. In brackets, we provide the statement number (S1 to S49) and standardised Q score, from +5 ('most like my view') to -5 ('most unlike my view'), which corresponds with the grid in Figure 3.2, where '0' represents a middle position. Statements marked with an asterisk indicate statements that distinguish one viewpoint from another at 95% significance or higher.

Women's viewpoints can be summarised as:

Viewpoint 1: Design parks for women's safety and independence

Table 4.1 shows the highest ranked statements by women aligned with this viewpoint. It illustrates a future-orientated outlook that something can and should be done to support women to feel safe using parks independently, at all times of day and after dark. It sees the solution to women's feelings of unsafety as designing parks with women's safety in mind, including better lighting, help points, visible security and more staffing.

The idea that nothing can be done to make parks safe for women's use after dark was deemed to be unacceptable for policy (S2, -5*), yet authorities were perceived not to be doing enough about the harassment of women in parks (S17, +2*).

'There has to be things that you can do because it's not just a given that public places are going to be unsafe for women, and there is nothing you can do about it.' (P21)

'If they [parks] were designed with women you would see better lighting, you would see signs, you would see more patrolling.' (P40)

Women's independence and autonomy was a key concern in this viewpoint. Inadequate design and management of parks were seen as barriers to feeling safe alone, particularly after dark, and without relying on friends or family to access parks (S7, +1*). On the other hand, women used their knowledge of familiar parks to help manage safety concerns and facilitate independent use (S49, +4).

'I don't feel safe in any park after dark ... there is just not enough lighting, ever... There are no safety points. All the amenities close, so even the toilets close at four o'clock, so if you are in the park after dark,

there is nothing there that could support you as a single person.' (P9) *'It's about being safe on my own and I think that is really important. I don't want to necessarily go to the park with a friend every night because I am a single person, and I am independent, and I would like to feel that.'* (P9)

This viewpoint was distinguished by the strongest support for a wide range of physical design interventions in parks with lighting being seen as a 'priority' (S11, +5*), but also CCTV cameras (S10, -4*) and help points (S33, +4*) to support and extend women's use of park space, especially during seasons with shorter daylight hours. Indeed, this viewpoint most strongly disagreed with the idea that having lots of visible security measures in a park makes it seem like an unsafe place (S12, -4*).

'I think if the authorities are going to make any changes to the parks for women... I think cameras, lighting, physical presence would be key, that's where the majority of the funding needs to go.' (P48)

'Light automatically makes it feel safer because you can see what's going on around you and you can pre-prepare for things.' (P9)

The presence of visible authority figures, including 'caring' park staff, were perceived as reassuring given their formal capacity to intervene in potentially harmful situations and by being a contact point for women to report concerns or access help. Women in this viewpoint desired a formal visible presence in parks, which could be provided by security patrols (S16, +5*), more park staff (S13, +4*) or police officers (S15, -3). Park staff were also felt to impart a feeling of safety by providing 'eyes' on the park and formal guardianship, as well as during friendly and comforting verbal and non-verbal interactions, which communicated to women that they have been 'noticed' and are on their 'radar'.

'It was just a really quick interaction and off he [groundsman] went, but it would make me feel safe to do that [run around the park] again... those kind of things are really, really important because you've been seen.' (P43)

Women often advocated for park staff to work extended hours or for shift patterns to be arranged to provide visible presence throughout the day, including on late afternoons and early evenings when it is dark in winter, to support feeling safe.

Well-used parks (S22, -3) and parks with presence of other women (S30, +3) felt safer. Lone men (S6, -1*), groups of men and boys (S5, 0*), groups of teenagers (S46, -1) and men with their families (S31, 0*) were typically considered as non-threatening in parks unless their behaviour signalled otherwise. However, the presence of drinkers and drug users in parks (S45, +1*) alongside physical disorder such as rubbish, needles and graffiti (S20, +2), felt intimidating.

Park features that limit visibility, such as thick vegetation (S38, -3*), secluded areas (S40, -3), and fences or walls (S43, -2), contributed to feeling unsafe.

'So parks with thick vegetation, hedges, trees, no I don't feel safer... they have thinned things quite a lot so there is more visibility and that feels really good.' (P41)

Yet, while park design was seen as important in empowering women to use and feel safer in park space, this viewpoint also perceived the need for societal change in attitudes towards women such as sexism and prejudice (S24, +3) to address the causes of women's insecurities:

'The root of why parks feel less safe for women and girls is because of violence against women and girls in society and that comes down to sexism, oppression of women, and men's behaviour and attitudes towards women...' (P21)

The viewpoint advocated for men to take more responsibility to change their behaviour in parks to improve women's sense of safety (S4, +3*). Even small changes in public etiquette, such as men not walking or running too close, were thought to make a difference. Men were seen as part of the solution, as 'allies and bystanders' that could help women feel safer, particularly if they stood up to harassment or gave 'women a bit of space' (P35).

Table 4.1 Highest ranked statements (Viewpoint 1)

Most disagree (-5/-4)	Most agree (+5/+4)
I feel safe in parks after dark	Having lighting in parks would make them feel safer for me to use them after dark*
Nothing could be done to parks to make me feel safe enough to use them after dark*	I would feel safer in parks if there were regular, high visibility patrols by park security staff*
CCTV cameras do not make me feel safe*	Parks would feel safer if there were more park staff present*
It is safer to challenge unwanted comments or attention from men and boys in parks than to ignore them	I would feel safer in parks if there was a panic button/emergency help point*
Having lots of visible security measures in a park makes it seem like an unsafe place*	I feel safer in parks that I am familiar with

Viewpoint 2: Lighting parks won't deter predatory men, change society

Table 4.2 shows the highest ranked statements by women aligned with this viewpoint. It illustrates the view that women's fears in parks cannot be designed-out as they stem from the threat of violent men. Moreover, the risk from predatory men is potentially amplified in 'secluded' park environments and after dark. It sees the solution in dealing with the foundations of women's fear – challenging the societal norms and attitudes towards women that sustain violence and changing male behaviour.

Women aligning with this viewpoint were most equivocal as to whether any parks are safe for women (S25, 0*) at any time of day (S3, 0*), reflective of a wider sense of vulnerability in society and perception that potentially nowhere is safe:

'I don't think any parks are safe... and I don't think women and girls in today's society are safe at all.' (P55)

Past experience of crime and violence (S47, +5*), hearing about other women suffering bad experiences in parks (S48, +3) and harassment (S27, +2) shaped women's feelings of unsafety, particularly in 'quieter' and 'secluded' public spaces, such as parks:

'A lot of women have experienced being wolf whistled, shouted at or sexually assaulted on nights out... experiences of that type does make you feel unsafe in parks because by their nature they are quite secluded.' (P62)

'I had to change cutting through the park to go... the long way round because I had heard about that assault... you don't want to put yourself in them positions.' (P32)

'I was reading that article about the woman that got killed in the park... you think, "oh I walk in parks by myself, that could have happened to me."' (P62)

This wider sense of vulnerability and unease in public spaces was related to intersections of being a woman with other aspects of identity, including ethnicity, age, religion, disability and LGBTQ+ status (S19, +2). Although these women were heterogeneous in this regard, these aspects of identity shaped differences in experiences, affecting women's feelings of safety:

'It's not just about me being a woman that stops me from going to the park, it's me being an Asian woman... being a Muslim woman.' (P32)

'If you're LGBTQ+, you're younger, you wear a hijab or have some kind of mark of religion, that makes you more likely to be attacked.' (P33)

Lone men in parks were particularly feared as fitting the perceived profile of a sexual predator (S6, +4), with groups of men and boys less so, albeit still intimidating (S5, +1*). On the other hand, men with family were seen as legitimate park users (S31, 0).

'The presence of lone men in parks makes me feel unsafe... you hear of these assaults and you just have a fear that something is going to happen.' (P32)

After dark, fear in parks is most palpable (S1, -5*). In direct contrast to Viewpoint 1, there was strong agreement that nothing can be done to parks to make them feel safe enough for women to use after dark (S2, +3*) when the risk of sexual violence is perceived as at its highest.

'Nothing makes me feel safe in the dark at all, ever.' (P51)

Physical design interventions such as lighting (S11, -2*), CCTV cameras (S10, -1) and help points (S33, 1*) were not felt to be enough to mitigate risks to women's safety when alone in parks, particularly after dark. Relatedly, entrances and exits (S41, -1*), facilities and mixed uses (S9, -1*) and clearer signage and maps (S34, -1) were all ranked lower priorities. For this viewpoint, fears in parks cannot be 'designed-out' as women's insecurity stems from men's behaviour.

'That's not going to stop men from hurting a woman just because there's more lighting in the park.' (P10)

'...during the dark times of day it doesn't feel safe enough, even if there was lighting or CCTV, because still something can happen.' (P22)

Threats felt amplified in park landscapes with thick vegetation (S38, -5) and secluded areas (S40, -4) given limited visibility, and women avoided these parts of the park. Hence, reducing thick vegetation was supported.

'Every park has beautiful [greenery], one has trees, one has bushes... But if this is too big it does not make me feel safe because the person can hide inside and then can push me into the bushes and, for example, rape me.' (P26)

'As nice as trees are, I'd rather be in areas where it's quite open and you can see around you.' (P62)

In contrast, signs of disorder (S20, +0*, S45, 0*) and tidy grass and flowerbeds (S21, -1*) were seemingly less important to this viewpoint. Nonetheless, greater formal visible surveillance of parks, including by police officers (S15, -3), security patrols (S16, +2) and to some extent more park staff (S13, +1*) was felt to improve women's sense of security.

'I think in this situation they [police] would definitely make me feel safe, especially if it was like female officers.' (P62)

Yet, this viewpoint was most critical about authorities taking action on women's harassment (S17, +3*), noting the absence of visible policing, a lack of safety and reporting campaigns related to parks, and bad experiences by women reporting.

This viewpoint sees the solution to women's fears as located mostly beyond the park, in changing societal attitudes (sexism and racism) towards women and male behaviour (S24, +4).

'We are doing things around it which make us safer, but not dealing with the cause, which is males' behaviour... and until that is dealt with, women and girls will not be safe in those quiet spaces.' (P31)

Moreover, the idea that women should take personal safety measures to stay safe and avoid violence must change (S36, -4). Walking boldly was seen as 'a myth' as 'it doesn't stop unwanted attention' (P1) (S18, -3). In contrast, men should take responsibility for changing their behaviour in parks to make women safer (S4, +4*).

'It's not the women's responsibility to take safety measures, it's the men's responsibility not to do it... also, society's responsibility to educate men so that they don't make women feel unsafe.' (P1)

Until men's behaviour changes, it is perceived as safer going to parks with friends and family (S7, +5) as part of organised groups (S8, +2), and when the park is busier with people (S22, -3), including other women (S30, +3) and users of a similar identity (S32, +1).

Table 4.2 Highest ranked statements (Viewpoint 2)

Most disagree (-5/-4)	Most agree (+5/+4)
I feel safer in areas of parks with thick vegetation, for example hedges, trees and bushes	I feel safer using parks with friends and family
I feel safe in parks after dark*	Experiences of crime or violence in the past make women and girls feel unsafe in parks*
It is safer to challenge unwanted comments or attention from men and boys in parks than to ignore them	Men and boys should take responsibility for changing their behaviour to make women and girls feel safer in parks*
I feel safer in more secluded areas of parks that are hidden from view	Social attitudes towards women and girls, for example sexism and prejudice, need to change for me to feel safer in parks
As long as women and girls take personal safety measures in parks, they can be safe*	The presence of lone men in parks makes me feel unsafe

Viewpoint 3: Safety in familiarity, danger spotters

Table 4.3 shows the highest ranked statements by women aligned with this viewpoint. It illustrates the view that not all parks feel unsafe, but some parks are blighted by anti-social behaviour and have reputations for being unsafe. The solution is to create well-used parks designed to attract 'legitimate' use(rs) with good visibility to enable women to spot dangers and take action.

This viewpoint most strongly disagreed that 'No parks are safe for women and girls' (S25, -4*). Women differentiated between safe and unsafe parks, as well as times of day. While this viewpoint did not agree that parks are unsafe during daylight hours (S3, -2), there was a strong fear of using parks after dark (S1, -5).

'I think some parks are safe. I think it depends when you go, which parks you go to, what areas they're in, who frequents them.' (P16)

Unlike Viewpoints 1 and 2, this viewpoint placed less emphasis on the idea that societal attitudes towards women have to change for women to feel

safer in parks (S24, 0*), and felt much can be done to parks themselves to make them feel safer to use. Moreover, hearing about other women suffering bad experiences in parks (S48, 1*), harassment (S27, 0*), and past experience of crime or violence (S47, +1) were all ranked lower, alongside the effects of intersectionality, reflecting the demographic profile of the women aligning to this viewpoint, see Appendix C (S19, -2). Despite some support for male behaviour change in parks (S4, +1*), the safety of the local area and improving park design and management mattered most to this viewpoint.

Women felt very safe in some parks while avoiding others with reputations for 'risky' users. This viewpoint was distinguished by a much greater concern with the presence of drinkers and drug users (S45, +5*), groups of teenagers (S46, +3*), and groups of men and boys (S5, +4*). Lone men without a 'legitimate' purpose were also considered a threat (S6, +5). While lone men were associated with a risk of sexual violence, groups of men and (male) teenagers were linked to drinking and drug use, domination of park space and sexual harassment.

'I can think of parks... that I wouldn't go to because they've got reputations for predatory males, drug taking, drink, and then there are parks where I wouldn't bat an eyelid at walking through at all.' (P16)

'I've spent a lot of time jogging in the park, so I get a lot rubbish from groups of young lads and men.' (P14)

'If there's a man just walking round the park and he's got no children or no dog... no purpose ... that would make me feel very insecure.' (P23)

This viewpoint put greater importance on physical signs of disorder (S20, +3*), which act as 'warning signals' (Innes, 2004) for social dangers. On the other hand, signs of order, such as tidy grass (S21, 0) or symbols of gender equality (S26, -3*) were less important to the immediacies of feeling safe in parks:

'I think the needles speak for themselves obviously, you know there could be drug users there... it would just be off-putting.' (P30)

In contrast, women viewed larger, well-maintained parks with a range of facilities and mixed uses (S9, +1) and provision of amenities such as cafes (S23, +3) as safer, in part because they create spaces with lots of passive surveillance throughout the day.

'In the bigger parks... definitely you feel much more comfortable being around those facilities because there is people there and there is stuff going on and there is a sense of it being official... And it attracts people throughout the day.' (P19)

They also felt more secure in parks that they knew from experience attracted 'legitimate' activities and users, including other women (S30, +2) or men with their families (S31, +2*). Well-used parks (S22, -4) were felt to provide safety in numbers and mitigate unsafe situations with potentially 'risky' users.

'There will be people using them, women using them, families, a lack of anti-social behaviour, you would probably have a nice feeling, playgrounds and just feeling comfortable and safe.' (P38)

'If they [groups of men and boys] were there playing football... rugby training or some fitness training, or running as a group, I wouldn't find that intimidating.' (P16)

'With facilities, there's generally a lot more people... So if there [is] a lone man maybe in those types of parks, then I wouldn't feel as bad.' (P58)

This viewpoint was ambivalent as to whether anything could be done to parks to improve women's feelings of safety after dark (S2, 0) as design does not stop 'risky' users. Moreover, parks are designed for daytime use, which is when most people visit them. Interventions after dark would need to foster busyness, to create park spaces that feel safe enough to use.

'They can be made safer, they can't really prevent who's in them, but there's things that can be done to make them seem safer, yes.' (P58)

'I wouldn't run round the park in the dark but that's because there is no lighting... I don't think they are designed with women and girl's safety in mind because it is a popular main route during the day, and it is not used by anybody after dark.' (P19)

The presence of visible authority figures in parks, including park staff (S13, +2*), security patrols (S16, +2) and police officers (S15, -2*), were valued to tackle anti-social behaviour, and were seen as more important than physical design interventions, such as help points (S33, 0*) and clearer signage (S34, -1). However there was some support for CCTV cameras (S10, -2) and lighting (S11, +1*), particularly during winter when 'it becomes dusk quite quickly in the afternoon' (P23). Lighting was not seen as an effective intervention alone given the presence of vegetation and absence of people using parks after dark.

'I wouldn't feel safe in a park after dark usually because they are lonely and quiet... I am still not going to walk through a park with great lighting because if it's empty I wouldn't feel safe because there is too many nooks and crannies that I would feel intimidated around.' (P15)

Secluded areas (S40, +5) and thick vegetation (S38, -4) in parks were interpreted as important to wellbeing, yet also potentially unsafe. Indeed, designing parks to maximise openness and visibility was much more important in this viewpoint (S39, 4*). Relatedly, more exits to parks could also aid escape (S41, +1).

'...you're better in an open space, that people can see you, or you can see other people. If you're more in a secluded area then you might be potentially more vulnerable in a park situation.' (P23)

As with the other viewpoints, the solution does not lie in women taking personal safety measures (S36, -3). However, women return to familiar parks (S49, +3) as a strategy to enjoy parks safely, alongside going with friends and family (S7, +4) or as part of organised groups (S8, +2).

'I tend to stick to parks I am familiar with...its familiar surroundings so you know... where the not safe places are... familiarity is good for me.' (P7)

Table 4.3 Highest ranked statements (Viewpoint 3)

Most disagree (-5/-4)	Most agree (+5/+4)
I feel safer in more secluded areas of parks that are hidden from view	The presence of some park users, for example drinkers and drug users, makes me feel less safe*
I feel safe in parks after dark	The presence of lone men in parks makes me feel unsafe
I feel less safe when the park is busy with people	I find the presence of groups of men and boys in parks intimidating*
No parks are safe for women and girls*	I feel safer in areas of parks where I can see a good distance around me*
I feel safer in areas of parks with thick vegetation, for example hedges, trees and bushes	I feel safer using parks with friends and family

Divergence across viewpoints

As shown in the descriptions above, there are key areas where women's viewpoints diverge. Appendix D organises the 49 statements used in the study from 'consensus', where there is most statistical agreement across the viewpoints, to 'divergence', where there is least. As the table in Appendix D shows, divergence between viewpoints is not usually complete disagreement. Rather, it shows divergence in the degree of strength, certainty or importance placed on that statement within different viewpoints.

Whilst there was strong agreement across viewpoints that parks feel unsafe after dark, there was disagreement as to whether something could be done to parks by authorities to make them feel safe enough for women to use after dark. Whilst Viewpoint 1 strongly disagreed that nothing could be done and viewed this as an unacceptable policy position (S2, -5*), Viewpoint 3 was more equivocal (S2, 0*) whereas Viewpoint 2 had a greater degree of agreement (S2, +3*). While Viewpoint 1 and 3 viewed some parks as safe according to various contextual factors, women in Viewpoint 2 were most equivocal as to whether any park is safe at any time. This reflected women's wider sense of vulnerability and unease in public spaces, partly as related to intersectionality with various aspects of women's identities shaping experiences and feelings of safety (see chapter 7 for a discussion about intersectionality and feelings of safety in parks).

This divergence paralleled views towards lighting. Viewpoint 1 strongly agreed that lighting would make parks feel safer to use after dark (S11, +5*) as part of a greater emphasis on visible security measures to improve women's safety and independence using parks. On the other hand, Viewpoint 3 placed the statement on lighting towards the middle (S11, +1*) and Viewpoint 2 was in relative disagreement (S11, -2*). Viewpoint 3 was more concerned with designing openness and visibility into park landscapes (S39, +4*) than Viewpoints 1 and 2 (39, +1/0).

The viewpoints also diverged in their perceptions of 'risky' park users. Notably, lone men in parks were interpreted as a potential threat in Viewpoints 2 and 3 (S6, +4/+5), but not in Viewpoint 1 (S6, -1*). While Viewpoint 2 widely perceived lone men as potential 'predators', Viewpoint 3 generally distinguished between presence and behaviour, with men engaged in activities such as walking a dog seen as less threatening. In contrast, the presence of groups of men and boys was interpreted as strongly threatening in Viewpoint 3 (S5, +4*), where male group dynamics were associated with 'bravado' and unwanted comments, in comparison with potentially threatening in Viewpoint 2 (S5, +1*), depending on size of group, but not threatening in Viewpoint 1 (S5, 0*) unless the group's behaviour signalled otherwise.

On the other hand, the presence of drinkers and drug users and groups of teenagers were interpreted as intimidating in Viewpoint 3 (S45, +5*, S46, +3*), but less so in Viewpoints 1 and 2 (S45, +1*/0*, S46, -1). Moreover, particularly in Viewpoint 1, there was a social justice belief in the right of teenagers to use parks. Yet for Viewpoint 3, attuned to a diverse range of potential threats, these types of park users were seen as 'unpredictable' and associated with experiences of 'abusive behaviour', notably unwanted comments.

The focus on types of 'risky' people in parks in Viewpoint 3 reflected the perceived importance of local context in shaping safety. In contrast, Viewpoint 1 was reassurance- and solution-focused, prioritising the need for visible security to deal with potential threats, whereas Viewpoint 2 focused on the threat of men, and the wider social context of male behaviour driving women's fear.

The emphasis placed on the need to address broader social, cultural and structural factors underpinning women's fears in parks and public spaces more broadly distinguished Viewpoints 1 and 2 from Viewpoint 3. Hence, Viewpoints 1 and 2 prioritised changing societal attitudes towards women

(S24, +3/+4) and male behaviour (S4, +3*/+4*) as key parts of the solution, yet these were much less of a priority for Viewpoint 3 (S24, 0*, S4, +1*). By contrast, Viewpoint 3 was primarily concerned with the local social order of their park created by its users, as well as the openness and visibility of the park environment.

Consensus across viewpoints

Eight statements were ranked in statistically similar ways by women across the three viewpoints, identifying areas of consensus. The first three areas relate to aspects of park design and management that women felt improve safety and feelings of safety (busyness, the presence of other women, and organised group activities), the second two relate to aspects that women felt impede safety (challenging unwanted comments and perimeter fences or walls). The final three aspects refer to statements placed in a middle position, reflecting some ambivalence and less strong feeling.

In addition to these eight areas of consensus, there were further areas where the viewpoints were similar, but which did not reach the statistical threshold for 'consensus'. These included feeling unsafe in parks after dark, feeling safer nearer to the edges of parks, feeling safer with the presence of police officers, feeling unsafe in secluded areas, and feeling safer using familiar parks.

1. Busier parks feel safer

Well-used parks feel safer (S22, -3/-4) because there is increased passive surveillance, which is perceived to deter offending and provide opportunities for support and help from other users through 'more eyes' (P11) on the park.

Well obviously the more people that are there the more safer it is. As a woman, it's when you're actually on your own, isolated, that I'd feel more unsafe.' (P31)

When parks are busier with people, women feel that they are 'not on their own in the park' (P15), even when visiting the park alone, with women planning their visit during busy times.

'I will walk the dog while parkrun's going on because... there's an organised thing going on, there's lots of volunteers around, there's lots of people I could ask for help if I needed.' (P43)

Facilities, amenities, visible staff and organised activities were viewed as central to fostering busyness during the daytime, and improved safety perceptions as a result. Busier, well-lit parks after dark may also encourage greater park use:

'We did go running in a park that was well lit in a busy place. If there was loads of people using it, we would use it... I want to see where I am running.' (P19)

Well-used parks with steady footfall may mitigate some of the effects of darkness on fear:

'I go over to Hebden Bridge... everyone walks through the park after dark, and women, but it's a lot safer for women over there... there's a lot more women out and about... I mean in the park itself it's pitch black, but it's the route from the train station... So, a lot of people use it.' (P35)

Threats from lone men, groups or other park users seen to be 'risky' were also perceived as less intimidating in well-used parks. By contrast, many women associated isolated, unpopulated parks with additional personal safety risks:

'I think bad things are more likely to happen when nobody else can see those things happening.' (P41)

2. Women in parks signal a safer place

There was a consensus that the presence of other women in parks is a sign of safety (S30, +3/+2), because women 'wouldn't use them if they are not safe' (P38). Seeing other women in parks also empowered more women to use parks, creating potential for positive feedback loops: 'you get a lot of Asian women walking around this particular park... possibly because there are other women doing the same.' (P17)

'Having other women and girls there, especially...on their own, it makes you feel a lot better.' (P9)

3. Organised group activities extend women's use of parks

Organised group activities were perceived to support women to feel safer and extend women's use of parks (S8, +1/+2), including in quieter or secluded areas of parks, and after dark. They were felt to create a sense of inclusion and belonging, as well as 'safety in numbers' (P35) and because there is a trusted 'organiser' with oversight. Many women commented that these activities enabled them to engage in exercise and social opportunities they would not do alone because of safety concerns, both during the day and after dark.

'..it [running group] is a really good way for me to still get out, to exercise, to be social... they're organised and there's lots of us... so they feel really, really safe.' (P43)

'I do love the more secluded areas [of parks] because it's a bit quieter... you can be part of a group and get a bit more out of it, but it's just I would never do that on my own.' (P9)

'I would feel safe using parks as part of an organised group... It makes you feel like you belong, the park belongs to you as well.' (P36)

There was a desire for a wider choice of organised activities beyond exercise classes to appeal to a broader demographic of women. By contrast, some women were neutral towards group activities, as they preferred 'solitariness'.

'You always see fitness groups, but it would be nice to have a broader range of opportunities, like photography or art classes or even a picnic club or a book group in the summer. Parks could be used for so many different things.' (P9)

Organised group activities also made parks busier, and therefore feel safer and less likely to be territorialised by particular groups or become male-dominated. Men and boys participating in organised sports and activities in parks were not perceived as threatening, and added to passive surveillance.

'...someone has a purpose to be there, like organised sport, gardening or volunteering... Anyone in those categories ticks the box of making me feel safer.' (P64)

4. Fences or walls around the edge of parks limit escape and visibility

There was consensus that fences and walls around the edge of parks (S43, -2) felt less safe because they may limit escape and visibility: 'I think if there was fences everywhere and it was hard to get out... that wouldn't make me feel safe' (P62). Additionally, in making the park more secluded or hidden, women felt fences or walls impeded attracting help from bystanders.

5. It is safer to ignore than challenge unwanted comments in parks

Women disagreed that it was safer to challenge than ignore unwanted comments in parks so as not to escalate a situation (S35, -4/-3): 'You'd make things worse... they won't like you because you've challenged them' (P49). In parks, it was often felt safer to ignore the comments 'and carry on walking, get out of the situation' (P24). However, there was an awareness that leaving male behaviour unchallenged would not change the status quo, yet safety trumped a desire to challenge. Women's decisions on how to respond to incidents also depended on situational factors, wider context, disposition and personality.

6. Seeing park users of a similar identity feels safer

Women agreed that seeing other park users of a similar identity feels safer but qualified this (S32, +1/0). Parks that comprise a mix of people felt safer as they convey an atmosphere of inclusivity, but it is important to see similar users within the diversity.

'I just feel that if there is somebody that looks like you and you just automatically feel that you are not on your own for some reason.' (P32)

7. Women can't rely on other nearby park users to intervene in harassment
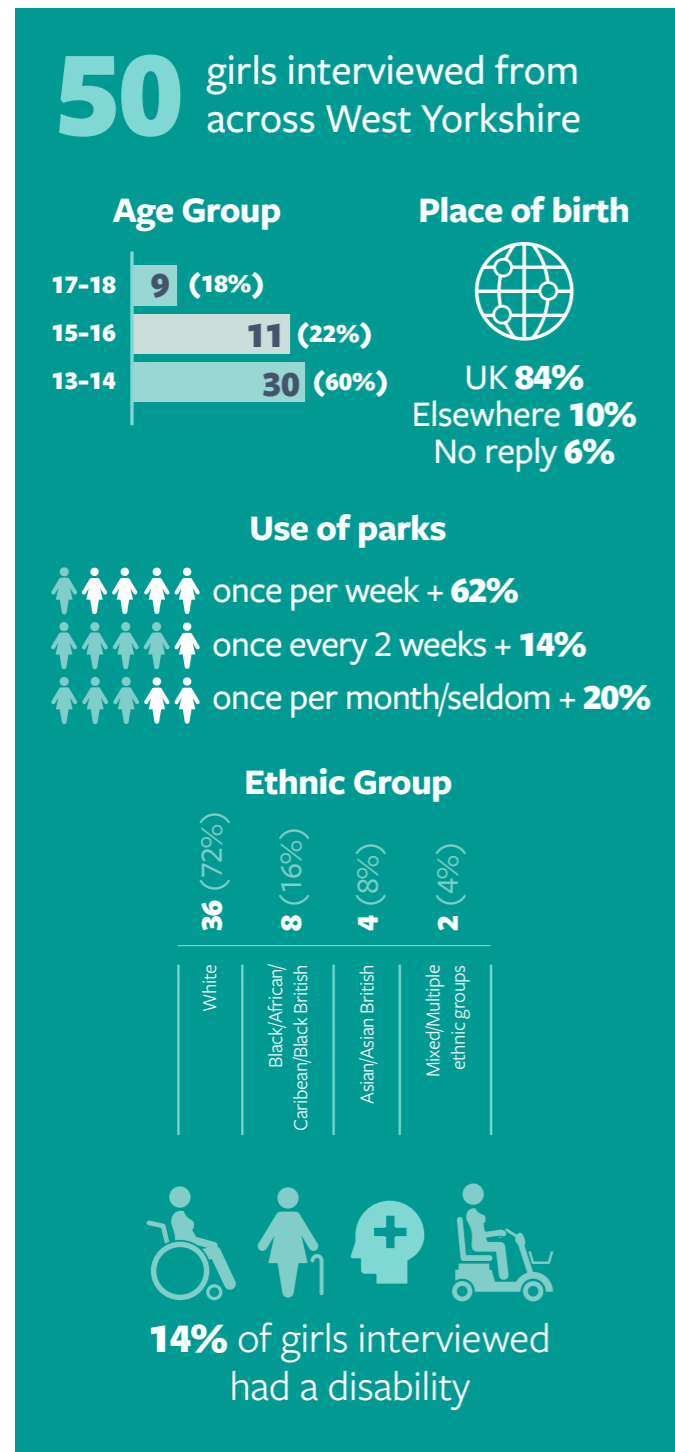
Women generally agreed that you can't rely on other nearby park users to intervene in harassment in parks (S14, 0/+1). As one woman commented: 'I have seen somebody being attacked in the park and people just walking by' (P4). However, the degree of agreement and reasons varied. While some felt that 'community spirit seems to be broken down' (P39), others perceived that people 'turn the other way... in case they get hurt' (P30). Views on this statement complement the general idea that well-used parks are safer in increasing the probability for bystander intervention.

8. Mobile phone safety apps may be useful but trade freedom for safety

Recent years have seen a growth in mobile phone safety apps promoted at women which allow women to choose trusted contacts to track their journeys. Some women saw these types of tracking apps as potentially useful. Yet, many expressed that they should not have to rely on them, which trade aspects of freedom and independence for safety as a 'double edged sword' (S37, -1). As one woman put it: 'I don't want to be tracked and followed in order to feel safe, so no not for me' (P15). Instead, some women suggested 'an app that sees where predatory men are' (P21).

5. FINDINGS – GIRLS' VIEWS ON FEELING SAFE IN PARK

During focus groups, 50 girls aged 13-18 years from West Yorkshire individually rank ordered 49 statements on a grid relating to feelings of safety in parks, from 'most like' to 'most unlike' their views. Afterwards, girls reflected in group discussions on the reasons for their views and what might make parks feel safer and more welcoming.

50 girls interviewed from across West Yorkshire

Age Group

- 17-18 **9** (18%)
- 15-16 **11** (22%)
- 13-14 **30** (60%)

Place of birth

UK **84%**
Elsewhere **10%**
No reply **6%**

Use of parks

- once per week + **62%**
- once every 2 weeks + **14%**
- once per month/seldom + **20%**

Ethnic Group

- **36** (72%) White
- **8** (16%) Black/African/Caribean/Black British
- **4** (8%) Asian/Asian British
- **2** (4%) Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups

14% of girls interviewed had a disability

Girls are more diverse in their views than women, and do not have a singular view of what makes parks feel safe, although there are some areas of general agreement. Using factor analysis, we extracted three clusters of 16, 12 and 13 girls with statistically similar response patterns who share a viewpoint on feeling safe in parks.[12] Five statements were ranked in statistically similar ways by girls across the three viewpoints, identifying areas of consensus.

In what follows, we summarise each viewpoint, the differences between them and areas of consensus. In brackets, we provide the statement number (S1 to S49) and standardised Q score, from +5 ('most like my view') to -5 ('most unlike my view'), which corresponds with the grid in Figure 3.2, where '0' represents a middle position indicating less strong feeling. Statements marked with an asterisk indicate statements that distinguish one viewpoint from another at p<0.05 significance or higher.

Girls' viewpoints can be summarised as:

Viewpoint 1: People in parks

Table 5.1 shows the highest ranked statements by girls aligned with this viewpoint. It illustrates the view that the presence of groups of (male) teenagers in parks are intimidating, and that authorities are not doing enough about harassment and violence against women and girls, which hearing about and experiencing makes parks feel unsafe to go to. The solution should involve changing sexist attitudes, rather than telling girls what not to wear/do.

In this viewpoint, feeling unsafe in parks is strongly shaped by the people and groups who use parks. Improving the environment of the park itself was seen as secondary.

'No matter facilities in parks, or how parks look, or whatever – it's the people in it that are the problem, not the actual park. And I think rather than sorting the parks out, sorting the people out would probably have a better effect.' (Group 5)

Walking past groups of other teenagers (S46, +5*) and groups of men and boys (S5, +3*) feels intimidating as they may 'say stuff' or dominate park space. As one girl noted, we 'feel uncomfortable with boys just being there' (Group 10).

'I just feel the boys need to... see what they're doing to girls, we feel really unsafe and try to avoid boys because of how they act.' (Group 4)

'I just don't like walking past boys, because every time... they're like "give us a wiggle, do this, do that".' (Group 3)

Being with friends (S7, +1*) did not necessarily feel safer as they may also suffer harassment, and in some cases friends were seen as the harassers:

'You could be there with your friends, and sometimes it's your friends that are the problem' (Group 7). Hence, parks with other users of a similar identity (i.e. teenagers) did not necessarily feel safer (S32, 0*).

Girls also felt unsafe in the presence of other types of people in parks, such as people drinking or using drugs (S45, +3) and lone men (S6, +2). Even the presence of men using parks with their families (S31, -1*) may be interpreted as intimidating.

'From personal experience, you could be with friends and a random drunk person could make you feel really uncomfortable... They may not be doing anything, but they could do anything, like throw a brick at you or anything.' (Group 2)

Given that feelings of safety were interwoven with the people and groups in parks, it is less surprising that busier parks (S22, 0*) and familiar parks (S49, -1*) did not necessarily feel safer, with some girls indicating that familiarity meant they knew which parks, or parts of parks, were more dangerous and therefore to be avoided. Girls felt that some types of offending would go unnoticed in busy parks, and they were ambivalent as to whether other park users would intervene in situations of harassment (S14, 0). Relatedly, amenities in parks, such as cafes, were not prioritised (S23, 0).

Nonetheless, the presence of other women and girls did make parks feel safer (S30, +2), suggesting that the type of park user can be important. However, women-only areas were not seen as a solution (S29, -1), though using parks as part of organised group activities felt safer (S8, +1).

Harassment (S27, +5) is an important dimension of feeling unsafe in parks, yet girls felt that authorities did not take it seriously enough (S17, +4). Indeed, of the 16 girls aligned with this viewpoint, 11 had experienced harassment in public in the past year, higher than in Viewpoints 2 and 3 (Appendix C). Girls explained that unwanted comments and attention happen regularly and make them feel 'uncomfortable' and 'unsafe', yet they did not feel it was safe to challenge these behaviours themselves (S35, -3*), and they do not feel authorities are dealing with their experiences in parks in appropriate ways.

'I got sexually assaulted in a park. And he got excused because he had ADHD.' (Group 5)

Furthermore, girls in this viewpoint agreed that other aspects of their identity shaped their feelings of safety in parks (S19, +2).

'A lot of times your religion or what you are wearing [points at headscarf] that makes me feel vulnerable. It makes people think they can do something.' (Group 2)

Furthermore, hearing about other women suffering bad experiences in parks from friends, parents, social media and the news also impacts negatively on feelings of safety (S48, +4*).

'I feel like when you like just hear about like stories about like women getting abused or something in parks, it kind of makes you more wary to go in them.' (Group 6)

In this viewpoint, girls felt that parks are not designed with their safety in mind (S28, +1*), yet highlighted the importance of design for facilitating escape from 'risky' people and situations. Being 'trapped' by others in enclosed park areas was a prominent fear, such as in sports and play spaces (see discussion below on play space designs), with perimeter fences and walls (S43, -4*) and thick vegetation (S38, -5*) perceived to be particularly unsafe, and relatively more so than in the two other viewpoints. However, in consensus with the other viewpoints, girls felt less safe in the middle compared to the edges of parks (S42, -3) and in more secluded or hidden

areas of parks (S40, -3) as inhibiting escape. Conversely, lots of exits could make parks and play spaces feel safer (S41, +2*).

'No hidden areas, everything to be open... It's just not comfortable.' (Group 5)

However, while physical disorder such as rubbish, needles and graffiti (S20, +1) contributed to girls in this viewpoint feeling unsafe in parks, by contrast signs of order and inclusion, such as tidy grass and flowerbeds (S21, -2) and symbols of gender equality, such as inspirational statues and murals of women (S26, -3), did not provide counterpoint signals of safety.

'There was a reason I wouldn't leave and go to the park. The state of it. You'd have a swing set without the swings. They would have been taken away having been vandalised. We'd spend most money on transport to get to another park that was better maintained.' (Group 2)

Whilst the other two viewpoints were somewhat optimistic that something can be done to improve feelings of safety in parks after dark, this viewpoint was ambivalent (S2, 0*). Indeed, in contrast to other viewpoints, girls felt that physical design interventions, such as lighting (S11, -1*) and CCTV cameras (S10, 0), would not necessarily make parks feel safer, with some girls noting that they could not stop an incident happening. There were also some concerns about CCTV in parks being potentially 'intrusive'; a counterpoint to the recreational and leisure purposes of parks.

Similarly, visible staff presence, such as more park staff (S13, -2*), security patrols (S16, -1), and police officers (S15, 0*) were not seen as interventions to make parks feel safer. Previous negative interactions with police officers and park staff influenced views on the presence of authority figures in parks. In this regard, some girls preferred female park staff and police officers who may take harassment more seriously, and believe them.

'There's more of a chance that if something does happen, they'll [female staff] believe you.' (Group 9)

'Maybe if there was someone in the park that you could go to... A woman police officer, or a woman that works around the park. So if they see anything going on, they could prevent it from happening.' (Group 5)

Moreover, this viewpoint most strongly disagreed that girls can protect themselves through taking personal safety measures (S36, -5*), with girls strongly disagreeing that walking boldly or confidently would make them feel safer in parks (S18, -4).

Ultimately, this viewpoint seeks societal change in attitudes towards women and girls (S24, +3) and towards the idea that girls are responsible for changing their behaviour, including how they dress, to be safe in public spaces, associating this with victim blaming. Girls supported the idea that men and boys should take responsibility for changing their behaviour in parks (S4, +1*), and relevant authorities should do more. Whilst this viewpoint disagrees that 'No parks are safe for women and girls' (S25, -2*), it is underpinned by a pessimism that parks could be made to feel safer for girls because 'you can't change people' (Group 5).

Table 5.1 Highest ranked statements (Viewpoint 1)

Most disagree (-5/-4)	Most agree (+5/+4)
I feel safer in areas of parks with thick vegetation, for example hedges, trees and bushes*	Everyday harassment of women and girls in public places, for example unwanted comments and attention, makes me feel unsafe in parks
As long as women and girls take personal safety measures in parks, they can be safe*	I find the presence of groups of teenagers in parks intimidating*
Walking boldly and confidently would make me feel safer in parks	Relevant authorities, for example the police or council, don't do enough about harassment of women and girls in parks
Fences or walls around the edges of parks make me feel safer*	Hearing about other women suffering bad experiences in parks makes me fearful of going to parks myself*
I feel safe in parks after dark	Experiences of crime or violence in the past make women and girls feel unsafe in parks

Viewpoint 2: Familiarity and security

Table 5.2 shows the highest ranked statements by girls aligned with this viewpoint. It illustrates the view that going to familiar parks with familiar people is important to feeling safe, and that lots can be done to design parks to make them busier and feel safer for girls throughout the day, including improving visible security and exits and reducing secluded areas.

In this viewpoint, and in contrast to Viewpoint 1, going to familiar parks with familiar people is relatively more important to perceptions of safety. In this way, visiting parks with friends or family (S7, +5) or as part of an organised activity supports feeling safe (S8, +3). Visiting with others was perceived to offer some protection from harassment or crime due to safety in numbers, as well as the strong belief that friends and family will intervene, if necessary.

'I normally go... with my family and friends. It's about being in a group.' (Group 2)

'Unless I am with my mum or my dad, I just stay away from parks... I feel like if I have my mum or dad there then everything will be OK. They are my comfort zone.' (Group 2)

'I'd feel safer with someone I've known ... they're going to help you more.' (Group 6)

Familiar parks feel safer (S49, +5*) through shaping expectations about safety, thereby helping girls feel more confident that a park is safe before visiting. Familiarity brings tangible knowledge about the park layout that aids feeling safe, such as knowing where exits and 'quickest get-aways' are. In turn, a lack of familiarity made girls feel ill-at-ease in parks: 'If it's unfamiliar, I don't know it or where I'm going' (Group 2). In this way, building girls' familiarity with local parks was seen as one strategy to improve feelings of safety:

'You need to feel comfortable and relaxed and familiarity brings that... Walks around the park to get to know it and your local area, to make you familiar... So when you go to the park, you go with a different attitude.' (Group 2)

Given the emphasis placed on familiarity, wider factors such as hearing about other women suffering bad experiences in parks (S48, 1*), harassment (S27, +1*), changing societal attitudes towards women (S24, +1*) and men taking responsibility (S4, 0*), were lower priorities. This could reflect the fact that some 83% of girls aligned with this viewpoint had not experienced harassment in public in the past 12 months, see Appendix C.

Relatedly, this viewpoint was also the least likely to agree that relevant authorities do not do enough about harassment in parks (S17, 1*), as well as less likely to disagree that taking personal safety measures can keep girls safe (S36, -1*), including walking boldly and confidently (S18, -2*). Reflecting this, mobile phone safety apps (S37, 1*) were viewed slightly more favourably, though not seen as a solution.

In this viewpoint, well-used parks feel safer (S22, -2*), irrespective to some extent of the other park users' age or gender. For example, groups of other teenagers (S46, -1) were not felt to be intimidating, perhaps because they share a similar identity (S32, +4*), although this may also link to other intersections of identity (S19, +1).[13] Moreover, the presence of lone men (S6, -1*) was not necessarily intimidating, while girls were ambivalent about the presence of groups of men and boys (S5, 0) and other women and girls (S30, 0*). Additionally, women-only areas of parks were not seen as a solution (S29, 0), potentially as this may exclude male friends and family members. Parks were also seen as places for everyone and 'women can be as bad as men' (Group 6). An exception was the presence of certain 'unpredictable' park users, such as drinkers and drug users, who made parks feel unsafe (S45, +4).

In general, this viewpoint was characterised by a confidence that some parks are safe for women and girls (S25, -3*) combined with an optimism that something can be done to parks to improve girls' feelings of safety after dark (S2, -3*), more so than in the other viewpoints. Notably, lots of visible security measures was felt to enhance girls' feelings of safety (S12, -5*), including CCTV cameras (S10, -3*), police officers (S15, -3*), park staff (S13, +3*), security patrols (S16, +2*), lighting (S11, +2*), help points (S33, +2) and clearer signage (S34, +1*).

'[Lighting] can also help you spot other people. There could easily be people that can hide in the darkness of bushes, and if everything's well lit, it's easier to spot things if you are in danger.' (Group 5)

'A police officer walk round every hour or so.' (Group 7)

'More people around that work there.' (Group 2)

Moreover, girls valued busyness and mixed use of parks because this maximises passive surveillance and the possibility for other park users to intervene in threatening situations (S14, -2*). Hence, parks designed and planned to provide a range of facilities and mixed uses (S9, +3*) and a variety of amenities (S23, +2*) were felt safer in part because they foster activity levels. Park design and layout was also important to this viewpoint in facilitating escape through lots of exits (S41, +4*).

'If it's busy that means more people might be there to help you.' (Group 2)

'...to make it feel safer [you would need]... exits just like everywhere so like you can easily get out.' (Group 5)

In addition, parks with tidy grass and flowerbeds (S21, 0*) and inspirational statues and murals of women (S26, 0*) were seen slightly more favourably in this viewpoint, perhaps because signs of order and security in parks are more important than signs of disorder (S20, -1*), though all these statements had less strong feeling.

In summary, there is optimism that parks can be designed and managed as inclusive places where girls feel safe. For this viewpoint, encouraging girls to

use parks through improving familiarity with parks and the design of parks are higher priorities than changing societal attitudes and male behaviour.

Table 5.2 Highest ranked statements (Viewpoint 2)

Most disagree (-5/-4)	Most agree (+5/+4)
Having lots of visible security measures in a park makes it seem like an unsafe place*	I feel safer using parks with friends and family*
I feel safe in parks after dark	I feel safer in parks that I am familiar with*
I feel safer in more secluded areas of parks that are hidden from view	Having lots of entrances and exits to a park makes me feel safer*
I feel safer in areas of parks with thick vegetation, for example hedges, trees and bushes	I feel safer using parks if I can see other park users of similar identity to me*
It is safer to challenge unwanted comments or attention from men and boys in parks than to ignore them*	The presence of some park users, for example drinkers and drug users, makes me feel less safe

Viewpoint 3: Men and patriarchy

Table 5.3 shows the highest ranked statements by girls aligned with this viewpoint. It illustrates the view that harassment and threats of violence towards women and girls are key drivers of feeling unsafe in parks. Hence, societal changes to the norms and attitudes that underpin this and greater gender equality are needed for girls to feel safer in public spaces, with authorities doing more.

In this viewpoint, public spaces are perceived as scary and dangerous places for girls due to predatory male behaviour. As a girl explained, the one thing that affects her sense of safety in local parks is 'just men' suggesting that 'they just need to like get a grip and just behave' (Group 4). The presence of men in parks was perceived as intimidating, both lone men (S6, +2) and groups of men and boys (S5, +1), although other teenagers were not necessarily intimidating as fears often related to older men. The presence of drinkers and drug users also made girls feel unsafe, although to a lesser degree than other viewpoints (S45, +1). Girls related their fears to differential power relations between men and girls in society.

'Men have more power. They could literally do anything that they wanted to. And they either couldn't get caught, or they would do it and the girl would feel too weak and vulnerable to go to anyone about it.' (Group 7)

By contrast, the presence of other women and girls in parks (S30, +3) was felt to be reassuring as 'usually, like, it's men who do all the bad stuff' (Group 4). Hence, women-only areas of parks are viewed relatively more favourably than in the other viewpoints (S29, +1) with feelings of unsafety in parks primarily relating to being a girl, rather than other aspects of identity (S19, -2). One girl suggested:

'A little building room by the park where you can just go sit... And there'd be someone there to stop boys from coming in... A safe space for girls...' (Group 7)

Furthermore, harassment in public spaces (S27, +5), hearing about other women's bad experiences in parks (S48, +5*) and past experiences of crime or violence (S47, 4*) reinforce a view that the world is not a safe or equal place for women and girls, with 62% of girls aligned with this viewpoint experiencing public harassment in the past 12 months, see Appendix C. Indeed, compared to other viewpoints, there was greater relative

agreement that 'No parks are safe for women and girls' (S25, 0*).

'There's a lot... even if it's not like any like physical thing, just the unwanted comments in general, it can just like ruin someone's day or make them keep on not wanting to go to the parks anymore.' (Group 4).

'Harassment is a really important thing. And it happens to loads of different girls, and affects them.' (Group 7)

'The parks are so unsafe. Earlier this year, my cousin got raped in a park.' (Group 3)

Moreover, there was a lack of confidence that other park users will intervene if they see a woman or girl being threatened or harassed (S14, 0), while relevant authorities are perceived as not doing enough about harassment (S17, +4).

'I don't feel like they [authorities] do enough... they kind of see it as an everyday thing, and they'll report it and move past it kind of thing. They never go into depth to, or take care, or help that person who's been through it. And it's happened so much, they haven't changed anything about the parks. The parks are all the same as they used to be, and they've still had loads of reports about women being harassed.' (Group 7)

'When you are getting catcalled and harassed, no one really does anything.' (Group 3)

Therefore, public spaces will continue to feel unsafe until there are broader societal changes, including to male behaviour, sexism and oppression of women (S24, +4):

'If sexism wasn't a thing, then none of it would happen.' (Group 4)

'I feel like it's men in parks, cos like the park near my house, a lot of women have been raped in there.' (Group 8)

In comparison with the other viewpoints, this viewpoint placed greater emphasis on men and boys taking responsibility for changing their behaviour in parks (S4, +3*), yet relevant authorities, including schools, must also educate boys on acceptable behaviour:

'Just having that education... this is how you can make people feel safer, and this is what's not acceptable to do in parks.' (Group 8)

Girls perceived it as safer to ignore rather than challenge unwanted comments and attention (S35, -5*), and walking bolding and confidently (S18, -4) may also attract unwanted attention. This viewpoint had less opposition than other viewpoints to the idea that taking safety measures can keep girls safe in parks (S36, -1*).

Whilst girls thought that changes could make parks feel safer after dark (S2, -2), this viewpoint differentiated between the relative benefits of different physical design interventions. CCTV cameras (S10, 0) may not improve feelings of safety. As one girl commented: 'Crimes still happen even before CCTV cameras' (Group 4). In contrast, lighting (S11, +3*) was felt to improve girls' feelings of safety by aiding visibility, facilitating bystander intervention, and helping girls to assess if men pose a threat. Help points (S33, +2) could also enhance feelings of safety in facilitating quick access to help, if required.

Moreover, there was some agreement that visible staff presence, such as police officers (S15, +1*), park staff (S13, 0*) and security patrols (S16, 0) did not always make parks feel safer. A lack of trust in the police and authority figures informed a view that concerns or reports of harassment towards girls may not be taken seriously or that authority figures could potentially be predatory themselves, with these fears partly informed by high profile news stories.

'What if one of them turned out to be a rapist?' (Group 5)

'Female staff present, not male… because if a male is harassing me, I don't then want to go to another male, who might do the same…' (Group 5)

Furthermore, interactions with police officers and park staff perceived to be unsympathetic or procedurally unjust contributed to a perception that parks are not places where teenagers belong or that girls are a problem to be managed.

'Sometimes they just kick you out of places for no reason. Or they feel the need to tell you to do something.' (Group 4)

'Most times I just don't like them [police], I know that they're trying to like look after us, but it's like they just can be nice about it.' (Group 4)

'If people see the police, they might get a bit anxious about it. But I feel park staff might feel a bit friendly, and a better presence around the park.' (Group 9)

Overall, this viewpoint expressed a concern that physical interventions in parks do not address the root cause of girls' unsafety – threats of violence against women and girls, thereby underscoring the need for societal change alongside design change to improve feelings of safety in parks and other public spaces.

'Whether there's good lighting or horrible lighting, there's still weird men who might do summat to you.' (Group 9)

Table 5.3 Highest ranked statements (Viewpoint 3)

Most disagree (-5/-4)	Most agree (+5/+4)
I feel safe in parks after dark	Hearing about other women suffering bad experiences in parks makes me fearful of going to parks myself*
It is safer to challenge unwanted comments or attention from men and boys in parks than to ignore them*	Everyday harassment of women and girls in public places, for example unwanted comments and attention, makes me feel unsafe in parks
I feel safer in areas of parks with thick vegetation, for example hedges, trees and bushes	Experiences of crime or violence in the past make women and girls feel unsafe in parks*
I feel safer in more secluded areas of parks that are hidden from view	Relevant authorities, for example the police or council, don't do enough about harassment of women and girls in parks
Walking boldly and confidently would make me feel safer in parks	Social attitudes towards women and girls, for example sexism and prejudice, need to change for me to feel safer in parks

Differences across viewpoints

As shown in the descriptions above, there are key areas where girls' viewpoints diverge. Appendix D lists the 49 statements used in the study from 'consensus', where there is most statistical agreement across the viewpoints, to 'divergence', where there is least. As the table in Appendix D shows, divergence between viewpoints is not usually complete disagreement. Rather, it shows divergence in the degree of strength, certainty or importance placed on that statement within different viewpoints. Statistically, Viewpoints 1 and 3 were closest, with the greatest difference

between Viewpoints 1 and 2. In Viewpoints 1 and 3, societal attitudes, sexism and patriarchy were key issues for girls' feelings of unsafety, whereas the presence of women in parks increased a sense of safety. Furthermore, both Viewpoints 1 and 3 saw men, particularly lone men, as a threat. On the other hand, Viewpoint 2 was more equivocal as to these aspects.

In this sense, Viewpoints 1 and 3 saw societal change in attitudes and violence against women and girls as necessary to make parks and other public spaces safer and feel safer to girls. Indeed, girls connected their feelings of unsafety in parks with a wider sense of vulnerability in society that affected not only their sense of insecurity in parks but also on the streets, in public transport and at school.

However, Viewpoints 2 and 3 display an optimism that something could be done to improve girls' sense of safety in parks, particularly after dark. This included girls taking personal safety measures, but without strongly aligning to this idea.

Furthermore, for Viewpoint 2, feelings of safety stemmed from being in familiar parks with familiar people. This was shared to some degree by Viewpoint 3, but less so by Viewpoint 1. Viewpoint 2 was also strongly enthusiastic about physical design interventions and visible staff presence in parks, such as CCTV cameras, police and security patrols. This enthusiasm was weaker in Viewpoint 3 and slightly weaker still in Viewpoint 1.

The strongest area of divergence related to groups of teenagers. While Viewpoint 1 perceived such groups as threatening and dominating, Viewpoints 2 and 3 perceived them as more benign or variable.

Consensus across viewpoints

Five statements were ranked in statistically similar ways by girls across the three viewpoints, identifying areas of consensus. While the first two areas relate to aspects of park design and management that girls felt improve or facilitate safety (emergency help points and being near to the edges of parks), the second two relate to aspects that girls felt impede safety (darkness and secluded areas). The final aspect (times of unsafety during daylight hours) was placed in a middle position, reflecting some ambivalence.

1. Help points in parks would be reassuring

Girls were generally in favour of emergency panic buttons or help points in parks (S33, +3/+2) to quickly access help, if required. They felt this to be important given limited mobile phone reception in some parks. Additionally, some girls may lack mobile phones or have insufficient credit or data to make an emergency call. However, there was also some scepticism as authorities may be slow to respond. Girls also felt that help points could be misused or vandalised.

'I think if anything were happening in a park and they were close to a safety button, they could just press that and get some help.' (Group 2)

'I think they should put a stall in the park where you can go for help.' (Group 1)

Notably, girls had not thought about this safety measure before, unlike other aspects such as darkness where they drew on considerable prior thought and experience.

2. The edges of parks feel safer

The edges or perimeter of parks were generally considered safer than the middle (S42, -2/-3). Girls felt that, at the edges of parks, it was easier to escape from danger and 'risky' people towards nearby streets, shops or houses.

'If you were on the edge, you could get away.' (Group 7)

'If on a street you can run into a shop or something. In a park, you are in a space that is secluded.' (Group 2)

Furthermore, some girls expressed a preference for smaller parks over larger ones as they could see a good distance around them, and as smaller parks had relatively less middle to edge to facilitate escape. Girls also preferred parks with good levels of passive surveillance from streets or housing.

3. Parks do not feel safe after dark

Girls strongly disagreed that parks feel safe after dark (S1, -4/-5), with 86% of girls across viewpoints indicating they felt very/fairly unsafe walking alone in a local park after dark (see Appendix C).

Some girls expressed their fear of dark spaces in strong, visceral terms, where unease is felt in their 'gut' or 'stomach', with the constant need to be 'aware of what's around' them (Group 7). They explained how moving through darkness produces unpleasant sensations 'like butterflies' or feeling 'sick' (Group 7).

'…you walk in to a park on a night and like you're just constantly looking about…it scares you.' (Group 10)

While girls' fear in darkness extended beyond parks to other public spaces, a lack of lighting and limited sightlines in parks, as well as secluded areas or dense vegetation intensified feelings of insecurity: 'At night, you're always on edge – there's never a minute you can breathe until you've stepped through the door.' (Group 7)

In addition, girls felt they were at greater risk of victimisation, particularly physical or sexual assault, after dark: 'It feels like someone's gonna come kill you' (Group 7). Not only did girls highlight that there are fewer people around at night, they felt that darkness provided 'cover' to potential attackers. Furthermore, girls felt that there were more undesirable park users at night, which they associated with unpredictable behaviour or intimidation.

'It's really scary, the fact that even in the daytime, a man can approach me, and try to do something with me while there are other people are around. Being in the dark alone - it's terrifying.' (Group 5)

When girls were asked what would make parks feel safer after dark, lighting was one of the most commonly preferred solutions to improve visibility and reduce the ability of perpetrators to hide in dark areas.

4. Secluded areas in parks feel unsafe

There was consensus that secluded or hidden areas of parks do not feel safe (S42, -2/-3). Secluded areas, like dark areas, could conceal potentially threatening people, provide places to be 'trapped', and impede being seen (and heard) as well as seeing others: 'There's nobody around, nobody can see you, most likely hear you.' (Group 5) As such, many girls preferred openness in park design, being in parts of parks where there are other people around and avoiding secluded areas, such as woods and thick vegetation.

'Secluded parks or any area it makes me feel so unsafe… there'd be no one around.' (Group 5)

'Whenever I walk through park and see trees, I feel uncomfortable because it's more covered so you can't see. There can be people hiding and people can't see you.' (Group 2)

### 5. Parks feel safer during daylight hours, but not always

During discussions, girls expressed feeling safer using parks during daylight hours, with 62% of girls indicating that they felt fairly safe and a further 20% very safe walking alone in a local park during the day (see Appendix C). However, they also indicated that parks could sometimes feel unsafe during the day (S3, 0/-1). In particular, knowledge of sexual assaults can transform specific parks into threatening spaces even in the daytime:

'Last month a girl got raped in the park. And the weird thing is… she was just taking her kids to school and it was 8 in the morning, so it wasn't even night… he's just grabbed her and raped her in the park… And the thing is, it's not the first time I've heard of it, so I kind of feel weird going there.' (Group 8)

Photo elicitation activity: Park play spaces and MUGAs

We used a photo elicitation activity to understand girls' views on standard and 'gender-sensitive' (i.e., designed with/for girls) play space designs. Focus groups were shown 24 images of park play spaces,[14] including existing play spaces in the UK, Europe and the US, as well as 'Better design suggestions for parks' by Make Space for Girls (MSFG).[15] The images were circulated (in no particular order) among the girls, who were given the opportunity to say what they 'like' and 'dislike' about them with a focus on feelings of safety.[16]

There were four key findings. Firstly, girls strongly preferred open play spaces with good outlook and visibility in contrast to enclosed spaces, as typified by fenced courts/MUGAs, where they could be 'trapped'. Secondly, girls were enthusiastic about 'sociable' and active play equipment (such as swings), which allow them to hang out with friends in a 'fun' way. Thirdly, girls were generally positive about mixed-use spaces and landscapes, showing the need for gender-sensitive (mixed-use) design across parks, not only in designated play spaces. Finally, girls generally perceived images of MUGAs and skate parks as male-dominated and exclusionary (see also Walker and Clark, 2020; Clark, 2021), although there was some divergence in views, particularly around skate parks, as they could be spaces for girls. Yet, supposedly 'gender-sensitive' designs could also be perceived as exclusionary by teenage girls, particularly at the intersection of gender and age. Girls' comments highlight that 'gender-sensitive' designs may not always translate across contexts, underscoring the importance of local consultation and co-design with teenage girls.[17]
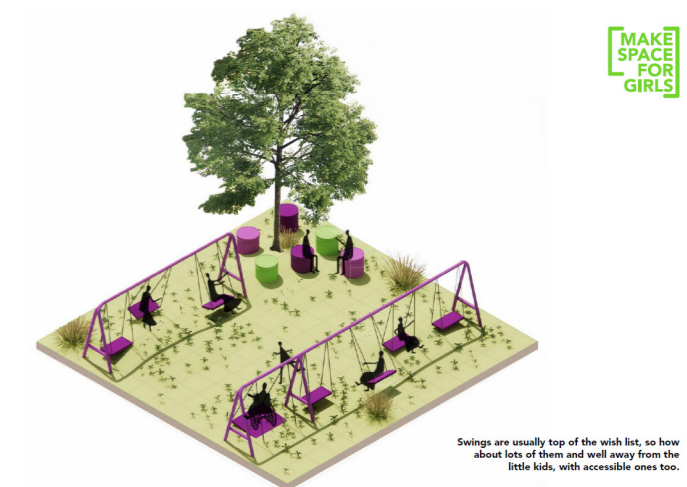
Swings are usually top of the wish list, so how about lots of them and well away from the little kids, with accessible ones too.

Image 1: Swings, including accessible swings (MSFG Better design suggestions for parks) https://makespaceforgirls.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Better-Ideas.pdf https://makespaceforgirls.co.uk/what-does-better-look-like/

Image 2: MUGA with multiple entrances/exits
https://www.tarmacadamsurfaces.co.uk/tarmac-muga/

Image 3: 'Social Seating' (MSFG Better design suggestions for parks)
https://makespaceforgirls.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Better-Ideas.pdf
https://makespaceforgirls.co.uk/what-does-better-look-like/

Images 4: Mixed-use play space designed 'with and for teenage girls' (Bredäng Park, Stockholm)
https://makespaceforgirls.co.uk/stockholm/ & https://landezine.com/bredang-park-dance-and-play/
Image source: Make Space for Girls (personal communication with Helen Forman, Urban Design Manager, WYCA)

Image 5: 'Still in the gym' (MSFG Better design suggestions for parks)
https://makespaceforgirls.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Better-Ideas.pdf https://makespaceforgirls.co.uk/what-does-better-look-like/

Image 6: Sociable shelter
http://canopiesbyacer.co.uk/gallery-category/teen-youth-shelters/

Image 7: 'Dividing a MUGA' (MSFG Better design suggestions for parks)
https://makespaceforgirls.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Better-Ideas.pdf https://makespaceforgirls.co.uk/what-does-better-look-like/

Image 8: Designs for Brickfields Park in Bath
Image source: Make Space for Girls (personal communication with Helen Forman, Urban Design Manager, WYCA)
https://yourpark.org.uk/sample-page-3-2/projects/brickfields-consultation/

Image 9: Standard MUGA with some colour (Sheffield)
https://www.axoleisure.co.uk/single-post/bespoke-heavy-duty-muga

Image 10: Open skate park
https://www.dailypost.co.uk/news/north-wales-news/what-kids-think-new-anglesey-14945636

Image 11: Mixed-use play space 'designed by, with and for girls' and young women 16-24 (Rösens Rodda Matta, Malmö). Images from Google Street View. https://makespaceforgirls.co.uk/malmo/

Image 12: 'Up High' (MSFG Better design suggestions for parks)
https://makespaceforgirls.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Better-Ideas.pdf https://makespaceforgirls.co.uk/what-does-better-look-like/
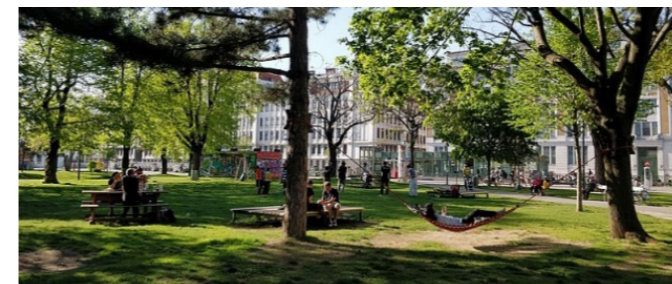

Image 13: Hammocks, Bruno-Kreisky-Park (Vienna, Austria)
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Bruno-Kreisky-Park#/media/File:Bruno-Kreisky-Park,_Wien,_2019.jpg
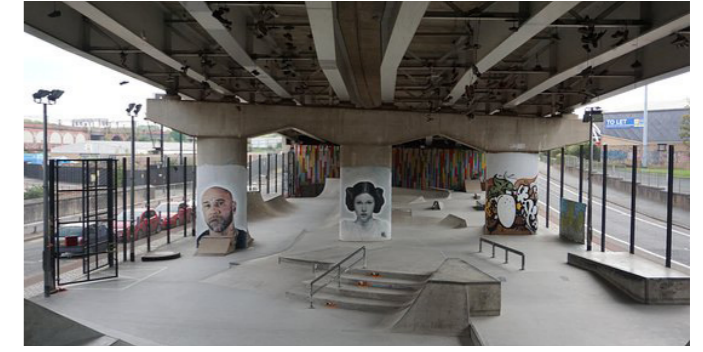

Image 14: Enclosed skate park with art
https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g187069-d4788865-Reviews-Projekts_MCR-Manchester_Greater_Manchester_England.html

1. Preference for openness and outlook vs enclosed and trapped

Across the focus groups, girls liked open spaces with good outlook as typified by some of the MSFG better design suggestions and park landscape designs.

'Swings... seating area... nowhere really to like hide and then like come out and try scare you or anything.' (Group 6, Image 1)

In contrast, they disliked enclosed spaces with fewer or less visible exits, or spaces with obstructed escape routes where they could be 'trapped', such as fenced courts/MUGAs. Even the 'gender sensitive' MUGA with multiple exits was perceived as enclosed:

'I don't really like that one because there's only... one entrance to get out... you'd feel trapped.' (Group 4, Image 2)

'All the trees surrounding it – it's closed in.' (Group 9, Image 2)

Girls' sense of unsafety in enclosed play spaces may go part way to explaining why 1 out of 5 girls (20%) indicated they would feel fairly or very unsafe using the sports/play areas of a park.

Yet, girls' dislike of enclosed spaces went beyond fenced courts, with dense vegetation surrounding other play spaces and a lack of lighting also of concern. Girls similarly expressed a strong dislike for play and seating equipment with supposedly 'gender-sensitive' designs if they felt the spaces could trap them or provide hiding places for potential attackers.

'We hated the circle table. Coz you're just trapped, and you can't see behind you or anything.' (Group 5, Image 3)

'There's so many trees round it, and anyone could be there. It looks like in the daytime already, so in night time it would be worse.' (Group 7, Image 4)

However, passive surveillance from surrounding streets and buildings mitigated some concerns around enclosure in fenced MUGAs/courts.

2. Positive about sociable aspects of play spaces and equipment

Girls generally liked the sociable aspects of some play spaces and equipment, with girls often commenting favourably on features of sociable seats, shelters, swings and exercise bikes, which enabled them to sit or chat with their friends.

'You can exercise whilst talking to your friends; the best thing ever!' (Group 1, Image 5)

'This is good to have a chat with friends with shelter.' (Group 1, Image 6)

Indeed, girls were particularly enthusiastic about MSFG design suggestions for swings (and swing-like hammocks), which may provide teenage girls with the opportunity to 'hang out' in a fun and active way. Several groups also commented positively on accessible swings, viewing them as inclusive.

'I love swings and it's great that there is one for disabled people too, to feel included.' (Group 1, Image 1)

'Being a teenager, I like to just hang out on the swings.' (Group 2, Image 1)

However, despite the importance of sociability in play space design, some girls also emphasised their need for personal space in relation to other park users, indicating fears of overcrowding or other people sitting too close.

3. Positive about mixed-use play spaces and park landscape design

Girls largely commented positively on MSFG better design suggestions for mixed-use play spaces and park landscape designs. Girls liked that they provided different activities and areas, for example singing on a stage in addition to sports, as well as spaces to hang out with friends or picnic with family.

'There's a lot of different spaces for different things' 'Like the tables to hang out with friends.' (Group 2, Image 7)

'There's like... somewhere to play sports and then there's like swings and stuff and then places like where you can sit on the grass with your family and have like a picnic.' (Group 6, Image 8)

While some girls felt that this represented a more equitable use of park space, one alluded to the safety benefits of mixed-use space 'for everyone': *'I quite liked this one because it was so open... and there was a bit for everyone so like if a man was running he can run on the outside bit of it, and the kids are more in the central bit.'* (Group 7, Image 8) [18]

4. MUGAs/skate parks vs gender-sensitive designs: the need for spaces for teenage girls

In addition to concerns about enclosure and entrapment, MUGAs and skate parks were generally perceived as male dominated and exclusionary for girls:

'It would be mainly boys... it might make you feel more uncomfortable. It's just like not a very good place.' (Group 6, Images 2 and 9)

'...if a girl goes there, like a group of girls, they (boys)'ll just kick you out.' (Group 8, Image 2)

'It looks dull. It's for boys.' 'I like skate parks but not many girls do that.' (Group 1, Image 10)

Furthermore, while girls were generally more positive about the 'gender-sensitive' mixed-use designs, they also expressed some ambivalence or dislike of one such space (Image 11), even perceived as 'for boys' by one girl. As above, this indicates the importance of local consultation and co-design with girls, as designs may not always translate across contexts.

Furthermore, some girls viewed certain gender-sensitive designs and play equipment as either for 'little kids' or older adults – even the sociable bikes – and thereby exclusionary for their age group.

'If it were mainly adults that were female going and sitting there, then... not all the teens would want to go there. And plus...it's just not like very fun, it's just like one big seat, space.' (Group 6, Image 12)

'I'd be embarrassed ... fair enough if you're like older ... or a kid.' (Group 10, Image 5)

Some girls also noted the possibility for vandalism of play spaces/equipment or anti-social behaviour, including by boys and other teenagers, highlighting issues of male intimidation across different spaces:

Girl 1: 'It doesn't look bad but it seems like it would be really busy...

Girl 2: 'Like boys would just turn it into a crack den.' (Group 3, Image 13)

However, some girls indicated that typically exclusionary spaces could also be places for girls, indeed for everyone, with the right kind of interventions.

'I obviously like the skate parks, because obviously, it's a place for girls... they can have fun in it, and it's a good space for social... But also, people, like teenagers and stuff, might have taken over it, and people might feel a bit scared to go near it. But I feel like if you put the right procedures in, it could be a fun place for everyone.' (Group 9, Image 14)

6. PROFESSIONALS' VIEWS ON WOMEN AND GIRLS FEELING SAFE IN PARKS

During one-to-one interviews, 27 professionals working in various local government services and the police from across West Yorkshire rank ordered 49 statements on a grid relating to women and girls' feelings of safety in parks, from 'most like' to 'most unlike' their views. Afterwards, professionals reflected on the reasons for their views and what might make parks feel safer and more welcoming.

27
professionals interviewed from across West Yorkshire

Area of work

15 (56%)	**3** (11%)	**8** (27%)	**1** (4%)
Parks	**Design**	**Policing**	**Other**

100% of professionals interviewed were **white**

52% male
48% female

Experience in role
10+ yrs **74%**
under 10yrs **26%**

Professionals have similar views on women's safety in parks, characterised by 29 areas of consensus and two slightly different viewpoints. Using factor analysis, we identified two clusters of 16 and 10 professionals with statistically similar response patterns who share a viewpoint on women's safety in parks.[19]

Given the high level of similarity in professionals' views, we first summarise areas of consensus then outline the two diverging viewpoints. In brackets, we provide the statement number (S1 to S49) and standardised Q score, from +5 ('most like my view') to -5 ('most unlike my view'), which corresponds with the grid in Figure 3.3, where '0' represents a middle position. Statements marked with an asterisk indicate statements that distinguish one viewpoint from another at p<0.05 significance or higher.

Consensus across viewpoints

Appendix D lists the 49 statements used in the study from 'consensus', where there is most statistical agreement across the viewpoints, to 'divergence', where there is least. As this table shows, there were 29 areas of consensus among professionals (including six areas with some ambivalence and less strong feeling).

There was a level of optimism among professionals about parks being safe for women and girls (S25, -5), and about being able to make parks safer and feel safer to use, including after dark (S2, -4/-3). Professionals had wide experience of diverse parks, and perceived some parks to be 'safer'. Furthermore, they believed that parks *should* be safe: 'everybody should be able to go in any park and feel safe' (P8, park services). Believing otherwise was 'extremely sad', akin to accepting professional failure or defeatism. Moreover, the danger was not the park itself, but the behaviour of its users: 'the park is not an evil thing, it is just a facility. It's the people who use it' (P3, policing/community safety).

Moreover, professionals felt that a range of practical 'environmental remedies' could improve women's sense of safety in parks:

'We can do things to the environment – we can cut back trees, bushes, branches; open pathways up; increase CCTV; lighting... It's pretty simple stuff, but it is doable.' (P25, policing/community safety)

For example, there was consensus that artificial lighting (S11, +1) and CCTV cameras (S10, -1) could partially improve women's sense of insecurity after dark (S1, -5/-4), subject to sufficient budget and opportunity. Indeed, some professionals were dissatisfied with an absence of lighting in parks to facilitate safer park use. However, lighting was also seen as a 'balancing act' (P3, policing/community safety) with regard to costs, biodiversity and aesthetics, but also its complex relationship with safety, thereby explaining some ambivalence. Lighting could create additional dangers by casting shadows, as well as attract potentially threatening people.

In addition, professionals perceived openness and visibility to be important for women and girls' sense of safety in parks, and in contrast with secluded (S40, -4) or thickly vegetated (S38, -4/-5) areas, which limit passive surveillance and increase women's sense of vulnerability to unseen dangers.[20] Hence, 'sensible' landscape design was important for safety (P13, design/planning), with vegetation management (cutting back) perceived as a 'doable' or 'cheap solution' (P18, park services), alongside improving mobility via pathways through the parks (P25, Other). Yet parks could accommodate both visibility and biodiversity net-gain, 'so more natural areas... [But] in a way that keeps open vistas...' (P20, park services).

There was also a preference for park designs that favour easy exits, with perimeter fences or walls seen to impede women and girls' sense of safety by blocking escape (S43, -2/-3). Professionals also disagreed that women and girls feel safer nearer the middle of parks (S42, -1/-2) given lesser escape possibilities.

However, professionals were generally ambivalent as to whether parks look or feel like they are designed with women and girls' safety in mind (S28, 0/-1), although some participants noted the legacy of Victorian planning, which may not have considered women's safety in parks. Others noted that safety in parks is not taken into account in 'gender specific' ways (P13, design/planning), with the lack of female representation in park management and the council perceived as a barrier to understanding women's views and lived experiences:

'I think a lot of our councillors are older men... they probably don't see it from the perception of a young female. And all of the management team... are middle-aged and men... so I think the hardest part of redesigning a park will be getting the hearts and minds changed, to understand that this is even needed.' (P25, Other)

In designing parks, professionals felt a balance was needed between safety and the other benefits or services that parks provide (e.g. environment and biodiversity), as well as diversity of experience, such as active experience and play, so as not to 'miss out on other things which can be important as well':

'I don't think they necessarily need to make everywhere completely safe. If you look at thick, dark woodland with dense undergrowth. It's a brilliant, great place...Some elements of that you crawl inside... like kids, climbing inside rhododendron bushes.' (P13, design/planning)

There was consensus that well-used parks are safer and feel safer (S22, -3) given increased passive surveillance and potential for bystanders, including nearer to busy amenities (S23, +2), although this was tempered by the type of user. Professionals agreed that women and girls feel safer in the presence of other women (S30, +3), and using parks with friends or family (S7, +4/+3). While other women provide a positive signal that 'if they're OK to be here, then it must be fine for me as well' (P1, park services), family and friends provide safety in numbers. Some professionals referenced ideas of all-round guardianship, having regular users trained and empowered to look after the park and its users.

Professionals were ambivalent about the impact of the presence of lone men (S6, 0) on women's sense of safety in parks, with professionals highlighting the 'difference between men's presence and the presence of men behaving badly' (P17, park services). Professionals recognised this category would also include elderly men and men walking their dog, so 'we can't just categorise and say all lone men would attack women and girls' (P15, policing/community safety). However, professionals felt that women and girls do not feel intimidated by men with their families (S31, 0/+1). By contrast, there was a strong sense that the presence of certain 'disorderly' park users considered 'unpredictable', for example drinkers and drug users, makes women and girls feel less safe (S45, +5).

In addition to social disorder, there was consensus that physical disorder affects perceptions of park safety. Physical signs that a park is 'uncared for', such as rubbish, needles and graffiti (S20, +3/+4), were felt to make 'anybody feel unsafe' (P6, policing/community safety) by provoking feelings of social danger. By contrast, symbols of gender equality, such as inspirational statues and murals, did not provide a counterpoint signal of safety, and were seen as irrelevant to the immediacies of safety in parks (S26, -3/-2).

Professionals also agreed that women and girls feel safer in familiar parks (S49, +2), not only because a sense of safety from familiarity was considered a human instinct, but also as better knowledge of the park environment helps women's awareness of riskier areas and people.

Professionals disagreed that visible security measures made parks seem unsafe (S12, -2). Rather, they felt that visible security measures more likely provide a reassuring signal, particularly if well-designed and subtle: 'People want to know there are security measures there, but they don't want to be overburdened with them because that says there is a problem' (P10, park services). However, while they felt that CCTV cameras (S10, -1) could send positive signals about formal surveillance and act as a deterrent, they also acknowledged its spatial and technical limitations: CCTV cannot cover an entire park, it may not function effectively and it is rarely actively monitored.

There was consensus that police officers make women and girls feel safe (S15, -2), yet also a recognition that media coverage of high profile incidents involving police officers may lower women's trust and confidence in the police. Although not meeting the statistical threshold for consensus, there was also broad agreement that visible park security staff could provide some sense of safety (S16, +1/+2).

There was less enthusiasm for technology and information type solutions. Mobile phone safety apps (S37, -1/0) were potentially useful but limited. Help points (S33, -1) were considered less useful as they may be situated far from the site of an emergency. Furthermore, both safety apps and help points may not elicit timely responses (including from authorities), particularly when threats emerge quickly. Clearer signage (S34, 0) was thought to make only a small difference to feelings of safety in parks.

There was consensus that it is safer for women and girls to ignore rather than challenge unwanted comments in parks (S35, -3), with any reaction seen as potentially escalating risk. There was similar scepticism that walking boldly and confidently would make women and girls feel safer (S18, -2); furthermore, it represented an unrealistic expectation of women and girls' lived experience of fear in parks. Moreover, this was seen to feed into 'victim blaming' narratives (P4, design/planning, P25, policing/community safety). Additionally, there was some sense that authorities should not communicate to women and girls that they should 'come [to parks] at appropriate times, or you should do this or do that' because parks are 'open 24/7' and women should be able to 'come at any point of the day' (P13, design/planning). Rather, the emphasis should be on perpetrators.

Furthermore, professionals agreed that social attitudes towards women, for example sexism and prejudice, need to change for women and girls to feel safer in parks (S24, +3/+2). There was a strong feeling that fear in parks is part of a wider societal problem affecting women and girls across all public and private spaces, and which required preventing the transmission of sexist attitudes between generations:

'I really do feel strongly about trying to change cultural generational perceptions of how women and girls should be treated.' (P6, policing/community safety)

However, professionals were ambivalent as to whether relevant authorities do enough about the harassment of women and girls in parks (17, 0). They perceived that authorities were doing a lot but could do more, particularly if given more resources (P20, park services).

Differences across viewpoints

Professionals' viewpoints diverged principally in relation to whether they focused on the structural, cultural and societal factors underpinning women and girls' fears or the situational factors in parks that may improve women and girls' sense of safety.

Viewpoint 1: Changing society, do not blame victims

Table 6.1 shows the highest ranked statements by professionals aligned with this viewpoint. It illustrates the view that harassment and violence against women and girls – what women hear about and experience – affect perceptions of safety, and that women taking personal safety measures is not the solution.

The first viewpoint advocates for changes to the structural and cultural societal factors that underpin violence against women and girls and the gendered effects of fear in public spaces. As one professional noted, 'it's not just targeting the park is it? I think it's society as a whole' (P13, design/planning).

This viewpoint is of the strong belief that past experiences of crime or violence (direct and indirect) make women and girls feel unsafe in parks (S47, +5), irrespective of where they occurred. Yet, this insecurity may be heightened by temporal and environmental conditions in parks, notably darkness, seclusion and isolation:

'If women and girls have past experiences of domestic violence… or boys outside, then, or in school… then it's definitely going to inform… how they feel safe within the community. And then if you move that into a potentially isolated park, depending on the time of day, then I think it will have an impact.' (P6, policing/community safety)

Furthermore, professionals believed that men need to be more aware of the pernicious impact of everyday public harassment on women's sense of safety and wellbeing (S27, +4):

'Catcalling, for example, wolf-whistling…it's perceived…[as] a bit of banter… But it's far more serious than that… It could have a real massive effect on their [women's] emotional wellbeing and their mental health and their security.' (P6, policing/community safety)

Hearing about other women suffering bad experiences in parks also makes women and girls fearful of going to parks themselves (S48, +4). Moreover, having or hearing about bad experiences was seen to affect women's sense of security for a long time afterwards.[21]

'It's that expectation – "I've been there before, this has happened before, this is going to happen again"' and so women and girls might 'take themselves out of that situation.' (P11, policing/community safety)

Given that wider societal attitudes and gender relations were the problem, changing men's attitudes and behaviour (S4, +3) was perceived as the solution to improve women's sense of safety in parks and public spaces: 'So there's still a lot of sexism… and that needs tackling' (P8, parks services). This was particularly the case for younger generations as the future of society, with groups of teenagers also considered to intimidate women and girls (S46, +2). More broadly, men and boys were felt to lack awareness of how women and girls experience public spaces, including the impact of close male presence:

'If a woman already feels a little bit anxious about being in the park… having somebody either jogging or walking close might spook them even more.' (P8, parks services)

By contrast, this viewpoint strongly disagreed that women and girls can keep themselves safe in parks through taking safety measures (S36, -4). This was seen as ineffective in preventing harm from determined attackers (P12, park services), as well as 'victim blaming'. Instead, it was perceived as the responsibility of potential perpetrators to change their behaviour, particularly as all members of the public have the right to use parks safely.

Table 6.1 Highest ranked statements (Viewpoint 1)

Most disagree (-5/-4)	Most agree (+5/-4)
No parks are safe for women and girls*	The presence of some park users, for example drinkers and drug users, makes women and girls feel less safe*
Women and girls feel safe in parks after dark*	Experiences of crime or violence in the past make women and girls feel unsafe in parks*
Women and girls feel safer in areas of parks with thick vegetation, for example hedges, trees and bushes*	Everyday harassment of women and girls in public places, for example unwanted comments and attention, makes them feel unsafe in parks*
As long as women and girls take personal safety measures in parks, they can be safe*	Women and girls feel safer using parks with friends and family
Women and girls feel safer in more secluded areas of parks that are hidden from view	Hearing about other women suffering bad experiences in parks makes women and girls fearful of going to parks themselves*

Viewpoint 2: Gender-sensitive design for maximum use

Table 6.2 shows the highest ranked statements by professionals aligned with this viewpoint. It emphasises practical changes in park design and management by relevant authorities to make parks more attractive and appealing to women, girls and families, thereby increasing their use of parks and making it feel safer for women and girls.

This viewpoint strongly agreed that women and girls feel safer in parks with a range of facilities and mixed uses (S9, +5) that would 'attract your women and your girls and attract your little families and your picnickers' (P8, park services). Professionals contrasted these women friendly facilities with only having sports facilities or open green space that might attract a narrower or male-dominated set of park users. In particular, toilet facilities were needed to bring families to parks, and for organised group activities. Relatedly, this viewpoint felt that women and girls would feel safer in parks with tidy grass and flowerbeds (S21, +1) as they attract a more varied and frequent use of parks.

'Where parks look clean, and well used… it look[s] like there are good people, the right people, using parks.' (P17, park services)

This viewpoint evoked a strong sense that women and girls would feel safer using parks in organised group activities (S8, +4) as organisers would be suitably qualified and checked. Furthermore, these activities would attract other women, girls, and families, contributing to busyness.

As one professional explained: 'If there is activity, rather than inactivity, then people always feel safer' (P3, park services).

By making parks more attractive to women and girls, this was thought to create positive feedback loops: 'If you have a group of ladies doing circuits you will get more ladies' (P20, parks services). This would further foster a positive park atmosphere, a constructive busyness and safety in numbers.

'Like putting things in there that women and girls are more likely to want to use, rather than just having spaces that end up being dominated by guys… And then… more women feel safe as there are more women there. So you have this positive spiral.' (P5, parks services)

This viewpoint favoured a reassuring presence of visible authority figures to foster busyness and create an official presence, be they gardeners and maintenance staff (S13, +3) or regular, visible patrols by park security staff (S16, +2).

'Gardener, police officer, it doesn't really matter…a community officer, a youth worker. An event… Some people go when the footballers are there, knowing they feel a bit safer as there are other people on site.' (P10, park services)

This viewpoint also put a greater emphasis on women's ability to avoid danger. Notably, visibility was considered important (S39, +4), allowing women and girls to identify hazards and take appropriate action. There was also a greater sense that women and girls can take safety measures to be safe (S36, 0), albeit with some ambivalence as authorities also had a role to ensure safety in parks, such as cutting back vegetation. Yet, women and girls should respond by 'taking responsibility for their actions' (P27, park services). Some hazards, such as unlit and shadowed paths, were easily anticipated and avoided, and it was felt that women can and should take appropriate responsibility. As one professional put it:

'There is an equal responsibility between the [park] provider and the user.' (P3, policing/community safety)

Table 6.2 Highest ranked statements (Viewpoint 2)

Most disagree (-5/-4)	Most agree (+5/+4)
Women and girls feel safer in areas of parks with thick vegetation, for example hedges, trees and bushes*	Women and girls feel safe in parks that provide a range of facilities and mixed uses, for example sports grounds, playgrounds or seating areas*
No parks are safe for women and girls*	The presence of some park users, for example drinkers and drug users, makes women and girls feel less safe*
Women and girls feel safe in parks after dark*	Women and girls feel safer in areas of parks where they can see a good distance around them*
Nothing could be done to parks to make women and girls feel safe enough to use them after dark	Signs of disorder make women and girls feel unsafe in parks, for example rubbish, needles and graffiti*
Women and girls feel safer in more secluded areas of parks that are hidden from view	Women and girls would feel safer using parks as part of organised group activities, for example sports, exercise, social activities, or volunteering*

Comparisons between the views of professionals and women and girls

There was a marked difference between participant groups in how safe parks are perceived to be for women and girls. As shown in Figure 6.1, whilst 89% of professionals think parks in their area of West Yorkshire are very or fairly safe for women and girls, this compares with 37% of women and 22% of girls.

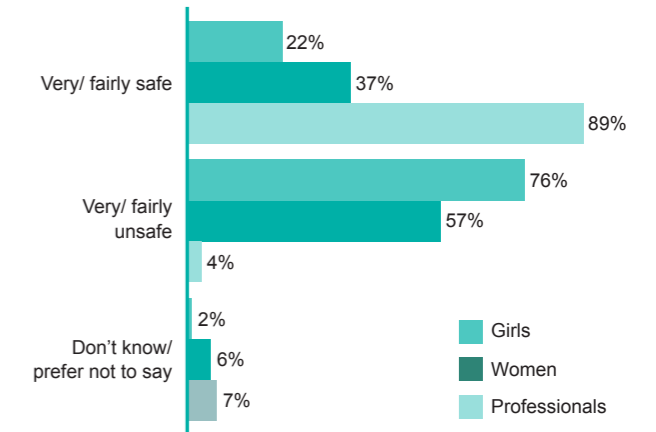**In your area of West Yorkshire, how safe or unsafe do you think parks are for women and girls?**

Figure 6.1 In your area of West Yorkshire, how safe or unsafe do you think parks are for women and girls?

There are various factors that may explain this difference. For instance, professionals displayed a sense of optimism in line with their professional responsibilities to make parks safe. They may also have a different understanding of the risk of crime in parks based on a familiarity with crime statistics, whereas girls and women may draw more on fear and perceptions of crime, which tend to over-estimate crime. Moreover, professionals may have wider experience of local parks, and are therefore more likely to know 'safer' ones. However, this difference may also indicate that professionals have a divergent viewpoint from women and girls. This is important to consider because if the people designing and managing parks have a different viewpoint from (potential) users, then this might be a barrier to improving park safety.

We therefore explored whether the viewpoints of professionals who design, manage, police and work in parks vary from those of the women and girls we interviewed by comparing relative z-scores for each statement for each of the viewpoints. The z-score is the statistical measurement relating to where a statement is placed on the most/least agree spectrum, for that viewpoint. For any particular statement, we can explore whether a professionals' viewpoint is a relative outlier by considering whether any particular statement has a higher or lower z-score than all the women and girls' viewpoints. If it does not, the professionals' view can be considered to sit between the women and girls' viewpoints. Given that there are eight viewpoints in total, with random placement we can expect that for 25% of the statements, the first professionals' viewpoint will be the outlier at either the highest or lowest z-score, and the same for the second. Here we see that the first professionals' viewpoint is the outlier for one statement and the second is the outlier for 10 statements. Thus, we cannot state that professionals' viewpoints are outliers, and instead they tend to sit within the range of women and girls' views. Therefore, it does not appear that professionals' views on the causes of feelings of safety and unsafety for women and girls is markedly different from the women and girls themselves.

Looking at which statements are outliers for the second viewpoint, we see a pattern. Consistent with its favourable view of interventions that create neater, well-used parks, we see it is relatively most in favour of organised group activities (S8), parks with mixed facilities (S9), tidy grass and flowerbeds (S21), and the absence of signs of disorder (S20). This viewpoint has the highest z-score for the idea that women and girls feel safer in the presence of other women and girls in the park (S30), and with other users of a similar identity to them (S32). Of all the eight viewpoints, this professional viewpoint has the highest score for the idea that as long as women and girls take safety measures, they can be safe (S36).

Overall, we see little difference between the two professionals' viewpoints, with a Pearson correlation coefficient (henceforth Pearson's r) of 0.822, indicating a very high level of correlation, and thereby a very high level of

agreement amongst professionals. Pearson's R is a statistical measure the similarity between two sets of values, on a scale of 1, indicating perfect overlap between the sets of values, to -1. By contrast, the three women's viewpoints had Pearson's r of 0.6439, 0.647, and 0.6732, indicating that they were all moderately correlated with one another, and thereby a moderate level of agreement amongst women. The three girls' viewpoints showed lower levels of overall correlation. Viewpoints 1 and 3 were moderately correlated (Pearson's r of 0.6807), viewpoints 2 and 3 were also moderately correlated (Pearson's r of 0.566), but viewpoints 1 and 2 were furthest apart with a low level of correlation (Pearson's r of 0.4698). Thus, we can say that there was more variation in the views of girls, particularly between viewpoints 1 and 2, than for women, and that professionals show a very high level of similarity in view.

7. INTERSECTIONALITY AND FEELINGS OF SAFETY IN PARKS

Existing literature highlights that women and girls' differential experiences and fear of violence and crime are produced through intersecting power relations and systems of oppression (e.g. Pain, 2001; Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 1998).

Aligning with the findings of this literature, the mean placement value, on the +5 to -5 scale, of statement 19 ('Besides being a woman/girl, there are aspects of my identity which affect my sense of safety in parks, for example my religion, ethnicity, age, LGBTQ+, nationality or disability status') was 1.13 for girls, and 0.19 for women. This indicates that most women and girls placed it closer to the 'most like my view' (+5) than 'least like my view' (-5). For statement 32 ('I feel safer using parks if I can see other park users of similar identity to me'), this was 1.06 for girls and 0.30 for women. Overall, this indicates that such intersectional issues are of some importance to participants, more so for girls than women.

However, even with the inclusion of S19 and S32 in the statement set, Q methodology is not suitable for systematically analysing intersectional variation in clusters of views, for example whether one ethnic or age group across West Yorkshire have consistently different responses. However, the qualitative data, as well as the individual responses to S19 and S32 does provide some insights into how issues relating to intersectionality form part of wider viewpoints.

This section therefore provides a complementary, but separate, thematic analysis of women and girls' responses on intersectionality, independent of viewpoint, with the aim of enriching the overall findings and conclusions. This discussion is structured around analysis of key identity intersections and interlocking power relations, which emerged as important to some women and girls feelings of unsafety in parks, notably: ethnicity, religion and gender; age and gender; disability and gender, and LGBTQ+ and gender. In these qualitative intersectional 'snapshots', we provide detailed quotations to foreground women and girls' voices, perceptions and experiences. While this schematic presentation does not reflect the complexity of women and girls' identities and experiences, it enables us to draw out and reflect on some key intersectional differences in women and girls' perceptions of safety in parks and to make associated policy recommendations.

This analysis is particularly important given the diverse socio-demographic backgrounds and identities of women and girl participants, which also reflect the socio-demographic diversity of the West Yorkshire case study area (see Introduction). In addition to the inclusion of women and girls between the ages of 13 to 84 years, participants identified from diverse ethnic groups. Some 18% of women and 8% of girls identified as Asian/Asian British, 6% of women and 16% of girls as Black/African/Caribbean/Black British, 5% of women and 4% of girls as from Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups and 6% of women (0% of girls) as from Other ethnic group. Additionally, 31% of women and 14% of girls identified as having a disability.[22] Existing research shows that infrequent users of parks and green spaces are more likely to be women, older people, people in poor health or disability, of lower socio-economic status, from an minority ethnic background, who live in deprived areas and have less access to green space in their neighbourhood (Boyd et al., 2018; Natural England, 2019).

Ethnicity, religion and gender

As discussed briefly in chapters 4 and 5, some women and girls from minority ethnic backgrounds felt unsafe in parks due to their distressing and frightening experiences of verbal racist abuse in parks and other public spaces. Their experiences underscore how public racism continues to exclude some women and girls from full and equal access to public space, including the use and enjoyment of parks.

'I was walking through the park near school and this man called me the N word. I don't know him. It was after the Euros, like how they were racist to the footballers. I would be scared to walk to the park because of my race if they do something to me, because of how I look.' (Group 1)

'I don't think racism and any other incidents should be happening... but sadly they do happen. So that [S19] kind of stuck out for me because I have in the past, not in a park but in a public setting, when I have been walking on a road, because I enjoy walking, I have had people driving in their cars shout out and say the word "Paki", so it's unpleasant. And then whether I am walking in a park or a public footpath, it makes you feel that you don't want to go out on your own and do that walking, it can stop you.' (P50)

Notably, some Muslim participants felt that they were at an increased risk of verbal and physical harassment in public spaces due to their religious identity. They felt targeted in particular from wearing the headscarf, underscoring the gendered and embodied nature of religious and racist harassment towards Asian Muslim women and girls (see also comment from P32 in Viewpoint 2, chapter 4):

'A lot of times your religion or what you are wearing [points at headscarf] that makes me feel vulnerable. It makes people think they can do something.' (Group 2)

'I wear a hijab and that can make you a target for some people... I was approached by a man, who now I realise had mental health issues. He started asking me questions about my religion... after that I don't think I'd wanted to go to the park on my own again. I think before that I probably wasn't... because it's quite a busy park. It was during the day as well, but it just really did put me off, because he obviously targeted me because of my [head]scarf.' (P38)

Interlinked with experiences of racist abuse, women of colour may also have to confront exclusionary racist stereotypes, such as the perception that Asian women do not speak English, thereby compounding their sense of insecurity in public space:

'Something like being Asian, wearing the clothes that I do wear, people making their assumptions that I don't speak English. So they might say a remark because they think you can't communicate or you don't understand but when you do understand, so yes, that does make a difference.' (P32)

Furthermore, some women felt uncomfortable using parks or other public spaces in predominantly white areas due to feeling conspicuous and at greater risk of harassment.

'So, if I was to go to an area that's dominant, like most people are not from my identity, I would feel less safe because I feel like maybe most of the people there share the same views about my ethnicity and my religion... because it's visible that I'm from a different ethnicity. And I feel like if the whole idea people there are from the same background, and that's not very familiar with my background, it would be easier for them to harass me or nobody would stand up for me... I'm not saying that my identity is the sole reason why I feel unsafe in parks, but it's a very big factor of it... wearing a headscarf and visibly not white and, you know, just not being the typical woman in the UK.' (P66)

For some girls from Black ethnic backgrounds, this sense of spatial exclusion was connected to being perceived as 'suspicious' by others, including by police. For one girl, this intersected with socio-economic background, with the exclusionary white areas also seen as the 'posh' areas.

'Say you was like a group of five people and they was all white and you was the only Black person, you're most likely gonna get targeted just because of the skin colour. So I'd feel more safe if police wasn't there... Just because of your skin colour, you get targeted. I'm not doing anything wrong but I'll get the blame... I went to a school in a more white area, and like I went to the park... you'd get stares... It depends where you are really. Cos I went to like [area], that is like really, really posh...If I see a police officer, I'd probably go home than stay in the park.' (Group 8)

'I get a few looks, even when going to the shops, because of my colour. One time this woman was following me in the shops making sure I wasn't stealing anything because of my colour. Because of the area that I was in at the time there wasn't any Black people and I was in a tracksuit. That made me feel cautious. If I can't trust being in a shop, then I can't trust being in a park.' (Group 2)

Given these experiences, some women explained that they felt safer or more 'comfortable' being in areas with 'similar people' to them, as they would experience less prejudice. Their words indicate that racism also functions to exclude some women and girls from parks in certain areas, thereby producing forms of spatial exclusion impacting park use.

'Yes, even somebody like you, like wearing a [head]scarf. Or, you know, speaking same language you feel happy that is you know where I'm coming from, culture I have learned different language - More comfortable, yes.' (P54)

'If you see other similar people around, it feels more... homely. I feel like it would be less prejudice as if it was to be like a white only area, or like an area where people don't understand my ethnicity... or they might even see me as threatening to them.' (P66)

Age and gender

Age negatively affected both girls and older women's sense of safety in parks, with both sets of participants indicating a sense of physical vulnerability and a feeling of being less able to protect or defend themselves. However, this sense of unsafety was experienced in different ways and associated with different risks and threats between age groups.

Notably, girls felt they were seen as an 'easy target' or a particular focus for harassment (and sexual violence), with a sense of physical vulnerability compounded by unequal power relations at the intersection of gender and age, which enabled men to target young girls with perceived impunity (see also comment from Group 7, chapter 5):

'Because of your age, they'll [men] think you can't do anything about it, if they do something to you.' (Group 1)

'I get approached when I am wearing my school uniform.' (Group 1).
Girl 1: 'So do you think people look at you differently when you walk in the park because you're 14 and not like 26?'
Girl 2: 'Yeah, paedos, yeah'.* (Group 4)

Some women in older age groups similarly perceived younger women and girls to be more at risk of harassment, particularly from groups of teenage boys. They contrasted their now greater sense of safety with their experiences as younger women or with their fears for younger female relatives:

'Have to say I feel safer now than when I was younger, because I'm old now. Makes a difference with harassment, yes.' (P43)

'I think when I was younger I probably was intimidated more by groups of boys, but as I've got older teenagers don't really intimidate me anymore [laughs] you know, I think they [are] just kids. If I was with my daughter who is 14 – 15, my other daughter is about 12 then I do feel a bit hmm, you know, what if they were on their own. I wouldn't like them to be walking through here if there was a group of lads. So, for them, I feel a bit, you know, anxious really.' (P38)

In contrast, older women felt they were at risk from harassment or abuse from younger people and teenagers in parks, which one woman connected to mental health or other issues experienced by teenagers.

'In my area where I live there are... some teenagers and for example, they disturb... older people. And this also not make me feel safe because... when I am walking for example then can also start something say or something do... Because now young people they like look internet, they not go outside or if they have any problem like in family maybe they not want to talk about that and maybe then their aggression inside... grow up and then explode for people, older people. So, this also not safe.' (P26)

Yet while the type or nature of the harassment may be different to that experienced by younger women, older women's experience of ageist abuse in public space may still be produced through differential power structures at the intersection of age and gender, with older women indicating their fear of verbal abuse from teenage boys. Yet, teenage girls were also perceived to verbally harass older women.

'...it's the children in parks though isn't it, the lads that are abusing older women and calling them all sorts of names, you know what I mean... I've seen it - you can't intervene can you, because then they're going to start on you. And I can't do it at my age, I can't be intervening, I'm 68 years old. So yeah, I've heard lads, and girls even, telling people to F-off and throwing stuff and rubbish all over. Do you know what I mean? It's not nice. And I don't feel safe, so I just walk away, I can't - if I intervene with somebody then I'm going to get hurt.' (P25)

Furthermore, as indicated in the previous quote, some women in older age groups indicated a sense of physical vulnerability or powerlessness to defend themselves or intervene in the harassment of other women. Yet, while this perception of unequal power resonates with girls' experiences, it was also experienced differently by some older women who explained that their sense of physical vulnerability was related to reduced mobility. This was felt to limit their capacity to escape threats, further shaping their feelings of insecurity in public space.

'Besides being a woman what other aspects of my identity affect my sense of safety in parks. Yes, again because I'm older now. Not so fast on my pins, so if somebody did try and attack me, I can't run away quickly. Or if I try they'll catch me. It just adds to the extra uncertainty.' (P52)

Furthermore, experiences of embodied inequality may exclude older women from parks in other ways. As one women explained, while the provision of public toilets may be important for 'people of all generations', including those with children, they may be particularly essential for older women's sense of ease, comfort and security using parks.

'How do we bring back public toilets?... 'you know, that's probably quite an important feature really in a park... and drinking fountains and those sorts of things... Because whether you have got a child or yourself or whatever, it just makes it easier for people. I have been with an older woman who just had to squat down and have a wee... she had to do it. And it just felt like there should have been somewhere that she could have gone to use the toilet rather than that.' (P41)

Disability and gender

Disability and gender also emerged as a key intersection for some women's feelings of unsafety in parks. Aligning somewhat with the viewpoints of older women presented above, women with physical disabilities explained that they felt less able to defend themselves from potential attack due to reduced mobility, as well as excluded from parks given lack of public toilet provision.

'I'm disabled, I wouldn't be able to reach [safety] you know running from people, from a bad area and, yes, if they rape, pulling you.' (P56)

'My disability. I can't go to the parks because of the distance of needing a toilet to be local. So, I never go. I need special public toilets that are looked after... There is one, but whether it's open, it's always a bit flaky. And the distance from, say, like the canal up to there is [too far].' (P4)

Another participant who did not identify as having a disability also indicated that more provision in parks for disabled people would help to improve accessibility.

'With people maybe in a wheelchair... I think more can be done for them with access and making it more accessible for people with disabilities as well.' (P50)

LGBTQ+ and gender

Some participants felt that LGBTQ+ individuals were more likely to be verbally harassed in parks.

'I have got friends who are lesbian and gay and I know they do get [comments].' (P18)

'If you're LGBTQ+ or you know, you're younger, you wear a hijab or have some kind of mark of religion that makes you more likely to be attacked.' (P33)

'...age and LGBTQ+, these two I think is the most [important to] highlight here to be so vulnerable to go into the park to any other area in the dark, most likely get harassment.' (P51)

Furthermore, while participants' gender identity did not emerge as a central theme in interviews and discussions, some girls did raise their concerns that women-only areas in parks could exclude trans or non-binary people (Group 4). In relation to this issue, some professionals noted the difficulties of defining and enforcing women-only spaces, particularly around gender identity. Their comments underscore the need for further research on park safety in relation to gender identity.

Powerful identity intersections

In contrast to the experiences presented above, other women did not feel that intersections of their identity, beyond being a woman, negatively affected their safety in parks. Some women also recognised that they belonged to certain powerful identity categories, notably being white, without a disability, and heterosexual, which protected them from certain forms of prejudice or harassment. Thus, in their awareness of power inequalities among women, as well as recognition of the greater insecurity experienced by other women from minority or less powerful groups, their comments further emphasise the need for attention to intersectionality to ensure all women and girls feel safe in parks.

'So, I think that my identity other than being a woman, I am white British, I am heterosexual, and I have not got a disability, so I am a similar identity of the people who have got power in our society. So, I know other friends who are gay or Black they experience more prejudice than me, the only prejudice I would ever experience is because I am a woman.' (P1)

'I don't think there is anything other than me being a woman that probably would affect me. I get that for other people it probably does though.' (P19)

'The reason I don't feel safe going into parks really at night is, because I am female and I am white. I have the benefit of not feeling that my race is an additional kind of risk factor for me. I live in a predominately white society. I am straight, nobody would know if I had a religion by looking at me. So there aren't other, you know, I am kind of a white British woman, there is nothing else, there is no other factors for me, I don't have a disability so there aren't things that would be an additional thing.' (P21)

Intersectionality and safety in parks

This section has explored how women and girls' differential experiences and perceptions of safety in parks are linked to their intersectional identities. While some women felt that they didn't have any further 'risk factors' beyond being a woman, other women and girls felt they were at greater risk of prejudice, harassment, and violence in parks according to interlocking power structures of gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability and sexuality. In addition to feelings of unsafety, these heightened risks, particularly of racism, may curtail women and girls' full and equal right to use and enjoy (certain) parks and public spaces perceived as unsafe for them. Furthermore, the lack of adequate provision of public facilities in parks, particularly toilets, may prevent older women and those with physical disabilities from recreating in parks.

However, questions of intersectionality and park safety require further in-depth exploration and research, as one participant reflected:

'I think there's more conversation around actually- more detail in like what it is about being LGBTQ or what is it about being of a certain ethnicity or from a certain religion that makes you feel unsafe. I feel like that's a conversation that we need to have on a larger scale.' (P33)

8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Feeling that a park is safe to use is an important dimension of accessibility, without which the positive effects of parks on health and wellbeing may not be realised (Public Health England, 2020; Van Hecke *et al.*, 2018). Yet, national statistics show high levels of perceived unsafety in parks among women, particularly after dark (Office for National Statistics, 2022).

This research shows that feeling unsafe in West Yorkshire's parks is a barrier that needs to be addressed and prioritised to ensure that women and girls feel equally able to use, enjoy and benefit from parks. The majority of the 117 women and girls we interviewed think that parks in their area of West Yorkshire are very or fairly unsafe for women and girls (57% and 76% respectively). Moreover, most of the women and girls we interviewed felt unsafe alone in parks after dark (97% and 86% respectively) and approximately 1 in 5 felt unsafe alone in parks during the daytime.

This research shows that women and girls perceive safety in parks in complex and multifaceted ways, which presents challenges for relevant authorities seeking to make parks feel safer. Women and girls' views on feeling safe in parks encompass broader societal issues such as misogyny, harassment and violence against women and girls as well as the specifics of park design such as trimming vegetation, installing lighting, park layout and scale. By demonstrating that feelings of safety *in* parks are part of broader societal phenomena that go *beyond* parks, this research recommends that improvements to the design and management of parks must be part of an holistic, multi-agency approach that addresses the root causes of women and girls' unsafety and the specific problems of violence against women and girls in certain parks.[23]

The research finds that women and girls' perspectives on feeling safe in parks cluster into holistic shared viewpoints, underpinned by broader themes such as intersectionality, misogyny, vulnerability, and responsibility for change. Across viewpoints, women, and particularly teenage girls, have diverse views on what makes parks feel safe or unsafe, and what might make parks feel safer.

For women, the key axes of difference include whether physical design interventions, such as lighting, help points and CCTV cameras, can make parks feel safer; whether any park is safe for women or whether unsafety is linked to specific parks; whether danger comes from the inequalities rooted in a patriarchal society that requires broader change or from particular park users such as lone men; whether something can be done to improve women and girls' sense of safety in parks after dark; and whether women and girls are safer in familiar parks with familiar people. For girls, key axes of difference include these same issues, but with more divergence as to whether taking personal safety precautions is futile in the face of motivated offenders. There is also difference in opinion over whether other park users, such as men or teenagers, increased or decreased feelings of safety.

The shared viewpoints we outline in this report can aid park design and management decisions about how to support women and girls to feel safe and welcome in parks, with areas of consensus as a starting point for policy and practice. Differences in views among women and girls mean that interventions in parks may improve perceptions of safety for some women and girls, but not others. There are inevitably trade-offs and compromises, and with scarce resources, we recommend prioritising the general areas of agreement that women and girls view as important to using and feeling safe in parks.

Visibility in parks matters, as darkness, thick vegetation and hidden areas were considered less safe than daytime or open areas. Sexist attitudes towards women are important in shaping feelings of safety, and experiencing harassment in parks or hearing stories about incidents in parks, made women and girls feel unsafe. Specific incidents, rather than the volume of crime, are known to have a disproportionate impact on perceptions of safety (Innes, 2004), and women and girls often discussed changing their behaviour and avoiding parks where they had heard about incidents or have a poor reputation. Parks that are well-used throughout the day, especially with the presence of women, are considered safer. Organised group activities could extend women and girls' use of parks and contribute to busyness. The edges of parks, particularly where there are no fences or barriers, feel safer because they are overlooked and facilitate easy escape. Opportunities to seek help in parks are important to women and girls, particularly the presence of visible staffing, security patrols and policing for women, whereas help points were favoured by girls. In general, women and girls are less keen on the idea of women-only areas in parks, although some girls highlighted the importance of a safe place of refuge, and mobile safety apps. While such apps can be useful, they are seen to trade freedom for safety.

In relation to responsibility for change, there is relative agreement among women and girls that men should take more responsibility for changing their behaviour in parks to make women and girls feel safer. In addition, there is agreement, for girls especially, that relevant authorities are not doing enough about harassment in parks. Furthermore, there is disagreement with the idea that as long as women and girls take personal safety measures in parks, they can be safe.

We also explored professionals' views on women and girls' safety in parks to find out whether those working in parks have different understandings to the women and girls who might use them. We found that most professionals think parks in their area of West Yorkshire are very or fairly safe for women and girls, contrasting with the views of the majority of women and girls we interviewed. At first glance, this might indicate that professionals do not understand what makes parks feel safe or unsafe for women and girls, but there is little evidence to support this from our other data. Instead, this difference could be explained by other factors, for example, women and girls could be drawing on their fears and feelings, which may overestimate crime risk, whereas professionals could be drawing on recorded crime statistics. Furthermore, we found that professionals are notably homogeneous in their views of what makes parks feel safe or unsafe, and that their views tend to sit within the spread of views of women and girls, rather than being outliers.

There is considerable consensus amongst professionals working in parks on what can be done to improve women and girls' feelings of safety, as well as a strong sense that parks can and should be safer, and that authorities could do more to facilitate this. There is an emphasis on taking action on matters lying within their purview, such as vegetation management and tidying graffiti. Professionals strongly feel that visibility and good sightlines make women and girls feel safer, as do physical design interventions such as lighting, CCTV and the presence of visible authority figures. Key axes of difference amongst professionals centre on whether safety is a shared responsibility between

park users and authorities, or whether it is the responsibility of potential perpetrators to change their behaviour. Additionally, professionals differed as to the relative importance of interventions in parks to increase busyness to improve safety versus prioritising societal change.

Professionals are also acutely aware that changes to parks to improve safety and feelings of safety need to be balanced with the other benefits and services parks provide, including biodiversity, sense of place and connection to nature, and diversity of experiences.

Recommendations

'If more things make it safer for you to be in parks, obviously you'd want to be in parks more often, because it's safer for you.' (Girl, Group 9)

The United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal 11.7 requires that all nation states will 'by 2030 provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.'[24] Based on the research findings, as well as discussions with over 50 parks managers, police officers, Design Out Crime Officers, built and natural environment practitioners and women's organisations at a workshop organised with West Yorkshire Combined Authority on the 31 October 2022, we recommend that:

Parks and play spaces should be better designed and managed to be well-used, sociable places that offer activities and facilities that are welcoming to women and girls. Changes should support women and girls to feel safe throughout the day and all-year round.

To take forward this overarching ambition, following the research, West Yorkshire Combined Authority are working with Keep Britain Tidy,[25] Make Space for Girls[26] and the University of Leeds to develop guidance for the design and management of new and existing parks and play spaces to make them feel safer and more welcoming to women and girls.[27]

In what follows, we summarise seven key conclusions from the research and identify associated recommendations.

1. Create equitable access to parks for women and girls by addressing barriers to feeling safe and advance equality of opportunity in play space provision.

Sustainable funding for parks is important for creating and maintaining parks that are safe and inclusive for everyone, including women and girls. Funding for UK parks has declined by an estimated £690 million over the past decade resulting in a sustained loss of frontline staff and declining park conditions, such that nearly 1 in 10 UK parks are in a poor condition (APSE, 2021). As our research shows, women and girls believe much can be done to parks to address barriers to use and feeling safe, but this requires sustainable funding and investment. Gender disparities in using and feeling safe in UK parks illustrate the need to include a focus on women and girls' safety in creating more equitable parks. Girls' sense of exclusion and unsafety in park play spaces, as demonstrated by Make Space for Girls (Walker and Clark, 2020) and others, is supported by this research, and illustrates the need to advance equality of opportunity in park play space provision to encourage more equal use, as underpinned by the Public Sector Equality Duty.

We recommend that:

- The **UK Government** fund improvements to parks to support the safety of women and girls and increase funding for the provision of play spaces that meet the needs of all teenagers across genders, including girls.

- The **parks sector** raises awareness among elected members and local government as to the barriers and facilitators to women and girls using and feeling safe in parks, to inform funding, design and management decisions relating to green spaces.

- **Local authorities** ensure that park planning and design processes are inclusive of the viewpoints of those who are most excluded from public space. They should consider establishing a stakeholder group comprised of a diverse range of relevant organisations who work on the safety of women and girls as consultees.

- **Designers** and **developers** of parks and play spaces work with women and girls from diverse backgrounds at a local level to incorporate gender-related safety needs, interests and preferences. Co-design processes should include women and girls throughout the planning and design process and focus on intersectionality.

- The **Green Flag Award** scheme promotes ways to support women and girls' safety in parks, incorporating best practice in future guidance.

- **Local authorities**, as landowners and managers of 85% of the UK's parks[28] ensure that women and girls' safety is integral to park management strategies and site management plans. They should maintain all public parks they manage to recognised quality standards such as the Green Flag Award or equivalent.

2. Foster well-used parks with organised group activities and other opportunities that encourage more women and girls to use them and feel welcome.

Being alone and isolated from people contributes to women and girls feeling ill-at-ease and unsafe in parks, particularly at certain times of the day when parks are not well used. By contrast, women and girls expressed that their sense of wellbeing and safety in parks increases with the park being used and shared by others engaging in legitimate park-like activities, especially with the presence of other women. Seeing other women in parks is a sign of safety and empowers more women to use parks, creating potential for positive feedback loops. Passive surveillance provided by other park users, staff and volunteers helps women to feel that they are not alone or isolated in parks, engendering a sense of safety through a lower perceived risk of intimidation or violence. Parks that have a range of facilities and mixed uses, play spaces, amenities such as cafes, organised activities, and a presence of visible and friendly staff are seen to foster the conditions for well-used parks that are not male-dominated or claimed by particular groups, and which thereby feel safer. Park upkeep is also associated with fostering busyness through encouraging use.

Women visit parks to coincide with busier times, such as when they know organised activities in parks are taking place, to support feeling safer and foster independent use. Women told us that organised group activities (including mixed gender groups such as running) extend their use of parks, enabling them to engage in exercise, recreational and social activities that they would not do alone because of safety concerns during the day and after dark. In general, familiar parks feel safer, but organised activities might be needed to introduce people to new parks or make them familiar.

We recommend that:

- **Parks managers** review activity levels in parks to identify gaps and consider how to increase the frequency or duration of use by a wide range of people throughout the day in different seasons and weathers.

- **Parks managers** consider the opening and closing times of facilities, amenities and concessions in parks to maximise levels of use and foster busyness.

- **Parks managers** and **designers** consider how the location and arrangement of facilities, amenities and mixed uses in parks can best support passive surveillance across the space.

- **Parks managers** consider promoting parks for a wider range of mixed uses and activities, particularly where these may fill gaps in activity levels, such as school and work away days, meetings or workshops and local markets.

- **Local authorities** encourage and work with **public, private** and **third sector** organisations, including women and girls' organisations, to run a variety of different activities in parks that appeal to the needs, interests and preferences of a broad demographic of women and girls. To maximise access, activities should be programmed at different times of the day and evening, as well as in different seasons, and with the majority being free to access. Consider having a point of contact for activities and events in parks and be a motivator for park use.

- **Parks managers** pursue funding for organised group activities in parks from a range of budgets and sectors (e.g. health, sport, youth, education, communities, parks, leisure etc.).

- **Organisers of park activities** consider women and girls' safety-related concerns as part of ensuring activities are inclusive and accessible.

- **Local authorities** reduce barriers associated with third sector and other organisations running community activities in parks.

- **Local authorities** embed parks in area-wide active travel plans, promoting walkability and cycling (where appropriate) through parks to foster busyness.

- The **parks sector** works with **education providers** to induct schools and colleges into local parks and develop young people's familiarity with parks. School away days in parks could involve showing young people available park facilities, thereby developing a sense of belonging, education on appropriate behaviour, and asking young people how the park could be improved. Engagement with schools could also provide opportunities to bring in more volunteers, including young people.

3. Create inclusive park play spaces that feel safe and welcoming to teenage girls.

Our research supports existing studies that show girls feel ill-at-ease and unsafe in fenced areas and play spaces in parks including MUGAs and skate parks, which may be dominated by boys and young men, which can make the environment less appealing to girls and young women (Walker and Clark, 2020).

We recommend that:

- **Local authorities** provide spaces, facilities and equipment, including mixed-use spaces, that meet girls' needs, interests and preferences, such as swings and social seating, appropriate to their age group.

- **Local authorities** provide multiple play spaces and social areas in parks so that if one area is dominated or being used, girls have other options of spaces they can use.

- **Local authorities** review existing play space provision in parks in terms of how well it meets the needs, preferences and safety concerns of girls, to identify and address gaps in provision. Future investment in play space provision in parks should meet the needs and preferences of all teenagers across genders, including girls.

- **Local authorities** draw on best practice to (re)design skate parks and MUGAs to make them more accessible for girls.

- **Local authorities** consider tendering processes to gain access to equipment and facilities that meet best practice in designing play spaces for young people.

- **Designers** and **parks managers** ensure that facilities and amenities for teenage girls are not located in areas of parks that are secluded, less well-used or with thick vegetation surrounding them.

- **Local authorities** ensure that decisions about the design of play spaces and their location within the park are made with teenage girls as part of the design and planning process. A full cross-section of teenage girls should be consulted, with specific outreach to include those who are not currently users of the park.

4. Ensure a visible and approachable presence of parks staff and wider authority figures.

Women agree that the presence of more park staff, security patrols and/or visible policing in parks would help them to feel safer. Some girls agree with this, but others do not. This partly reflects the differing nature of women and girls' interactions and encounters with park staff and police officers in parks. For women, friendly and comforting interactions with park staff meant that they felt 'noticed' and are on the 'radar' of staff, thereby reducing feelings of being ill-at-ease in parks. As such, women often advocated for park staff to work extended hours or for shift patterns to provide visible presence throughout the day, including on late afternoons and early evenings when it is dark in winter. Girls recounted often quite different experiences with authority figures in parks, particularly with police officers, which account for differing opinion. Interactions seen as procedurally unjust and unsympathetic contributed to a view by some girls that authority figures do not make them feel safer or more welcome in parks. Moreover, some girls articulated that they would feel more comfortable approaching female members of staff or police officers.

We recommend that:

- **Local authorities** provide and maintain a visible presence of approachable and familiar trained staff in parks throughout the day in designated core hours, which are widely communicated on park signage, across social media and to relevant local organisations. They should consider adapting shift patterns to improve the presence of park staff throughout the day and have a single point of contact for a park who can be contacted in a variety of ways.

- **Local authorities** ensure, where possible, a gender balance in frontline park staff.

- **Parks managers** address gaps in frontline park staff by working with neighbourhood policing teams, community safety teams, Friends of groups, organisers of regular activities and local (youth) organisations who may be able to contribute to the provision of a visible formal and semi-formal presence in parks throughout the day and across all seasons.

- **Local authorities** and **police** raise awareness and train those who work or volunteer in parks to support women and girls to feel safer and welcome in parks. Training should include an understanding of how to recognise and respond to harassment or other incidents. Consider involving youth and girls' organisations on how to interact with young people in procedurally just ways.

5. Openness, visibility and escape routes should be facilitated by park design and management.

Women and girls' expressed a safety-related need for open, visible and easily escapable park spaces. Overwhelmingly, women and girls perceived obscured spots out of the visual range of others as places where danger

could hide and they could be trapped, rather than a refuge where they could hide from danger. Openness and an ability to see all around and move in different directions is important for women's practices of scanning environments to spot dangers and take action, especially when walking alone. Yet, professionals also expressed the importance of designing for a range of experiences in green spaces, where vegetation could provide adventure and fun. Moreover, the design and development of parks needs to consider the edges of parks, where girls in particular feel safer.

We recommend that:

- **Parks managers, gardeners and landscape architects** improve visibility and sightlines, for example by raising canopies and lowering bushes; cutting back dense, above eye-level, or overhanging vegetation by paths; and considering visibility and sightlines in park tree planting programmes.

- **Parks managers** and **landscape architects** maximise passive surveillance and perceptions of ease of escape around the edges of parks, for example by reducing physical barriers such as fences and walls; and considering pathways around the perimeter of parks.

- **Parks managers** ensure easy movement within the site, for example well-populated, wide routes through parks and clear signs and directions. Paths should lead from one busy node to another with clear lines of sight.

6. Changes to parks should be made to address women and girls' perceptions of safety after dark.

Women and girls avoid parks after dark because they do not feel safe. In certain seasons with shorter days, parks without lighting become inaccessible to many women in early mornings and from late afternoons. Lighting is very important to some women and girls' views on what would make parks feel safer and more accessible public places. Indeed, research shows that well-designed lighting can play a role in reducing fear and increasing use of space[29] as well as reducing crime[30], providing opportunities for more equal access to public spaces and assisting women to foresee and respond to potential harms. Yet, other women and girls do not feel that lighting would be sufficient for them to use or feel safer in parks after dark as it leaves the structural and cultural factors underpinning violence and harassment against women untouched.

In some instances, women identified well-used active travel routes through dark parks as safe because there are lots of people using them, including women. This illustrates that lighting and other physical design interventions should not be standalone solutions but part of a wider strategy to increase use of space and improve passive surveillance to engender feelings of safety. Some women advocated for a change to the culture of park management in ways that encourage greater use of parks after dark, through lighting interventions, visible staffing/security, open facilities and amenities, and organised group activities after dark. This raises broader questions about the role of parks after dark and resources to make changes.

In parks and green spaces, there is a need for lighting to be balanced with the ecological needs of the space, and lighting entire parks or all parks across a locality is not practical. Professionals felt that lighting interventions could be appropriate in parks subject to resourcing and opportunity. Hence, decisions should be about where and which parks would benefit from lighting. Notably, women perceived lighting to be important in relation to other 'popular' active travel routes, which are well used during the daytime but not after dark in part because of safety concerns and a lack of sufficient lighting. Relatedly, girls pointed out that some facilities in parks are lit, such as MUGAs, but not the paths to/from them.

We recommend that:

- **Local authorities** include specific actions to improve safety and feelings of safety in parks after dark in park management strategies, considering areas of parks or routes through parks where there is a need for safe public use.

- **Local authorities** and **parks managers** consider where in parks artificial lighting would add value in supporting park use, active travel and feelings of safety as part of a wider strategy that considers the ecological needs of the site. Where lighting cannot be provided, alternative routes should be signposted.

- **Local authorities** and parks managers support themed events and organised group activities after dark to encourage use of parks by women and girls.

7. Address fear of and incidents of sexual harassment and violence in parks.

Whilst sexual harassment is prevalent in all public spaces, it was ranked by girls as one of the highest statements affecting perceptions of safety in parks. Moreover, hearing about attacks in parks led to women and girls avoiding certain parks, and fuelled a general unease about park spaces more broadly. Lone men and groups of men and boys are a major factor in women and girls feeling unsafe in parks. This is partly due to experiences of harassment and crime in parks and wider society, which affects perceptions of safety in park spaces. Women and girls are not confident that other park users will intervene in threatening situations or harassment in parks. The desire for emergency help points, especially by girls, reflected a need among women and girls for there to be ways to seek help within parks.

Our research with professionals suggests that women and girls' safety in parks has not been the subject of focused consideration. It is necessary to challenge misogyny and change societal attitudes towards women; recognise that promoting the safety of women and girls is a responsibility of parks professionals, regardless of role; ensure plentiful and well-communicated opportunities to seek help in parks; and foster an ethic of care and responsibility among park users, volunteers, staff and organised groups using parks in relation to the safety of women and girls.

We recommend that:

- **Parks managers** provide a single point of contact about safety concerns, and how to report harassment or violence against women and girls in parks through multiple channels of communication, including on park signage.

- **Local authorities** and the **police** collect and share data on safety concerns and incidents of violence against women and girls in and around parks to feed into holistic, multiagency responses (e.g. via the 'Street Safe' app[31]).

- **Local authorities, police** and **community safety partnerships** include a focus on parks in violence against women and girls strategies, action plans and public campaigns.

- **Parks managers** work with **police** to develop strategies to empower park users to be active bystanders willing to intervene in the event of witnessing harassment or problematic behaviour in parks.

- **Parks managers** and **designers** work with women and girls to co-design help-points and/or other ways they would like to be able to access help in parks.

- **Local authorities** establish an 'Ask for Angela' type presence in parks, for example, with staff who work in parks, cafes, kiosks, Friends of groups, concessions, organisers of events and activities.

- **Local authorities** and **parks managers** develop a communication strategy for managing the image and reputation of parks, including feedback on the outcomes of incidents in parks, to minimise fear and avoidance behaviours.

9. REFERENCES

Allen, K., Barbin, A., Khan, A. and Ferreira, J. 2022. *VAWG in public spaces: Barriers to reporting and impacts on women and girls.* Available from: https://www.britsoccrim.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/BSCN-Summer-2022-VAWG-in-public-spaces.pdf

Association of Public Sector Excellence. 2021. The *State of UK Public Parks.* Available from: https://www.apse.org.uk/apse/index.cfm/research/current-research-programme/state-of-uk-public-parks-2021/

Barker, A. 2014. Communicating Security? Policing Urban Spaces and Control Signals, *Urban Studies,* 51(14), 3046-3061.

Barker, A. 2017. Mediated Conviviality and the Urban Social Order: Reframing the Regulation of Urban Public Space, *British Journal of Criminology,* 57(4), 848-866.

Beebeejaun, Y. 2017. Gender, urban space, and the right to everyday life, *Journal of Urban Affairs,* 39(3), 323-334.

Bogacka, E. 2020. Safety of urban park users. In: Ceccato, V. and Nalla, M.K., eds. *Crime and fear in public places.* London: Taylor & Francis, pp. 38–72.

Boyd, F., White, M.P., Bell, SL. and Burt, J. 2018. Who doesn't visit natural environments for recreation and why, *Landscape and Urban Planning,* 175: 102-113.

Burgess, J. 1998. But is it worth taking the risk? How women negotiate access to urban woodland: a case study. In: Ainley, R. *New Frontiers of Space, Bodies and Gender.* London: Routledge, pp. 115–128.

Collins, P.H. 1998. The tie that binds: race, gender and US violence, *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* 21(5), 917-938.

Crenshaw, K. 1991. Race, gender and sexual harassment, *Southern California Law Review,* 65: 1467-76.

Davis, M. 1990. *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future of Los Angeles.* Verso.

Ferraro, K. 1996. Women's Fear of Victimization: Shadow of Sexual Assault? *Social Forces,* 75(2), 667-690.

Girlguiding 2022. *Girls' Attitudes Survey 2022.* Available from: https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/girls-making-change/girls-attitudes-survey/

Hughes, J., Rogerson, M., Barton, J. and Bragg, R. 2019. Age and connection to nature: when is engagement critical? *Frontiers in the Ecology and the Environment,* 17(5), 265–269.

Innes, M. 2004. Signal Crimes and Signal Disorders: Notes on Deviance as Communicative Action, *British Journal of Sociology,* 55(3), 335-355.

Kelly, L. 1988. *Surviving Sexual Violence.* Oxford: Polity Press.

Kerns, L. 2021. *Feminist City.* Verso.

Lorenc, T., Clayton, S., Neary, D., Whitehead, M., Petticrew, M., Thomson, H., Cummins, S., Sowden, A., Renton, A. 2012. Crime, fear of crime, environment, and mental health and wellbeing: Mapping review of theories and causal pathways, *Health Place,* 18, 757–765.

Lorenc, T., Petticrew, M., Whitehead, M., Neary, D., Clayton, S., Wright, K., Thomson, H., Cummins, S., Sowden, A. and Renton, A. 2013. Fear of crime and the environment: systematic review of UK qualitative evidence, *BMC Public Health,* 13, 496.

Maruthaveeran, S. and Konijnendijk van den Bosch. C.C. 2014. A Socio-Ecological Exploration of Fear of Crime in Urban Green Spaces – A Systematic Review, *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening,* 13(1), 1-18.

Mitchell, D. 2003 *The Right to the City.* The Guilford Press.

National Police Chiefs Council. 2021. *Policing violence against women and girls: National framework for delivery: Year 1.* Available from: https://www.npcc.police.uk/

Natural England. 2019. *Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment* – The national survey on people and the natural environment. Headline report 2019: Analysis of latest results (March 2018 to February 2019) and ten years of the survey from 2009 to 2019. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/828552/Monitor_Engagement_Natural_Environment_2018_2019_v2.pdf

Office for National Statistics. 2022. *Perceptions of personal safety and experiences of harassment, Great Britain: 16 February to 13 March 2022.* Available from: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/perceptionsofpersonalsafetyandexperiencesofharassmentgreatbritain/16februaryto13march2022

Pain, R. 2001. Gender, Race, Age and Fear in the City. *Urban Studies,* 38(5–6), 899-913.

Parks for London. 2022. *Young, Green, and Well: A research study on young Londoners' green space use and mental wellbeing.* Hamida Diriye, Young Persons Health Project Officer; Dr Meredith Whitten, Researcher in Residence; Tony Leach, Chief Executive.

Piccininni, C., Michaelson, V., Janssen, I., & Pickett, W. 2018. Outdoor play and nature connectedness as potential correlates of internalized mental health symptoms among Canadian adolescents, *Preventive Medicine,* 112, 168-175.

Perez, C. 2019. *Invisible Women.* Penguin, Random House UK.

Public Health England. 2020. *Improving access to greenspace: A new review for 2020.* Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/904439/Improving_access_to_greenspace_2020_review.pdf

Rišováa, K. and Sládeková Madajováb, M. 2020. Gender differences in a walking environment safety perception, *Journal of Transport Geography,* 85, 1-8.

Sillman, D., Rigolon, A., Browning, M.H.E.M., Yoon, H. and McAnirlin, O. 2022. Do sex and gender modify the association between green space and physical health? A Systematic Review, *Environmental Research,* 209, DOI: 10.1016/j.envres.2022.112869

Stanko, E. 1995. Women, crime and fear, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science,* 539(1), 46-58.

Trevor Project 2021. *Measuring Youth Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity.* Available from: https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Measuring-Youth-Sexual-Orientation-and-Gender-Identity.pdf

UN Women. 2021. *Prevalence and reporting of sexual harassment in UK public spaces.* Available from: https://www.unwomenuk.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/APPG-UN-Women-Sexual-Harassment-Report_Updated.pdf

Valentine, G. 1990. Women's Fear and the Design of Public Space, *Built Environment,* 16(4), 288-303.

Van Hecke, L., Ghekiere, A., Veitch, J., Van Dyck, D., Van Cauwenberg, J., Clarys, P. and Deforche, B. 2018. Public open space characteristics influencing adolescents' use and physical activity: A systematic literature review of qualitative and quantitative studies, *Health & Place,* 51, 158-73.

Vera-Gray, F. 2018. *The Right Amount of Panic.* Policy Press.

Walker, S. and Clark, I. 2020. *Make Space for Girls.* Available from: https://makespaceforgirls.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Make-Space-for-Girls-Summary-of-Research-findings-December-2020-web.pdf

Warr, M. 1984. Fear of victimization: Why are women and the elderly more afraid? *Social Science Quarterly,* 65, 681–702.

Watts, S and Stenner, P. 2012. *Doing Q Methodological Research: Theory, Method and Interpretation.* London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

White Arkitekter. 2018. *Flickrum – Places for girls.* Available from: https://whitearkitekter.com/project/places-for-girls/

World Bank. 2020. *Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Urban Planning and Design.* Available from: https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/publication/handbook-for-gender-inclusive-urban-planning-and-design

Women Friendly Leeds. 2021. *Leeds Women's Safety Survey.* Available from: https://womenfriendlyleeds.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/WLL-WFL-Safety-Survey-Full-Report.pdf

Yorkshire Sport. 2022. *Make Space for Us.* Available from: https://womeninsport.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Make-Space-for-Us.pdf

Zedner, L. 2003. Too Much Security? *International Journal of the Sociology of Law,* 31(3), 155-184.

APPENDIX A

Final statement set used by women and girls

1. I feel safe in parks after dark
2. Nothing could be done to parks to make me feel safe enough to use them after dark
3. Even during daylight hours there are times when I feel unsafe in parks, for example mornings or lunchtimes
4. Men and boys should take responsibility for changing their behaviour to make women and girls feel safer in parks, for example not walking or jogging too close
5. I find the presence of groups of men and boys in parks intimidating
6. The presence of lone men in parks makes me feel unsafe
7. I feel safer using parks with friends and family
8. I would feel safer using parks as part of organised group activities, for example sports, exercise, social activities, or volunteering.
9. I feel safe in parks that provide a range of facilities and mixed uses, for example sports grounds, playgrounds or seating areas
10. CCTV cameras do not make me feel safe
11. Having lighting in parks would make them feel safer for me to use after dark
12. Having lots of visible security measures in a park makes it seem like an unsafe place
13. Parks would feel safer if there were more park staff present, for example gardeners and maintenance staff
14. You can't rely on other nearby park users to intervene when a women is being harassed or threatened in a park
15. Police officers in parks don't make me feel safe
16. I would feel safer in parks if there were regular, high visibility patrols by park security staff
17. Relevant authorities, for example the police or council, don't do enough about harassment of women and girls in parks
18. Walking boldly and confidently would make me feel safer in parks
19. Besides being a woman/girl, there are aspects of my identity which affect my sense of safety in parks, for example my religion, ethnicity, age, LGBTQ+, nationality or disability status
20. Signs of disorder make me feel unsafe in parks, for example rubbish, needles and graffiti
21. I feel safer in parks with tidy grass and flowerbeds
22. I feel less safe when the park is busy with people
23. I feel safer nearer to amenities in parks, for example cafes, kiosks and ice cream vans
24. Social attitudes towards women and girls, for example sexism and prejudice, need to change for me to feel safer in parks
25. No parks are safe for women and girls
26. Inspirational statues and murals of women and girls in parks would make me feel safer
27. Everyday harassment of women and girls in public places, for example unwanted comments and attention, makes me feel unsafe in parks
28. Parks do not look or feel like they are designed with women and girls' safety in mind
29. I would feel safer using women-only areas of a park
30. The presence of other women and girls in parks makes me feel safer
31. I do not feel intimidated by men's presence in parks when they are with their families
32. I feel safer using parks if I can see other park users of similar identity to me
33. I would feel safer in parks if there was a panic button/emergency help point
34. Clearer signage and maps in parks would help me feel safer
35. It is safer to challenge unwanted comments or attention from men and boys in parks than to ignore them
36. As long as women and girls take personal safety measures in parks, they can be safe
37. I would feel safer in a park if a trusted person could see where I am on a mobile phone app
38. I feel safer in areas of parks with thick vegetation, for example hedges, trees and bushes
39. I feel safer in areas of parks where I can see a good distance around me
40. I feel safer in more secluded areas of parks that are hidden from view
41. Having lots of entrances and exits to a park makes me feel safer
42. I feel safer nearer the middle compared to the edge of parks
43. Fences or walls around the edges of parks make me feel safer
44. Dogs in parks make me feel safe
45. The presence of some park users, for example drinkers, drug users, makes me feel less safe
46. I find the presence of groups of teenagers in parks intimidating
47. Experiences of crime or violence in the past make women and girls feel unsafe in parks
48. Hearing about other women suffering bad experiences in parks makes me fearful of going to parks myself
49. I feel safer in parks that I am familiar with

Final statement set used by professionals

1. Women and girls feel safe in parks after dark
2. Nothing could be done to parks to make women and girls feel safe enough to use them after dark
3. Even during daylight hours there are times when women and girls feel unsafe in parks, for example mornings or lunchtimes
4. Men and boys should take responsibility for changing their behaviour to make women and girls feel safer in parks, for example not walking or jogging too close
5. Women and girls find the presence of groups of men and boys in parks intimidating
6. The presence of lone men in parks makes women and girls feel unsafe
7. Women and girls feel safer using parks with friends and family
8. Women and girls would feel safer using parks as part of organised group activities, for example sports, exercise, social activities, or volunteering
9. Women and girls feel safe in parks that provide a range of facilities and mixed uses, for example sports grounds, playgrounds or seating areas
10. CCTV cameras do not make women and girls feel safe
11. Having lighting in parks would make them feel safer for women and girls to use after dark
12. Having lots of visible security measures in a park makes it seem like an unsafe place
13. Parks would feel safer if there were more park staff present, for example gardeners and maintenance staff
14. You can't rely on other nearby park users to intervene when a women is being harassed or threatened in a park
15. Police officers in parks don't make women and girls feel safe
16. Women and girls would feel safer in parks if there were regular, high visibility patrols by park security staff
17. Relevant authorities, for example the police or council, don't do enough about harassment of women and girls in parks
18. Walking boldly and confidently would make women and girls feel safer in parks
19. Besides being a woman/girl, there are aspects of women and girls' identity which affect their sense of safety in parks, for example their religion, ethnicity, age, LGBTQ+, nationality or disability status
20. Signs of disorder make women and girls feel unsafe in parks, for example rubbish, needles and graffiti
21. Women and girls feel safer in parks with tidy grass and flowerbeds
22. Women and girls feel less safe when the park is busy with people
23. Women and girls feel safer nearer to amenities in parks, for example cafes, kiosks and ice cream vans
24. Social attitudes towards women and girls, for example sexism and prejudice, need to change for them to feel safer in parks
25. No parks are safe for women and girls
26. Inspirational statues and murals of women and girls in parks would make them feel safer
27. Everyday harassment of women and girls in public places, for example unwanted comments and attention, makes them feel unsafe in parks
28. Parks do not look or feel like they are designed with women and girls' safety in mind
29. Women and girls would feel safer using women-only areas of a park
30. The presence of other women and girls in parks makes women and girls feel safer
31. Women and girls do not feel intimidated by men's presence in parks when they are with their families
32. Women and girls feel safer using parks if they can see other park users of similar identity to them
33. Women and girls would feel safer in parks if there was a panic button/ emergency help point
34. Clearer signage and maps in parks would help women and girls feel safer
35. It is safer for women and girls to challenge unwanted comments or attention from men and boys in parks than to ignore them
36. As long as women and girls take personal safety measures in parks, they can be safe
37. Women and girls would feel safer in a park if a trusted person could see where they are on a mobile phone app
38. Women and girls feel safer in areas of parks with thick vegetation, for example hedges, trees and bushes
39. Women and girls feel safer in areas of parks where they can see a good distance around them
40. Women and girls feel safer in more secluded areas of parks that are hidden from view
41. Having lots of entrances and exits to a park makes women and girls feel safer
42. Women and girls feel safer nearer the middle compared to the edge of parks
43. Fences or walls around the edges of parks make women and girls feel safer
44. Dogs in parks make women and girls feel safe
45. The presence of some park users, for example drinkers, drug users, makes women and girls feel less safe
46. Women and girls find the presence of groups of teenagers in parks intimidating
47. Experiences of crime or violence in the past make women and girls feel unsafe in parks
48. Hearing about other women suffering bad experiences in parks makes women and girls fearful of going to parks themselves
49. Women and girls feel safer in parks that they are familiar with

APPENDIX B

Interview questions with women

After women rank ordered the statements, we asked:

1. Reason(s) for their highest ranked statements (i.e. +5, -5, +4 and -4)
2. To identify other statements (rank ordered anywhere on the grid) that are important to understand their own subjective views on feeling safe in parks.
3. To identify any factors or issues related to feeling safe in parks that they felt may be missing from the set of statements.
4. To identify ways that their local parks could be improved to make them feel safer and more welcoming to use, including what the council or police could do.

Focus group questions / activities with girls

After girls rank ordered the statements, we discussed:

1. Reason(s) for their highest ranked statements (i.e. +5, -5) and similarities and differences among girls.
2. What they like and dislike about play spaces in parks, using photos of standard and gender-sensitive designs.
3. What changes could make parks feel safer and more welcoming for girls to use.

Interview questions with professionals

After professionals rank ordered the statements, we asked:

1. Reason(s) for their highest ranked statements (i.e. +5, -5, +4 and -4)
2. To identify other statements (rank ordered anywhere on the grid) that are important to understand professionals' views on women and girls' feeling safe in parks.
3. To discuss whether specific consideration is made for women and girls in decisions about the design, management or policing of parks.
4. To identify ways to improve women and girls' safety and feelings of safety in parks.
5. To discuss issues, challenges or barriers to improving safety of parks for women and girls.

APPENDIX C
Summary of women's sample by viewpoint

		Viewpoint 1	Viewpoint 2	Viewpoint 3	Unloaded	Total	% of sample
Age	16-19	1	1	0	0	2	3
	20-24	0	2	0	1	3	4
	25-34	2	3	1	1	7	10
	35-44	5	5	6	3	19	28
	45-54	4	2	4	2	12	18
	55-64	8	1	5	1	15	22
	65-74	0	1	2	4	7	10
	75-84	1	1	0	0	2	3
	Total	*21*	*16*	*18*	*12*	*67*	*100*
Ethnicity	Asian/ Asian British	6	5	1	0	12	18
	Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	1	2	1	0	4	6
	Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups	0	2	0	1	3	4
	Other ethnic group	2	1	0	1	4	6
	Prefer not to say	1	0	0	0	1	1
	White	11	6	16	10	43	64
	Total	*21*	*16*	*18*	*12*	*67*	*100*
Disabled	Yes	5	5	3	8	21	31
	No	16	11	14	4	45	67
	Prefer not to say	0	0	1	0	1	1
	Total	*21*	*16*	*18*	*12*	*67*	*100*
Frequency of visits to parks	Almost every day	7	2	8	5	22	33
	At least once every week	7	4	4	4	19	28
	At least once every two weeks	5	3	1	1	10	15
	At least once a month	1	5	2	0	8	12
	Seldom/Never	1	2	3	2	8	12
	Total	*21*	*16*	*18*	*12*	*67*	*100*
Experience of harassment in last 12 months	Yes	12	9	4	11	36	54
	No	9	5	14	1	29	43
	Unsure/Prefer not to say	0	2	0	0	2	3
	Total	*21*	*16*	*18*	*12*	*67*	*100*
How safe or unsafe would you feel walking on your own in a local park? Daytime	Very safe	4	5	6	1	16	24
	Fairly Safe	14	4	11	6	35	53
	Fairly unsafe	2	5	1	2	10	15
	Very unsafe	1	1	0	3	5	7
	Don't know/Prefer not to say	0	1	0	0	1	1
	Total	*21*	*16*	*18*	*12*	*67*	*100*
How safe or unsafe would you feel walking on your own in a local park? At night	Very safe	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Fairly Safe	1	0	0	0	1	1
	Fairly unsafe	8	2	6	1	17	25
	Very unsafe	12	13	12	11	48	72
	Don't know/Prefer not to say	0	1	0	0	1	1
	Total	*21*	*16*	*18*	*12*	*67*	*100*

Summary of girls' sample by viewpoint

		Viewpoint 1	Viewpoint 2	Viewpoint 3	Unloaded	Total	% of sample
Age	13-15	13	8	10	3	34	71
	16-18	3	4	3	4	14	29
	Total	*16*	*12*	*13*	*7*	*48*	*100*
Ethnicity	Asian/ Asian British	1	1	-	1	3	6
	Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	-	4	2	1	7	15
	Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups	-	2	-	-	2	4
	White	15	5	11	5	36	75
	Total	*16*	*12*	*13*	*7*	*48*	*100*
Disabled	Yes	4	1	1	1	7	15
	No	7	9	7	5	28	58
	Prefer not to say	5	2	5	1	13	27
	Total	*16*	*12*	*13*	*7*	*48*	*100*
Frequency of visits to parks	Almost every day	3	2	6	1	12	25
	At least once every week	5	5	5	3	18	37
	At least once every two weeks	3	2	2	-	7	15
	At least once a month	1	2	2	5	10	21
	Seldom/Never	3	1	-	-	4	8
	Don't know/Prefer not to say	1	-	-	1	2	4
	Total	*16*	*12*	*13*	*7*	*48*	*100*
Experience of harassment in last 12 months	Yes	11	2	8	5	26	54
	No	2	10	5	2	19	40
	Unsure/Prefer not to say	3	-	-	-	3	6
	Total	*16*	*12*	*13*	*7*	*48*	*100*
How safe or unsafe would you feel walking on your own in a local park? Daytime	Very safe	-	4	4	2	10	21
	Fairly Safe	10	8	7	5	30	62
	Fairly unsafe	5	-	2	-	7	15
	Very unsafe	1	-	-	-	1	2
	Don't know/Prefer not to say	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Total	*16*	*12*	*13*	*7*	*48*	*100*
How safe or unsafe would you feel walking on your own in a local park? At night	Very safe	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Fairly Safe	1	2	2	-	5	10
	Fairly unsafe	5	5	4	2	16	33
	Very unsafe	10	6	7	-	26	54
	Don't know/Prefer not to say	-	-	-	1	1	2
	Total	*16*	*12*	*13*	*7*	*48*	*100*

The statistics given in this table are for 48 participants as two Q sorts were excluded from the analysis.

Summary of professionals' sample by viewpoint

		Viewpoint 1	Viewpoint 2	Total	% of sample
Age	16-19	-	1	1	4
	20-24	-	-	-	-
	25-34	2	-	2	8
	35-44	5	1	6	23
	45-54	6	2	8	31
	55-64	3	6	9	37
	Total	*17*	*10*	*27*	*100*
Ethnicity	White	17	10	27	100
Sex	Female	6	8	14	54
	Male	10	2	12	46
	Total	*17*	*10*	*27*	*100*
Area of work	Community safety/Policing	3	3	6	23
	Design/planning	3	-	3	12
	Parks services	8	7	15	58
	Other	2	-	2	8
	Total	*17*	*10*	*27*	*100*
Extent to which park is part of job responsibilities within job description	One of main responsibilities	8	6	14	54
	A minor responsibility	5	2	7	27
	Not part of responsibilities, but sometimes work on it	3	2	5	19
	Total	*17*	*10*	*27*	*100*
Time spent in this role, or similar roles	0-4 years	3	1	4	15
	5-9 years	2	1	3	12
	10-14 years	4	1	5	19
	15-19 years	3	1	4	15
	20+ years	4	6	10	38
	Total	*17*	*10*	*27*	*100*

APPENDIX D

These tables list all the statements used in the study, from most consensus to least consensus, as ranked by participants.

The last column in the table shows whether a statement is a 'consensus' statement (meaning it was given a highly similar rating by all participants, at a significance of p<0.01) or a 'distinguishing' statement (meaning that the different clusters of participants gave it a different rating, at a significance of p<0.01). Whilst consensus statements indicate similarity across viewpoints, distinguishing statements indicate divergence in viewpoints and determine whether a participant aligns with a particular viewpoint.

For each viewpoint and each statement, we list the composite Q score, which is where, if this Viewpoint represented a single person, they would have rank ordered this particular statement on the grid. We also list the z-score, which is the statistical value underpinning the factor analysis.

To depict the underlying scores for each statement, we have coloured them blue (for statements with a positive Q-score, indicating relative agreement), and brown (for statements with a negative Q-score, indicating relative disagreement), with shading decreasing closer to Q-scores of 0. Note that with Q methodology, these are not absolute measures of agreement, but relative orders of agreement and disagreement. A score of 0 does not represent the mid-point of neutrality between agreement and disagreement. Typically, respondents noted that the area of neither agreeing nor disagreeing in absolute terms lay within statements scores at -1 and -2.

Most to least consensus: [colour scale]

Statements from most consensus to least consensus by women

#	Statement	Viewpoint 1 Q score	Viewpoint 1 z score	Viewpoint 2 Q score	Viewpoint 2 z score	Viewpoint 3 Q score	Viewpoint 3 z score	Most to least consensus
30	The presence of other women and girls in parks makes me feel safer	+3	0.987	+3	1.027	+2	0.956	C
37	I would feel safer in a park if a trusted person could see where I am on a mobile phone app	-1	-0.249	-1	-0.317	-1	-0.335	C
43	Fences or walls around the edges of parks make me feel safer	-2	-0.746	-2	-0.92	-2	-0.863	C
35	It is safer to challenge unwanted comments or attention from men and boys in parks than to ignore them	-4	-1.578	-4	-1.336	-3	-1.439	C
32	I feel safer using parks if I can see other park users of similar identity to me	+1	0.411	+1	0.523	0	0.263	C
8	I would feel safer using parks as part of organised group activities, for example sports, exercise, social activities, or volunteering.	+1	0.473	+2	0.747	+2	0.67	C
14	You can't rely on other nearby park users to intervene when a women is being harassed or threatened in a park	0	0.225	+1	0.574	+1	0.342	C
22	I feel less safe when the park is busy with people	-3	-1.228	-3	-1.064	-4	-1.448	C
42	I feel safer nearer the middle compared to the edge of parks	-2	-0.85	-2	-0.704	-1	-0.415	
15	Police officers in parks don't make me feel safe	-3	-1.249	-3	-1.219	-2	-0.833	V3
40	I feel safer in more secluded areas of parks that are hidden from view	-3	-1.412	-4	-1.725	-5	-1.882	
29	I would feel safer using women-only areas of a park	-1	-0.178	0	0.002	-1	-0.55	V3
49	I feel safer in parks that I am familiar with	+4	1.226	+2	0.635	+3	0.973	
1	I feel safe in parks after dark	-5	-1.915	-5	-2.505	-5	-2.062	V2
21	I feel safer in parks with tidy grass and flowerbeds	0	0.05	-1	-0.595	0	-0.178	V2
12	Having lots of visible security measures in a park makes it seem like an unsafe place	-4	-1.74	-3	-1.208	-3	-1.095	V1
23	I feel safer nearer to amenities in parks, for example cafes, kiosks and ice cream vans	+3	1.146	+1	0.492	+3	1	V2
41	Having lots of entrances and exits to a park makes me feel safer	0	0.109	-1	-0.291	1	0.396	V2
26	Inspirational statues and murals of women and girls in parks would make me feel safer	-1	-0.534	-2	-0.705	-3	-1.259	V3
38	I feel safer in areas of parks with thick vegetation, for example hedges, trees and bushes	-3	-1.184	-5	-1.841	-4	-1.842	V1
20	Signs of disorder make me feel unsafe in parks, for example rubbish, needles and graffiti	+2	0.808	0	0.402	+3	1.163	V1, V2, V3
4	Men and boys should take responsibility for changing their behaviour to make women and girls feel safer in parks, for example not walking or jogging too close	+3	1.056	+4	1.401	+1	0.631	V1, V2, V3
34	Clearer signage and maps in parks would help me feel safer	+1	0.256	-1	-0.541	-1	-0.258	V1
18	Walking boldly and confidently would make me feel safer in parks	-1	-0.206	-3	-0.944	-1	-0.252	V2
47	Experiences of crime or violence in the past make women and girls feel unsafe in parks	+2	0.855	+5	1.422	+1	0.61	V1
48	Hearing about other women suffering bad experiences in parks makes me fearful of going to parks myself	+2	0.877	+3	1.173	+1	0.336	V3
7	I feel safer using parks with friends and family	+1	0.674	+5	1.424	+4	1.405	V1
28	Parks do not look or feel like they are designed with women and girls' safety in mind	0	0.042	+1	0.512	-1	-0.344	V1, V2, V3
16	I would feel safer in parks if there were regular, high visibility patrols by park security staff	+5	1.628	+2	0.87	+2	0.872	V1
27	Everyday harassment of women and girls in public places, for example unwanted comments and attention, makes me feel unsafe in parks	+2	0.76	+2	0.97	0	0.128	V3
9	I feel safe in parks that provide a range of facilities and mixed uses, for example sports grounds, playgrounds or seating areas	+1	0.547	-1	-0.173	+1	0.637	V2
3	Even during daylight hours there are times when I feel unsafe in parks, for example mornings or lunchtimes	-2	-0.829	0	0.046	-2	-0.683	V2
31	I do not feel intimidated by men's presence in parks when they are with their families	0	0.237	0	-0.139	+2	0.833	V1, V2, V3
44	Dogs in parks make me feel safe	-1	-0.496	-2	-0.868	0	0.11	V1, V2, V3
36	As long as women and girls take personal safety measures in parks, they can be safe	-2	-0.854	-4	-1.794	-3	-1.033	V2
10	CCTV cameras do not make me feel safe	-4	-1.459	-1	-0.539	-2	-0.566	V1
13	Parks would feel safer if there were more park staff present, for example gardeners and maintenance staff	+4	1.609	+1	0.523	+2	0.898	V1, V2, V3
39	I feel safer in areas of parks where I can see a good distance around me	+1	0.661	0	0.275	+4	1.443	V1, V2, V3
19	Besides being a woman/girl, there are aspects of my identity which affect my sense of safety in parks, for example my religion, ethnicity, age, LGBTQ+, nationality or disability status	0	0.003	+2	0.794	-2	-0.586	V1, V2, V3
33	I would feel safer in parks if there was a panic button/emergency help point	+4	1.284	+1	0.498	0	-0.144	V1, V2, V3
5	I find the presence of groups of men and boys in parks intimidating	0	-0.118	+1	0.595	+4	1.441	V1, V2, V3
24	Social attitudes towards women and girls, for example sexism and prejudice, need to change for me to feel safer in parks	+3	1.071	+4	1.367	0	-0.222	V3
17	Relevant authorities, for example the police or council, don't do enough about harassment of women and girls in parks	+2	0.855	+3	1.258	-1	-0.394	V1, V2, V3
45	The presence of some park users, for example drinkers, drug users, makes me feel less safe	+1	0.69	0	0.279	+5	1.948	V1, V2, V3
46	I find the presence of groups of teenagers in parks intimidating	-1	-0.251	-1	-0.484	+3	1.263	V3
6	The presence of lone men in parks makes me feel unsafe	-1	-0.309	+4	1.319	+5	1.513	V1
25	No parks are safe for women and girls	-2	-0.981	0	0.398	-4	-1.605	V1, V2, V3
11	Having lighting in parks would make them feel safer for me to use after dark	+5	1.792	-2	-0.79	+1	0.397	V1, V2, V3
2	Nothing could be done to parks to make me feel safe enough to use them after dark	-5	-1.966	+3	1.177	0	0.062	V1, V2, V3

Statements from most consensus to least consensus by girls

#	Statement	Viewpoint 1		Viewpoint 2		Viewpoint 3		Most to least consensus
		Q score	z score	Q score	z score	Q score	z score	
1	I feel safe in parks after dark	-4	-1.77	-5	-1.75	-5	-1.82	C
42	I feel safer nearer the middle compared to the edge of parks	-3	-0.72	-2	-0.84	-2	-0.75	C
40	I feel safer in more secluded areas of parks that are hidden from view	-3	-1.33	-4	-1.34	-4	-1.63	C
33	I would feel safer in parks if there was a panic button/emergency help point	+3	1.08	+2	1.03	+2	0.71	C
3	Even during daylight hours there are times when I feel unsafe in parks, for example mornings or lunchtimes	-1	-0.36	-1	-0.39	0	-0.02	C
37	I would feel safer in a park if a trusted person could see where I am on a mobile phone app	+1	0.19	+1	0.7	+1	0.21	V2
47	Experiences of crime or violence in the past make women and girls feel unsafe in parks	+4	1.31	+3	1.12	+4	1.71	V3
20	Signs of disorder make me feel unsafe in parks, for example rubbish, needles and graffiti	+1	0.12	-1	-0.41	+1	0.18	V2
39	I feel safer in areas of parks where I can see a good distance around me	+2	0.81	+2	0.89	+1	0.29	V3
38	I feel safer in areas of parks with thick vegetation, for example hedges, trees and bushes	-5	-2.05	-4	-1.36	-4	-1.62	V1
21	I feel safer in parks with tidy grass and flowerbeds	-2	-0.62	0	-0.12	-3	-0.83	V2
28	Parks do not look or feel like they are designed with women and girls' safety in mind	+1	0.29	-1	-0.49	-1	-0.33	V1
18	Walking boldly and confidently would make me feel safer in parks	-4	-1.61	-2	-0.92	-4	-1.68	V2
30	The presence of other women and girls in parks makes me feel safer	+2	0.83	0	0.18	+3	1.02	V2
31	I do not feel intimidated by men's presence in parks when they are with their families	-1	-0.37	0	0.13	+2	0.53	V1, V2, V3
45	The presence of some park users, for example drinkers, drug users, makes me feel less safe	+3	1.17	+4	1.19	+1	0.39	V3
29	I would feel safer using women-only areas of a park	-1	-0.4	0	-0.11	+1	0.5	V3
24	Social attitudes towards women and girls, for example sexism and prejudice, need to change for me to feel safer in parks	+3	1.25	+1	0.46	+4	1.42	V2
5	I find the presence of groups of men and boys in parks intimidating	+3	1.22	0	0.22	+1	0.43	V1
35	It is safer to challenge unwanted comments or attention from men and boys in parks than to ignore them	-3	-0.95	-4	-1.49	-5	-2.01	V1, V2, V3
12	Having lots of visible security measures in a park makes it seem like an unsafe place	-2	-0.61	-5	-1.51	-1	-0.4	V2
2	Nothing could be done to parks to make me feel safe enough to use them after dark	0	0.08	-3	-1.12	-2	-0.64	V1, V2, V3
4	Men and boys should take responsibility for changing their behaviour to make women and girls feel safer in parks, for example not walking or jogging too close	+1	0.27	0	-0.19	+3	1.01	V1, V2, V3
32	I feel safer using parks if I can see other park users of similar identity to me	0	-0.02	+4	1.21	+2	0.52	V1, V2, V3
44	Dogs in parks make me feel safe	+1	0.16	-2	-0.86	-3	-1.04	V1
17	Relevant authorities, for example the police or council, don't do enough about harassment of women and girls in parks	+4	1.43	+1	0.29	+4	1.42	V2
43	Fences or walls around the edges of parks make me feel safer	-4	-1.62	-1	-0.6	-1	-0.36	V1
14	You can't rely on other nearby park users to intervene when a women is being harassed or threatened in a park	0	0.1	-2	-1.1	0	0.05	V2
8	I would feel safer using parks as part of organised group activities, for example sports, exercise, social activities, or volunteering.	+1	0.14	+3	1.13	-1	-0.22	V2
34	Clearer signage and maps in parks would help me feel safer	-2	-0.44	+1	0.57	-2	-0.77	V2
25	No parks are safe for women and girls	-2	-0.48	-3	-1.27	0	0.13	V1, V2, V3
23	I feel safer nearer to amenities in parks, for example cafes, kiosks and ice cream vans	0	-0.09	+2	0.95	-1	-0.38	V2
26	Inspirational statues and murals of women and girls in parks would make me feel safer	-3	-1.42	0	-0.22	-3	-1.46	V2
48	Hearing about other women suffering bad experiences in parks makes me fearful of going to parks myself	+4	1.43	+1	0.64	+5	2.05	V1, V2, V3
10	CCTV cameras do not make me feel safe	0	0.1	-3	-1.21	0	-0.06	V2
41	Having lots of entrances and exits to a park makes me feel safer	+2	0.66	+4	1.44	0	0	V1, V2, V3
16	I would feel safer in parks if there were regular, high visibility patrols by park security staff	-1	-0.31	+2	1.06	0	-0.05	V2
19	Besides being a woman/girl, there are aspects of my identity which affect my sense of safety in parks, for example my religion, ethnicity, age, LGBTQ+, nationality or disability status	+2	0.96	+1	0.68	-2	-0.43	V3
22	I feel less safe when the park is busy with people	0	0.1	-2	-0.96	-3	-1.36	V1, V2, V3
15	Police officers in parks don't make me feel safe	0	-0.18	-3	-1.25	+1	0.34	V1, V2, V3
7	I feel safer using parks with friends and family	+1	0.59	+5	2.21	+3	1.26	V1, V2, V3
9	I feel safe in parks that provide a range of facilities and mixed uses, for example sports grounds, playgrounds or seating areas	-1	-0.3	+3	1.09	-1	-0.4	V2
11	Having lighting in parks would make them feel safer for me to use after dark	-1	-0.22	+2	0.98	+3	1.41	V1, V2, V3
6	The presence of lone men in parks makes me feel unsafe	+2	0.77	-1	-0.69	+2	0.88	V2
49	I feel safer in parks that I am familiar with	-1	-0.19	+5	1.59	+2	0.77	V1, V2, V3
13	Parks would feel safer if there were more park staff present, for example gardeners and maintenance staff	-2	-0.65	+3	1.13	0	0.06	V1, V2, V3
27	Everyday harassment of women and girls in public places, for example unwanted comments and attention, makes me feel unsafe in parks	+5	2.04	+1	0.35	+5	1.91	V2
36	As long as women and girls take personal safety measures in parks, they can be safe	-5	-2.24	-1	-0.67	-1	-0.26	V1, V2, V3
46	I find the presence of groups of teenagers in parks intimidating	+5	1.84	-1	-0.39	-2	-0.7	V1

Statements from most consensus to least consensus by professionals

	Statement	Viewpoint 1		Viewpoint 2		Most to least consensus
		Q score	Z score	Q score	Z score	
10	CCTV cameras do not make women and girls feel safe	-1	-0.472	-1	-0.484	C
42	Women and girls feel safer nearer the middle compared to the edge of parks	-1	-0.661	-2	-0.628	C
2	Nothing could be done to parks to make women and girls feel safe enough to use them after dark	-3	-1.473	-4	-1.549	C
12	Having lots of visible security measures in a park makes it seem like an unsafe place	-2	-0.841	-2	-0.917	C
15	Police officers in parks don't make women and girls feel safe	-2	-0.881	-2	-0.934	C
40	Women and girls feel safer in more secluded areas of parks that are hidden from view	-4	-1.569	-4	-1.623	C
17	Relevant authorities, for example the police or council, don't do enough about harassment of women and girls in parks	0	-0.027	0	0.071	C
22	Women and girls feel less safe when the park is busy with people	-3	-1.156	-3	-1.056	C
23	Women and girls feel safer nearer to amenities in parks, for example cafes, kiosks and ice cream vans	+2	0.853	+2	0.736	C
18	Walking boldly and confidently would make women and girls feel safer in parks	-2	-0.748	-2	-0.621	C
11	Having lighting in parks would make them feel safer for women and girls to use after dark	+1	0.483	+1	0.624	C
7	Women and girls feel safer using parks with friends and family	+4	1.457	+3	1.296	C
35	It is safer for women and girls to challenge unwanted comments or attention from men and boys in parks than to ignore them	-3	-1.461	-3	-1.284	C
37	Women and girls would feel safer in a park if a trusted person could see where they are on a mobile phone app	-1	-0.143	0	0.051	C
43	Fences or walls around the edges of parks make women and girls feel safer	-2	-0.867	-3	-1.113	C
28	Parks do not look or feel like they are designed with women and girls' safety in mind	0	0.02	-1	-0.238	C
6	The presence of lone men in parks makes women and girls feel unsafe	0	0.294	0	0.016	C
33	Women and girls would feel safer in parks if there was a panic button/emergency help point	-1	-0.292	-1	-0.579	C
26	Inspirational statues and murals of women and girls in parks would make them feel safer	-3	-1.212	-2	-0.897	C
31	Women and girls do not feel intimidated by men's presence in parks when they are with their families	0	0.095	+1	0.438	C
34	Clearer signage and maps in parks would help women and girls feel safer	0	-0.032	0	0.313	C
49	Women and girls feel safer in parks that they are familiar with	+2	0.809	+2	1.16	C
24	Social attitudes towards women and girls, for example sexism and prejudice, need to change for them to feel safer in parks	+3	1.191	+2	0.811	C
30	The presence of other women and girls in parks makes women and girls feel safer	+3	0.897	+3	1.28	C
45	The presence of some park users, for example drinkers, drug users, makes women and girls feel less safe	+5	1.828	+5	1.439	C
1	Women and girls feel safe in parks after dark	-5	-1.88	-4	-1.445	C
25	No parks are safe for women and girls	-5	-1.642	-5	-2.093	C
38	Women and girls feel safer in areas of parks with thick vegetation, for example hedges, trees and bushes	-4	-1.518	-5	-1.976	C
20	Signs of disorder make women and girls feel unsafe in parks, for example rubbish, needles and graffiti	+3	0.906	+4	1.4	C
32	Women and girls feel safer using parks if they can see other park users of similar identity to them	+1	0.744	+3	1.256	D
16	Women and girls would feel safer in parks if there were regular, high visibility patrols by park security staff	+1	0.597	+2	1.114	D
41	Having lots of entrances and exits to a park makes women and girls feel safer	-1	-0.108	1	0.416	D
3	Even during daylight hours there are times when women and girls feel unsafe in parks, for example mornings or lunchtimes	+1	0.332	-1	-0.239	D
8	Women and girls would feel safer using parks as part of organised group activities, for example sports, exercise, social activities, or volunteering	+1	0.653	+4	1.298	D
39	Women and girls feel safer in areas of parks where they can see a good distance around them	+2	0.75	+4	1.423	D
47	Experiences of crime or violence in the past make women and girls feel unsafe in parks	+5	1.497	+2	0.803	D
29	Women and girls would feel safer using women-only areas of a park	-1	-0.536	-3	-1.231	D
13	Parks would feel safer if there were more park staff present, for example gardeners and maintenance staff	+1	0.542	+3	1.265	D
44	Dogs in parks make women and girls feel safe	-2	-1.065	-1	-0.337	D
4	Men and boys should take responsibility for changing their behaviour to make women and girls feel safer in parks, for example not walking or jogging too close	+3	1.232	+1	0.422	D
14	You can't rely on other nearby park users to intervene when a women is being harassed or threatened in a park	0	0.279	-1	-0.54	D
19	Besides being a woman/girl, there are aspects of women and girls' identity which affect their sense of safety in parks, for example their religion, ethnicity, age, LGBTQ+, nationality or disability status	+1	0.706	0	-0.193	D
48	Hearing about other women suffering bad experiences in parks makes women and girls fearful of going to parks themselves	+4	1.4	+1	0.501	D
5	Women and girls find the presence of groups of men and boys in parks intimidating	+2	0.814	0	-0.089	D
21	Women and girls feel safer in parks with tidy grass and flowerbeds	-1	-0.507	+1	0.534	D
27	Everyday harassment of women and girls in public places, for example unwanted comments and attention, makes them feel unsafe in parks	+4	1.493	+1	0.452	D
46	Women and girls find the presence of groups of teenagers in parks intimidating	+2	0.773	-1	-0.27	D
36	As long as women and girls take personal safety measures in parks, they can be safe	-4	-1.528	0	-0.224	D
9	Women and girls feel safe in parks that provide a range of facilities and mixed uses, for example sports grounds, playgrounds or seating areas	0	-0.024	+5	1.44	D

Endnotes

1   Notably, creating 'safer spaces' is a key pillar of the Policing Violence Against Women and Girls national delivery framework (National Police Chiefs Council, 2021), which requires police forces to create 'problem profiles' of the most dangerous public, private and online spaces, including drawing on information from women about where they feel unsafe and at risk. The Home Office SafeStreet service collects spatial data on environmental and behavioural features of public places that feel unsafe, which can be used to inform problem profiles.

2   Findings shared at the workshop Green and Gender-just Cities: Exploring the Relationship Between Gender Inequalities and Urban Natural Environments, October 2022. More information available at: https://www.york.ac.uk/yesi/research/environment-health/green-and-gender-just-cities/

3   There can never be absolute safety, but risks should be perceived as at a tolerable level.

4   https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/policing-and-crime-news/655-000-secured-to-improve-safety-for-women-and-girls/

5   https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/media/9463/the-safety-of-women-and-girls-strategy.pdf

6   Information supplied by Helen Forman, West Yorkshire Combined Authority, based on information from the West Yorkshire: State of the Region Report 2021, available from: https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/media/7421/west-yorkshire-state-of-the-region-2021-report.pdf

7   Searches included Web of Science, Scopus, Google Scholar, University of Leeds Library, Google, The Conversation and Gov.UK with the terms: women, girl(s), children, park(s), public space, green space(s), fear, (un)safe.

8   The themes covered: temporality (daytime/after dark); seasonality; designing-in natural surveillance; entry/exit routes; dogs; anti-social behaviour and crime; previous victimisation; hearing about crime; men and boys; being alone or accompanied; use or activity in parks; physical security interventions; capable guardians (formal and informal); park reputation or image; media coverage; personal or individual characteristics; signs of disorder and quality of park; sense of spatial control; green space type; busyness of park; misogyny and sexism; inclusive design; women and girls; similar people/identities; information provision; and personal safety measures.

9   Our definition of women and girls was inclusive. All women and girl participants were asked a series of questions to capture aspects of their identity, including an open-response question on gender identity using wording from the Trevor Project's 'Measuring Youth Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity' report (Trevor Project, 2021: 13).

10 This statistical threshold means that there is a high probability that this was not due to chance.

11 Collectively, these viewpoints explain 51% of the total variance within the sample. The characteristics of women aligned with each viewpoint is provided in Appendix C.

12 Collectively, these viewpoints explain 44% of the total variance within the sample. The characteristics of girls aligned with each viewpoint is provided in Appendix C.

13 Notably, in this viewpoint, 75% of girls self-identified from ethnic minority backgrounds compared with 12% in Viewpoint 1 and 15% in Viewpoint 3. Following government guidance, 'ethnic minorities' refers to all ethnic groups except the white British group. See: https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/style-guide/writing-about-ethnicity.

14 Images and background information provided by Helen Forman, Urban Design Manager, West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

15 https://makespaceforgirls.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Better-Ideas.pdf

16 While photo elicitation was invaluable in generating reflective discussions, girls may have given different views had they experienced these spaces in person.

17 As Make Space for Girls highlight, in designing parks for girls, 'the most important step of all is to ask the girls what they want from the places in which they live'. https://makespaceforgirls.co.uk/case-studies/

18 The group had discussed their fear of (male) runners.

19 Collectively, these viewpoints explain 61% of the total variance within the sample. The characteristics of professionals aligned with each viewpoint is provided in Appendix C.

20 Although they distinguished between long grass/tall trees as potentially less intimidating in contrast to thick hedges above head height, which could reduce visibility and conceal attackers/hazards.

21 Female professionals reflected on their own experiences of harassment in explaining their views.

22 Disability is defined according to the Equality Act 2010, see: https://analysisfunction.civilservice.gov.uk/policy-store/measuring-disability-for-the-equality-act-2010/

23 Mapping the specific issues and incidents of violence against women and girls in West Yorkshire's parks was beyond the scope of this study. However, in preparing the bid to the Home Office Safer Streets Fund round three, data was collected on incidents in ten parks, which included harassment, indecent exposure and voyeurism, unwanted sexual touching, rape, sexual assault and up skirting. In addition, sexual exploitation of girls was identified as an issue in certain parks when discussing the findings at a workshop on the 31 October 2022. Moreover, a survey of 1,371 women in one district of West Yorkshire found that 45% had experienced harassment in parks and open spaces (Women Friendly Leeds, 2021: 11).

24 https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal11

25 Keep Britain Tidy manage the Green Flag Award scheme on licence from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. See: https://greenflagaward.org/

26 Make Space for Girls campaigns for facilities and public spaces for teenage girls. See: https://makespaceforgirls.co.uk/

27 This work is being taken forward as part of a follow-on collaborative project funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023 (ES/X002861/1). For more information about this project, see: https://essl.leeds.ac.uk/law/news/article/1621/dr-anna-barker-leads-new-project-to-improve-understanding-of-women-and-girls-safety-in-parks

28 The State of UK's Public Parks 2021 (Association of Public Sector Excellence, 2021).

29 https://www.arup.com/projects/perceptions-of-night-time-safety-women-and-girls

30 https://www.college.police.uk/research/crime-reduction-toolkit/street-lighting?InterventionID=3

31 The Home Office SafeStreets app is a service for people to report where they feel unsafe. Reports include identifying reasons for feeling unsafe, which can be behavioural (e.g. catcalling, harassment), environmental (e.g. vandalism). It is being used in West Yorkshire to produce monthly analytical reports which are fed back to neighbourhood policing teams.

Acknowledgements

Disclaimer

Cover photo credits
University of Leeds Image Library