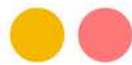


CREATING SAFER, PROTECTIVE SPACES: PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF SAFETY IN VICTORIA NIGHTLIFE AND HOSPITALITY ESTABLISHMENTS

A POLICY PAPER



Good Night Out Vancouver, 2023

**good
night
out.** VICTORIA
SATELLITE
OFFICE

Acknowledgements

Good Night Out would like to acknowledge that this exploration and our ongoing presence in Greater Victoria takes place on the unceded traditional Coast Salish territories of the ləkʷəŋən (Lekwungen) speaking peoples. As a feminist organization addressing violence against marginalized genders, we are committed to making the links between colonization, settler-imposed power structures and sexual violence while seeking to dismantle them, as each are inextricably connected.

Dedication

Good Night Out would like to dedicate this work to the community members who took the time to contribute to this exploration through participation of the focus group sessions. We further wish to dedicate this work to all those working in anti-violence and sexual violence prevention. We hope our contribution will add to the great work that has come before us and will come after us.

For a future where nights out are free from sexual violence.

To reference this document, please use the following citation:

Kierstead, A.L., & Forrester, S. (2023). Creating Safer, Protective Spaces: Perceptions and experiences of safety in Victoria nightlife and hospitality establishments. Victoria, BC: Good Night Out Vancouver.

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Publication date: December 2023

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As part of practicing ongoing and ethical consent, we ask that you respect the license. Remember, consent is an ongoing way of moving through these industries (non-profit, hospitality, nightlife, etc.) and the world and one of immediate ways to engage with this practice is to honour our asks. If we are alerted to someone disregarding our asks, we will call them in around this. We appreciate you honouring this work and our relationship with it.

The exploration process and the writing of this paper would not have been possible without the funding from Canadian Women's Foundation, in partnership with Ending Violence Association of British Columbia. The survey referenced throughout was funded through the City of Victoria.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



From November 2022 to February 2023, Good Night Out gathered information on community perceptions and experiences of safety within hospitality and nightlife spaces in Victoria, British Columbia to learn how to increase safety for patrons and workers. As GNO is a non-profit committed to building community capacity to prevent and respond to sexual violence in the aforementioned sectors, we sought to gather information on self-reported experiences of harassment and sexual violence in addition to insights on patrons’ general sense of belonging, self-expression, and physical and psychological safety within these spaces.

This data was gathered from an online survey, open from November 16 to December 30, 2022, and 4 focus group sessions, facilitated with the same participants weekly between January 18 and February 8, 2023. There were a total of 319 survey respondents and 7 focus group participants. The findings from the survey were further explored with the focus group across 4 sessions on the following topics: 1) consent and prevention messaging, 2) establishment reporting and response, 3) drink spiking and over-intoxication, and 4) essentials for a safe and fun night out.

The findings and recommendations are presented thematically in this paper and the recommendations are further grouped using **a social-ecological model of sexual violence prevention in nightlife and hospitality settings:**

STRUCTURAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address barriers in accessing crisis and support services for persons who have experienced sexual violence, “survivors”. • Develop, implement, and enforce policy that addresses sexual violence in industries that experience gender inequity • Ease financial burden on industry to partake in training and providing wellness support through subsidies or bursaries for small businesses to compensate staff to take training 	
SOCIETAL	Challenge social norms that uphold prescriptive heteronormative gender roles and perpetuate rape culture.	
COMMUNITY	Build community capacity to prevent and respond to sexualized violence through education and support programs.	
	Patron	Industry
RELATIONSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and implement a street team, a peer support model for safety and prevention, in the downtown core. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with establishments in educational efforts and evaluation. • Adopt a risk assessment approach for prevention 	
INDIVIDUAL	Promote healthy personal and professional relationships through practicing accountability when individuals push and violate boundaries. Engage men and masculine-presenting people in sexual violence awareness and prevention.	
INDIVIDUAL	Build bystander intervention skills and learn about comprehensive consent from an early age through public education and accessible adult learning/programs. Shift attitudes away from victim-blaming towards an understanding of collective responsibility to improve safety.	

Good Night Out’s social-ecological model for sexual violence prevention in nightlife and hospitality settings adapted from Khan et. al. 2019; Stokols, et. al. 1996; and Terry, 2014.

Using the social-ecological model we can demonstrate that addressing sexual violence in nightlife settings requires a comprehensive approach involving multiple levels, working cohesively, as community resources can target the relationship and individual levels. This model also depicts that there are various factors that can influence human behaviour; therefore taking action at peer, community, and organizational levels can create sustained change on all fronts.

A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

We wish to acknowledge that not all persons who have experienced sexual violence identify as victims nor survivors given the social connotations and stigma attributed to these labels. For simplicity in this paper, we identify all persons who self-reported an experience of sexual violence as survivors.



While the term survivor is used herein, we recognize that various terms used to identify people who have experienced sexual violence can have both positive and negative connotations and that there are inherent stereotypes that are attributed to terms like “victim” and “survivor”, such as perceptions of weakness and strength, that may alienate folks that do not feel they themselves or their experience fit into the ideal description of these terms. For this reason, we ask readers to think about the power of language while engaging with this paper and to think critically when referring to such persons in different contexts (i.e, in day-to-day conversation, in policy, in media, etc.).

safer nights out for all.
music. hospitality. nightlife.

INTRODUCTION

In 2018, just over 1 in 4 (27%) Victoria residents experienced unwanted sexual behaviour in public spaces with women being significantly more likely to experience it versus men.

Statistics Canada, 2020. Safe Cities profile series: Key indicators by census metropolitan area

SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

For both men and women in Canada, the most common public space for where their most serious incident of unwanted sexual behaviour occurred was inside a restaurant or bar.

According to GNO's recent survey, 61% of patrons in Victoria experienced harassment and 34% experienced sexual violence **inside a hospitality establishment** with about 1 in 4 of patrons reporting to the establishment at which it occurred. For the small sample of Victoria hospitality industry workers that participated in GNO's survey, more than half reported experiencing harassment at work.

BC legislation states that workplaces must take reasonable steps to mitigate bullying and harassment, this includes sexual violence. Despite the workplace being a place that people should feel safe and be free from experiencing harassment, 47% of workers across Canadian provinces witnessed or experienced some sort of inappropriate sexualized or discriminatory behaviour. Those belonging to a sexual minority are twice as likely to experience unwanted sexual behaviour at work.

Both patrons and workers alike deserve to have spaces to exist without fear of being victimized based on their gender and/or sexuality.

Social spaces that resist, actively challenge and offer respite from sexual violence are essential. Hospitality and nightlife are no exception.



ABOUT THE PROJECT

Good Night Out (GNO) sought to gather current information on perceptions and experiences of safety amongst patrons and industry workers in hospitality and nightlife spaces in downtown Victoria. Information of this nature is critical to informing our anti-violence work within communities, similar to the Granville Entertainment district in Vancouver where GNO operates an award-winning peer support outreach team on weekend late nights to support patrons.

In summer of 2022, GNO opened a satellite office in Victoria, extending our operations from primarily Vancouver where we have been operating since 2017. The official expansion of GNO's services to Victoria was anticipated as the City of Victoria named our organization in the 2019 Strategic Plan as a model for exploring ways to end sexual violence on nights out.

As part of the Strategic Plan Grant awarded to GNO in 2022 from the City of Victoria, we set out to conduct the first-ever nightlife safety survey in Victoria as a way to provide the City with information from the public about their perceptions and experiences engaging in Victoria's nightlife. The focus of the survey was on safety in Victoria's nightlife within public spaces and in particular, hospitality and nightlife establishments that are licensed to sell liquor. Some of the feedback received from survey respondents was the desire to discuss experiences outside of establishments and around the area in connection to nights out in these spaces; GNO gathered some preliminary findings with regards to surrounding areas within the focus group sessions.

GNO also received funding in the same year from the Canadian Women's Foundation in partnership with Ending Violence Association BC which allowed us to host a focus group, gathering qualitative data regarding how to achieve safer nights out in Victoria and exploring preliminary insights in-depth found in the results of the survey.

The purpose of the focus group was two-fold:

- 1) share findings of our recent safety survey with the community, including those who work and socialize in hospitality and nightlife spaces; and,
- 2) explore some of the concerns and ideas raised in the survey in more detail and hear thoughts on how to make Victoria's hospitality spaces safer to work and play in.

Supported by the findings from the *Safer Spaces* survey, this policy paper presents the findings of the focus group sessions and outlines recommendations for creating a safer nightlife in the local community.

METHODOLOGY

This exploration was done with a mixed-methods approach, using both quantitative and qualitative frameworks including a cross-sectional survey research and thematic analysis. While our findings from the focus group are the main focus of this paper, we highlight relevant survey results where applicable as the survey acted as the starting point for the topics of discussion for the focus group.

For the **focus group**, GNO collected qualitative data from four, 90 minute virtual sessions with 7 participants. The participants were recruited locally from GNO's existing volunteer applicant list, an online hospitality group, and community organizations. All participants had to review an information sheet and complete an intake and consent form prior to participation. The final focus group comprised 7 individuals of various intersecting identities with the majority being queer white women which aligned with the demographics in our recent survey. Focus group participants were compensated with an honorarium of \$240.00 for participation in all four sessions plus a 15 minute exit survey.

Participation in the focus group was confidential therefore measures to protect confidentiality were implemented.

- 1) Sessions were recorded for the sole purpose of transcribing the information for accuracy in reporting. Transcription will not include any identifying information about the participants as we will use pseudonyms/replacement names (i.e. "Participant 1"). Once the session has been transcribed, the recording will be permanently deleted.
- 2) All personal data collected in the recruitment (including intake and consent forms) and evaluation process was destroyed within 3 months of the last focus group date.

An inductive thematic analysis approach was applied to the focus group data meaning that we started with our data and identified possible patterns across codes to derive themes. This was conducted by the main facilitator based on notes and transcripts from the data gathering sessions.

For **the survey**, a cross-sectional study design was applied as this was the first time GNO conducted research in the Greater Victoria community. The data collected in the survey serves as a starting point for future longitudinal analysis should surveys be conducted on a recurring basis to evaluate perceptions and experiences of nightlife safety within commercial establishments licensed to serve liquor. The survey was open for responses for 6 weeks and hosted on a dedicated website, <www.saferspacesurvey.com>.

Participant selection was randomized and there were a total of 319 participants who completed the survey. 292 of the participants identified themselves as patrons which is relevant as patrons were asked different questions from those who identified as industry workers.

Using information from the 2021 Census of the Population for the City of Victoria, our margin of error for the sample of patrons is ~6% at a 95% confidence level. This means we anticipate our survey findings would be within ~6 percentage points of the real population value 95% of the time.

93.4% of the total survey respondents identified that they are local to Victoria and the remaining 6.6% identified as visitors. As the survey was anonymous, GNO did not collect information (i.e., postal codes) to validate residency. Not all who completed the survey answered all of the questions.

For the purposes of calculating statistical significance, we looked at the population information for the City of Victoria provided in the 2021 Census. We reference data from the Victoria Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) where data does not exist for the City of Victoria census subdivision. We chose to use the data from the City rather than the CMA as we focused on experiences and perceptions of safety at establishments in Victoria where the bulk of which are located in the downtown core in the City of Victoria.

93.42% of survey respondents said they were local to Victoria. While we asked if respondents considered themselves local to the area, we did not capture addresses to verify if a respondent resides in the area.

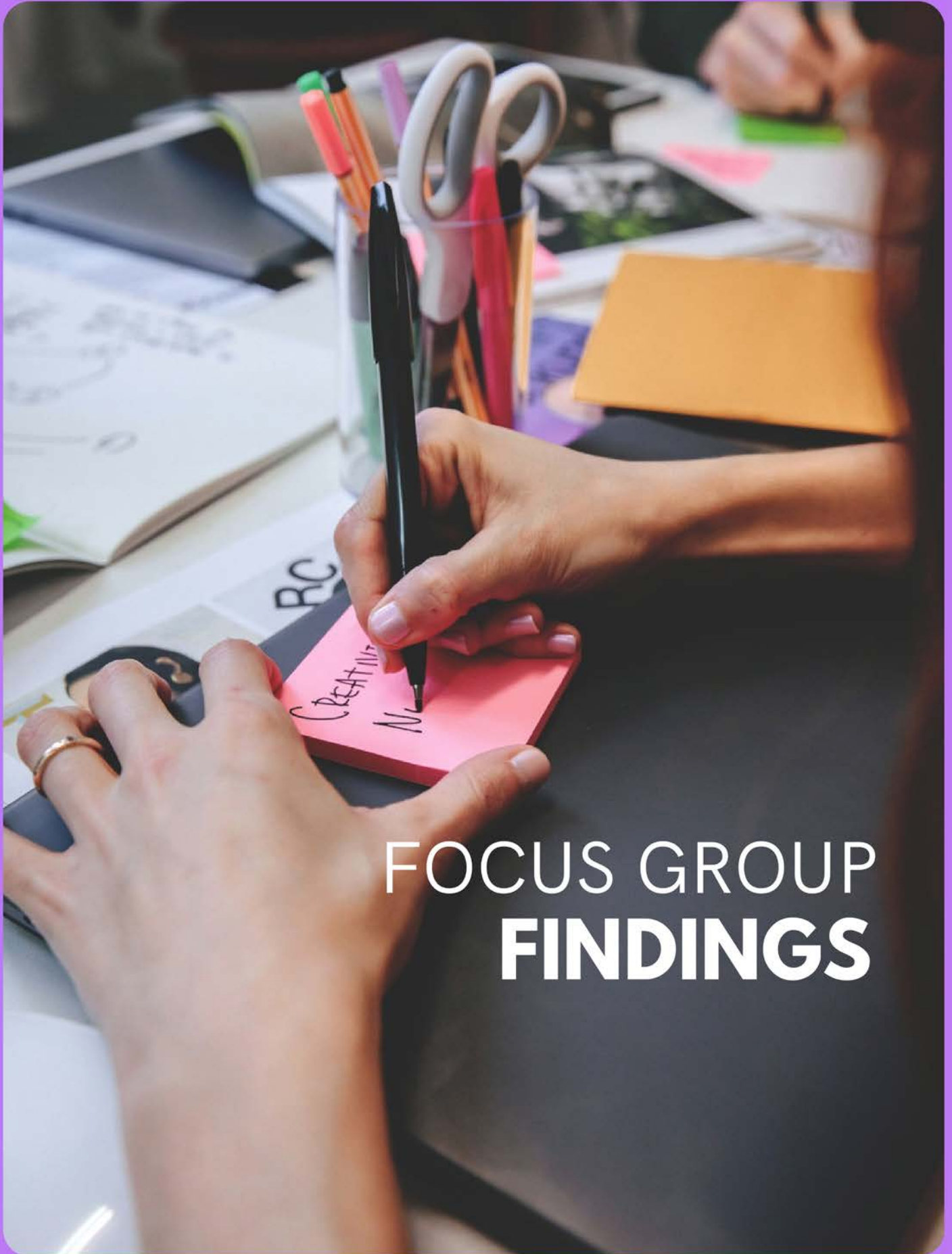
Prior to completing the survey, participants were provided with information pertinent to obtaining informed consent as displayed on the webpage prior which included details on privacy and data management. Survey participants were anonymous and no identifying information was collected unless the participant opted to enter the prize draw that was used as an incentive to encourage participation. In the event that a survey participant entered the draw, only their personal email address was collected and destroyed after the draw was completed following the close of the survey in January 2023.

OUR POSITIONALITY

Reflecting on our positionality as researchers is relevant to conducting valuable qualitative research and recognizing its limitations. The GNO research team is composed of white settler cisgender women and queer femmes with (Western) academic experience in sociology, public policy, nursing, gender studies, and social work. In addition to our roles as sexual violence prevention educators, our combined work and lived experience also delves into the areas of harm reduction and mental health.

Regarding the focus group, 5 of the 7 participants provided feedback indicating that on average, the facilitators agreed to the group agreements for the session, which included taking a neutral stance on topics, actively listening, and managing time. It is worth noting that as an organization that operates using anti-oppressive and survivor-centered approaches, neutrality is not always possible.

Additionally standard qualitative research comes with its limitations such as size and bias with sampling; for the focus group GNO sought out a small mixed group of folks employed in the hospitality and nightlife sector and those with previous interest in GNO's work that matched the sample make-up of the online survey. Given that the majority of those who completed our online survey in 2022 were patrons, we opted to primarily focus on patron experiences in the additional exploration with the focus group; therefore, our recommendations are largely directed towards improving perceptions and experiences of safety for patrons with acknowledgement of areas to explore to create safer work experiences for those employed in the hospitality and nightlife industry.



FOCUS GROUP **FINDINGS**

BARRIERS TO SAFER NIGHTLIFE



Based on the focus group findings which were substantiated by survey results, **3 key barriers** arose for patrons to feel safer on nights out.

01.

Individualistic Culture

- Profit motive and over-intoxication affect ability and willingness of businesses and workers to intervene when witnessing problematic behaviour.

02.

Poor Education & Training

- Lack of knowledge of how to intervene when witnessing harassment and providing support for someone who has experienced sexual violence.
- Binary views of consent and dominance of heteronormative scripts in sexual encounters.

03.

Lack of Accountability

- Focus is placed on the individual to be responsible for preventing the harm from occurring rather than on the perpetrator causing it.
- Lack of alternative forms of response and support than establishment security and/or police.

INDIVIDUALISTIC CULTURE

In an individualistic culture, like most Western countries, independence and self-sufficiency are considered predominant values and people are encouraged to put self-interest above that of others. As we function in a capitalist society, financial gain is beneficial for self-interest therefore industries where tip-based compensation accounts for a large portion of income will motivate workers to increase their tips through methods such as upselling especially in times where COVID-19 economic impacts have adversely affected tourism and hospitality, an industry that is disproportionately affected by gender inequality.

Tipped workers experience sexual harassment at a higher rate than non-tipped workers and were also less likely to have the behaviour addressed when reporting to management. For workers dependent on gratuities for the majority of their income such as servers and bartenders, tipping creates a dynamic in which a patron holds power over them that they can exploit, subjecting tipped workers to unwanted sexual behaviour as a condition of receiving a good tip.

Conversely, increased liquor sales will contribute to alcohol consumption, which has been linked to tipping practices with a possible explanation for this being that alcohol intake increases people's moods and decreases their ability to process information. While alcohol consumption may lead to an increase in tips, it can also increase the likelihood of perpetrating and/or experiencing sexual violence amongst patrons or towards workers.

Sexual violence in nightlife does not exist in a vacuum. The compounding of tip-based compensation and alcohol consumption in an industry predominately staffed by women, will therefore heighten the risk of sexual violence being perpetrated in a liquor-licensed establishment and both workers and patrons being victimized. Discussions with the focus group explored these factors as areas requiring attention in Victoria-based hospitality and nightlife establishments.

Business profits and tip-based compensation

"Establishments would rather make money than create safety."

Focus group participant

Focus groups were presented with the results from the survey results on what would make patrons feel safer as it pertains to preventing drink-spiking and over-intoxication. Participants shared in their observations both as workers and patrons in nightlife spaces that businesses value profit over the safety of their patrons.

Studies have shown a positive correlation between alcohol consumption and tipping practices, suggesting that the more intoxicated a patron is, the more likely they are to tip. One participant directly attributed tip-based compensation with the over-service of alcohol.

"As long as tipping is the industry norm, people are going to continue to over-serve in order to make more money."

Focus group participant

This aligns with the written feedback from survey respondents as beyond individual workers relying on tips, businesses as a whole may be less likely to prevent or intervene as one survey respondent explained that profit motive needs to be removed from the nightlife experience as it "incentivizes staff to over-serve patrons and turn a blind eye to sketchy behaviour".

Another respondent wrote that they believe most workers are willing to be community minded and helpful, however making money will always be prioritized in a society that is geared towards making a profit. Financial reality of both business and workers may therefore result in complicity as instances of sexual harassment go unnoticed or are tolerated as they risk their profit, income and livelihood being negatively impacted.

In our economic system, money is needed so people can meet their basic needs therefore money is a powerful motivator, especially as businesses and customer-facing workers have been greatly impacted by COVID-19. In this reality, the need for many to pay their bills is likely to trump any desire from a worker or business to intervene when a high-paying patron is causing harm, especially if the worker is not directly affected by the harm but even in scenarios where they are the target for sexual harassment.

While not discussed in detail in our focus group, it is worth noting that research shows that tip-based compensation not only contributes to over-service but also creates an environment where workers are subject to tolerating sexual harassment for the sake of their income or because the business applies pressure to staff to not lose the customer. Not addressing this form of sexual violence then contributes to its normalization in the industry where sexual harassment is assumed to be part of the job.

Over-service, binge-drinking, and substance use

Approximately 1 in 3 people in Canada reported in 2018 that alcohol was a factor in their most serious experience of unwanted sexual behaviour in a public space. According to the General Social Survey on Victimization, individuals in Canada who engaged in binge drinking, excessive alcohol consumption, were 2 times more likely than those who did not to experience sexual assault with women being more than 3 times more likely to experience this type of victimization. In one study of first-year university women, more than three-quarters of sexual assaults involved using drugs or alcohol to render the victim incapacitated (i.e., drug-facilitated sexual assault).

"Over-serving is an industry problem that is normalized by our toxic drinking culture."

"[We need] shifts in the culture of establishments so that the goal isn't to get over-intoxicated."

Participants on culture and drinking

Survey snapshot



While the majority of patrons and the entirety of the focus group said policies and procedures that work to prevent drink spiking (drug-facilitated sexual assault) in establishments would make them feel safer on a night out, none of the participants could recount that they had seen prevention policies in place or in practice at Victoria establishments.

For an example of how this may look in practice, consider ordering a round of drinks for an individual that is not present or not part of your group. Best practice would be for the server to obtain permission from the receiving party if they want to have the drink before placing the order.

Closely tied to the profit motive, participants reflected on how this drives over-consumption.

“Establishments are all about money. It seems like they believe if you cut someone off you’re no longer making money off them so you might as well kick them out.”

Focus group participant

Further on party culture, one participant explained that “last call frenzy is insane as people mass order [and] consume drinks”. As we discussed the lack of or invisibility of prevention procedures by establishments, the group turned to reflecting on the roles of liquor inspectors and wondering how they can work collaboratively with establishments to address some of these issues.

Those in the group that did not work in the industry asked if there was a central reporting system that liquor inspectors could access to know which areas require support; participants with working experience in the industry discussed the voluntary BarWatch program in BC as an option however raised that there are some concerns with implementation and privacy.

While our online survey did not gather information on respondents’ substance-use (including alcohol), the focus group shared the desire for industry workers and bystanders to be “trained to assist people who use [other] substances” as the lack of knowledge around substance combinations and presence of stigma toward people who use drugs (PWUD) was raised as a barrier towards prevention. One participant said “establishments need to have more patience and less judgment”.

Sexual violence as a personal problem

Several focus group participants alluded to sexual violence being seen as a personal, private problem. For decades this social perception has persisted despite literature explaining how structures and systems have shaped impacted survivors.

When it comes to drug-facilitated sexual assault, commonly referred to as drink-spiking, an observation from the focus group was that prevention is often passed onto those perceived to be a target or victim of having their drinks dosed without their knowledge.

This is materialized through safety and prevention campaigns as well as products designed for prevention being highly gendered. In this sense, often prevention falls to individuals, in this case patrons, to prevent it from happening to them, rather than establishments being proactive in creating an environment that deters bad actors.

“Lots of tools on the market are targeted towards patrons: scrunchie, drink condoms, nail polishes that change color based on presence of substance...”

Focus group participant

In reviewing various contemporary safety and prevention campaigns, one participant pointed out that the majority of messaging shown focuses on heterosexual encounters that portray women as victims and hold women individually responsible for preventing the violence that is enacted upon them.

Another participant echoed concerns of only heterosexual encounters being the focus of safety campaigns:

[Sexual violence] does not just happen between cis men and women.

Focus group participant

In Canada, individuals belonging to a sexual minority reported being sexually assaulted three times more than those who identified as heterosexual. In surveying Victoria patrons, just over 70% of 2SLBTQIA+ respondents reported experiencing harassment within a local establishment in comparison to 54.5% of those who did not identify as 2SLGBTQIA+.

When safety campaigns do not have a diverse representation of the community or heavily focus on one type of relationship/encounter, patrons who've experienced harm may feel isolated; patrons may not believe support resources are for them or they may question whether their experience qualifies as sexual harassment/violence as they do not fit the narrative of what a victim should look or act like. Therefore, a lack of diversity in prevention messaging can have an unintended consequence of reinforcing victim-blaming narratives and harmful gender norms when solely focused on individual and gendered responsibility.

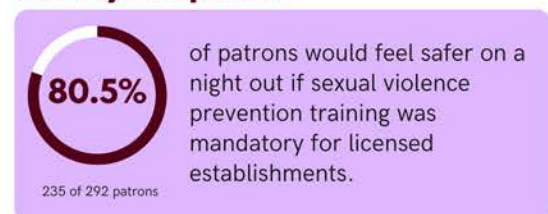
POOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Survey respondents were asked what would make them feel safer on a night out and were provided with multiple-choice and an open text field for response. The top 3 selected safety measures all involved some form of safety training around sexual violence prevention for businesses and workers as well as taxi operators.

Revisiting the findings from the survey on disclosures to and response from establishments, 1 out of 4 patrons reported instances of sexual violence and harassment that occurred. Furthermore, those who experience harassment or sexual violence at an establishment were 3.7 times more likely to disagree that establishments provide safe opportunities to voice issues or disclosures.

In asking the focus group what could encourage patrons who experience this harm to disclose to an establishment, participants suggested that sexual violence awareness and prevention be included in British Columbia's mandatory responsible beverage service training program, Serving-It-Right. The group believed that mandatory training would ensure staff have a basic understanding to address, prevent, and respond to incidents within their spaces.

Survey snapshot



Bystander intervention skills for industry

In the 2018 Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces, Canadians reported their most serious incident of unwanted sexual behaviour occurred in a bar or restaurant. This tells us not only that sexual violence is happening in public places, but that there are very likely bystanders around. Having the skills to safely assess and intervene is essential to addressing this unwanted sexual behaviour.

In an Australian study on bystander intervention in bars, ambiguity around pre-existing relationships and social norms in nightlife were listed as potential factors to determine whether a sexual behaviour was unwanted; further it was assumed by bystanders that witnessing few patrons reprimanded for sexual violence would lead other patrons to think these behaviours are acceptable and therefore they would be less likely to intervene.

When discussing barriers to reporting to an establishment, one focus group participant suggested that any reporting process could be further complicated when the sexual violence occurs between people who know each other.

"So much sexual violence happens between people who know each other and this can complicate the reporting process."

Focus group participant

While not fully discussed in our focus group, one Victoria-based study from 2016 which involved focus groups with over 50 workers in retail, food services and hospitality, found that staff felt their employer did not prepare them to handle verbally abusive and aggressive patrons. Bystander intervention skills not only will improve staff's ability to detect and address poor behaviour but it can also better prepare staff that are on the receiving end of sexual harassment.

In reply to the focus group's discussion on industry' improving their response capacity, one participant believed that employees "are not qualified to deal with these types of disclosures". Training and adequate internal policies can also aid in providing clarity around the scope of an employee's role when receiving a disclosure not only to adequately support the person who has experienced harm but to protect themselves from vicarious trauma.

Existing data and exploration with the focus group suggests that industry staff may benefit not only from basic bystander intervention training, but from further clarity on the scope in which they should intervene or not intervene in patron-to-patron interactions.

Beyond bystander intervention, focus group participants also recommended additional training for staff to ensure when they respond to disclosures of sexual violence, that it is trauma-informed.

"We need to be survivor-focused [and think about] what other resources can an establishment offer a person who discloses harm".

Participants on training for industry workers

"[Staff] need to be trained in nonviolent communication, de-escalation, challenging behavior, [and] trauma-informed practice."

Misunderstanding sexual violence & limited knowledge of consent

Essential to being able to intervene is the ability to understand and detect sexual harassment. Research suggests that those working in an industry with a higher prevalence of sexual harassment reduces the chances that workers will be able to identify interactions as sexual harassment.

Uncertainty of whether an interaction is considered sexual harassment is further impacted by other factors such as the bystander's sex as well a lack of understanding of what constitutes consent.

In reviewing safety campaigns regarding consent and sexual violence prevention with a focus on nightlife and alcohol consumption, focus group participants found the scope of messaging across the examples to be largely limited to binary views of consent (i.e., yes means yes and no means no) and did not address the stigmatization of rejection and power-based nature of sexual violence. As one participant notably commented, "it really [shows] how critical education is - posters will always be limited to the knowledge of the viewer".

Several participants felt existing campaigns that look to provide education on what consent is and is not, such as the Safe Campuses BC campaign, were limited in scope as they only focused on what is legal and illegal, forgoing many other behaviors that make people feel uncomfortable:



"[This messaging on consent] only touches on sex. There are other advances in moments. The messaging could be broader. It's more about the space you hold and the behavior."

"There is a spectrum of consent so it sort of misses the mark. It feels like a check box like "at least we are saying something"."

"Ads like these should not leave interpretation. Consent is already confusing to some people."

LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY

According to the survey findings on establishment disclosures and response, roughly 30% of respondents agreed that 'Victoria establishments take quick and appropriate action when discrimination or safety becomes an issue to patrons' and less than a quarter of patrons agreed that establishments provide safe opportunities to voice issues or disclosures within their capacity.

However, those who experienced sexual violence in an establishment were almost 4 times more likely to disagree with both of the above statements than those who did not report experiencing sexual violence.

This tells us that establishments could be more trauma-informed with reporting processes that are available to patrons, i.e., structured in a way that prevents re-traumatization of survivors.

Focus group participants discussed accountability in two-fold: 1) establishments' responsibility for creating a space free from harassment both preventively and reactionary, and 2) holding the person who caused harm accountable within their purview as a commercial establishment.

Responsibility of establishments

The focus group advocated for sexual violence awareness, prevention and response training to be explicitly included in Serving-It-Right (SIR) to act as a mechanism for enforcement when establishments do not adequately mitigate the risk of violence. This pertains to what's called the duty to intervene: an establishment's duty to not allow people on the premises who appear likely to harm others as well as to remove patrons engaging in dangerous or negligent conduct.

“Sexual violence [prevention] should be a part of Serving-It-Right so all workers are trained as a requirement, we need to be survivor-focused, what other resources can an establishment offer a person who discloses harm.”

Focus group participant

While the duty to intervene is within the scope of SIR, there lacks a robust explanation of how to address incidents of unwanted sexual behaviour and the nuances of how scenarios are further complicated by power dynamics and social norms present in the hospitality industry.

When probed about how establishments could improve handling patrons that require ejection either due to over intoxication or perpetrating harm, one participant claimed that *"staff often operate "out of sight, out of mind" [with] no follow-up [when] removing people"*. This suggests that there is a gap between application of liquor service regulations and perception of public safety in enforcement of them; clarity on the scope of how an establishment ensures the duty of care for patrons both on and off the premises is essential to supporting safer nights out.

Survey snapshot



Focus for prevention messaging

Similar to the observations of sexual violence being seen as a personal problem, the focus group analyzed various consent and sexual violence prevention messaging in the form of advertisements and were asked about their impressions.

One key observation was that the majority of messaging typically only addressed patron to patron interactions and did not provide any instruction to patrons on where to get help at the establishment level; for the select few that included a call to action for people to take if they experienced or witnessed sexual violence, the resources were primarily targeted to support resources rather than accountability measures that an establishment could enforce.

The group also expressed concerns of establishments displaying safety and prevention messaging but not having adequate skills to de-escalate potentially harmful situations between patrons. In comparison to survey results, about half of patrons (48%) did not feel that establishments communicate about patron safety effectively and almost two thirds don't believe there is adequate, visible, safety messaging.

"Hopefully these [prevention] posters are supplementary to more in-depth education"

Focus group participant

Establishments should consider that displaying safety and prevention messaging can come with an assumption that their space is equipped to address instances of sexual harassment and other forms of violence. In the event that harm occurs in the space, is reported but not adequately handled (or perceived to be), patrons lose faith in the establishment and it renders this messaging meaningless, contributing to feelings of distrust amongst the community.

From the focus group discussion, a cognitive dissonance was observed between the desire for establishments' to make their spaces safer and implementing adequate policy and procedures to address sexual violence.

"It is very much a culture shift that is needed not just having [prevention] campaigns."

Focus group participant

Participants reported that any time they saw prevention campaigns they questioned what role the establishment plays in preventing violence and if businesses felt it was enough to put up safety messaging without any other mechanisms for prevention in place.

"My experience of the staff has been pretty lacklustre when actually called on. This experience has kinda taken the wind out of all of these types of campaigns for me. So I think that at least here, training/auditing of bar staff is very important in maintaining faith in these programs."

Focus group participant

Accountability for perpetrators

The normalization of what is considered expected and acceptable behaviour in nightlife settings has been cited in numerous studies as a contributor to nightlife-related sexual violence. Behaviours such as victim-blaming (ex. “you shouldn’t have drank so much”) or pushing up against someone with sexual intent/touching people on the dance floor without consent. Social norms in nightlife spaces can therefore be seen to create a culture of permissibility, in which sexual violence is expected and tolerated in this environment. These power dynamics are amplified when they occur in an environment where sexual violence is seen as par for the course. Establishments must lead by example by holding their staff and patrons accountable for upholding such norms.

When discussing potential barriers to reporting instances of sexual violence to an establishment, all participants referenced power dynamics between the patron and those working for or owning the business particularly if the perpetrator was an employee of the establishment. Two participants described that workers that are bystanders risk being “canceled” or black-listed from future opportunities if they call out problematic behaviour of someone who is highly respected in the industry. These power dynamics are amplified when they occur in an environment where sexual violence is seen as par for the course.

Experiences of sexual violence within Victoria’s bar and restaurant industry began circulating online at the end of January 2021 which was brought up during one session with the focus group in which participants called for accountability practices to be implemented within establishments and the industry as a whole.

While most discussions centered around the patron experience, power dynamics impact workers too. According to a national survey of sexual misconduct at work, the second most likely reason workers (39% of women and 27% of men) did not talk to anyone at work about the gender-based discrimination they experienced was because they did not think any action would be taken. In turn, over a quarter of women who experienced sexual assault in the workplace stated that the perpetrator was someone in a position of authority in the workplace.

One participant recalled from a recent night out in Victoria that “the creepiest person was the security guard”. Another participant noted from both personal experience and from witnessing interactions on a night out that most of the unsafe behaviour displayed was directly from staff.

Furthermore, one participant shared that if a report isn’t handled by the establishment and this becomes known publicly, any negative impacts on the establishment directly impacts workers’ income as most hospitality workers work in places where their compensation is tied to tipping.

“Keeping a harmful person in the venue is negligence, we can offer perpetrators the chance to change their behaviour only a certain number of times before they are knowingly causing harm, we must offer care to survivors with consent and discretion, all staff should be trained in de-escalation and active listening skills so as to not re-traumatize.”

**Focus group participant
regarding removing patrons
who have caused harm**

RECOMMENDATIONS



RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results from our survey and findings from the focus group and literature review, the following outlines recommendations for reducing the risk of sexual violence perpetration in public spaces where alcohol and other substances are consumed. The recommendations were developed with the social-ecological model in mind, which can be found in the Executive Summary. It should be noted that none of the recommendations should be actioned in a silo but rather implemented with thoughtful consideration of the impact on the other levels and preferably, consultation with said groups to promote collective responsibility for addressing sexual violence in nightlife spaces.

SHORT-TERM

01. Equip the public with bystander intervention skills

Public violence prevention workshops that include bystander intervention could be offered at low to no cost to the community through partnerships between non-profit organizations that already offer this training, such as Good Night Out, and neighbourhood associations interested in building community resilience.



02. Provide low-barrier consent education to the public

Educational campaigns that look to expand the application of consent beyond sexual interactions could assist in debunking assumptions that asking for permission “ruins the mood”; normalizing consent for other types of relationships (platonic, professional, etc.), will make championing sexual consent less taboo. Additionally, our focus group found that most consent campaigns need to show “signs about revoking consent [as it is] okay to change your mind” and provide education on how to handle rejection.

For including campaigns of these natures inside venues, messaging is only one aspect of fostering safer nights out and engagement is limited to those who willingly engage with the content. There is a desire to attribute messaging with the skill and comfort of staff with patron safety and intervention.

Additional education around practicing consent while intoxicated or using substances could help bridge the gap between limited knowledge of consent. Ideally this education would start in younger demographics, such as being included in public school sexual health curriculums.

03. Clarify and communicate the duty to intervene of liquor-licensed establishments with regards to supporting patrons experiencing unwanted sexual behaviour

The SIR manual suggests all licensed establishments have a written policy for how to handle patrons who refuse to leave; making such a policy transparent to patrons, such as through a summarized “Code of Conduct” for the establishment, could help define what the duty of care entails and help address the lack of accountability.

A Code of Conduct acts as the foundation to an establishment’s policy and serves to set the expectation for how people should act in your space. It should be concise regarding the expected behaviour for the space, clear on who it applies to, and list any consequences for failure to comply. It is a key item to support both staff and patrons when addressing unacceptable conduct.

For businesses that have implemented additional prevention tools such as a Code of Conduct and bystander intervention training for staff, adding this information on their websites’ accessibility/contact page could increase transparency to patrons, contributing to improved customer buy-in. Other ways to communicate that their staff are “here to help” if a patron is uncomfortable could be to incorporate their reporting procedures into branded items like posters, handbills, and coasters.

MID-TERM

04. Improve policy writing skills among local businesses that have smaller HR functions with a focus on defining and addressing sexual violence

Implementing strong workplace policies that implies a low tolerance for harassing behaviours can have a positive impact on mitigating workplace sexual harassment. It is important to note that a policy is only one aspect of preventing sexual violence and prevention efforts will be more successful when combined with education. Only 30% of Victoria patrons of believed establishments take quick and appropriate action when safety becomes an issue to them therefore any policies that address sexual harassment amongst workers should be extended to include patron-to-patron behaviour to improve such perceptions.

Despite that having a bullying and harassment policy is a legislated requirement as per the *BC Workers Compensation Act*, only 30% of the 27 Victoria industry workers that responded to our 2022 survey reported that their workplace had a sexual violence prevention policy. A caveat to this data is that perhaps when completing the survey, workers thought this ought to be separate from the bullying and harassment policy though sexual violence, namely sexual harassment, is meant to be covered under such policy in BC.

The minimum for a bullying harassment policy may not adequately address the complexity of addressing sexual violence, this only protects behaviours of a person towards a worker and does not extend to patron to patron interactions unless they are a risk for occupational and health safety (OH&S).



GNO recommends to partner establishments to consider extending their safety policies beyond what is mandated, and include patron to patron interactions. Key to implementation would be communicating this out to patrons via marketing materials which can also act as a deterrent to those seeking out spaces to enact violence.

05. Establish a permanent peer support presence on nights out modelled after GNO’s Granville Street Team

As discussed in the focus group and validated by existing statistics, a range of unwanted sexual behaviours is happening in public spaces across Canada, with many of them not meeting the threshold of criminal behaviour, despite having detrimental effects on individual and community safety and wellbeing. This tells us that there is a need to have an increased presence of people (workers, patrons and outreach teams) into these spaces to offer layers of protection from sexualized violence.

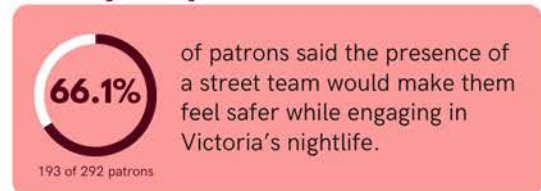
GNO has operated an award-winning outreach team in downtown Vancouver that seeks to curb incidences of late-night gender-based harassment. The GNO outreach team works Friday and Saturday nights in the City’s nightlife district on Granville street and also inside select establishments and events to help prevent and respond to sexualized violence. In 2024, GNO will be adapting their peer support outreach model as a pilot project in Victoria with the support of federal funding. In order to maintain a permanent presence that focuses on building community resilience, long-term funding will need to be secured.

Key Partners



Anti-violence and harm reduction organizations, City, local authorities, Business Associations

Survey snapshot



06. Engage men and masculine-presenting people in sexual violence awareness and prevention

“We also need to have men who can support other men.”

Focus group participant

Shifting the role of prevention away from women and feminized people as individually responsible is necessary for shifting away from a rape culture that is upheld by gender stereotypes and normative assumptions of what it means to be

feminine and masculine. At the relationship level, this requires engaging men and masculine folks in bystander intervention amongst their peers as a form of accountability and community responsibility. To do so, education on the root causes of sexual violence is needed, specifically to understand how gender relations within wider systems of exploitation uphold toxic masculinity. With this awareness, men and masculinized folks can begin to unpack harmful misconceptions of what it means to “be a man” as it pertains to exerting control over women.

07. Focus on assessing and improving risk factors within nightlife as a means of sexual violence prevention

There are identifiable risks that can increase the likelihood of sexual violence being perpetrated and/or go unnoticed in a space. None of these things are the sole cause of sexual violence as the only thing that directly causes it is people committing it. That said, establishments can take steps to mitigate the risks that are often higher in hospitality environments.

Let's take for example, the physical space where liquor is served such as a bar or a nightclub. Lighting is often minimal or dimmed where present to help create a desirable atmosphere for patrons. Areas where sight is impaired can be a risk as unwanted conduct may be hard to catch, especially if there is a lack of security surveillance.

GNO specializes in workshops for staff and management looking to audit their space and create a safer environment for both staff and patrons; training includes education on risks and tools to address them. Uptake for GNO's entry level Protective Spaces 101 workshop has been rising in Victoria since the program expanded to the island in 2022 however it is solely on establishments to take the initiative to participate.

08. Promote diversity in hospitality management

Programs that look to reduce barriers for those historically marginalized to advance in hospitality, could be beneficial to improving diversity across the industry. Companies should look to provide professional development funds to those who are multiply-marginalized, (i.e., belonging to 2 or more groups that are or have been marginalized) and interested in leadership opportunities.

Key Partners

Organizations such as the Support Network for Indigenous Women and Women Of Colour (SNIWWOC)



“The idea that a staff person has lived experience that could relate to yours makes it easier to communicate and be yourself.”

Focus group participant



LONG-TERM

09. Explore ways to incorporate mandatory education for liquor-licensed establishments on sexual violence prevention and response, including awareness of drug-facilitated sexual assault (i.e. drink-spiking) and building comfort and skill with bystander intervention.

One avenue could be the incorporation of training in the province's existing responsible liquor sales and service program, Serving-It-Right. This program is self-study which poses some limitations therefore should not be the only sexual violence prevention strategy relied upon. Another option is for municipalities to establish their own alcohol policies which the City of Victoria has considered. Initial research suggests that some alcohol policy approaches can positively contribute to preventing sexual violence but like with any prevention strategy, or the recommendations herein, they cannot operate independently from other prevention efforts.

For the training content, it should include understanding the extent of sexual violence as it relates to public places and spaces where liquor is consumed. Moreover, establishments should be have the skills to handle disclosures in a trauma-informed way as suggested from the focus group given the prevalence of sexual violence.

Focus group participants expressed a desire for antecedent-based interventions where staff are equipped to recognize behaviour prior to escalation and to safely intervene but know where to outsource for community-based support for victim-survivors. Education that includes prevention and response acts as an antecedent-based intervention as it focuses on building skills to address behaviours before they escalate to being harmful.

*As a former live music venue owner who worked hard to ensure that staff were educated on consent, safety and harm reduction with a very small budget to do so, I think that it would be awesome if there was some **financial support from the city** to help make these spaces more safe. Some businesses probably make enough money to implement some of these safety protocols, but I think many will not, especially smaller venues and restaurants and those that have suffered more during the pandemic.*

Survey respondent

On the topic of drink spiking, awareness campaigns and prevention tools have largely been marketed to those who are targets of these crimes rather than addressing the behaviours of those who perpetrate them. This reinforces victim-blaming narratives and to combat this, staff should have skills and awareness to recognize signs someone has been "spiked" or dosed without their knowledge and be prepared to act quickly.

Effective training must be robust and focus on awareness of sexual violence while providing the industry with bystander intervention skills.

10. Reduce reliance on tip-based compensation

Tip-based compensation has been shown to contribute to higher rates of experiencing sexual harassment on the job. One study found that states in America that require restaurants to pay a full minimum wage with tips on top have significantly lower rates of sexual harassment reports from tipped workers. As of June 2021, liquor servers in BC must be paid the regular minimum wage in addition to tips they receive. To improve the reliance on tips especially for folks that are not making a living wage (according to Living Wage for Families, the living wage in Victoria is \$25.40/hr, almost \$10 higher than the minimum wage), tip pooling could be viable option if implemented fairly and even possibly, regulated.

11. Develop policy standards specific to sexual violence prevention and response in the industry that extends to patrons' experiences

"I used to work in a restaurant and my coworkers were great, but the management team was entirely men, and ownership was unsupportive. More onus needs to be put on ownership to not just train but have a unified and documented process for responding to reports of sexual harassment and violence. The logs of (anonymized) issues and how they were responded to could be required to be included in annual business and liquor license renewals."

Survey respondent

Legislation that applies to liquor-licensed establishments could be proposed similar to the components of the *Sexual Violence and Misconduct Policy Act* for post-secondary institutions in BC. A standardized approach that outlines the minimum prevention and response tools and training required for establishments may also encourage patrons to report issues to establishments if they know that there is a set protocol for businesses to follow and that they are accountable for investigating or reporting on it in a trauma-informed way.

Further, a policy standard can help define to both staff and to patrons what behaviours constitute sexual violence including some that may not be considered criminal but make people feel unsafe. Including what may be considered "minor" will help challenge the status quo of ignoring or even tolerating sexual harassment and unwanted sexual behaviour in hospitality and nightlife spaces.



To ensure there is not a disproportionate burden on small local businesses, a staged approach for policy implementation could be employed based on staff size and profit margins. To reiterate what was discussed in the focus group and throughout this paper, a multi-faceted approach is required to ensure sexual violence prevention is effective; a policy will not be sufficient if the businesses responsible are not provided with the support and training to uphold it.

CONCLUSION

The focus group sessions that this paper is based on were conducted with the intent to hear from the community and highlight some of the ways different levels of our society can improve safety in Victoria's nightlife scene, with a particular focus on the role of the business community and respective levels of government. There is a large volume ahead for the industry and society to address sexual violence as a collective responsibility however we remain hopeful that some of the recommendations included herein are feasible in the near to medium term for both individual businesses, business associations, and governing bodies. It is essential that any and all of the recommendations are implemented through a consultation process with the respective communities, namely patrons and surrounding industries, to ensure recommendations are embedded in ongoing commitments to create a safer nightlife and city.

In summary, establishments can improve on communicating what is and is not tolerated in their space. Patrons want to spend their time (and money) in places that prioritize their safety and autonomy. Businesses can retain customers through proactive safety measures and solid response plans. Harassment and violence prevention training for establishments would make patrons feel safer, and would equip staff with skills to better support their customers. We would be amiss to not address the potential heavy lift and commitment required from an industry that is already burdened with high-turnover and rising costs. Subsidies programs for small businesses and other forms of support and enforcement from municipal

and provincial governments are required to establish and maintain increased accountability for addressing sexual violence throughout the industry. Through GNO's existing education program, we have seen great promise from partner establishments committed to being proactive in addressing sexual violence.

Creating safer nights out relies heavily on prevention as a long-term solution however like with any cultural shift, this can take time. Given the high prevalence of sexual violence in Canada, we also need to be mindful of the demand on crisis and support services therefore funding for these resources is critical to supporting workers and patrons who experience any form of harassment and sexual violence.

It is our hope as an anti-violence organization that these findings and recommendations are useful to other stakeholders in the field. The findings shared here are helpful in assessing patron perceptions of Victoria's nightlife, their experiences with safety, what they hope to see, and how GNO can support safety in the area. We also hope that the data collected from future, regular research will contribute to the evaluation of the ongoing, multi sector efforts to change the area for the better.





For a Safer Nightlife.

Building community capacity through education, outreach, and advocacy.

MORE ABOUT US

Good Night Out Vancouver, "Good Night Out", is a British Columbia non-profit organization committed to building and improving community capacity to prevent and respond to sexual violence in spaces where substances are consumed such as clubs, bars, restaurants, breweries, festivals, and more.

Good Night Out has contributed to municipal work on sexualized violence, being mentioned in the City of Victoria Strategic Plan and working with the City of Victoria and City of Vancouver on work following motions to do more to prevent sexual and gender based violence in hospitality spaces. This work has included working with the Ending Violence Association of BC on self-paced courses for workers and employees on workplace sexual harassment for Victoria and a recently launched pilot project with the City of Vancouver to offer intensive supports for and data collection with partner establishments.

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