



Survey of Sexual Harassment
Avonside Girls' High School
Te Kura Kohine o Ōtākaro

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Pūkeko Research Ltd



Acknowledgements

E ngā mana, ngā reo, ngā wāhine toa e ngā rangatahi. Tēnā koutou katoa.

Thanks to the parents, staff and students of Avonside Girls' High School who supported this research going ahead. Sexual harassment is difficult to discuss and stirs a lot of feelings among people, and you have all taken a leap of faith in committing to this study.

Particular thanks to the senior leadership team, especially Catherine Law (Principal), Tanya Clegg (Deputy Principal) and Nardine Schroder (Head of Guidance) for their work in planning and ensuring the safe delivery of the survey.

Many other staff, and also a group of senior students, were involved in developing and fine-tuning the survey content and organising the roll-out.

The reporting and recommendations in this document represent my own findings and not those of the school. These are very complex issues and I am sure the school will be pursuing its journey for some time to come.

One aspect of the complexity in preparing this report is that some students in their responses made specific allegations of rape or behaviour which would otherwise constitute a criminal offence. To respect the participants, these words and descriptions have been retained, although often under-played for anonymity purposes, but this does not mean that the situations described have been investigated or prosecuted, as that is beyond the scope of this study.

Ngā mihi nui

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Executive summary

This study of sexual harassment at Avonside Girls' High School follows the same format, methodology and approach as the research at Christchurch Girls' High School in 2021. It has been approved by the New Zealand Ethics Committee.

A survey was simultaneously carried out at Shirley Boys' High School, a school colocated with AGHS, which is reported on separately. It is important to understand the unique situation of these two schools. Avonside Girls' High School is a single sex state girls' school. Following the Christchurch earthquake, the school needed a new site and rebuild. In 2019 AGHS moved into one side of a unique, modern building on the QEII site in New Brighton. Shirley Boys High School moved into the other side. The two schools share this site and have a few shared spaces- the library, the café, a gymnasium and two theatres. They share a few administrative staff. A few senior classes have both boys and girls to allow for all subjects to be taught. Other than that, the two schools have their own Board of Trustees, Principals, Senior Leaders, Teachers, administrators, and classrooms/staff spaces. When reference is made to the 'site' in this report, it is important to take this in context.

The survey was completed by over 72% of consented students, a very high rate.

Harassment included verbal, spatial, written and physical or sexual contact. On average, participants had been harassed more than ten times in their lifetime and experienced more than four types of harassment.

Harassment took place online, around town and on public transport, while socialising or with family, or at or around the school site.

School age or older males constituted more than three quarters of harassers. Other groups (whatever gender) included young or older females of mixed-gender groups, family members, teachers, and non-binary persons. The number of female harassers is less than 10% of all perpetrators.

In terms of most frequent harassment, online and electronic images were experienced by around 40% of participants, a number of verbal behaviours by many (rating, body shaming, cat calling and taunts) followed by a wide range of physical and sexual acts, up to and including rape.

In the first two terms of 2022, 379 participants reported a very high 2650 incidents of sexual harassment, or seven per student who had experienced harassment. This is

very similar to the frequency reported in the CGHS survey indicating the wider social issue and concerns here.

The worst incident included 21 sexual assaults of rape or near-rape, 25 other cases where consent was withheld, 32 cases of unwanted touching in a sexual manner, 26 instances of sexual assault within families, more than 50 'worst' incidents involving online harassment, many cases of serial cat-calling, eight reported cases of sexual harassment at work, many cases of verbal and physical harassment on buses and more than 30 reports of participants who were harassed as young children.

Those experiencing their worst incident had a wide range of feelings about it – on average eight different recorded emotions per participant. These included being uncomfortable, nervous, upset, embarrassed, afraid, degraded and angry. Around 40% of these participants sought help, but only a quarter of these, less than 10% of the total, reported they received any assistance.

Most reported changing aspects of their lives to try and avoid further sexual harassment. The most common change was adding long and baggy clothes to their wardrobes and stopping the wearing of short, tight and revealing clothing. Other strategies include avoiding certain places, changing their routes, staying home or staying safe, not taking buses or being careful on them, keeping away from the boys' school and modifying their behaviour in terms of drinking and partying, in particular.

Four sets of changes were called for most strongly. The first was that participants sought a range of help, including good, effective, confidential support, education about sexual harassment and how to counter it, to tackle the normalisation of sexual harassment in school and society, and to make the subject easier to discuss and ease the strong feelings associated with it.

The second set of changes was a high-quality education programme especially, but not only, for the boys. This needs to start in primary school and be focussed on respect and consent.

The third set of changes requested was that sexual harassment have consequences. It was pointed out that even at the most serious end, there was often little accountability. For things like catcalling and the like, which can make lives a misery, there are no sanctions at all. Participants felt there was a lot of victim-blaming and little accountability.

The final change requested by participants is a range of safe places. These include online spaces that are safe from sexual harassment, places that people can go to talk, protective place and 'no judgment' zones.

Of the large group of participants, including those who had not been sexually harassed (total n=550) nearly 80% knew of at least one other person who had been sexually harassed in the past three years. Together, the 431 respondents noted 796 persons they knew who had been sexually harassed. 217 people had witnessed harassment, 10 had been involved in sexually harassing others and 100 had intervened to try to stop sexual harassment.

Participants were engaged in a number of activities that were linked to sexual harassment, in order of frequency: video games with sexual or violent content, online porn, taken and shared nudes or dick pics, shared images with others, were involved in fights at school, watched recordings of people they know having sex, recorded their own sex tape or shared a sexual recording.

Students feel the need to always, or sometimes, hide their emotions at school, in order not to be seen as weak. Students recorded a range of other views about sexual harassment. They want more action and for people to speak up more, even though this is hard. They are looking for more education and for people to “fix it”.

Students were aged from 13-19, with a modal age of 16. 92% identified as female and the rest as male, non-binary and other sex identities. 60% identified as straight with 17% bisexual and a range of other sexualities.

There were many different cultures in the school. The most common ethnicities were pākeha followed by Māori, various Pacifica nations and a range of others representing over 50 ethnic groups.

The conclusion described the findings and repeated the call to action made by many of the students. With this study and one taking place in the boys' school, the colocated schools will work both together, and independently, towards change.

Recommendations

That the school and board note the findings of this study, and in particular that there is significant, ongoing sexual harassment being experienced by the majority of students of all ages at AGHS school. The school needs to consider how the site (as a colocated space) can be better perceived as a safe place in terms of sexual harassment, for a number of reasons:

1. Sexual harassment takes place within the school grounds and around the area of the school. It also takes place on transport, both school and public, that brings students to the school site and takes them home.
2. There is a perception that there isn't a system of sanctions in place for those who practice sexual harassment within the school's area of influence. In particular, the level of catcalling, rating and verbally harassing students is very high around the school site, and there is a perception that there is no punishment for such behaviour even though it can be highly damaging.
3. The school needs to consider what more can be done to ensure students believe they can get high-quality, compassionate, confidential support within the school. A number thought that teachers should take leadership on this but that they do not.
4. The school needs to consider how to create a safe-disclosure space for all victims of sexual harassment. There is a perception that there is no safe place for students who are being sexually harassed within the school.

It is therefore recommended that the school recognise the wide range of harassment affecting its students and seek ways to eliminate sexual harassment within its sphere of influence, provide full support to students and provide safe place for shelter and support.

5. There is a need for education to help students avoid sexual harassment, identify it, prevent it, understand and apply rules of consent, be a good bystander, talk about experiences and be agents for change. This needs to be ongoing and supportive.
6. The participants also strongly recommend education for their peers at boys' schools and for those on the colocated site, who they feel do not understand the effects of sexual harassment on others.

The aspirations of participants for wider social change to overcome sexual harassment and promote gender equality should also be recognised and supported by the school.

Introduction

This survey of sexual harassment was carried out at Avonside Girls' High School between 29 August and 2 September 2022. It followed on from the previous year's study of sexual harassment in Christchurch Girls' High School, which had received significant publicity.

Staff and students at the school were concerned about levels of sexual harassment in their community. The school is colocated with Shirley Boys' High School in new premises in North-Eastern Christchurch, and it was decided that the survey would be carried out in both schools. Though separate schools, the two schools share a site and building.

It was further decided that the same survey should be used in both schools, even though the survey would be carried out separately and separate reports would be issued.

The schools used the same survey and the same distribution rules, but different opportunities were provided for responding to the survey.

The survey was based on the 2021 Christchurch Girls' High School study. There were some changes made to that survey, both to update the data but also to incorporate matters raised by students, from both the girls' and boys' schools. Focus group interviews were held in both schools.

Ethical approval and consent

Ethical approval was linked to the 2021 permission provided by the NZ Ethics Committee for the CGHS survey. Some additional and changed questions were approved. The same consent regime was adopted as the original survey, and the school committed to adopting the core ethical practices of the original survey. Students under 15 years of age were required to receive parental agreement to participate (an opt-in system), while those over 15 were able to participate unless their parent/guardian actively objected (an opt-out system).

The first question asked 789 students to agree to participate, decline to participate (survey will end) or request further information. They were then offered a list of contact details for organisations, if they needed support.

In total, 583 students made it to the first question. From that, 12 declined to participate and 572 continued, a response rate of 72.5%. This is a high response rate compared to other surveys on this topic.

Personal experience of sexual harassment

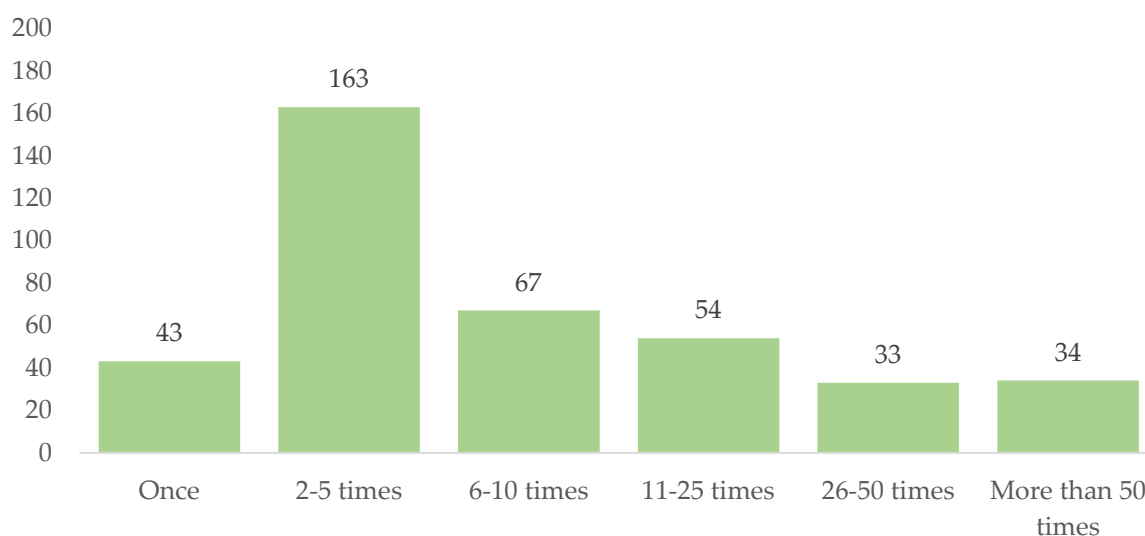
The survey outlined a definition of sexual harassment which was broad-ranging and inclusive, as follows:

Sexual harassment is any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment. It can be relatively minor or very serious. This can include unwanted physical contact, invasion of personal space, suggestive remarks, comments on dress and appearance, jokes of a sexual nature or the display of sexually offensive material in a public space.

Students were asked: 'Have you ever been sexually harassed?' A further prompt was offered if unsure. In total, 400 students noted they had been sexually harassed and went on to complete the section about personal harassment. The survey 'skipped' the remainder (168) straight to a later section on others' harassment.

Students who had been harassed were asked to estimate how many times they had ever been harassed and the responses are laid out in Figure 1 below.

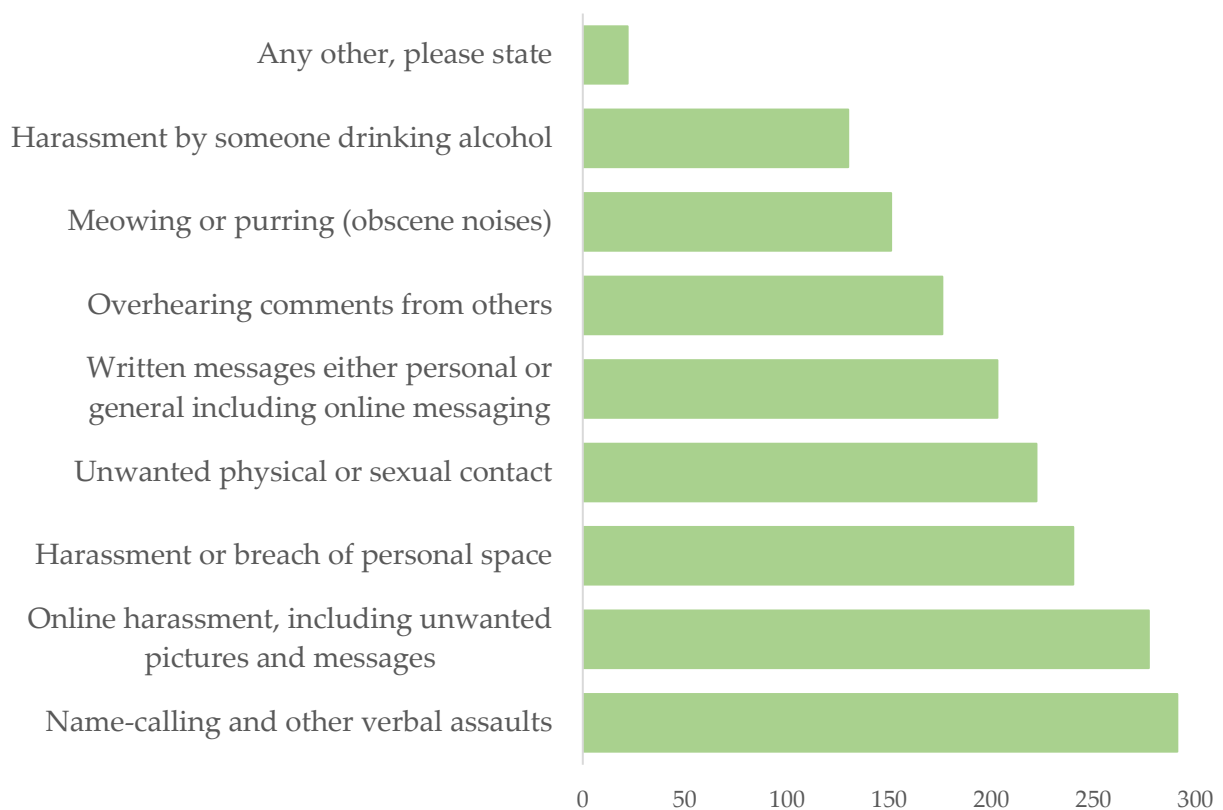
Figure 1. Reported number of times sexually harassed (n=394).



Taking the median figure of each category, respondents reported more than 5000 incidences of sexual harassment during their short lifetimes – more than ten per person responding.

Some of these incidents overlap or took place at the same time. Nevertheless, the numbers are significant that children and adolescents had so many such experiences. Participants were also asked what types of harassment they had experienced and gave the following responses:

Figure 2. Types of harassment experienced by participants (multiple responses allowed) n=394.



Other forms of harassment mentioned by participants included: “creepy requests”, being followed, staring and intense scrutiny, grooming, “being shown a penis without permission” (and “unsolicited nude pictures is such a big issue – needs addressing”), requests to remove clothes and rape. One person noted:

Being seen in a sexual context which makes me uncomfortable. Such as private parts of my body being looked at for too long.

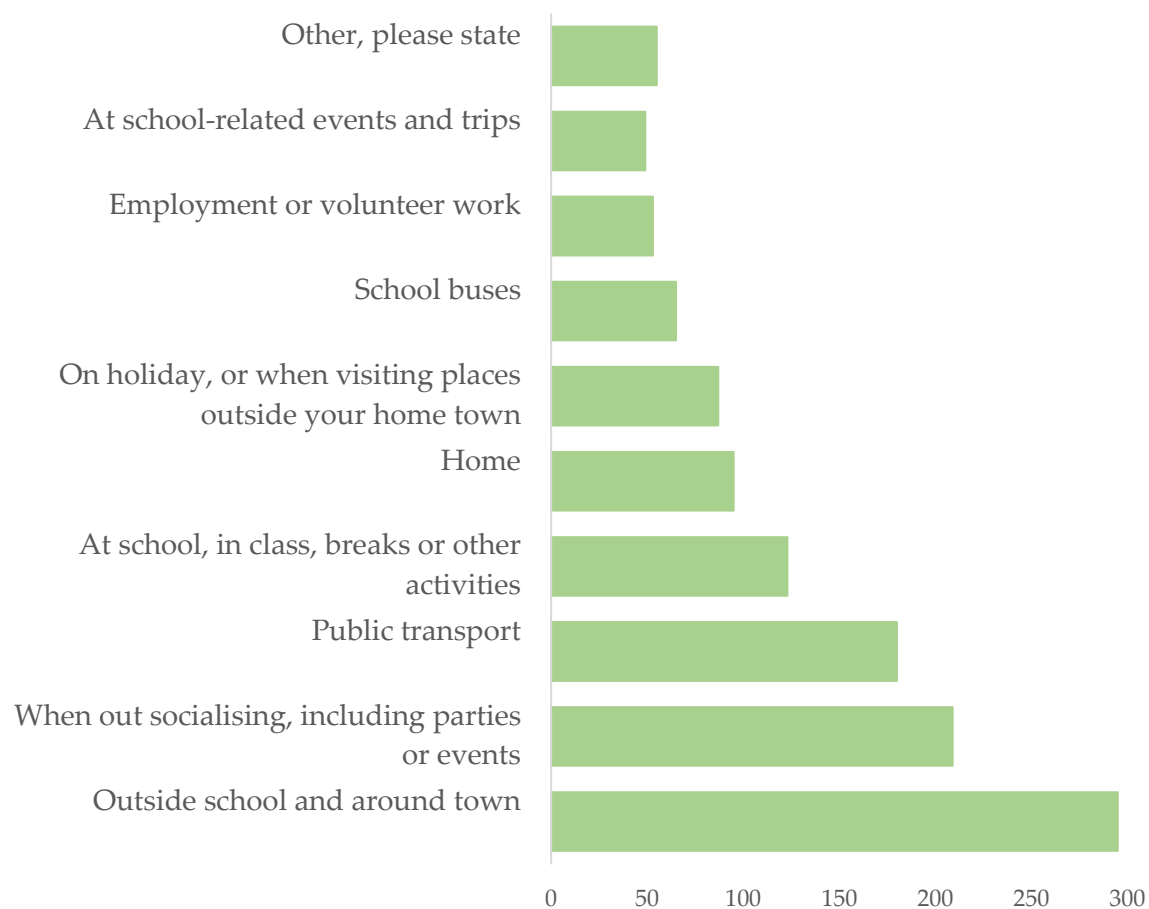
On average, each person who had been the victim of sexual harassment had experienced more than four different ‘types’ of harassment (this includes some double-counting, where the harassment fell into more than one category).

The 2021 survey of Christchurch Girls’ High School was focussed mainly on external spaces, but for this survey there was interest in sexual harassment within the school site, in particular because it is in a situation of colocation – a boys’ school and a girls’ school next to each other with a few common spaces. In recent UK research,

OFSTED [found that significant sexual harassment took place within the school setting](#): in breaks, at lunch, in the classroom. It should be noted that AGHS and SBHS are not co-educational but there are a few places on the premises where students do cross over as indicated above.

In the following question, participants were asked where the harassment they experienced took place. On average, each victim reported they were sexually harassed in three different locations. The top two locations were ‘outside school and around town’, making 25% of all places, and ‘out socialising’, making up 17% of responses.

Figure 3. Number of harassment events by place (multiple responses allowed) n=394



Three out of every four of those reporting sexual harassment had been harassed outside the school and around town, and half reported harassment when out socialising.

More than half reported harassment on public transport, with a quarter of these taking place on school buses.

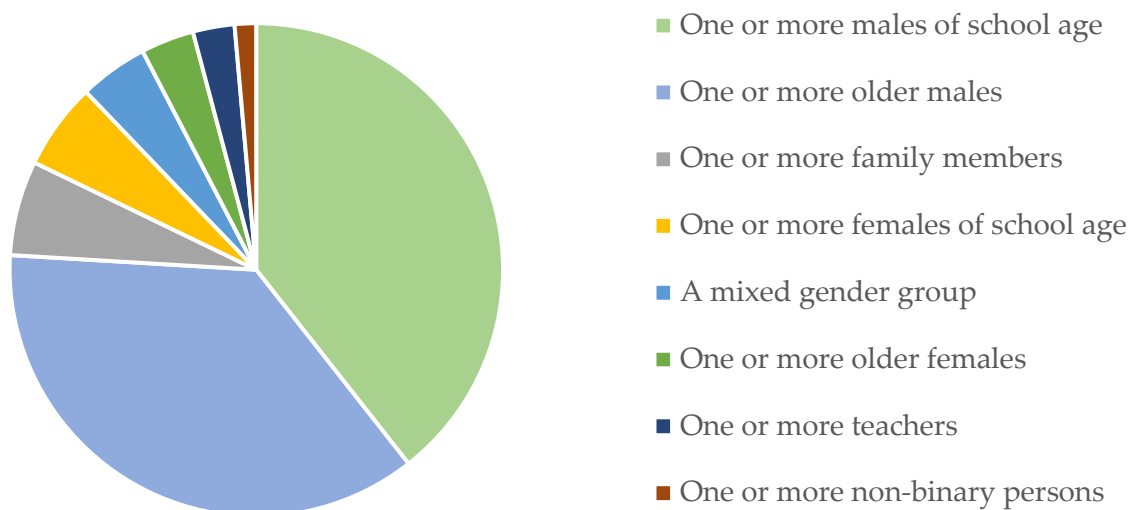
Around a third (123) reported harassment on the school site and another 48 at school-related events and trips.

Sixteen participants reported being harassed at the home of a friend or extended family member. In all, one in four reported sexual harassment in the home or other people's homes.

Others reported harassment at work, in after-school classes, online and social media (various mentioned).

On average, three quarters of nominated harassers were either school age males or older males. The total number of harassers by category is outlined in the pie-chart below at Figure 4:

Figure 4. A profile of the sexual harassers, as reported (n=784)



Of the individual harassers, 39% were identified as school age males and 36% as older males. All of the other groups together made up 25% of the total. Whilst teachers are mentioned none of the staff issues mentioned related to AGHS.

In total, 388 people responded to this question but with 784 different (multiple) responses.

This means that 78% of participants had been sexually harassed by a school aged male and 73% by an older male. Those harassed by family members (12%) and females (11%) were the next biggest groups. A small number reported harassment by teachers (13 by count). One participant noted she was harassed by an ex-partner and his friends and two others by boyfriends.

Participants were asked about daily sexual harassment behaviours they experienced. Figure 5 below ranks these according to the most prevalent (most reports of frequent

events) to the least. This gives a snapshot of the kinds and frequency of sexual harassment experienced by participants either 'quite often' or 'weekly or daily'.

Figure 5. Frequency of sexual harassment behaviour reported 'often' (n=388)

Receiving unwanted comments and images electronically	157
Being rated on your looks by others	150
Body shaming	133
Cat-calling	114
Being rated on sexual factors by others	85
Taunts about sex or sexuality	60
Sexual harassment by individuals	54
Unwanted touching, groping or grabbing	44
Obscene sounds e.g. meowing and purring	43
Sexual harassment by groups	35
Sexual assault	21
Shoving, slapping or hitting as part of sexual harassment	20
Rubbing genitals on you	13
Other, please write in	4

This question differs from that of the CGHS study in the addition of the category of online harassment. It is particularly interesting that this category immediately jumped to the head of the table of most common forms of harassment, reflecting international findings. With that change, findings here are otherwise in line with the earlier survey.

Rating people on their looks, body shaming, cat-calling and sexual taunts feature as the most common 'in person' harassment. There is a view, expressed later in the report, that such behaviours are highly normalised within the culture of the school and students are expected to put up with them.

The more physical harassments are less common but can have a huge impact on student's lives. Unwanted touching, rubbing, groping or grabbing lead participants to change their routines to avoid a repeat, while the level of reported sexual assault is of concern.

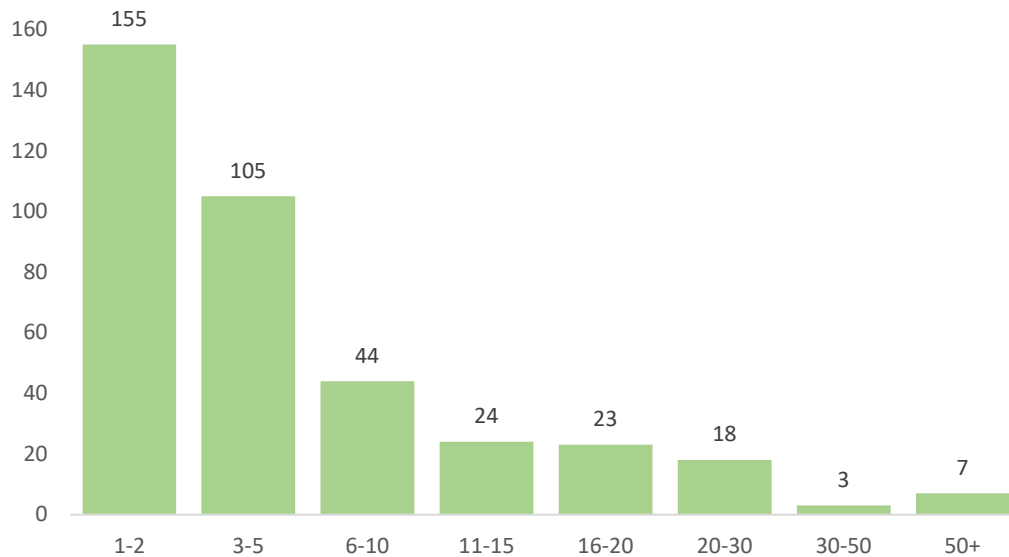
A small number of 'other' behaviours were noted, including 'having food thrown at you and other things such as condoms'; 'foul language'; 'forced to do something sexual'; 'harassment on social media' and 'sexting'.

The 400 participants have experienced many harassments and many types of harassment in their short lives.

Sexual harassment in 2022

Participants were asked to estimate how many times, in total, they had been sexually harassed in the first two terms of 2022. This spanned the period from late January to mid July. The results are shown in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6. Frequency of sexual harassment occurrences in first two terms 2022 (n=379)



Averaging out the categories to median (e.g. 16-20 averaged to 18), and treating 50+ as 50, the 379 students that responded reported 2650 incidences of sexual harassment during those two terms, or seven incidents each on average.

The worst incident

Participants were asked to provide information on the 'worst' incident of sexual harassment they had experienced. The aim of this question was to examine the harm profile of the harassment. But this is not an exact science. There is no objective 'scale' of sexual harassment. Any such event can be viewed legally, morally, physically, emotionally, social or in terms of psychological effect. Also, the amount of harm caused may differ significantly based on a range of factors. These include immediate or long-term factors, with abuse able to trigger post-traumatic stress disorders that persist long after the event. Finally, victims of sexual harassment do not all have the same ability to cope with it for many reasons including personal, cultural, familial or social.

In only one case in this data was it explicit that the police were called. The vast majority of harassment, including at the more serious end, is played out in private lives and kept silent from everyone.

Sexual assault

In the survey, 21 students described incidents of sexual assault that ended in rape or near rape. A small number of participants reported being raped on more than one occasion, including "multiple times for two months" at a young age and "many times raped and assaulted". Others reported single incidents that affected them strongly: "raped by my boyfriend at a birthday party" and "I was only fourteen and my boyfriend raped me and that is by far the worst sexual assault I have experienced". One young woman explains she had no notion that this was not normal, in a classic case of no consent:

I was raped by my 'boyfriend' at the time and forced into unwanted sexual things. I thought it was normal until I talked to someone about it that your boyfriend shouldn't be forcing or holding you down to do things you don't want to after saying no heaps and they try to manipulate into doing it otherwise you don't 'love them' but they held me down anyway and I became numb realising there was nothing I could do to stop him.

Participants outlined a range of other incidents that ended with rape or near-rape. In one case, a student in year nine was assaulted and held down by her boyfriend: "He grabbed me in multiple places - my breasts, my butt, and tried sliding his hand in between my legs". He left bruises on her chest and wrists but, as the assault took place in broad daylight and in public, she was saved from further harm.

A number of others reported being attacked by friends, acquaintances or boyfriends. One person noted: “he was on top of me with his pants down and if I wasn’t strong enough to get him off I don’t know what would have happened next”. Several other participants also reported successfully fighting off a sexual attacker.

Participants were at most risk when drunk and at parties, and several described incidents where they were taken into rooms for sex. However, none of the participants reported being raped by a group of boys working in concert, as was reported on several occasions in the Christchurch Girls’ High School survey.

Lack of consent

This is a complex category of 25 cases that range from non-consensual approaches that ended because an interruption took place, to sex that took place with no consent given. An example of this was a participant whose partner initiated unwanted sex and she was forced into it “without being allowed to speak at all”. Others said no and their partner persisted (often over significant periods of time) until grudging consent was given: “whatever.... do what you want”.

One of the main concerns of participants in this group was that they were keen to engage in many different kinds of interactions with their partners but in practice interactions often became sexualised.

The final main group in this category is participants who encountered people, often at parties, concerts or other external environments who: “fingered”; “pushed up against a tree and was forcefully kissed without my consent”; “grabbed and kissed”; “touched while asleep” and the like, where no opportunity for consent took place.

While many of the participants talked about consent, they often found it difficult to maintain a constant standard of consensual relationships.

Physical touching

Participants reported (32 reports) being touched in sexual ways by others in a range of different environments. Clear places of risk are parties, anywhere where drinking is occurring, sleepovers, other people’s houses, buses and places of recreation such as pools.

Quite a few stories told of being grabbed, fondled, slapped or otherwise touched by males: “I was at the club and multiple men walked directly up to me and touched my breasts”; “groping at social events, unwanted touching...”; “pushed against a wall and forced to kiss him”; “on holiday in a river he groped me, ass, boobs, hips...”; “fell asleep and woke up to a guy rubbing against me and touching me”;

“someone I was involved with forced themselves onto me and wouldn’t stop kissing me”; “a guy grabbed my vagina without consent”; “grabbed my legs on a bus”; “sliding his hand up my leg to my thigh on a bus”; and many more.

Families

Sexual assault within the family was mentioned by 26 participants as the worst incident. Some of these include incidents of sexual assault by close family members, including parents, stepparents and grandparents. The abuser was often drunk at the time, but not always. When it is a close family member, some participants were confused about whether it was abuse, or whether it was a form of “love”.

Family members sometimes took their children into risky environments, with visits to parental friends ending in sexual molestation. The family members of friends also could lead to harassment. Extended family and friends of family members could also be risky, especially during gatherings or parties, and especially when sleepovers were involved. It is also much harder in family situations to both protect themselves from harm and keep the issue secret from family members. The need for secrecy and non-disclosure is mostly paramount among these victims.

None of the quotes are used here given the sensitivities. But it was observed that a number of these events happened when a participant was younger (from age 4 up) and a number of comments indicated that participants had learned, over time, to protect themselves from such advances, by staying in their room, staying around other people or forms of person management. What they did not do was inform other family members what was happening.

Alcohol and sexual harassment

Alcohol reduces inhibitions and can lead to serious events of sexual harassment. Participants talked about the difficulties in keeping themselves safe when they, and those around them, had too much to drink. At times the people they were with set out to get them drunk to be compliant. This was particularly so at parties where they slept over, sometimes finding themselves in difficult situations. Several participants discussed being pressured into sex while drunk or with a drunk partner, and this often included threats or aggressive behaviour as well.

But alcohol impairment can be encountered anywhere, and participants described incidents on the street, on buses or in the home. Several different stories, some quite serious, were told about drunk men at bus stops or on buses. Several participants talked about their father’s alcohol abuse and how it led to difficult and serious situations. Modern technology can enhance dangers. In one instance, an old friend

located a person on Snapchat using a location indicator and arrived unwanted (and drunk) at a party, nearly raping someone. In all, 20 'worst' incidents were precipitated or enhanced by alcohol.

Dick pics, nudes and online harassment

Images of sex are a kind of currency on the internet that is wielded in many different ways. There were more than 50 occasions that online or phone/image harassment were reported as the worst thing. The main feeling of recipients of unwanted pictures, images or videos of this kind is that their everyday life is being sexualised. The feelings that are evoked in many cases are an extreme invasion of privacy. For some, the fact that they receive such communications is a sign that they are being viewed sexually by known or unknown other persons, and it is deeply uncomfortable.

Some participants are bombarded with sexual images "guys online asking for nudes or send unwanted nudes all the time"; "many unwanted pictures have been received and unwanted sexual messages"; "multiple.... without any warning or being asked".

Even for those less upset by these communications, frequency can add stress: "I have also been sent nudes, dick pics, boob pics and have been asked to send photos and I have had sexual comments made towards me"; "sending videos and photos to me".

Some have had their privacy breached when ex-boyfriends have shared pictures of them: "ex boyfriend had shared pics of me to all his mates and said some personal shit".

One person had an effective solution: "Been sent disgusting messages and gross dick pics on social media a while ago. But not recently cause I've deleted most social medias or aren't active".

Cat calling

The largest category of worst experiences is cat calling. By itself this can be frightening and unsettling but it is often accompanied by a range of other behaviours that make it worse.

When I got a dog, I walked him every day. The men across the street from me would always catcall me and yell at me about my body. Whether that was them yelling a remark about how they'd like to fuck me or my tits, or my stomach. Once they started to walk across the street to me, I ran with my dog into my dad's arms, when they tried to enter the property I had to call the police, they came and took a report on what happened and my details, this

happened multiple times every month until they were evicted from their house. I thank God every day that they're gone.

The Shirley students were implicated explicitly in 12 of the cat-calling examples. Some of the boys apparently engage in cat-calling, "moaning", "barking" and suchlike behaviour on a regular basis. One boy, aged about 13, yelled out to a senior girl "Are they fake? Probably are". She commented: "I wasn't scared, more a little sad that he thought it was funny to say something like that".

The cat-calling is bad when it is so frequently repeated, when participants feel they can barely go anywhere without encountering it and when it is accompanied by frightening behaviour. The comment was often made that it is so normalised it is just part of day to day life at school and in public places, and feels like nothing can be done about it.

Harassment at work

A number of the senior students have jobs they go to in the evenings and weekends, and a number of these have experienced sexual harassment at work. Eight incidents were reported. These included an older male worker groping her continually, and not being able to report it because all the male workers were friends. A manager slapped the bottom of a worker. A man "sexualised me drying the cutlery and saying he needed to control himself". One person had her bottom grabbed by a woman and one person was stalked by a customer (but in that case the manager did step in to support her).

On the buses

The public bus service was the site of a number of frightening attacks. Quite often the event involved older men, in some cases drunk, approaching a young woman, feeling her body, masturbating, yelling or following her off the bus. Younger bus passengers use the bus for making loud comments and 'body-shaming' girls. There were many, many more incidents on the buses. Some victims called out to the bus driver for help but the drivers often do not hear or do not react.

When boys get together on the bus (public or school) they can become harassers: "it's an ongoing issue on the school bus where a group of male seniors continue to cat call me and others, meow at us, yell share sexual comments about us and throw objects at us."

The sexual harassment of young children

Incidents of sexual harassment were reported to have occurred from age 4. The number of participants reporting such events was 31. Throughout their young lives, children are at risk of being approached by people who touch them, groom them, pull their clothes off, show off penises, assault them and bribe them to be touched. Some have very imperfect memories of what happened, but they have never forgotten their fear.

So many other serious incidents

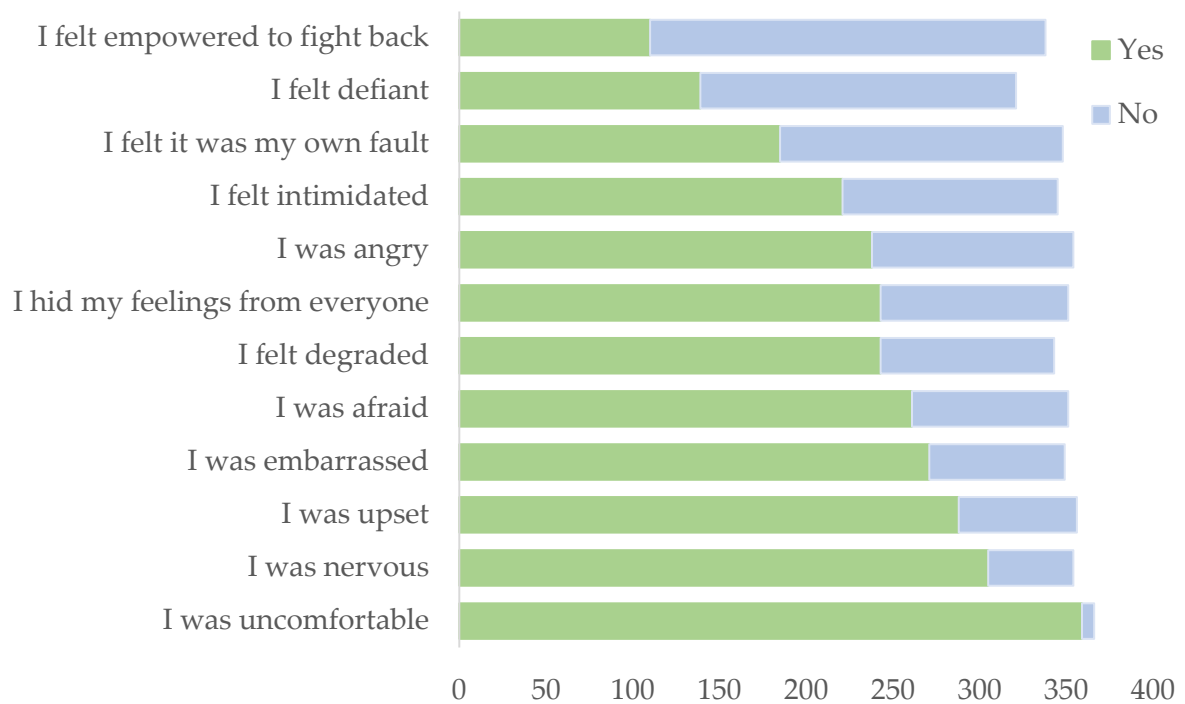
There were many other serious incidents, some with life-changing effects such as needing to give up a beloved sport. Some cannot be identified, others are widespread in society: being pressured into sex, being stared at for long periods, being rated on your sexual qualities or looks, strange people taking an interest, talk on the streets, at school, in the library and in so many places. As some of the participants themselves note, it is shocking how normalised such behaviour is for them.

Effects of the worst incident

Participants were asked to 'tick boxes' to explain how the worst incident made them feel. The overwhelming feeling, reported by over 90% of them, was discomfort. On a sliding scale they reported feeling nervous, upset, embarrassed, afraid and degraded. A large majority, 70% also hid their feelings from everyone. The same proportion were angry and over half felt intimidated. Half felt the sexual harassment must have been their own fault. Around a quarter felt defiant and/or empowered to fight back.

It was very striking that, *on average*, participants ticked 8 of the 12 boxes (2863 'yes' ticks from 359 participants), demonstrating that they had a large number of different feelings about their harassment. Both the nature and the number of the feelings experienced underlines the significant role that sexual harassment plays in these students' lives.

Figure 7. How participants felt about the worst incident they experienced (n=359).



Most participants (70%) did not seek help or support when they were harassed. There was no particular trend about this – serious incidents were not more likely to be reported to others than minor ones. There are many reasons why participants do not seek assistance, which are explored later in the survey.

Of the hundred or so who sought help or support, only a quarter felt they got the support they needed. Most turned to family members, friends or a counsellor for help, with smaller numbers looking to social media, a helpline or a teacher. One person reported going to the police. Many were left with unresolved issues and nowhere to turn. This reality informs student views about what should happen in relation to sexual harassment.

Responding to sexual harassment

Six out of ten participants (228/385) reported that they had needed to do something differently as a result of the harassment they had experienced. As with previous studies, participants are well aware of the potential for repeated harassment and take a number of steps to protect themselves.

In the CGHS survey, students reported that their most common response to being sexually harassed was to dress in different clothing, that covered them, that was baggy and included coverings from head to foot.

This is even more true at AGHS, where 79 students reported they 'wear more clothes' to avoid unwanted sexual attention. Comments include:

I never wear anything too fitting or tight, don't wear crop tops etc. It's annoying and makes me uncomfortable that I have to alter my personal style so that I don't get stared at and yelled at on the street

I just started wearing more covery clothing depending on where I was going and how comfortable I felt.

I became more insecure and wore baggier clothing to hide my body from people. I tend to keep to myself more and don't really like going out alone. I also don't go out at night to hangout with friends in public

I was catcalled in a dress which I really liked and I stopped wearing it because they made me feel like I was doing something wrong by wearing it and I just lost all confidence

Not wearing nice clothes or heels when out at night cos otherwise I know I will just get cat called and even tho it's not dangerous it makes me angry.

I don't wear certain clothes in certain places because I'm scared old men are going to look at me or touch me and I also make myself look smaller and less noticeable.

I've found that I feel really uncomfortable wearing skirts, shorts, and crop tops. So now my wardrobe consists of jeans and hoodies.

Clothing changes as in just wearing long and baggy clothes.

Wear less revealing clothes, make sure my skirt is long, avoid that dairy by school, avoid the boys' half of the campus.

Avoiding certain places is the next most frequent strategy for the participants and a wide variety of places were cited: a person's home, not going out at certain times, not go to the place of assault, staying in a bedroom when a certain person is in the house, stay home a lot more, avoid certain places at school and many others.

Five participants specifically noted that they no longer walked home from school and waited to be picked up or took different routes. Some have also avoided buses, or, if they use them, dress modestly, put their heads down and are careful where they sit.

A number cited the boys' school generally or particular parts of it (especially sports areas) as places to be avoided at all times.

A small number of people (7) reported they had made many changes: "changed everything in my day to day life". Comments include: "I haven't gone near certain people and I've worn different clothes", and "I don't like being in crowds of people and I am really nervous around family and guys".

Some avoid being around groups of males, and even individuals, have "stopped talking to boys", "be firm with boys when I talked to them", "struggle to be alone with guys", "avoided many different all male friend groups" and try to stay away from males.

Some of those abused by family have taken significant steps to avoid their abusers, including staying in their rooms, not going to certain houses, not seeing certain relatives, avoiding their family and become much more cautious around family friends.

Finally, a number cite the need to be careful:

Been super careful around where I go and stay + who I'm with.

More cautious about who I'm around in public because it makes me uncomfortable.

Not going out as much, have a smaller group of friends.

Over-analyse every situation and consider all the things that could go wrong.

I have avoided seeing this person again and I am now very aware of people in power as a result and wary of other behaviour.

Some of the participants in this survey live with a high level of anxiety as a result of their experiences. To finish this section, here is one such comment:

I don't go near red zones as much, I get scared when I leave my house, I make sure that I'm always aware of my surroundings and where I am, all these things have made me scared, and I don't talk to males if I don't know them. I always feel like something could happen and I need to make sure that I'm not around anyone who could do something like that to me again.

Wanting change

There were strong calls for changes by the participants in how to deal with sexual harassment. Implied was a significant critique of the current system, and a feeling that sexual harassment was normalised in schools and society and that nothing would be done about it.

Help us!

The first and largest plea, by around 80 participants, was for more help for those affected by sexual harassment. The help requested was of four main types. The first was the provision of high quality, absolutely confidential, compassionate support:

Getting the appropriate support and not taking 2 years for the case to be brought to the attention of the court.

I would like for people of any gender or age to be able to have people they can confide in when they have been sexually harassed.

Just more places where someone can go to talk, without fear of other people finding out.

Bring more awareness to it so victims don't feel scared and unable to speak up. and having a lot more support as I know so many people who feel like they can't talk about their experience, or it'll get spread somehow.

I'm not sure, I just feel like I want to talk to someone about it but I'm too scared they will talk to my parents and my parents won't believe me.

The second call was for a programme of education for the young women about sexual harassment:

More awareness. I didn't realise it was sexual assault for months afterwards because I felt as if it was my fault. I think more reassurance that the sexual assaulter will receive consequences because fear of people not believing them is real.

Make people educate about this so that they know what is happening with them (just in case something happens) and what to do about it.

Learn that you are not obligated to do anything you're not okay with.

The third was to tackle the 'normalisation' of sexual harassment in the school and in society:

I would like it (support) to be normalised in society and more talked about as I know that it's a common thing that many people go through.

Being able to talk about it without feeling ashamed and encouragement to speak up about experiences.

Sexual harassment becoming a more well known and dealt with thing.

I'd like for the topic to be less taboo in school. I feel like either no one is talking about it or everyone is. Practically daily I have people catcall me and it has become normal. It isn't normal and I don't know what I want done about it, but I know it needs to stop.

Be upfront with it. Especially because so many young girls are "people pleasers" they will take rude comments and laugh them off or ignore them just to be nice. However, that gives the perpetrator opportunity to go for them. People need to talk about it more, especially in high school.

The fourth was to make the subject easier to talk about, more comfortable.

Be told that it isn't something we should be embarrassed about.

I don't know what you can do to help, because most people including me feel too uncomfortable to get help.

Just support from teachers and try to encourage them to explain what happened.

Making sure we don't feel we need to hide our feelings.

One person had strong advice for the school: "Robust systems in place to deal with issues as they occur, both for perpetrators and people who have experienced harassment, and better teaching about what is harassment and how to report it"

Educate them!

The second largest call (40 people) was for education for everyone, but in particular for boys and men about the impact of sexual harassment on girls.

Educate males that it's not ok.

Be taught in schools that it's not ok.

Teach what sexual harassment is in school and why it is so harmful and bad to do (especially for boys' schools).

I want people (men) to be educated on why it's inappropriate and I want them to see how it affects people. I want people who have ever made someone feel uncomfortable to see the effects it has on others.

Focusing on starting awareness at a young age e.g. younger boys as it's a common theme within primary schools with younger boys getting away with sexual behaviour/normalised.

I'm not sure what could help. You can't just train these habits out of people. I don't know how you could ever get specific men to stop catcalling.

I would like more education for people about consent and their rights, and what is wrong and illegal. I would like the law to come down harder on those who do it. I would like the school to put in measures to prevent this happening, punish and rehabilitate offenders more seriously.

There were calls for education for all, but particularly for males.

Consequences!

The third largest group called strongly for accountability for male sexual harassers. This group saw little accountability for even the most serious attacks on girls and women, and certainly a high tolerance of the culture of cat-calling that was so common among young males.

I feel as if sexual harassment, normal harassment, and rape all just get pushed aside by law enforcements. I feel like girls like me don't feel like they can go and say "hey this boy tried to force me into having sex with him" because most responses are "oh he didn't actually rape you so we can't really do anything" or "oh we will put it in our system that he raped you" but nothing rarely gets done. I feel like there needs to be safe places for girls and guys to go where they can report it, get support, and decide on pressing charges etc. and people that actually rape girls and guys should have actual consequences because enough is enough.

Places you can report it without being judged and then being able to get help without having to pay or tell anyone else.

I'm not sure, I would like to see more punishment given to men that are caught harassing. I think that unity & solidarity within women will help us.

Have more support and consequences for the people that have done it.

Offer more support and justice in the policing system around sexual assault/harassment.

Awareness. Accountability. Not victim blaming.

Actual consequences for the perpetrators, more support for the victims.

Make more consequences for all the things that happen even if it is not physical.

For people to actually face consequences because of their action when it comes to forms of sexual harassment. It should not be a normal thing for (men) to just do and say to all women and get little to no consequence.

I would like more education for people about consent and their rights, and what is wrong and illegal. I would like the law to come down harder on those who do it. I would like the school to put in measures to prevent this happening, punish and rehabilitate offenders more seriously.

The general view by those who had a position was that there needed to be clear consequences for those sexually harassing others. This is not just for rapists but also for those making others' lives a misery by cat-calling.

The participants had a strong sense that sexual harassment was not taken seriously enough and in order to eliminate it, more sanctions are needed.

Safe places!

The final call was for safe places to retreat from both physical and online harassment, and to make the online environment in particular much safer (17 people talked about such places directly; many more indirectly). The following few comments provide some descriptions of what a safe place might look like. Note there are a number of important distinctions between safe places that protect people from sexual harassment, places to go to talk, online safety and a place of no judgment for people.

Create safe spaces where anyone can go if they need a break or want to isolate themselves for a bit.

Have people on buses after a certain time to help prevent this.

Get rid of social media :)

I would like to not feel scared to walk down the street, women tend to not feel safe walking around alone this should be changed, safer spaces are needed.

Support and places for those to talk about it freely and anonymously.

When we speak up about it don't make it seem like our fault and don't say we are lying and listen to us before you decide it's not a big deal.

Throughout the study there were many comments on online harassment. The concept of a 'safe place' in that context needs to be explored further.

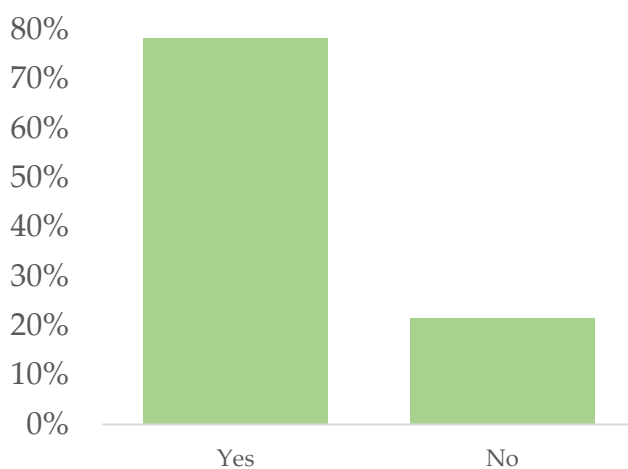
Other comments included the concept of bystanders becoming witnesses to harassment and speaking out; several pleas to stop the dick pic/nudes culture and ensuring that victims of sexual harassment are not further victimised by being forced to speak up.

Wider knowledge of sexual harassment

The sections of the report on the experience of sexual harassment (see above) were limited to those who indicated they had been harassed. This and following sections report findings from the whole group of responders, around 550 people.

Participants were asked whether they knew of others who had been sexually harassed over the past three years. The large majority, 431/550, or 78%, said they did.

Figure 8. Proportion who know of other people sexually harassed in past three years (n=550)



This response indicates that knowledge of the existence of sexual harassment is widespread within the school community. This figure is almost identical to the proportion in the Christchurch Girls' High study.

Those who indicated they did know someone were then asked who the person was. The 431 participants together noted 796 persons who they know had been harassed, in the following categories (note, this is almost certainly an undercount). The responses are in Table 1 below.

Table 1. People that participants knew who had been harassed (n=431)

	%	Count
A student at your school	41.71%	332
A friend outside school	30.40%	242
A family member	15.33%	122
Someone in your community	9.55%	76
Other	3.02%	24
Total	100%	796

Other responses include 'Mum', friends, family members, co-workers and even a stranger who discussed their situation at the school library. One person noted:

Friend at school who is not doing the survey because who parents do not know, it has happened to her twice. Also another friend at the swimming pool who might not have permission to do the survey.

The survey aimed to discover how much participants knew about sexual harassment in the wider school community. These are self-reports:

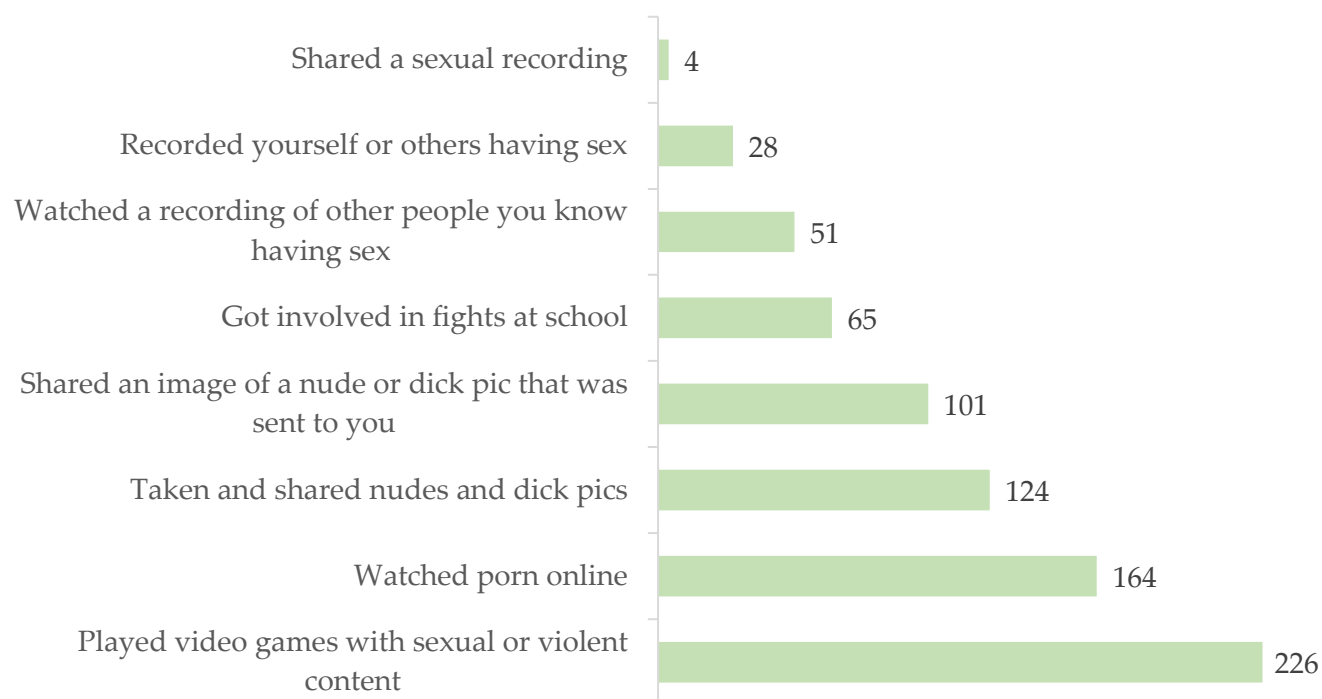
217 had witnessed sexual harassment

10 had been involved in sexually harassing others

100 had intervened to try to stop sexual harassment

In the following table, participants were asked to outline their involvement in a range of activities that were not sexual harassment in themselves but could be linked to harassment. There were 539 potential respondents.

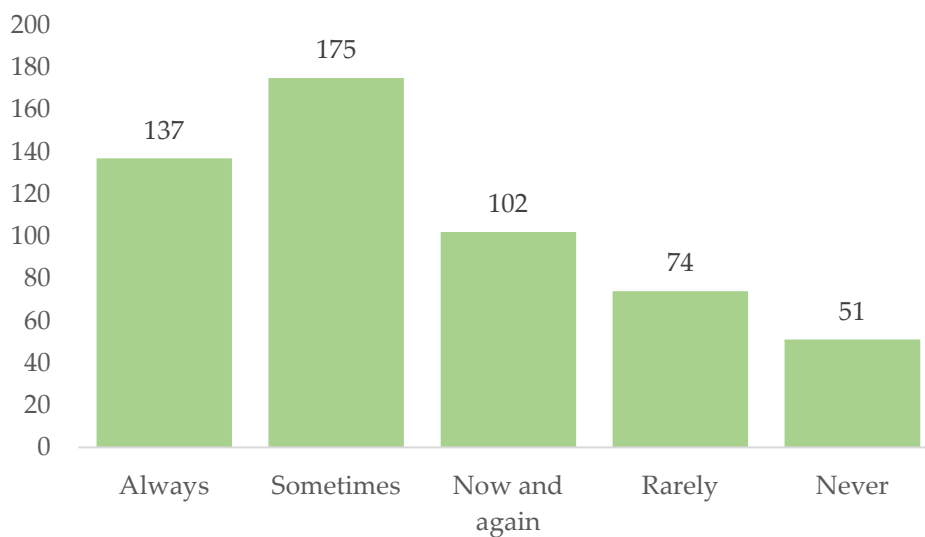
Figure 9. Involvement in harassment-related activities



In interviews with a focus group of students prior to this survey, it was suggested that there was significant pressure on students to both conform to dominant views

and also to hide their emotions, in order to not be seen as weak. This might include in circumstances such as sexual harassment. For the students in this study, 58% agreed that they always felt such pressure to hide their emotions, 32% felt this pressure occasionally or rarely, and 10% never felt the need to hide their emotions.

Figure 10. How often students feel the need to hide their emotions so they won't be seen as weak (n=539).



There is pressure, felt by the majority, to hide emotions so they will not be seen as weak. The question remains how much such pressure contributes to the continuance of sexual harassment, and whether the culture that underpins it can (or should) be changed.

Other thoughts and feelings about sexual harassment

Students were given the opportunity to express any other thoughts or feeling they might have on the topic of sexual harassment. Most had nothing further to say.

The most common view expressed by those who responded to this question was that sexual harassment needed to be stopped. It was harmful, and unfair, and people were suffering as a result:

I feel like it's a problem that has happened to many people worse than me. I would like to see it changed in our community.

Some remained indignant that nothing was done, even though it was widely known in the school community that there were problems:

I think that people that do it get away with it and it is swept under the rug as I know over 10 Shirley boys who have sexually harassed my friends at parties and outside of school and even when I have reported it no serious consequences get done about it.

One person commented that she did not like that it was so bad the school felt it necessary to do a survey about it. Another said: "I wish that it stops".

The second most common comment was around the need for everyone to speak up. There was a feeling that people were treading around the edges of the problem in order to save people's sensibilities, rather than tackle it head-on:

I wish schools taught it better. In intermediate we got taught about making "good" decisions and it was all about how women shouldn't go out and get drunk, not that predators should be educated. We are so uncomfortable at the idea of talking about harassment etc, that we never talk about perpetrators in order to shield people.

The remainder of the comments in speaking up were around the need to reject the notion that sexual harassment is normal, to acknowledge it is "disgusting" (two comments), that "no means no" and a plea to "help us fix it".

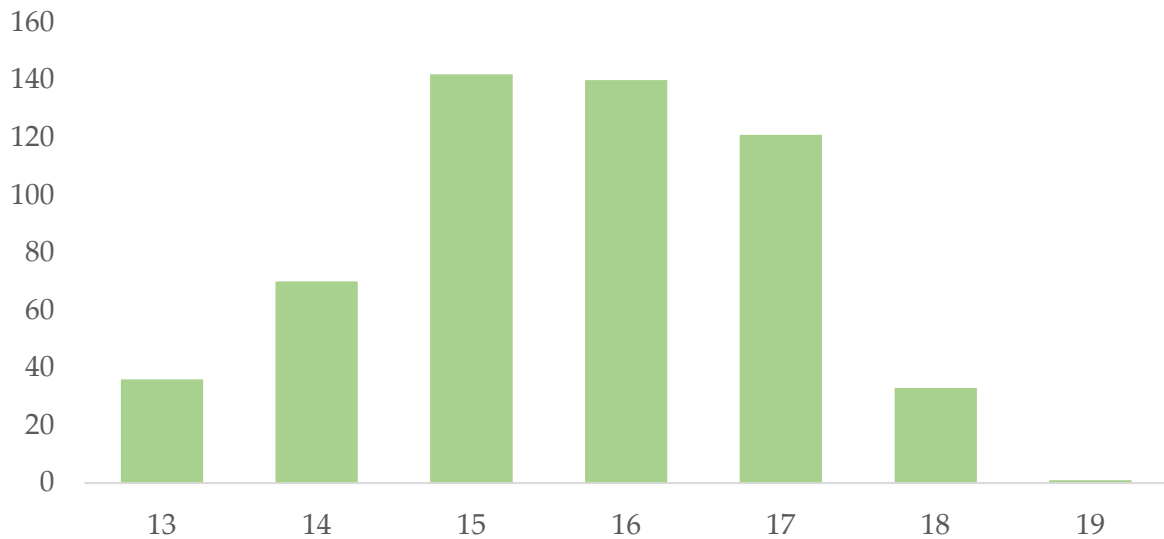
The third most common 'other comment' was that participants felt "disgusting", "fearful", "uncomfortable", "never feeling clean" and "I hate it", "It makes me sick" and "I don't feel like myself".

Other comments pleaded for help for "my friend" and "victims", were concerned about the mental health of victims and wanted to see change in how victims of sexual harassment were treated.

Others again wanted to be believed, wanted more awareness around sexual harassment in the school setting and how "tormenting" sexual harassment can be. People wanted clarity about sexual harassment boundaries. One participant said: "It makes me want to kill myself".

Demographic information

Figure 11. Age at date of survey (n=543)



Participants were asked to explain their gender identity. 91.5% (508/555) described themselves as female, seven as male, 12 as non-binary, eight as gender queer, fourteen as questioning and several others chose not to say.

Ninety five percent (512/540) identified with the gender they were assigned at birth.

Figure 12. Sexuality of participants (n=551).

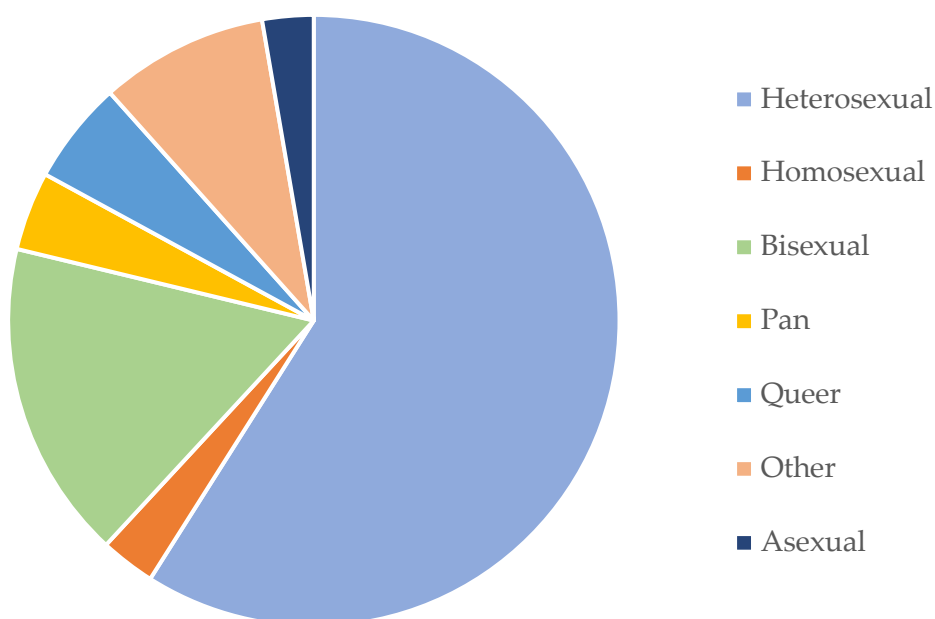
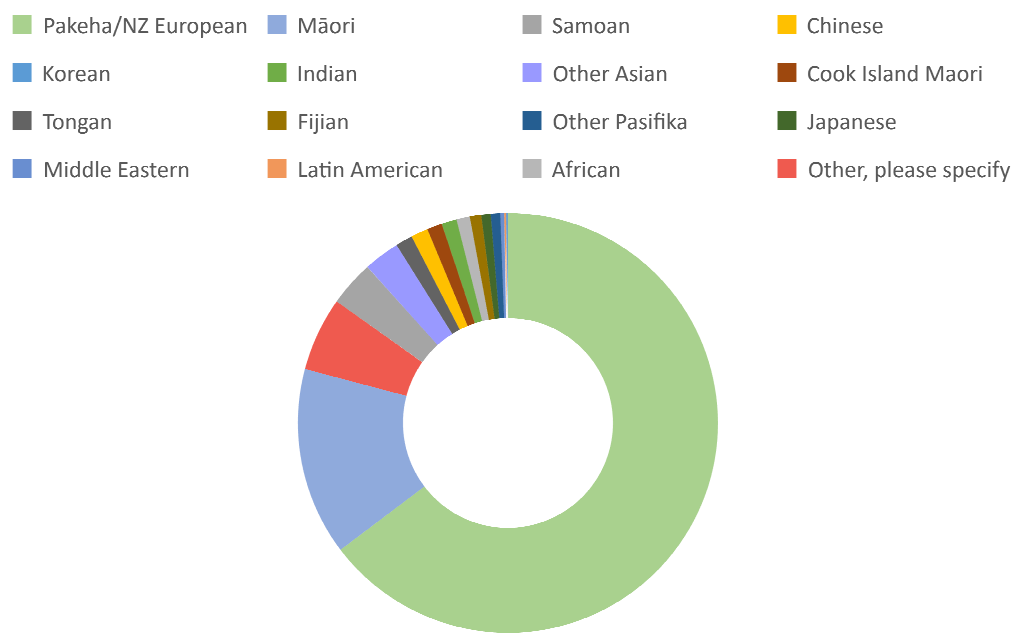


Figure 13. Ethnicity of participants (multiples allowed) (n= 550)



As well, 43 other ethnicities were noted by participants.

Conclusion

As far as we know, there have been no further surveys of sexual harassment in secondary schools since the study of Christchurch Girls' High School, fifteen months ago. This is despite strong interest in the issues, apparently from Parliament, government agencies, the media, youth organisations, women's organisations and other schools.

The lack of action has persisted despite major publicity around sexual harassment in tertiary education, in the workplace (especially the [Mediaworks inquiry](#) last year) and nationally and internationally with regard to what is generally known as the 'Me Too' movement.

This study has been able to confirm that the high levels of sexual harassment at CGHS are mirrored by the experiences of AGHS students. The number and proportion of harassment acts was almost identical in each, indeed remarkably so. So were the responses, with additional and baggy clothes the most common way students sought to protect themselves.

The students in this school are asking significant questions about how change may take place. For example, some describe being cat-called daily and note that there are no sanctions against this. Some call for punishment, some for education (and most want both).

Participants also raise the question of how, before they are even old enough to vote, people can be subject to numerous, confidence-sapping, dangerous, frightening or illegal sexually-related acts without apparently any action at all. They are upset and angry about it and want change.

They want to see males engaged in making changes, as most of the harassment comes from them. They do not think their male peers will change unless there are sanctions in place, but ideally they want them to choose to change.

The huge silence around sexual harassment seen at CGHS continues at AGHS. Some participants explained that there were good reasons for not telling people – not enough support, fear of being disbelieved, fear of a significant event being shrugged off, fear of parents being told and privacy being breached. There was a wide call for better support services and more safe places, which might increase a tendency to disclosure.

The two colocated schools will no doubt work together on some of these issues.