

Juristat Bulletin—Quick Fact

Students' experiences of discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation at postsecondary schools in the Canadian provinces, 2019

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Students' experiences of discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation at postsecondary schools in the Canadian provinces, 2019

by Marta Burczycka, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics

All forms of discrimination can create an environment where people feel disrespected, excluded and potentially unsafe. In the postsecondary environment, discrimination creates barriers to full participation which may hinder the success of students (Asquith et al. 2019; Levchak 2013).

The issue of discrimination based on gender has permeated postsecondary institutions since at least the mid-twentieth century, with observers pointing out that people who identify as women continue to face discrimination in fields of study where they are underrepresented (Barthelemy et al. 2016; Reilly et al. 2015; Stratton et al. 2005). More recently, discussions on the rights of transgender people and those whose gender identity fits beyond the traditional dichotomy of “woman” and “man” have gained prominence, as members of these groups and their allies draw attention to barriers in academia and beyond (Dugan et al. 2012; Griner et al. 2017). Concurrently, people identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer have drawn attention to the inequalities they face in the postsecondary system and elsewhere (Friedman and Leaper 2010; Woodford and Kulick 2014).

For these reasons, discrimination on the basis of gender, gender identity or sexual orientation in the postsecondary setting represents an important topic for research and policy work. The present study aims to describe the prevalence, characteristics, and attitudes surrounding these forms of discrimination among Canada's 2.5 million postsecondary students (see Text box 1).¹ Developed and conducted by Statistics Canada, the Survey on Individual Safety in the Postsecondary Student Population (SISPSP) collected data from students at Canadian postsecondary schools in 2019. The survey was funded by the Department for Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) as part of *It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence*.

This *Juristat Bulletin—Quick Fact* presents findings on the prevalence, characteristics and impacts of discrimination based on actual and perceived gender, gender identity or sexual orientation among students aged 18 to 24 at postsecondary institutions in the Canadian provinces (17 to 24 for students living in Quebec²). The context in which discriminatory behaviours occurred—where they happened, who was responsible, and who was around—gives insight into actual and perceived equality on campus. This analysis provides an indication of postsecondary school culture when it comes to issues surrounding discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation. In a separate report, Statistics Canada has released an analysis of unwanted sexualized behaviours and sexual assault among postsecondary students in the Canadian provinces (see Burczycka 2020).

Text box 1

Key terms

The 2019 Survey on Individual Safety in the Postsecondary Student Population (SISPSP) measures behaviours that occurred in the postsecondary school-related setting. Universities, colleges, CEGEPs and other postsecondary institutions are included.³

The survey collected information on the following discriminatory behaviours based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation:

- Suggestions that a man does not act like a man is supposed to act
- Suggestions that a woman does not act like a woman is supposed to act
- Someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because of their gender
- Comments that people are not good at or should be prevented from being in a particular program because of their gender
- Someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because of their sexual orientation or assumed sexual orientation
- Someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because they are, or are assumed to be, transgender

Text box 1 — end

Key terms

The postsecondary school-related setting includes:

- On campus
- While travelling to or from school
- During an off-campus event organized or endorsed by the postsecondary school, including official sporting events
- During unofficial activities or social events organized by students, instructors, professors, either on or off-campus
- An employment at the school
- At a co-op or work term placement organized by the school
- Behaviours that occurred online where some or all of the people responsible were students, teachers or other people associated with the school.

Campus refers to the physical building or buildings in which classes, studies, and activities take place, including (for example) residences, cafeterias, libraries, and lecture halls, as well as adjacent outdoor spaces.

Almost half of students witness or experience discrimination on sexual orientation and gender identity

Close to half (47%)⁴ of students at Canadian postsecondary institutions witnessed or experienced discrimination on the basis of gender, gender identity or sexual orientation (including actual or perceived gender, gender identity or sexual orientation). It was more common for women (52%) than men (42%) to have either witnessed or experienced discrimination, and women were more likely to have witnessed or experienced each one of the specific kinds of behaviours included in the category (Table 1).⁵

Notably, the higher prevalence of discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation seen among women students mirrors findings from other studies. Women more often face many types of harmful behaviours based on gender, including unwanted sexualized behaviours and sexual assault in the postsecondary setting (Burczycka 2020) and in Canadian society in general (Cotter and Savage 2019).

When it came to discrimination in the postsecondary setting, there was a particularly large gap between women and men who witnessed or experienced comments that people are not good at or should be prevented from being in a particular program because of their gender. This type of discrimination was witnessed or experienced by 28% of women students, versus 15% of men. Additionally, more women than men witnessed or experienced suggestions that a woman does not act like woman is supposed to act (36% versus 25%).

Women were also more likely than men to have witnessed discriminatory behaviours in the postsecondary environment, without having personally experienced them. For instance, 25% of women students said that they had witnessed (but not experienced) suggestions that a man doesn't act like a man is supposed to act or that a woman doesn't act like a woman is supposed to act, compared to 22% of men. The same pattern was seen with each of the other kinds of discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation, when the proportions of women and men who witnessed them were compared. Notably, it is unknown if these behaviours were more likely to have occurred in the presence of women, for example, or if women were more likely to perceive certain behaviours as discriminatory.

One in five women, one in eight men experience discrimination in the postsecondary setting

Many students indicated that they had personally experienced discrimination based on actual or perceived gender, gender identity or sexual orientation in the postsecondary setting. Women were more likely to have experienced each of the discriminatory behaviours, with the exception of being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because they are or are assumed to be transgender (reported by 1% of women and men, respectively).

Overall, one in five (20%) women students stated that they personally experienced discrimination in the past 12 months, representing over 200,000 individuals (Table 2).⁶ Among men, almost one in eight (13%) reported having this kind of experience—about 118,000 students.⁷

With respect to the specific kinds of discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation, 16% of women experienced comments that they didn't act like a woman is supposed to act, while a slightly lower proportion of men (12%) experienced comments that they didn't act like a man is supposed to act. Smaller proportions of women (3%) and men (2%)

experienced being insulted, mistreated, ignored or excluded because of their sexual orientation or assumed sexual orientation.

A larger difference in how women and men experienced discrimination in the postsecondary setting was seen with comments that they are not good at or should be prevented from being in a particular program because of their gender. Almost one in ten (9%) women experienced this type of discrimination, compared to 2% of men.

Similar questions about discrimination on the basis of gender, gender identity or sexual orientation were asked by the SSPPS, a survey aimed at gathering information representative of all Canadians. Looking specifically at the workplace experiences of Canadians aged 15 and older in the provinces, findings from that study showed that 8% of women and 5% of men experienced suggestions that they did not act like a man or woman is supposed to act in the 12 months preceding that survey (Cotter and Savage 2019). Though these results are not directly comparable to information collected from students—they represent a different age group and are focussed on experiences in the workplace—these proportions show that women continue to experience higher rates of discriminatory behaviours as they move into the workforce.

Discrimination on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation experienced by one in three LGB+ students

Many students at postsecondary institutions in the Canadian provinces indicated that they were lesbian, gay, bisexual or had another sexual orientation other than heterosexual, such as pansexual or asexual (LGB+). This was the case for over 270,000 students, or 11% of all postsecondary students in the provinces, and included 14% of women, 7% of men, and 93% of gender diverse students.⁸ More specifically, among women, 2% identified as lesbian, 11% identified as bisexual, and 1% identified with a sexual orientation other than lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual. Among men, 3% identified as gay, 4% identified as bisexual, and 1% identified with a sexual orientation other than gay, bisexual or heterosexual. Six in ten (61%) of gender diverse students identified as bisexual.⁹

Experiences of discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation in the postsecondary setting were prevalent among LGB+ students. Close to one-third (31%) of gay and lesbian students reported this kind of discrimination, as did 34% of bisexual students and 34% of students who reported a sexual orientation other than gay, lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual. These proportions were double that experienced by heterosexual students (15%, Table 3).

More specifically, 31% of women who identified as lesbian stated that they had experienced discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation in the postsecondary setting, as did 34% of bisexual women and 39% of women with another sexual orientation other than heterosexual. Among men, 31% of those who identified as gay or bisexual (respectively) reported discrimination of this type.¹⁰ None of these differences were found to be statistically significant.

Discrimination based on gender identity, sexual orientation experienced by other demographic groups

Discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation was reported by individuals belonging to other demographic groups. Students who reported that they lived with some form of disability were also overrepresented: a quarter (24%) indicated that they had experienced discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender or gender identity, compared to 13% of students who were not living with a disability (Table 3). Women students who lived with a disability had a higher prevalence of discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation in a postsecondary setting (26%) than women who did not have a disability (15%). Men who identified as students living with a disability also experienced discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation in larger proportions than their counterparts with no disability (19% versus 11%).

Students who indicated that they sometimes (20%) or usually (20%) wore a visible religious symbol, such as a head scarf or turban, experienced a higher prevalence of discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender or gender identity, compared to students who did not wear such items (16%) (Table 3). This reflected the experience of men in the postsecondary environment, more so than women students. Among women students specifically, those who sometimes (22%), usually (22%) or never (20%) wore a visible religious symbol experienced discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation in similar proportions. Among men, those who sometimes (17%) or usually (17%) wore a visible symbol associated with their religion had a slightly higher prevalence of having experienced discrimination than men who did not wear such a symbol (13%).

In contrast, students who identified as members of a visible minority group were slightly less likely to have experienced discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation (16%) than students who did not identify as a visible minority (18%) (Table 3). Women students who identified as members of a visible minority group had a slightly lower prevalence of this kind of discrimination (19%) than their counterparts who were not members of such a group (21%). Among men who were

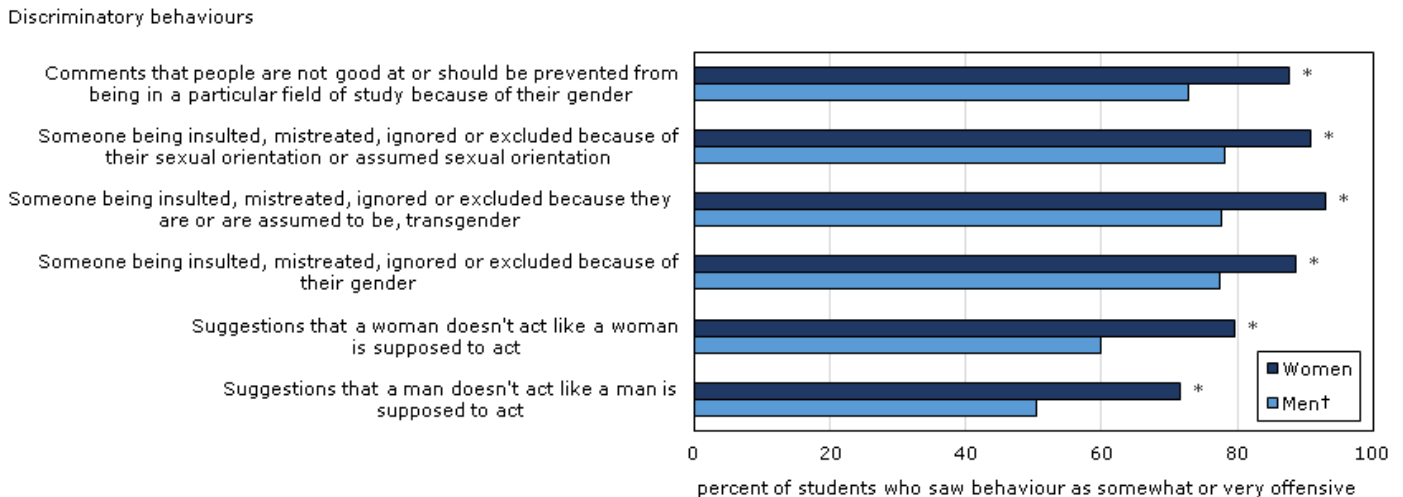
members of a visible minority group, their prevalence of this type of discrimination in the postsecondary setting (13%) was not statistically different from that of men who were not visible minorities (14%).

Discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation was as common among First Nations, Métis and Inuit¹¹ students as it was among those who were not Indigenous (19% and 17%, a difference not found to be statistically significant; Table 3). It was as common for Indigenous women students to experience this kind of discrimination as it was for their non-Indigenous counterparts (20%, respectively). Among Indigenous men, 18% experienced this type of discrimination, a proportion not found to be statistically different from that of their non-Indigenous counterparts (13%).

Most students see discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation as offensive

Although discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation was witnessed or experienced by many students, most considered it to be either somewhat or very offensive. Almost nine in ten (88%) women and seven in ten (73%) men who had witnessed or experienced this type of discrimination, for instance, stated that “comments that people are not good at or should be prevented from being in a particular field of study because of their gender” were somewhat or very offensive (Chart 1).

Chart 1
Students at Canadian postsecondary schools' views on the offensiveness of discriminatory behaviours that they witnessed or experienced, by type of behaviour and gender, 2019



* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)
 † reference category

Note: Includes postsecondary students aged 18 to 24 (17 to 24 in Quebec) as of December 31, 2018 in the Canadian provinces who witnessed (saw or heard) or experienced (targeted, directed at them personally) discriminatory behaviours in the past 12 months. Includes behaviours which occurred in the postsecondary setting, including on campus, off campus (if they occurred during travel to or from school, during an official or unofficial event organized by someone affiliated with the school, or during paid or unpaid employment, work placements or volunteer work associated with postsecondary studies) or online (where some or all of the people responsible were students, teachers or other people associated with the school). Excludes behaviours that respondents heard about from someone else (e.g., something that a friend confided in them). The categories "women" and "men" include cisgender and transgender women and men. Percent calculations are based on unrounded estimates and include missing responses. Confidence intervals are available upon request.

Source: Survey on Individual Safety in the Postsecondary Student Population.

Nine in ten (91%) women and almost eight in ten (78%) men said that someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored or excluded because of their sexual orientation or assumed sexual orientation was somewhat or very offensive, while similar proportions (93% of women and 78% of men) felt that way about someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored or excluded because they are or are assumed to be, transgender.

Interestingly, “suggestions that a woman doesn't act like a woman is supposed to act” were somewhat or very offensive to more men (60%) than “suggestions that a man doesn't act like a man is supposed to act” (50%). Fewer women also saw this latter type of discrimination as somewhat or very offensive (72%), compared to other types.

Regardless of the specific type of discriminatory behaviour in question, women were more likely than men to consider it somewhat or very offensive.

Women who witness discrimination in the postsecondary setting are more likely to take action

In addition to being more likely to witness or experience discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation in the postsecondary setting and to find it offensive, women students were also more likely than men to have done something in response when they saw these behaviours being directed at others. Over half (55%) of women said that they took some sort of action at least once in these situations, compared to 41% of men (Table 4).

Women who took action were more likely to have spoken to the person who was targeted (63%, versus 58% of men who took action) and were more likely to have spoken about it to someone outside of the school (15% versus 9%). However, when taking action, women were less likely than men to have stepped in to separate those involved (22%, versus 30% among men who intervened).

Smaller proportions of students who witnessed discrimination contacted someone in authority about it. Here, no differences were seen between women and men who took action: they were as likely to have reported the behaviour to the school (8% and 7%), spoken to someone at a school-run service (8% and 7%), and spoken to someone at a student-run service (6% and 5%).

Large proportions of both women (74%) and men (79%) stated that in at least one instance in which they had witnessed sexual orientation- and gender-based discrimination, they did nothing in response. Women were more likely than men to say that they did not take action because they felt uncomfortable (40% versus 23%), feared negative consequences for themselves or others (20% versus 13%), or worried about their personal safety (10% versus 6%). The fact that women's actions are constrained by these types of concerns hints at broader pressures that women students may experience in the postsecondary setting.

Discrimination in learning environments, school-related employment more common for women

Discrimination on the basis of gender, gender identity or sexual orientation that happened in the postsecondary context may have taken place on campus, or—if it involved a student, teacher, or happened at an event sanctioned or organized by students or the school—it may have happened in an off campus or online space (see Text box 1).

In general, seven in ten students who had experienced this kind of discrimination in the postsecondary setting said that at least one incident happened on campus. This included 73% of women and 71% of men who had experienced discrimination on the basis of gender, gender identity or sexual orientation. Under half said that they had experienced this type of discrimination in a school-related setting off campus, including 46% of both women and men who had experienced discrimination. Less than one in five stated that discrimination had occurred in a school-related online environment (15% of women, 18% of men). None of these differences were found to be statistically significant.

Notably, women were more likely than men to have experienced discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation in two important locations. Just over half (52%) of women students who had experienced this kind of discrimination on campus said that it had happened in a learning environment such as a lecture hall or lab; this compared to 43% of men. Similarly, a considerably larger proportion of women (14%) than men (8%) who had experienced discrimination off campus said that it happened during an internship, volunteer assignment, or other type of paid or unpaid employment related to their studies. Men, on the other hand, were more likely than women to have experienced discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation in an off-campus residence (other than a fraternity or sorority; 59% of men versus 41% of women who had experienced off-campus discrimination). These differences are telling, as they suggest women more often face discrimination in formal settings directly related to their academic programs and associated work experience.

Discrimination by gender, gender identity, sexual orientation often happens with others around

Most students who experienced discrimination on the basis of gender, gender identity or sexual orientation in the postsecondary setting said that other people were around when it happened (Table 5). Seven in ten (70%) women who had experienced this kind of discrimination said that others were around in at least one instance when the behaviour took place—a slightly higher proportion than among men (66%).

While at least some of those who were around when the behaviour took place may not have been aware of what was going on, their presence suggests that the potential for intervention by others may exist in many instances. However, the majority of students who had experienced discrimination in the presence of others said that no one who was around took any action in response to what was going on: this was the case for 56% of women and 66% of men who had been discriminated against with others around.

Some students said that other people did do something in response to the acts of discrimination. Among them, many said that others confronted the perpetrator: this was the case for 74% of women and 64% of men who had experienced this type of discrimination in the presence of others who took some sort of action in response. Other common actions taken by others included creating a distraction (reported by 37% of women and 39% of men) and separating those involved (26% of women, 31% of men). Fewer students who had experienced discrimination in the postsecondary setting where others took some sort of action said that the action taken had been to tell someone in authority about what was going on (9% of women, 14% of men).

Sometimes, the actions taken by people who witnessed discrimination on the basis of gender, gender identity or sexual orientation were not intended to stop the situation or help the person being targeted. In some cases, others actually encouraged the behaviour: this was the case for 15% of women who had experienced discrimination where others took some sort of action, along with an even larger proportion of men (24%).

While most students who had experienced discrimination on the basis of gender, gender identity or sexual orientation said that other people were present when the behaviour took place, most behaviours were perpetrated by a single person—though about a quarter of both women (23%) and men (26%) said that two or more people were always responsible. In this sense, discriminatory behaviours that occur in the postsecondary setting occasionally happen in group settings.

In general, this pattern was similar for women and men who experienced sexual orientation- or gender-based discrimination. However, there were differences when it came to the gender of perpetrators. Women were more likely than men to state that perpetrators were always men (55% of women who had experienced discrimination, compared to 38% of men). Meanwhile, men who had experienced discrimination were more likely than women to say that only women were responsible (17% versus 5%).

Peers responsible for discrimination more often than those in positions of authority

Most of the time, students who experienced sexual orientation- or gender-based discrimination said that a peer was responsible. Seven in ten women (72%) and men (73%) said that a fellow student was responsible for at least one instance, and large proportions of women (38%) and men indicated (47%) that the perpetrator was a friend or acquaintance (Table 5).

The fact that most perpetrators of discrimination were peers suggests that discrimination in the postsecondary context tends to occur outside of formal power relationships. People in authority—professors, coaches, supervisors at work and others—hold a considerable degree of power in the postsecondary setting. According to students who experienced discrimination, people in these kinds of positions were rarely responsible. That said, 12% of women who had experienced discrimination said that a professor or instructor was responsible—a larger proportion than among men (7%). Women were also more likely to state that they had been discriminated against by a teaching assistant (4% versus 2% among men). Small, but equal, proportions of women and men stated that they had experienced discrimination on the basis of gender, gender identity or sexual orientation by a supervisor or boss at a co-op, internship or paid on-campus employment (3% and 2%, respectively).

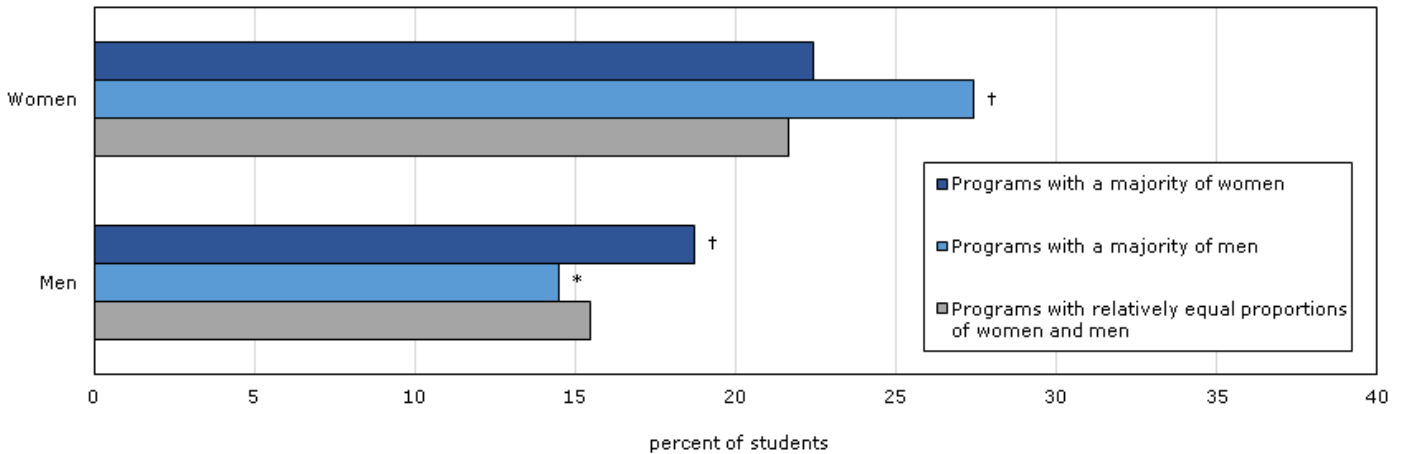
Men face discrimination in programs of study where their gender is underrepresented

The prevalence of discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation varied across university programs of study.¹² Students who were enrolled in programs in where more than 60% of the students were women, where more than 60% were men and where the proportions of men and women were relatively equal had different experiences.

For men at Canadian universities, the gender composition of their field of study—that is, whether their program was made up of mostly women, mostly men, or equal proportions of both—was somewhat correlated with experiences of discrimination on the basis of gender, gender identity or sexual orientation in the postsecondary setting. About one in seven (14%) men studying in programs where the majority of students were men said that they had experienced discrimination of this type (Chart 2). This was a smaller proportion than among men in programs with mostly women students, among whom 19% said that they had experienced discrimination of this type. There was no statistically significant difference in the proportion of men in programs with equal proportions of men and women who experienced discrimination (15%) compared to those in the other types of programs.

Chart 2

Prevalence of discriminatory behaviours among students at Canadian postsecondary schools in the past 12 months, by gender composition of program of study, 2019



* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)
 † reference category

Note: Differences among women are not statistically significant. Includes university students only. Includes students aged 18 to 24 (17 to 24 in Quebec) as of December 31, 2018 in the Canadian provinces. The categories "women" and "men" include cisgender and transgender women and men. Percent calculations are based on unrounded estimates and include missing responses. Includes behaviours which occurred in a postsecondary school setting, including on campus, off campus (if they occurred during travel to or from school, during an official or unofficial event organized by someone affiliated with the school, or during paid or unpaid employment, work placements or volunteer work associated with postsecondary studies) or online (where some or all of the people responsible were students, teachers or other people associated with the school). Programs where women or men represent 60% or more of students (according to data from the 2016/2017 academic year collected by the Postsecondary Student Information System) are considered to be programs in which women or men (respectively) form the majority of students. Confidence intervals are available upon request.

Source: Survey of Individual Safety in the Postsecondary Student Population.

Among women, 27% of those in university programs with 60% or more men stated that they had experienced discrimination on the basis of gender, gender identity or sexual orientation. Similar proportions were noted among those in programs with mostly women (22%) and those in programs where women and men were equally represented (22%)—differences that were not found to be statistically significant.¹³

Impact of discrimination greater on students' emotional wellbeing than on academic life

Discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation can have wide-ranging and detrimental impacts on those who experience it. In an environment that ostensibly rewards talent and hard work with recognition and opportunity, discrimination can be especially destructive (Asquith et al. 2019; Levchak 2013). The SISPS asked students about how their experiences of discrimination had impacted their emotional and mental health, as well as their academic life.

Experiences of discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation in the postsecondary context had emotional consequences for many students. For example, many women felt annoyed (59%), frustrated (54%), and angry (51%) (Table 6). These impacts were also reported by men who experienced discrimination, though they were more common among women. Notably, serious mental health impacts were similarly prevalent among women and men, including becoming anxious (14% and 11%, respectively), depressed (7% and 6%), or fearful (6% and 5%) as a result, or having experienced suicidal thoughts (2% and 3%); none of these differences were found to be statistically significant.

Notably, almost all types of negative impacts on emotional and mental health were more common for LGB+ students, compared to their non-LGB+ counterparts. This was especially pronounced when it came to serious impacts on mental health. For instance, LGB+ students who had experienced discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation were twice or three times as likely as non-LGB+ students to have become anxious (24% versus 10%), depressed (14% versus 5%), or fearful (12% versus 4%) as a result, or to have experienced suicidal thoughts (4% versus 2%). As with non-LGB+ students, these impacts were as common among LGB+ women and LGB+ men.

Overall, relatively few students said that experiences of discrimination had an impact on their academic life. For instance, 4% of women and 3% of men who had experienced discrimination said that they had stopped going to classes as a result, and 3% of women and 2% of men had asked for extensions on assignments. However, LGB+ students who had experienced discrimination were considerably more likely to have experienced negative impacts on their academics, including having to ask for extensions on assignments (6%, versus 2% of non-LGB+ students) or dropping classes (3% versus 1%).

Less than one in ten students who experience discrimination speak about it with someone associated with the school

Relatively few students who experienced discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation spoke about it to someone associated with the school, such as a faculty member, student support service, campus security, mental health counsellor, chaplain, or someone employed at their student residence or who was responsible for students' wellbeing. Among women who experienced discriminatory behaviours, 7% spoke to someone associated with the school about at least one instance (compared to 5% among men) (Table 7). Of those students who did speak to someone associated with the school about what they experienced, 65% of women and 57% of men said that in at least one instance, they spoke to a resource affiliated with the school's administration (such as a medical care centre). A smaller proportion of women (18%) said that they had spoken to someone at a student-run resource, such as a peer support group.¹⁴

A common reason that women gave for why they chose to speak with someone associated with the school (38%) was to access mental health support. Some women who had experienced discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation also stated that they spoke with someone associated with the school because they wished to pursue an informal resolution to the situation (19%).¹⁵

When it came to reasons for not reporting discrimination to the school, similar proportions of women and men said that they did not do so because they did not see the incident as serious enough (65%, respectively), because they did not need help (49% of women and 46% of men who did not report), and because they had resolved the issue on their own (37% and 40%).

Other reasons included not knowing whether and how discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation that happened in the postsecondary setting should be reported. These kinds of reasons were especially common among women: about one-fifth (21%) of women who did not speak to anyone at the school said they did not do so because they were not aware that this type of incident could be reported (compared to 11% of men); 15% said that they did not know who at the school could provide help (versus 8% of men). Women also worried that the school wouldn't take them seriously (16%), as did 11% of men.

Text box 2 Experiences of transgender students

While anyone can experience discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation—whether actual or perceived—research suggests that these experiences are common among the transgender population (Dugan et al. 2012; Griner et al. 2017). In the analysis that follows, transgender people are defined as anyone who does not identify as cisgender—that is, anyone who identifies with a gender other than the one that they were assigned to at birth, including individuals who do not identify with either of the binary genders, or who identify with a binary gender in addition to another gender.¹⁶ According to the SISPSP, 0.8% of postsecondary students were transgender, including 0.1% who were transgender women, 0.2% who were transgender men, and 0.4% who were gender diverse—in all, about 19,000 students.¹⁷

Findings suggest that transgender students were considerably more likely to have experienced discrimination on the basis of gender, gender identity or sexual orientation (Text box 2 table). Four in ten (40%) transgender students say that they had experienced discrimination of this type in the postsecondary context in the previous 12 months, compared to 17% of cisgender students.

Specifically, 27% of transgender students said that they had experienced suggestions that they do not act like a man or a woman is supposed to act; this compares to 14% of cisgender students. Similarly, 22% of transgender students stated that they had been insulted, mistreated, ignored or excluded because of their gender in a postsecondary setting—a considerably higher proportion than among their cisgender counterparts (6%). The same proportion of transgender students (22%) said that they had been insulted, mistreated, ignored or excluded because they were (or were perceived to be) transgender.

Text box 2 — continued

Experiences of transgender students

Text box 2 table

Students at Canadian postsecondary schools who personally experienced discriminatory behaviours in a postsecondary setting in the past 12 months, by type of behaviour and transgender status, 2019

Type of behaviour	Cisgender ¹			Transgender ²		
	percent	95% confidence interval		percent	95% confidence interval	
		from	to		from	to
Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity	16.9	16.2	17.6	40.1*	29.0	52.3
Suggestions that they don't act like a man or a woman is supposed to act	13.9	13.2	14.6	27.4†	18.1	39.3
Being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because of their gender	5.5	5.1	6.0	22.2†	13.7	33.9
Comments that they are not good at or should be prevented from being in a particular program because of their gender	5.4	5.0	5.8	F	...	...
Being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because of their sexual orientation or assumed sexual orientation	2.2	1.9	2.5	F	...	...
Being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because they are or are assumed to be transgender	0.5	0.4	0.7	22.5*	13.7	34.6

... not applicable

F too unreliable to be published

* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

† reference category

1. Includes people who identify with the gender that they were assigned at birth.

2. Includes people who identify with a gender other than the one that they were assigned at birth. This definition includes individuals who do not identify with either of the binary genders, who identify with both binary genders, or who identify with a binary gender in addition to another gender.

Note: Includes postsecondary students aged 18 to 24 (17 to 24 in Quebec) as of December 31, 2018 in the Canadian provinces who experienced (targeted, directed at them personally) discriminatory behaviours in the past 12 months. Includes behaviours which occurred in the postsecondary setting, including on campus, off campus (if they occurred during travel to or from school, during an official or unofficial event organized by someone affiliated with the school, or during paid or unpaid employment, work placements or volunteer work associated with postsecondary studies) or online (where some or all of the people responsible were students, teachers or other people associated with the school). Excludes behaviours that respondents heard about from someone else (e.g., something that a friend confided in them). Percent calculations are based on unrounded estimates and include missing responses. Respondents were able to provide information on multiple incidents; therefore, percentages do not add to 100. Confidence intervals should be interpreted as follows: If the survey were repeated many times, then 95% of the time (or 19 times out of 20), the confidence interval would cover the true population value.

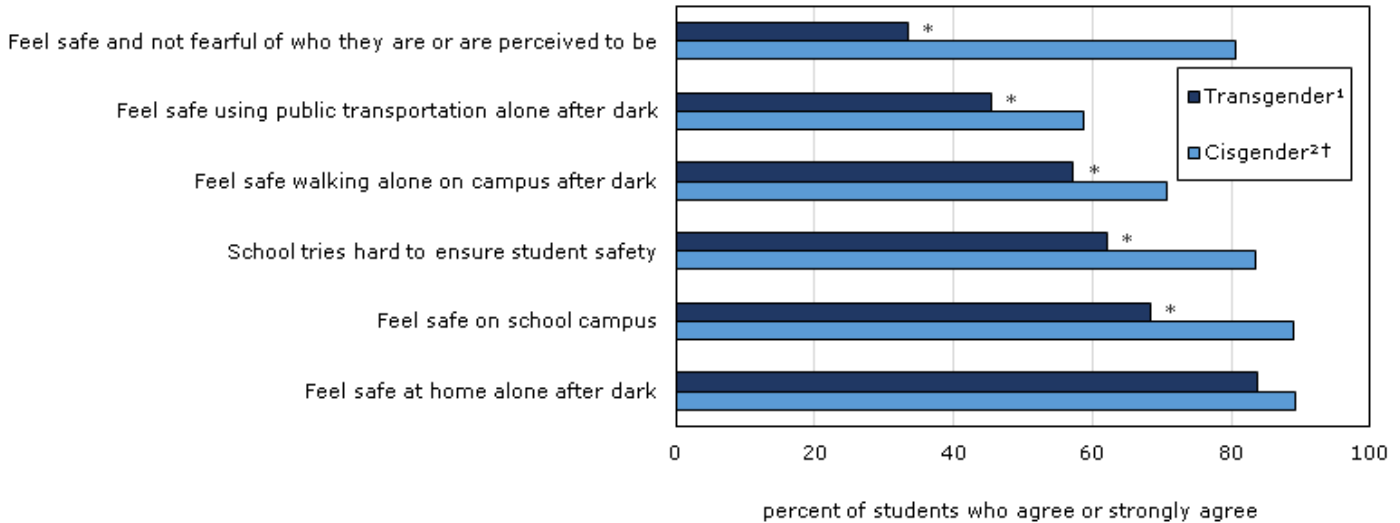
Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on Individual Safety in the Postsecondary Student Population.

Many transgender students indicated that they did not feel safe in and around their school environment (Text box 2 chart). When asked if they felt safe and not fearful of who they were or were perceived to be, one-third (33%) said that they agreed or strongly agreed with this statement—compared to 81% of cisgender students. Transgender students were also less likely to agree or strongly agree that they felt safe when using transit alone after dark (45%, versus 59% of cisgender students), to agree or strongly agree that they felt safe walking alone on campus after dark (57% versus 71%), and to agree or strongly agree in general that they felt safe on their school's campus (68% versus 89%). Transgender students were also less likely to agree or strongly agree that their school tries hard to ensure student safety (62% versus 83%). In contrast, most transgender students indicated that they felt safe at home alone after dark, and were as likely as cisgender students to agree or strongly agree that they felt safe in that situation (84% and 89%).

Text box 2 — end
Experiences of transgender students

Text box 2 chart
Students at Canadian postsecondary schools' beliefs about personal safety, by transgender status, 2019

Beliefs about personal safety



* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

† reference category

1. Includes people who identify with a gender other than the one that they were assigned at birth, including individuals who do not identify with either of the binary genders, who identify with both binary genders, or who identify with a binary gender in addition to another gender.

2. Includes people who identify with the gender that they were assigned at birth.

Note: Includes postsecondary students aged 18 to 24 (17 to 24 in Quebec) in the Canadian provinces. Percent calculations are based on unrounded estimates and include missing responses. Respondents were able to provide information on multiple incidents; therefore, percentages do not add to 100. Students who indicated that a particular situation did not apply to them (for example, those who never take public transit alone after dark) are excluded. Confidence intervals are available upon request.

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on Individual Safety in the Postsecondary Student Population.

Students who experience discrimination based on gender, gender identity, sexual orientation less likely to feel safe

In addition to questions about their experiences of discrimination on the basis of gender, gender identity or sexual orientation, postsecondary students were asked about their feelings of safety in and around their campus. Feelings of safety are an important part of how people experience the spaces around them; feeling unsafe has a negative impact on mental health and quality of life, and can dissuade people from fully engaging with the world around them (Bastomski and Smith 2016; Woodford and Kulick 2014).

Having experienced discrimination on the basis of gender, gender identity or sexual orientation had significant impacts on students' feelings of safety. Across all measures of personal safety in and around school, those who had not experienced discrimination were more likely to agree or strongly agree that they felt safe, while those who had these experiences were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree (Table 8). For instance, more than a quarter (27%) of students who had experienced discrimination disagreed or strongly disagreed that they felt safe walking alone on campus after dark, compared to 14% of students who had not experienced discrimination.

Differences were seen for both women and men: women who had experienced discrimination more often disagreed or strongly disagreed that they felt safe walking alone on campus after dark (38%) than women who had not experienced discrimination (23%). Among men, 8% of those who had experienced discrimination disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement, compared to 4% of men who had not experienced discrimination.¹⁸ In all cases—that is, across all measures of personal safety and among students that had and had not experienced discrimination—women's responses indicated that in general, women students feel less safe in the postsecondary environment.

Summary

Close to half (47%) of students at Canadian postsecondary institutions witnessed or experienced discrimination on the basis of gender, gender identity or sexual orientation (including actual or perceived gender, gender identity or sexual orientation) in the past year. This included a larger proportion of women (52%) than men (42%). Women were also more likely to have witnessed this form of discrimination without having personally experienced it (25% versus 22%), and were more likely to have experienced it themselves (20% versus 13%).

Discrimination that happened in the postsecondary context may have taken place on campus, or—if it involved a student, teacher, or happened at an event sanctioned or organized by students or the school—it may have happened in an off-campus or online space. Women were more likely than men to have experienced discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation in two key locations, including in a learning environment such as a lecture hall or lab (52%, versus 43% of men) or during an internship, volunteer assignment, or other type of paid or unpaid employment related to their studies (14% versus 8%). This suggests women more often face discrimination in formal settings directly related to their academic programs and associated work experience.

Most women (72%) and men (73%) said that a fellow student was responsible for at least one instance of discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation that they experienced in the postsecondary setting. That said, 12% of women who had experienced discrimination said that a professor or instructor was responsible—a larger proportion than among men (7%).

Women and men were similarly likely to report serious mental health impacts as a result of discrimination, such as anxiety (14% and 11%, respectively), depression (7% and 6%), and fear (6% and 5%). In addition, students who experienced discrimination based on gender, gender identity or sexual orientation—especially women—said that they felt unsafe in various situations in and around campus. Despite this, relatively few students who experienced discrimination spoke about it to someone associated with the school, such as a faculty member, student support service, campus security, mental health counsellor, chaplain, or someone employed at their student residence or who was responsible for students' wellbeing.

Experiences of discrimination on the basis of gender, gender identity or sexual orientation in the postsecondary setting were more common for students who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or with another sexual orientation other than heterosexual (LGB+). LGB+ students were also more likely than their non-LGB+ counterparts to experience impacts on their emotional and mental health. This kind of discrimination was also more common for transgender students.

Data source

Data are drawn from the Survey on Individual Safety in the Postsecondary Population.

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Notes

1. Data are based on a sample of 14,882 postsecondary students in the Canadian provinces. Each student responding to the survey was assigned a statistical weight so as to be representative of the approximately 2.5 million postsecondary students in the ten provinces.
2. In the province of Quebec, students graduate from secondary school one year earlier than students in other Canadian provinces and territories. Many then attend two- or three-year college level programs, known as CEGEPs (collèges d'enseignement général et professionnel), including technical programs or pre-university programs required for admission to university. Thus, it is common for students aged 17 to be enrolled in postsecondary programs in Quebec; for this reason, the target age for Quebec students surveyed by the Survey of Individual Safety in the Postsecondary Student Population is 17 to 24 years.
3. For a definition of and information about CEGEPs, see endnote 2.
4. Please note, numbers in text have been rounded while one decimal place is shown in tables and charts.
5. For the purposes of this study, "women" and "men" include both cisgender and transgender women and men. Students who do not identify as cisgender or transgender women and men are included as gender diverse students, and represent 0.4% of the survey sample (approximately 10,980 students). The relatively small proportion of gender diverse students means that in most cases, statistical findings cannot be released due to data quality or confidentiality concerns. For this reason, unless otherwise noted, the main body of the study is limited to analysis of women and men; the experiences of gender diverse students are explored together with those of transgender students later in this study (see Text box 2).
6. The confidence interval (CI) for the number "over 200,000 women" is from 191,742 to 213,495. CIs should be interpreted as follows: If the survey were repeated many times, then 95% of the time (or 19 times out of 20), the confidence interval would cover the true population value.
7. The confidence interval (CI) for the number "about 118,000 men" is from 109,061 to 126,593. CIs should be interpreted as follows: If the survey were repeated many times, then 95% of the time (or 19 times out of 20), the confidence interval would cover the true population value.
8. Gender diverse includes individuals who do not identify with either of the binary genders, or who identify with a binary gender in addition to another gender. The terms "women" and "men" include both cisgender and transgender women and men.
9. Information on other sexual orientations identified with by gender diverse students is not available due to sample size.
10. Information on the experiences of men who identified with another sexual orientation other than heterosexual is not available due to sample size.
11. Throughout this paper, the term "Indigenous" is used to refer to individuals identifying themselves as First Nations people, Métis or Inuit peoples.
12. Analysis of field of study includes only students who attended university. For more information, see Data source.
13. It should be noted that the number of women in programs with 60% or more men was small, relative to the number of women enrolled in other programs. This inequality of distribution may have influenced whether or not the differences in proportion of women who were victimized in the various program types were statistically significant.
14. Statistics for men are not available due to sample size.
15. Statistics for men are not available due to sample size.
16. Elsewhere in this study, transgender people (that is, people who were assigned female at birth but identify as men, and those who were assigned male at birth but identify as women) are counted as women and men in accordance with their stated gender. For this section, transgender people are analyzed separately, and include gender diverse people.
17. Percentages do not total 0.8% due to rounding. Because of small sample size, additional analysis on the experiences of trans women and of trans men (disaggregated) is not available.
18. While it is possible that students' experiences led to these feelings of being unsafe, other factors not measured by the survey may have influence and therefore, causality should not be assumed.

Detailed data tables

Table 1
Students at Canadian postsecondary schools who witnessed or experienced discriminatory behaviours in a postsecondary setting in the past 12 months, by type of behaviour and gender, 2019

Type of behaviour	Men†				Women			
	number	percent	95% confidence interval		number	percent	95% confidence interval	
			from	to			from	to
Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity	374,000	42.0	40.6	43.4	520,000	51.9*	50.6	53.1
Suggestions that a man does not act like a man is supposed to act	280,000	31.5	30.2	32.9	344,000	34.3*	33.0	35.6
Suggestions that a woman does not act like woman is supposed to act	219,000	24.6	23.4	25.9	362,000	36.1*	34.9	37.4
Someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because of their gender	125,000	14.0	13.1	15.0	241,000	24.1*	22.9	25.2
Comments that people are not good at or should be prevented from being in a particular program because of their gender	130,000	14.6	13.6	15.6	277,000	27.7*	26.5	28.8
Someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because of their sexual orientation or assumed sexual orientation	107,000	12.0	11.1	12.9	193,000	19.2*	18.2	20.3
Someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because they are or are assumed to be transgender	67,000	7.5	6.8	8.3	127,000	12.7*	11.8	13.6

* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

† reference category

Note: Includes postsecondary students aged 18 to 24 (17 to 24 in Quebec) as of December 31, 2018 in the Canadian provinces who witnessed (saw or heard) or experienced (targeted, directed at them personally) discriminatory behaviours in the past 12 months. Includes behaviours which occurred in the postsecondary setting, including on campus, off campus (if they occurred during travel to or from school, during an official or unofficial event organized by someone affiliated with the school, or during paid or unpaid employment, work placements or volunteer work associated with postsecondary studies) or online (where some or all of the people responsible were students, teachers or other people associated with the school). Excludes behaviours that respondents heard about from someone else (e.g., something that a friend confided in them). The categories "women" and "men" include cisgender and transgender women and men. All estimates have been rounded to the nearest 1,000. Percent calculations are based on unrounded estimates and include missing responses. Respondents were able to provide information on multiple incidents; therefore, percentages do not add to 100. Confidence intervals should be interpreted as follows: If the survey were repeated many times, then 95% of the time (or 19 times out of 20), the confidence interval would cover the true population value. Confidence intervals for proportions are shown, and are available for numbers upon request.

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on Individual Safety in the Postsecondary Student Population.

Table 2
Students at Canadian postsecondary schools who personally experienced discriminatory behaviours in a postsecondary setting in the past 12 months, by type of behaviour and gender, 2019

Type of behaviour	Men†				Women			
	number	percent	95% confidence interval		number	percent	95% confidence interval	
			from	to			from	to
Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity	118,000	13.2	12.3	14.2	203,000	20.2*	19.2	21.3
Suggestions that they don't act like a man or a woman is supposed to act	107,000	12.0	11.1	13.0	156,000	15.6*	14.7	16.6
Being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because of their gender	20,000	2.2	1.8	2.7	85,000	8.5*	7.8	9.3
Comments that they are not good at or should be prevented from being in a particular program because of their gender	14,000	1.6	1.3	2.0	88,000	8.8*	8.1	9.6
Being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because of their sexual orientation or assumed sexual orientation	17,000	1.9	1.5	2.3	26,000	2.6*	2.2	3.0
Being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because they are or are assumed to be transgender	5,000	0.5	0.4	0.8	6,000	0.6	0.4	0.9

* significantly different from reference category (p < 0.05)

† reference category

Note: Includes postsecondary students aged 18 to 24 (17 to 24 in Quebec) as of December 31, 2018 in the Canadian provinces who experienced (targeted, directed at them personally) discriminatory behaviours in the past 12 months. Includes behaviours which occurred in the postsecondary setting, including on campus, off campus (if they occurred during travel to or from school, during an official or unofficial event organized by someone affiliated with the school, or during paid or unpaid employment, work placements or volunteer work associated with postsecondary studies) or online (where some or all of the people responsible were students, teachers or other people associated with the school). Excludes behaviours that respondents heard about from someone else (e.g., something that a friend confided in them). The categories "women" and "men" include cisgender and transgender women and men. All estimates have been rounded to the nearest 1,000. Percent calculations are based on unrounded estimates and include missing responses. Respondents were able to provide information on multiple incidents; therefore, percentages do not add to 100. Confidence intervals should be interpreted as follows: If the survey were repeated many times, then 95% of the time (or 19 times out of 20), the confidence interval would cover the true population value. Confidence intervals for proportions are shown, and are available for numbers upon request.

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on Individual Safety in the Postsecondary Student Population.

Table 3
Students at Canadian postsecondary schools who personally experienced discriminatory behaviours in a postsecondary setting in the past 12 months, by student characteristics, 2019

Student characteristics	Students who personally experienced discriminatory behaviours ¹		
	percent	95% confidence interval	
		from	to
Age (years)²			
17 and 18	14.8*	13.3	16.5
19†	17.3	15.6	19.2
20	18.2	16.4	20.0
21	19.4	17.4	21.4
22	17.2	15.3	19.3
23	16.1	14.2	18.3
24	15.7	13.6	18.1
Visible minority status			
Visible minority†	15.6	14.5	16.8
Not a visible minority	17.8*	16.9	18.7
Indigenous³			
Total Indigenous†	18.9	14.8	23.9
First Nations	18.6	12.5	26.7
Métis	20.2	15.0	26.7
Inuit	F	...	...
Not Indigenous	17.0	16.3	17.7
Sexual orientation			
Heterosexual†	15.1	14.4	15.8
Gay or lesbian	30.6*	25.1	36.8
Bisexual	33.5*	30.2	37.0
Sexual orientation n.e.c. ⁴	33.6*	24.1	44.6
Religious affiliation			
Buddhist	12.9*	8.3	19.6
Christian	16.5*	15.4	17.6
Hindu	15.6*	11.6	20.7
Muslim	17.0	13.9	20.6
Sikh	17.2	12.5	23.2
Other religions† ⁵	23.7	18.0	30.6
No religious affiliation	17.5	16.4	18.6
Religious symbol⁶			
Yes, most of the time	19.8	16.7	23.2
Yes, sometimes	20.4*	17.9	23.1
No†	16.5	15.7	17.3
Disability⁷			
Living with a disability†	23.7	22.3	25.1
Not living with a disability	13.2*	12.4	14.1
Marital status			
Single†	17.2	16.5	18.0
Married or common law	13.8*	11.6	16.4
Widowed, separated, divorced	F	...	...
Dating status⁸			
Not dating	15.1*	14.2	16.1
Dating relationship ⁹	18.7*	17.4	20.0
Dating casually† ¹⁰	24.8	21.9	27.9
Time at school			
Less than one year†	13.5	12.0	15.1
One or two years	15.2	13.9	16.7
Three or four years	19.3*	18.1	20.7
Five or more years	18.7*	17.0	20.4

See notes at the end of the table.

Table 3 — end
Students at Canadian postsecondary schools who personally experienced discriminatory behaviours in a postsecondary setting in the past 12 months, by student characteristics, 2019

Student characteristics	Students who personally experienced discriminatory behaviours ¹		
	percent	95% confidence interval	
		from	to
Type of school in past 12 months			
University [†]	19.7	18.8	20.8
Non-university	12.4*	11.4	13.5
Both university and non-university ¹¹	21.7	14.7	30.7
Type of student in past 12 months			
Full time	17.2*	16.5	18.0
Part time [†]	13.5	11.3	16.1
Both	20.9*	17.2	25.2
Living arrangements			
Campus housing [†]	21.8	19.0	24.7
Off campus with partner	14.1*	11.1	17.6
Off campus with roommates	22.6	20.9	24.4
Off campus alone	17.3*	14.5	20.4
With parents	14.4*	13.5	15.3
With other family	16.9*	13.6	20.7
Other	14.8*	9.9	21.6

... not applicable

F too unreliable to be published

* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

† reference category

1. Includes suggestions that a man does not act like a man is supposed to act or a woman does not act like a woman is supposed to act, someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because of their gender, comments that people are not good at or should be prevented from being in a particular program because of their gender, someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because of their sexual orientation or assumed sexual orientation, and someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because they are, or are assumed to be, transgender.

2. Age group reflects students' ages at the time of survey collection. Students may have been younger at the time that they experienced a discriminatory behaviour.

3. The term "Indigenous" is used to refer to individuals identifying themselves as "First Nations people, Métis or Inuit".

4. Sexual orientation not elsewhere classified (n.e.c.) includes students who identified as asexual, pansexual or with another sexual orientation not indicated elsewhere.

5. Includes Jewish, traditional First Nations, Métis or Inuit spirituality, and others.

6. Includes clothing or accessories that are visibly associated with a faith or spiritual practice, such as head coverings, jewelry with religious symbols, and regalia.

7. Includes students whose daily activities are sometimes, often, or always limited by difficulties related to hearing, vision, pain, mobility, flexibility, dexterity, learning, developmental, memory, or mental or psychological health.

8. Includes students who indicated that they were not married or living in common-law relationships.

9. Includes boyfriend or girlfriend-type relationships.

10. Includes causal dating relationships that the respondent does not consider to be a boyfriend or girlfriend-type relationship.

11. Includes students who attended both a university and a non-university postsecondary institution in the past 12 months.

Note: Includes postsecondary students aged 18 to 24 (17 to 24 in Quebec) as of December 31, 2018 in the Canadian provinces who experienced a discriminatory behaviour in the past 12 months. Includes behaviours which occurred in the postsecondary setting, including on campus or off campus (if they occurred during travel to or from school, during an official or unofficial event organized by someone affiliated with the school, or during paid or unpaid employment, work placements or volunteer work associated with postsecondary studies). Percent calculations are based on unrounded estimates and include missing responses. Respondents were able to provide information on multiple incidents; therefore, percentages do not add to 100. Confidence intervals should be interpreted as follows: If the survey were repeated many times, then 95% of the time (or 19 times out of 20), the confidence interval would cover the true population value.

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on Individual Safety in the Postsecondary Student Population.

Table 4
Students at Canadian postsecondary schools who witnessed discriminatory behaviours in a postsecondary setting in the past 12 months, by actions taken and reasons for not taking action, and gender, 2019

Actions taken and reasons for not taking action	Discriminatory behaviours ¹					
	Men†			Women		
	percent	95% confidence interval		percent	95% confidence interval	
	from	to		from	to	
Actions taken						
Took action in at least one instance	41.0	38.8	43.2	54.8*	53.0	56.6
Spoke to the person(s) targeted by the behaviour	57.5	54.1	60.9	63.0*	60.5	65.4
Spoke to the person(s) responsible for the behaviour	80.5	77.6	83.1	76.8*	74.6	78.9
Created a distraction to stop the situation	26.9	24.0	30.1	26.0	23.9	28.2
Intervene and separate those involved	30.1	27.1	33.3	21.5*	19.5	23.7
Asked others to step in as a group	18.1	15.7	20.9	19.2	17.3	21.2
Spoke to someone outside school	9.2	7.4	11.5	15.2*	13.5	17.2
Reported the behaviour to the school	7.3	5.5	9.4	8.2	7.0	9.7
Spoke to someone at a service run by the school	7.0	5.4	9.2	7.8	6.5	9.3
Spoke to someone at a service run by students	5.2	3.8	7.0	6.4	5.3	7.8
Shared on social media	2.6	1.7	4.0	5.3*	4.3	6.7
Called school security	F	...	...	1.5	1.0	2.3
Called the police	F	...	...	0.7	0.4	1.3
Called a crisis line	F	...	...	F	...	...
Took some other action	9.3	7.4	11.7	7.4	6.2	8.9
Reasons for not taking action						
Did not take action in at least one instance	78.6	76.7	80.4	73.9*	72.2	75.5
Didn't think it was serious enough	66.4	63.9	68.8	49.6*	47.5	51.7
Felt uncomfortable	22.7	20.7	24.9	39.6*	37.5	41.8
Didn't know what to do	23.7	21.6	25.9	39.6*	37.5	41.7
Didn't think it was their responsibility	24.3	22.2	26.5	23.8	21.9	25.7
Felt there could be negative consequences for themselves or others	13.1	11.4	15.0	19.5*	18.0	21.2
Believed others were taking action	14.5	12.7	16.4	20.3*	18.7	22.1
Worried that taking action would affect peer relationships	12.8	11.2	14.6	15.8*	14.3	17.4
Felt worried for their own safety	5.9	4.8	7.3	9.5*	8.3	10.9
The targeted person asked them not to take action	5.1	4.1	6.3	10.2*	8.9	11.6
Felt taking action would endanger the targeted person	8.8	7.4	10.5	11.4*	10.1	12.9
Worried about what others would think of them	10.4	8.9	12.1	13.9*	12.5	15.5
Other reasons	11.8	10.3	13.5	12.1	10.7	13.6

... not applicable

F too unreliable to be published

* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

† reference category

1. Includes suggestions that a man does not act like a man is supposed to act or a woman does not act like a woman is supposed to act, someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because of their gender, comments that people are not good at or should be prevented from being in a particular program because of their gender, someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because of their sexual orientation or assumed sexual orientation, and someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because they are, or are assumed to be, transgender.

Note: Includes postsecondary students aged 18 to 24 (17 to 24 in Quebec) as of December 31, 2018 in the Canadian provinces who witnessed (saw or heard) discriminatory behaviours in the past 12 months. Includes behaviours which occurred in the postsecondary setting, including on campus, off campus (if they occurred during travel to or from school, during an official or unofficial event organized by someone affiliated with the school, or during paid or unpaid employment, work placements or volunteer work associated with postsecondary studies) or online (where some or all of the people responsible were students, teachers or other people associated with the school). Excludes behaviours that respondents heard about from someone else (e.g., something that a friend confided in them). The categories "women" and "men" include cisgender and transgender women and men. Percent calculations are based on unrounded estimates and include missing responses. Respondents were able to provide information on multiple incidents; therefore, percentages do not add to 100. Confidence intervals should be interpreted as follows: If the survey were repeated many times, then 95% of the time (or 19 times out of 20), the confidence interval would cover the true population value.

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on Individual Safety in the Postsecondary Student Population.

Table 5
Students at Canadian postsecondary schools who personally experienced discriminatory behaviours in a postsecondary setting in the past 12 months, by incident characteristics and gender, 2019

Incident characteristics	Men†			Women		
	percent	95% confidence interval		percent	95% confidence interval	
		from	to		from	to
Number of perpetrators						
Always one‡	36.1	32.4	39.9	38.8	36.0	41.7
Always two or more	25.9**	22.7	29.4	23.1**	20.7	25.6
It varied	20.4**	17.5	23.6	21.4**	19.0	24.1
Don't know	15.8**	13.2	18.9	15.2**	13.2	17.5
Gender of perpetrators						
Always men only‡	38.4	34.8	42.2	54.7*	51.5	57.8
Always women only	16.7**	14.1	19.8	5.0* **	3.8	6.5
Sometimes men, sometimes women	34.8	31.2	38.5	30.8**	28.1	33.7
Don't know	8.5**	6.6	10.9	7.9**	6.5	9.6
Bystanders present						
Yes, in at least one instance‡	65.6	61.8	69.3	70.3*	67.4	73.1
Never	23.4**	20.3	26.9	18.4* **	16.2	20.8
Don't know	8.9**	6.9	11.4	10.0**	8.4	12.0
Bystanders took action						
Yes, in at least one instance‡	27.5	23.3	32.2	39.2*	35.9	42.7
Never	65.6**	60.9	70.0	56.5* **	53.0	59.9
Don't know	6.7**	4.6	9.6	4.2**	3.1	5.8
Type of bystander action						
Confronted the perpetrator	63.9	54.4	72.4	74.3*	69.1	79.0
Created a distraction	39.2	30.1	49.1	36.9	31.7	42.5
Separated those involved	30.7	22.7	40.0	26.1	21.4	31.3
Asked if needed help	28.0	20.2	37.4	23.9	19.4	29.0
Encourage the behaviour	24.3	17.2	33.2	14.8*	11.3	19.2
Something else	20.2	13.7	28.7	11.6*	8.5	15.7
Ask others to step in	13.9	8.3	22.4	12.6	9.2	16.9
Tell someone in authority	13.8	8.3	22.2	8.6	5.7	12.7
Relationship of perpetrator						
Student at their school	73.3	69.7	76.6	71.8	69.1	74.3
Friend or acquaintance	46.6	42.9	50.4	38.0*	35.1	40.9
Stranger	17.8	15.0	21.1	28.5*	25.9	31.2
Student at another school	17.3	14.5	20.4	16.0	13.9	18.2
Boyfriend or girlfriend (current or former)	7.2	5.4	9.5	7.9	6.5	9.6
Professor or instructor at their school	6.8	5.1	9.1	12.0*	10.2	14.1
Member of a club or team to which they belong	6.1	4.4	8.4	5.5	4.3	6.9
Casual dating partner (current or former)	4.6	3.2	6.7	4.8	3.7	6.2
Staff member (including security personnel)	2.7	1.7	4.3	2.7	1.9	3.9
Co-worker at a co-op, internship, volunteer position or paid on-campus employment	2.5	1.5	4.2	2.8	2.0	4.0

See notes at the end of the table.

Table 5 — end
Students at Canadian postsecondary schools who personally experienced discriminatory behaviours in a postsecondary setting in the past 12 months, by incident characteristics and gender, 2019

Incident characteristics	Men†			Women		
	percent	95% confidence interval		percent	95% confidence interval	
		from	to		from	to
Relationship of perpetrator						
Teaching assistant at their school	1.7	0.9	3.1	3.6*	2.6	5.0
Supervisor or boss at a co-op, internship or paid on-campus employment	1.6	0.8	3.0	2.6	1.7	3.7
Coach or trainer	F	...	...	F	...	...
Married or common-law spouse (current or former)	F	...	...	F	...	...
Other ¹	5.6	4.0	7.7	10.2*	8.5	12.2
Don't know	6.3	4.6	8.5	5.7	4.4	7.2

... not applicable

F too unreliable to be published

* significantly different from reference category (†) ($p < 0.05$)

** significantly different from reference category (‡) ($p < 0.05$)

† reference category

‡ reference category

1. Includes private tutors and other unspecified persons.

Note: Includes postsecondary students aged 18 to 24 (17 to 24 in Quebec) as of December 31, 2018 in the Canadian provinces who experienced (targeted, directed at them personally) discriminatory behaviours in the past 12 months. Includes behaviours which occurred in the postsecondary setting, including on campus, off campus (if they occurred during travel to or from school, during an official or unofficial event organized by someone affiliated with the school, or during paid or unpaid employment, work placements or volunteer work associated with postsecondary studies) or online (where some or all of the people responsible were students, teachers or other people associated with the school). Excludes behaviours that respondents heard about from someone else (e.g., something that a friend confided in them). The categories "women" and "men" include cisgender and transgender women and men. Percent calculations are based on unrounded estimates and include missing responses. Respondents were able to provide information on multiple incidents; therefore, percentages do not add to 100. Confidence intervals should be interpreted as follows: If the survey were repeated many times, then 95% of the time (or 19 times out of 20), the confidence interval would cover the true population value.

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on Individual Safety in the Postsecondary Student Population.

Table 6
Students at Canadian postsecondary schools who personally experienced discriminatory behaviours in a postsecondary setting in the past 12 months, by type of impact and gender, 2019

Type of impact	Discriminatory behaviours ¹					
	Men [†]			Women		
	percent	95% confidence interval		percent	95% confidence interval	
		from	to		from	to
Emotional impacts						
Annoyed	36.7	33.2	40.4	58.5*	55.6	61.4
More cautious or aware	15.3	12.7	18.2	17.5	15.3	19.9
Frustrated	25.9	22.6	29.6	54.2*	51.2	57.1
Angry	21.9	18.9	25.3	50.7*	47.7	53.8
Upset	20.4	17.4	23.7	39.7*	36.8	42.6
Less trustful of others	12.7	10.3	15.5	19.1*	16.8	21.6
Confused	14.0	11.4	17.2	19.6*	17.3	22.1
Anxious	11.0	8.7	13.8	13.7	11.8	15.9
In shock or disbelief	11.3	9.1	14.1	27.8*	25.2	30.5
Hurt or disappointed	20.9	17.9	24.3	37.2*	34.5	40.1
Fearful	4.5	3.1	6.5	5.5	4.3	7.1
Experiencing lowered self-esteem	17.1	14.3	20.3	20.7	18.4	23.3
Ashamed	9.4	7.3	12.0	9.3	7.7	11.3
Guilty	3.4	2.2	5.2	5.6*	4.4	7.1
Depressed	6.3	4.7	8.5	6.8	5.4	8.4
Experiencing suicidal thoughts	3.0	1.8	4.7	1.6	1.0	2.5
Other emotional impact	3.3	2.2	4.9	3.7	2.8	5.0
Not much of an emotional impact	26.3	23.1	29.9	14.9*	12.9	17.1
No emotional impact at all	31.1	27.6	34.9	8.9*	7.4	10.7
Impacts on school experience						
Avoid specific buildings at school	4.0	2.7	5.8	5.1	3.9	6.6
Change route to school	1.8	1.0	3.4	1.6	1.0	2.6
Change time of travel to or from school	1.7	1.0	3.0	2.9	2.0	4.0
Get help from a mental health professional	3.9	2.7	5.7	4.2	3.2	5.6
Stop going to any classes	3.5	2.3	5.3	3.6	2.6	4.9
Ask for extensions	2.1	1.2	3.5	2.9	2.0	4.1
Use drugs or alcohol to cope	3.7	2.4	5.5	4.5	3.4	5.9
Try to change class schedule	2.3	1.4	3.8	2.7	1.8	3.8
Drop a class or classes	1.6	0.9	2.8	1.5	1.0	2.5
Ask to reschedule exams	1.3	0.6	2.6	F	...	...
Change where they live	F	...	...	0.8	0.4	1.5
Change school	F	...	...	F	...	...
Drop out of school	F	...	...	F	...	...
Change program	F	...	...	1.0	0.6	1.8

... not applicable

F too unreliable to be published

* significantly different from reference category (p < 0.05)

† reference category

1. Includes suggestions that a man does not act like a man is supposed to act or a woman does not act like a woman is supposed to act, someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because of their gender, comments that people are not good at or should be prevented from being in a particular program because of their gender, someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because of their sexual orientation or assumed sexual orientation, and someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because they are, or are assumed to be, transgender.

Note: Includes postsecondary students aged 18 to 24 (17 to 24 in Quebec) as of December 31, 2018 in the Canadian provinces who experienced (targeted, directed at them personally) discriminatory behaviours in the past 12 months. Includes behaviours which occurred in the postsecondary setting, including on campus, off campus (if they occurred during travel to or from school, during an official or unofficial event organized by someone affiliated with the school, or during paid or unpaid employment, work placements or volunteer work associated with postsecondary studies) or online (where some or all of the people responsible were students, teachers or other people associated with the school). Excludes behaviours that respondents heard about from someone else (e.g., something that a friend confided in them). The categories "women" and "men" include cisgender and transgender women and men. Percent calculations are based on unrounded estimates and include missing responses. Respondents were able to provide information on multiple incidents; therefore, percentages do not add to 100. Confidence intervals should be interpreted as follows: If the survey were repeated many times, then 95% of the time (or 19 times out of 20), the confidence interval would cover the true population value.

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on Individual Safety in the Postsecondary Student Population.

Table 7
Students at Canadian postsecondary schools who personally experienced discriminatory behaviours in a postsecondary setting in the past 12 months and who did or did not speak to someone about their experience, by reasons for and against doing so, satisfaction with actions taken and gender, 2019

Who students spoke to, reasons for and against doing so, and satisfaction with actions taken	Discriminatory behaviours ¹					
	Men [†]			Women		
	percent	95% confidence interval		percent	95% confidence interval	
from		to	from		to	
Spoke to someone associated with the school						
Yes, in at least one instance	4.8	3.4	6.8	7.2*	5.8	9.0
Spoke to a group run by the school administration						
Yes	56.7	37.8	73.8	65.0	53.8	74.9
Always satisfied or very satisfied	F	...	...	45.6	32.3	59.7
Always dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	F	...	...	19.7	10.4	34.3
Always neither or unsure	F	...	...	34.7	22.7	48.9
Spoke to a group run by a student group						
Yes	F	...	...	17.7	10.5	28.2
Always satisfied or very satisfied	F	...	...	F	...	...
Always dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	F	...	...	F	...	...
Always neither or unsure	F	...	...	F	...	...
Spoke to a group, but not sure who it was run by						
Yes	F	...	...	24.6	15.9	36.1
Reasons for speaking to someone associated with the school						
Receive accommodations	F	...	...	14.8	8.0	25.7
Receive mental health support	F	...	...	37.7	27.8	48.8
Receive protection	F	...	...	F	...	...
Pursue an informal resolution, e.g. mediation	F	...	...	18.9	11.0	30.5
Pursue formal action, e.g. charges	F	...	...	F	...	...
Other reasons (includes medical attention)	F	...	...	27.5	18.4	39.1
No, in at least one instance	93.4	91.2	95.1	91.4	89.5	93.0
Reasons for not speaking to someone associated with the school						
Didn't know who at school could provide help	8.3	6.3	10.9	15.0*	12.9	17.3
Didn't know where to go to get help at school	6.5	4.8	8.8	12.4*	10.5	14.6
Didn't know if this type of incident could be reported	10.5	8.3	13.3	20.5*	18.1	23.2
Felt embarrassed or ashamed	9.6	7.6	12.1	8.0	6.4	10.0
Too emotionally difficult	3.6	2.4	5.4	4.1	3.0	5.6
Wouldn't be kept confidential	4.6	3.2	6.6	5.0	3.9	6.6
Did not need help	45.7	41.9	49.6	48.8	45.7	51.9
Was not serious enough	65.4	61.4	69.1	64.8	61.8	67.6
Resolved the issue on their own	40.1	36.2	44.2	37.2	34.2	40.2
Worried wouldn't be believed	3.6	2.4	5.4	6.2*	4.8	7.9
School wouldn't take it seriously	10.7	8.5	13.5	15.8*	13.7	18.3
Did not want the person responsible to be hurt or get in trouble	8.0	6.0	10.6	8.1	6.5	9.9
Would be too hard to prove	4.8	3.4	6.8	10.1*	8.3	12.3
Too scared or frightened	2.4	1.4	4.1	2.3	1.6	3.4
Did not want anyone to know	7.5	5.6	10.1	7.5	6.0	9.3
Did not want to get in trouble	4.2	2.9	6.1	5.8	4.5	7.5
Felt studies or future career would be at risk	3.9	2.6	5.8	6.0	4.7	7.6
Other reasons	14.2	11.6	17.2	11.2	9.4	13.3

See notes at the end of the table.

Table 7 — end
Students at Canadian postsecondary schools who personally experienced discriminatory behaviours in a postsecondary setting in the past 12 months and who did or did not speak to someone about their experience, by reasons for and against doing so, satisfaction with actions taken and gender, 2019

Who students spoke to, reasons for and against doing so, and satisfaction with actions taken	Discriminatory behaviours ¹					
	Men [†]			Women		
	percent	95% confidence interval		percent	95% confidence interval	
		from	to		from	to
Spoke to someone else						
Yes, in at least one instance	34.6	30.8	38.5	56.3*	53.3	59.2
Friend	89.4	84.5	92.9	90.0	87.2	92.2
Family member	39.9	33.6	46.6	47.3	43.4	51.2
Current or former dating partner, or legally married or common-law partner	21.6	16.7	27.6	30.2*	26.6	34.1
Another student or peer	27.7	22.2	34.1	31.4	28.0	35.1
Crisis line or mental health professional	5.2	3.0	8.9	5.2	3.7	7.2
Doctor or nurse	F	...	...	F	...	...
Religious leader or Indigenous elder	F	...	...	F	...	...
Police	F	...	...	F	...	...
Other ²	F	...	...	2.7	1.6	4.4
No, in at least one instance	63.4	59.4	67.2	42.4*	39.4	45.3

... not applicable

F too unreliable to be published

* significantly different from reference category (p < 0.05)

† reference category

1. Includes suggestions that a man does not act like a man is supposed to act or a woman does not act like a woman is supposed to act, someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because of their gender, comments that people are not good at or should be prevented from being in a particular program because of their gender, someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because of their sexual orientation or assumed sexual orientation, and someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because they are, or are assumed to be, transgender.

2. Includes support provided in the workplace and other unspecified people.

Note: Includes postsecondary students aged 18 to 24 (17 to 24 in Quebec) as of December 31, 2018 in the Canadian provinces who experienced (targeted, directed at them personally) discriminatory behaviours in the past 12 months. Includes behaviours which occurred in the postsecondary setting, including on campus, off campus (if they occurred during travel to or from school, during an official or unofficial event organized by someone affiliated with the school, or during paid or unpaid employment, work placements or volunteer work associated with postsecondary studies) or online (where some or all of the people responsible were students, teachers or other people associated with the school). Excludes behaviours that respondents heard about from someone else (e.g., something that a friend confided in them). The categories "women" and "men" include cisgender and transgender women and men. Percent calculations are based on unrounded estimates and include missing responses. Respondents were able to provide information on multiple incidents; therefore, percentages do not add to 100. Confidence intervals should be interpreted as follows: If the survey were repeated many times, then 95% of the time (or 19 times out of 20), the confidence interval would cover the true population value. Confidence intervals for proportions are shown, and are available for numbers upon request.

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on Individual Safety in the Postsecondary Student Population.

Table 8
Students at Canadian postsecondary schools' beliefs about personal safety, by whether or not they personally experienced discriminatory behaviours in a postsecondary setting in the past 12 months, 2019

Beliefs about personal safety	Experienced discriminatory behaviours ¹			Did not experience discriminatory behaviours [†]		
	percent	95% confidence interval		percent	95% confidence interval	
		from	to		from	to
School tries hard to ensure student safety						
Agree or strongly agree	76.1*	74.2	78.0	85.2	84.4	85.9
Neither agree nor disagree	14.7*	13.1	16.4	11.7	11.1	12.4
Disagree or strongly disagree	8.1*	7.0	9.5	2.7	2.4	3.1
Feel safe on school campus						
Agree or strongly agree	81.6*	79.8	83.2	90.2	89.6	90.8
Neither agree nor disagree	10.8*	9.4	12.3	7.0	6.5	7.6
Disagree or strongly disagree	6.5*	5.4	7.7	2.3	2.0	2.7
Feel safe walking alone on campus after dark						
Agree or strongly agree	59.5*	57.2	61.7	72.5	71.6	73.4
Neither agree nor disagree	12.3	10.9	13.9	13.0	12.3	13.8
Disagree or strongly disagree	26.9*	24.9	29.1	14.0	13.3	14.7
Feel safe using public transportation alone after dark						
Agree or strongly agree	46.1*	43.7	48.5	59.6	58.6	60.7
Neither agree nor disagree	13.5*	11.9	15.2	16.0	15.2	16.9
Disagree or strongly disagree	38.9*	36.6	41.3	23.7	22.8	24.6
Feel safe at home alone after dark						
Agree or strongly agree	84.1*	82.3	85.7	90.0	89.3	90.6
Neither agree nor disagree	7.2	6.1	8.4	6.3	5.8	6.8
Disagree or strongly disagree	7.3*	6.2	8.6	3.3	2.9	3.7
Feel safe and not fearful of who they are or are perceived to be						
Agree or strongly agree	65.3*	63.1	67.5	82.2	81.3	82.9
Neither agree nor disagree	13.9*	12.3	15.5	10.3	9.6	10.9
Disagree or strongly disagree	19.5*	17.8	21.4	7.1	6.6	7.6

* significantly different from reference category (p < 0.05)

† reference category

1. Includes suggestions that a man does not act like a man is supposed to act or a woman does not act like a woman is supposed to act, someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because of their gender, comments that people are not good at or should be prevented from being in a particular program because of their gender, someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because of their sexual orientation or assumed sexual orientation, and someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because they are, or are assumed to be, transgender.

Note: Includes postsecondary students aged 18 to 24 (17 to 24 in Quebec) as of December 31, 2018 in the Canadian provinces who experienced a discriminatory behaviour in the past 12 months. Includes behaviours which occurred in the postsecondary setting, including on campus or off campus (if they occurred during travel to or from school, during an official or unofficial event organized by someone affiliated with the school, or during paid or unpaid employment, work placements or volunteer work associated with postsecondary studies). Percent calculations are based on unrounded estimates and include missing responses, and exclude responses of "not applicable". Respondents were able to provide information on multiple incidents; therefore, percentages do not add to 100. Confidence intervals should be interpreted as follows: If the survey were repeated many times, then 95% of the time (or 19 times out of 20), the confidence interval would cover the true population value.

Source: Statistics Canada, Survey on Individual Safety in the Postsecondary Student Population.