Isthmus Safety Initiative

Community Engagement Results

October 2022

Prepared by:

University of Wisconsin
Population Health Institute
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

PARTNERS IN COLLABORATION

Partners:

Capitol Neighborhoods Inc.
City of Madison Community Development
City of Madison Police Department
Downtown Madison Inc.
Public Health Madison & Dane County
University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute

ISI is funded by the US Federal Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Isthmus Safety Initiative

A total of 307 responses were collected. People shared the crimes they were experiencing downtown, identified the exact areas where they felt the most unsafe, and indicated their priorities for improving safety in this downtown area. Data were collected via surveys and in-person data collection.

There were slight differences in responses across subgroups, including race, age, and residency.

Hotspots of Concern Highlighted in Downtown Madison

- Variety of intersections on State Street and Langdon Street
- The State Capitol
- The Courthouse area

Highest Concerns for Safety

- Getting robbed
- Getting harassed by people on State Street
- Getting sexually assaulted

Top Ways to Improve Safety

- Non-police safety workers
- Better lighting
- Better upkeep of the area

ABOUT THE ISTHMUS SAFETY INITIATIVE

The Isthmus Safety Initiative (ISI) is in the second year of the two-year initiative funded by a grant from the Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Program (BCJI). The initiative aims to prevent violent crime in the downtown Madison area, from Park Street to the Yahara River. This initiative follows a community-based approach and includes an advisory council and steering committee.

Community Engagement Efforts Emphasized Accessibility

In line with the community-based approach, the ISI implemented 3 community engagement strategies to guide intervention selection and implementation:

- A diverse group of community leaders connected to various stakeholders of the downtown area were recruited to serve as decision-makers in the advisory council.
- Two brief surveys were sent along Madison resident and UW student listservs by advisory board members to solicit broader input on the key concerns and desired actions to improve safety in the downtown area.
- Members of the advisory council conducted in-person data collection on State St. from 8-10pm on a Thursday in July by providing in-person dot-voting on poster boards (see pictures below) and distributed a flyer with a QR code to patrons on State Street who preferred to contribute their perspectives online.

307 RESPONSES

Data collected as follows:

272 survey responses collected via e-mail recruitment*

35 responses through in-person data collection

16 responses through dot-voting (see right)

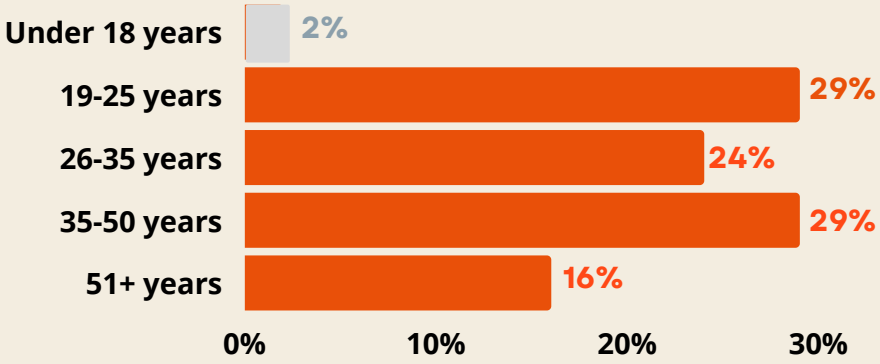
19 survey responses from State St. patrons via QR code*

*Respondents could have taken the survey more than once

Whose voices are included?

RESULTS REPRESENT DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

Strong representation across ADULT age cohorts

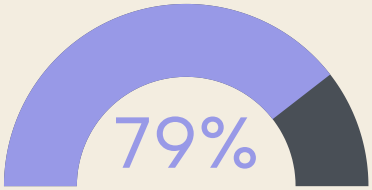


21%
BIPOC

Of respondents say people perceive them as Black, Indigenous or a Person of Color (BIPOC)

26%
Of respondents live downtown Madison (n=72)

Almost 80% of respondents were NOT students



20% of respondents were students at UW-Madison (n=52 UW-Madison students)

Results reflect the views of people who indicated they frequent the downtown area several days a week during daytime AND nighttime hours

ACROSS RACE, AGE, & RESIDENCY SUBGROUPS,

THERE WAS CONSENSUS REGARDING HOTSPOTS OF SAFETY CONCERNS

Respondents were asked to indicate up to 5 areas in which they feel unsafe on the map below. The frequency with which a pin was dropped on a specific area on the map is indicated via color. Moving from purple (least frequently 'selected') up through the colors of the rainbow to red (most frequently 'selected').

See Appendix A for maps of each subgroup

Every subgroup flagged the following intersections:

- **State and Gilman,**
- **State and Dayton (Near the Overture Center),**
- **State and Frances,**
- **West Main and South Hamilton**

Variations beyond that MAY simply reflect access

For example, the **hotspots in the student data and respondents who live downtown were all on the lower end of State Street and Langdon Street**, which likely reflects the younger age and lack of transportation for downtown residents. Respondents over the age of 26 did not flag Langdon St. much at all. Rather, **respondents 26+ flagged the 100-200 blocks of State St. and King St.** This reflects patterns in age cohort usage of the area.

Similarly, **white respondents had brighter hotspots near the Overture Center, the top of State St., Peace Park near the Buckeye Parking Lot, and near the Courthouse**. These patterns reflect the sheer number of white respondents we had and it is possible that **BIPOC respondents may not feel welcome in these areas, so they don't go there, and thus feel unsafe.**

TOP SAFETY CONCERNS

RANKED FROM HIGHEST TO LOWEST

Respondents indicated the degree to which they were worried these crimes may happen to them. **Below are the top safety concerns of the entire sample.**

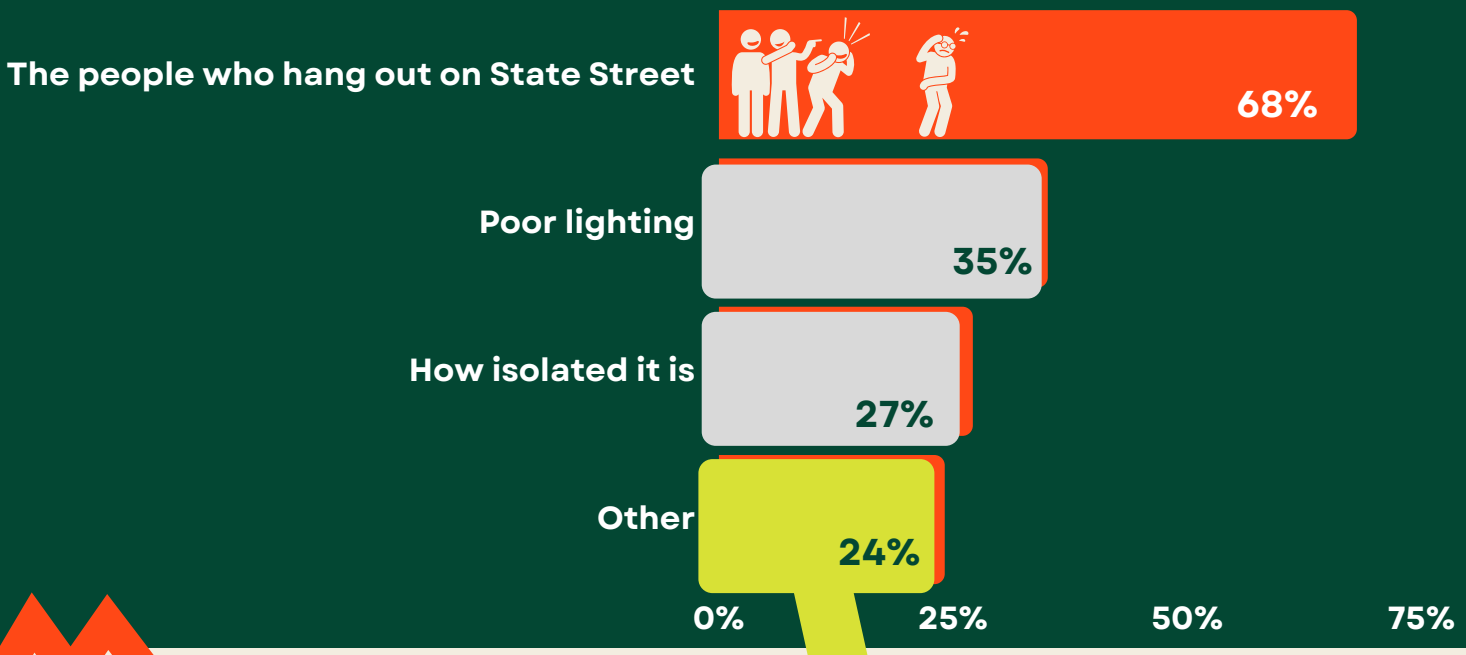
1. **Robbery/mugging**
2. **Street harassment**
3. **Sexual assault**
4. **Getting beat-up**
5. **Gun violence**
6. **Harassment by authorities**

The order of concerns varied by subgroup

- **BIPOC** respondents' (n= 56) **top concern was being harassed by authorities**, followed by being robbed or sexually assaulted.
- **White** respondents (n=215) are **more concerned about being robbed**, followed by being harassed by people on the street, then sexual assault. White respondents are NOT worried about being harassed by authorities.
- **Residents** (n=72) of the downtown area are **most concerned about street harassment**, whereas **visitors** (n=203) to downtown are **most concerned about being robbed**.
- **Younger** (under 35 y.o.) respondents (n=151) are **most concerned about street harassment**, whereas respondents **35 and older** (n=124) are **most concerned about being robbed**.

See Appendix B for details

OVERWHELMINGLY, IT'S THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE RESPONDENTS FEEL UNSAFE



Themes from the open-ended responses were analyzed to identify why folx feel unsafe. **The main concerns centered around people on State St. who appeared to have limited impulse control under the influence of alcohol or other drugs,** either as part of college culture or as a form of self-medication.

- Many respondents mentioned feeling unsafe around people who appeared to be living on the streets or in a shelter. Specific behaviors that contributed to this feeling included **panhandling, yelling and apparent drug use.**
- Others perceived an **uptick in violence** downtown as the new normal.
- Respondents also highlighted the density of college-aged students **binge drinking** also contributed to their concerns for safety.

Note: Larger words represent the frequency of the theme

PREFERRED WAYS OF IMPROVING SAFETY

Respondents chose their preferred ways of improving safety. **The majority of respondents selected non-police safety workers and better lighting as ways to improve safety.**

58% **Non-police safety workers**

Non-police safety workers was the **top way for white respondents** and **second for BIPOC respondents**

Better lighting was the **top way to improve safety for BIPOC respondents**

56% **Better lighting**

47% **Better upkeep of the area**

Better upkeep of the area was the **third best way for BIPOC and white respondents**

BIPOC and **white** respondents have **similar views** about security cameras improving safety

41% **Security cameras**

33% **More police presence**

Nearly half of respondents aged **35-51+** believe more police presence would improve safety

BIPOC respondents believe signs and murals would help with safety more than **white** respondents

26% **Signs and murals**

9% **Less police presence**

Only 4% of 35-51+ year old respondents believe less police presence would improve safety

TOP 3 WAYS TO IMPROVE SAFETY

VARIED BY RACE, AGE, & RESIDENCY

See Appendix C for details

Better lighting was the top way to improve safety for:

- **BIPOC** respondents
- Respondents **under 35 years old**
- **Downtown resident** respondents

Respondents who are white, over 35 years old, and respondents who visit downtown believe better lighting is the **second best way to improve safety.**

Non-police safety workers was the top way to improve safety for:

- **White** respondents
- Respondents **over 35 years old**
- Respondents who **visit downtown**

Respondents who are BIPOC, under 35 years old, and respondents who live downtown believe non-police safety workers is the **second best way to improve safety.**

Better upkeep was the third best way to improve safety for:

- **BIPOC and white** respondents
- Respondents **under and over 35 years old**
- Respondents who **live and visit downtown**

The ranking of preferred interventions varied by subgroup

Nearly half of respondents over 35 years old believe more police presence would be a way to improve safety (46%), whereas only 28% respondents under 35 believe more police presence would improve safety.

Less police presence was selected as a way to improve safety more often for under 35 years old, BIPOC, and downtown resident respondents, compared to white, over 35 years old, and non-downtown resident respondents.

SUGGESTIONS OFFERED FOR HOW TO IMPROVE SAFETY MOST OFTEN FOCUSED ON ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

Of the respondents who selected "other" for ways to improve safety (19%), themes included:

Create a sense of ownership via Environmental Design

- Many respondents mentioned ways to improve the look and feel of the downtown area
  - More lighting on the Lakeshore Path
  - Murals and artwork
  - More built in bike locks and better bikeped infrastructure
  - More security cameras
  - More community gathering areas (without alcohol)
  - More local businesses
  - No cars

Address Houselessness

- Some respondents recommended providing housing support or other resources like treatment, while others suggested moving or banning people who appear to be living on the street

Engage Bar Staff as Influencers

- Bystander intervention training for bar staff to prevent sexual violence and aggression

Non-Police Outreach Workers

- Some respondents mentioned violence interrupters, a phone number for people to call while walking home, and State Street ambassadors or the presence of Outreach workers (Catalyst for Change)

Work on a Culture Shift

- Some respondents suggested social norming toward a celebration of diversity and away from a hyper-focus on drinking

More Law Enforcement to Focus on De-Escalation

- A few respondents suggested increasing the presence of law enforcement and/or a curfew
  - Officers walking the streets
  - More control of fraternities

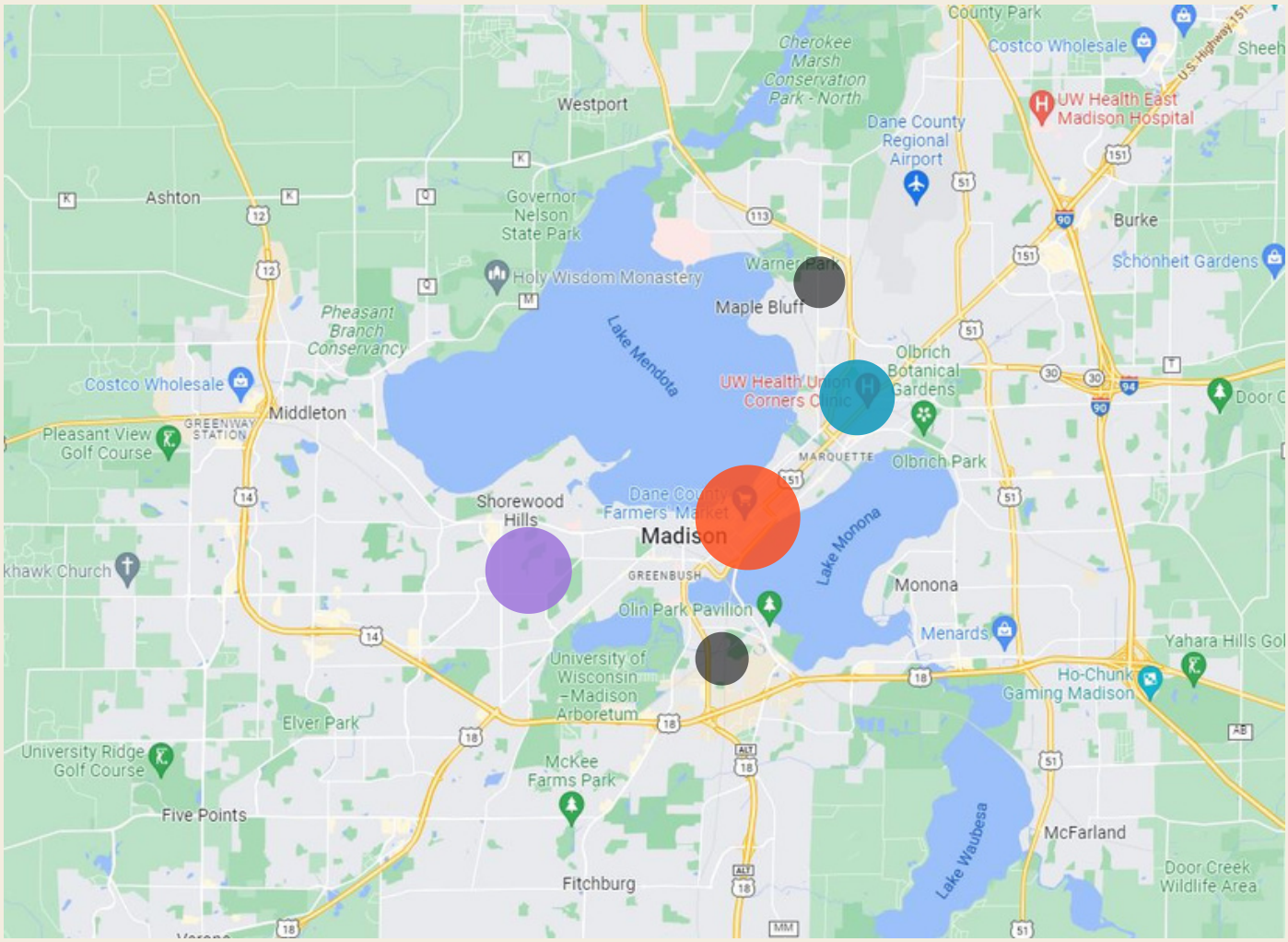
- **Other themes:**
  - Ban smoking and drug use on University grounds
  - Resolve racist interactions
  - Make it safe for teens
  - N/A or Don't feel unsafe or Unsure

70% OF RESPONDENTS LIVE EITHER DOWNTOWN, EAST OR WEST SIDE OF THE CAPITOL

Of the respondents (n=275),
26% live downtown Madison
23% live on the east side
21% live on the west side
18% don't live in Madison
7% live on the south side
5% live on the north side

Other responses & places respondents live include:

- Work in Madison area (7)
- Fitchburg (5)
- Middleton (4)
- Sun Prairie (2)
- Cottage Grove
- DeForest
- Elkhorn
- Lake Mills
- Mazomanie
- Milwaukee
- Monona
- Oregon, WI
- Poynette
- Sauk City
- Schaumburg, IL
- Stoughton
- Verona
- Windsor



NEXT STEPS FOR ISI

Next Steps

The findings of this report strongly mirror the conclusions the advisory council reached.

- Next step is to implement strategies and measure their impact on crime trends and perceptions of safety downtown.

Limitations

There were limitations to this data collection and reporting.

- Respondents could have responded to both surveys more than once and during the in-person data collection.
- Some measures were not included in the survey, including a gender question and the option to select "violence interrupters" and "bystander intervention training".

Please contact Caleb Odorfer at Public Health with questions about ISI: COdorfer@publichealthmdc.com

Isthmus Safety Initiative Website:

https://www.publichealthmdc.com/community-initiatives/violence-prevention/isthmus-safety-initiative-isi

For any questions related to the data collection process and reporting, please contact:

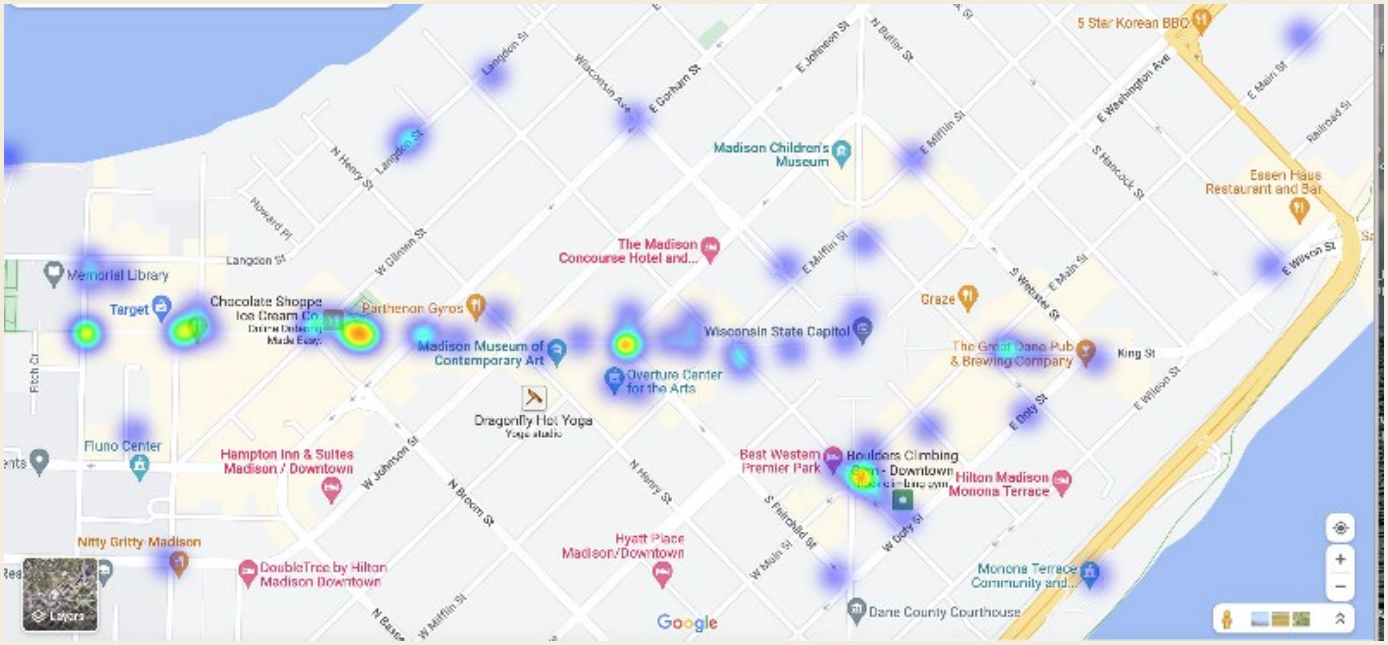
Abra Vigna:
abra.vigna@wisc.edu

Janae Goodrich:
jgoodrich@wisc.edu

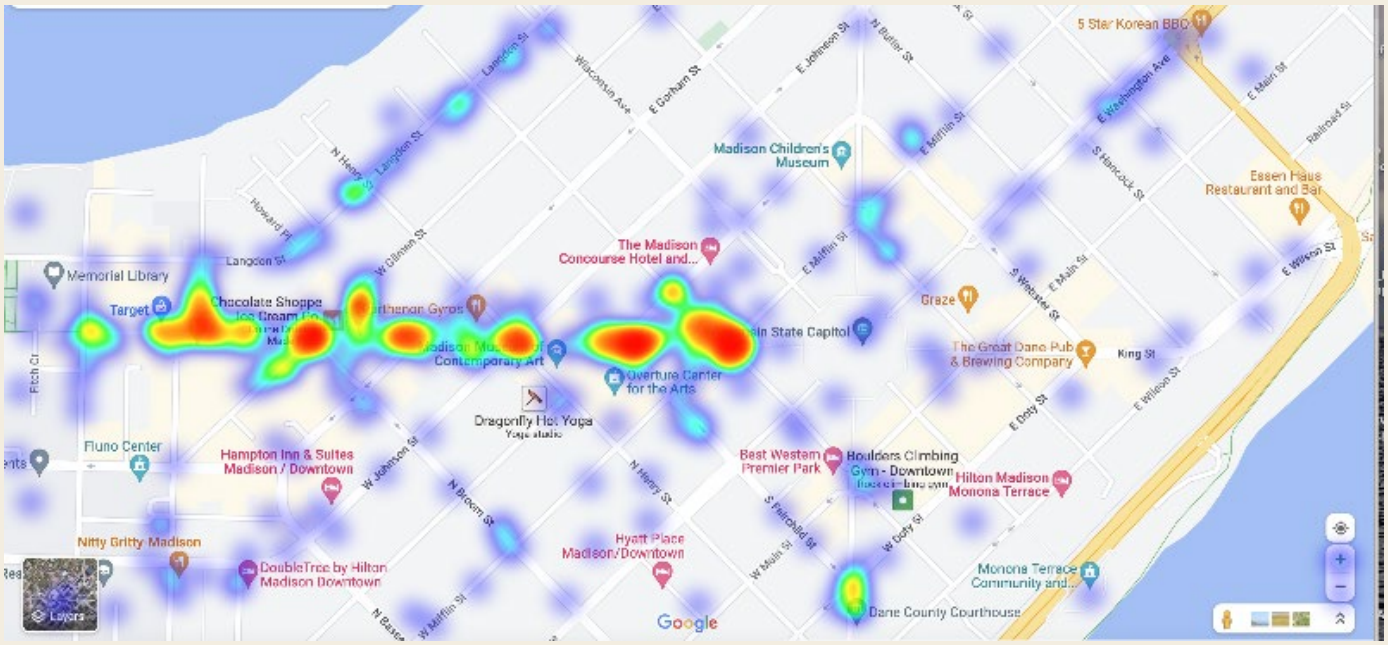
See Appendix D for Resident and Student survey

Appendix A – Maps of Areas of Safety Concerns in Downtown Madison by Identity

BIPOC (n=56)

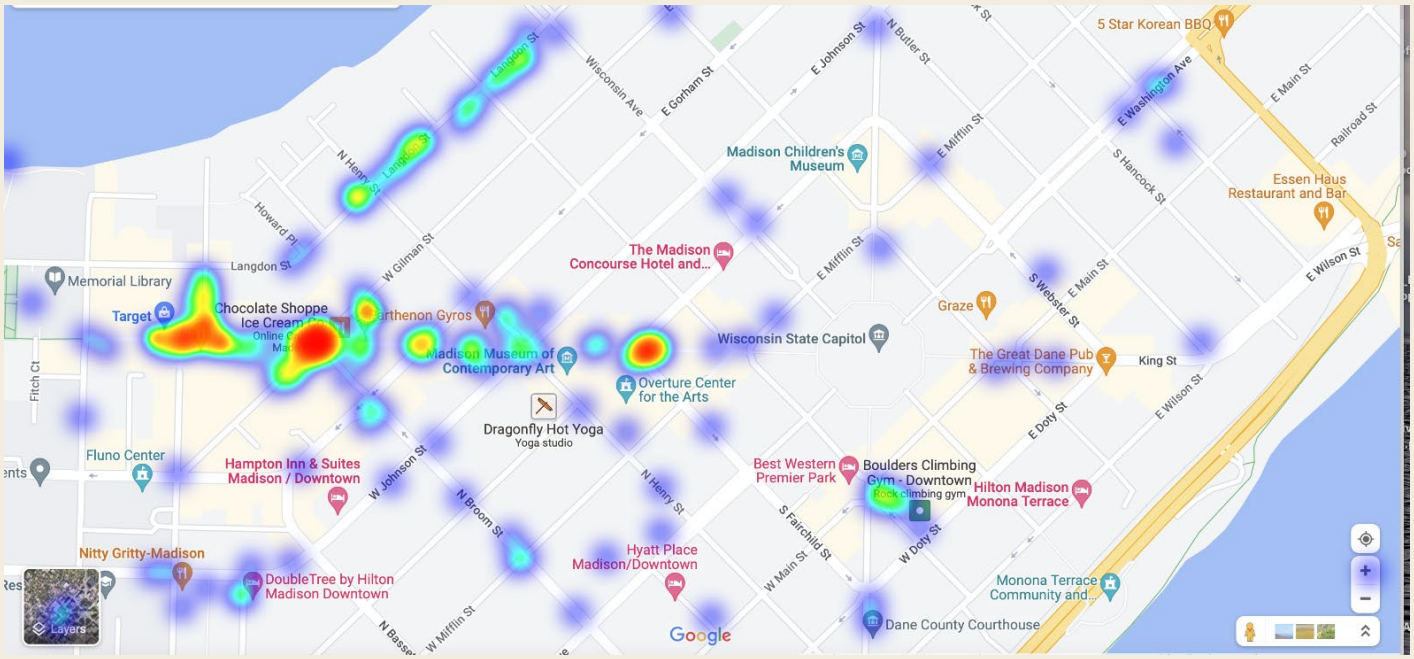


White (n=215)

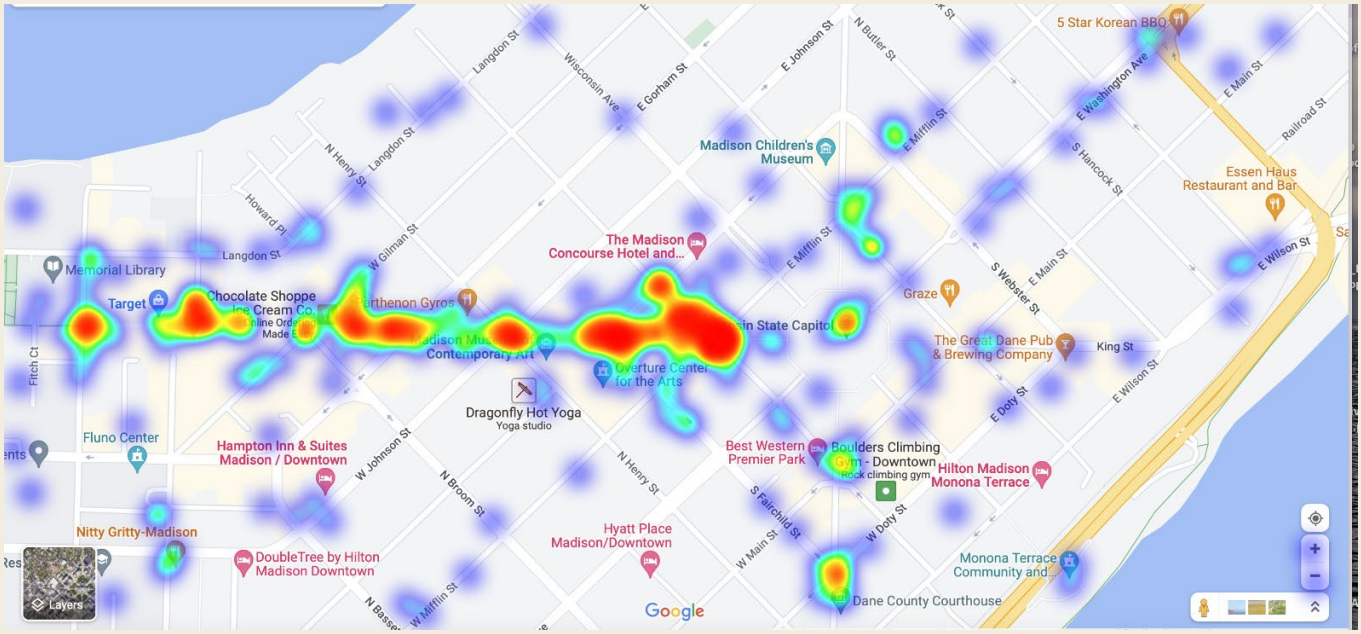


Note: Sample sizes have not been normalized; larger sub-groups will generate brighter hotspots because of the higher number of people that fall into that category.

Under 25 Years Old (n=86)

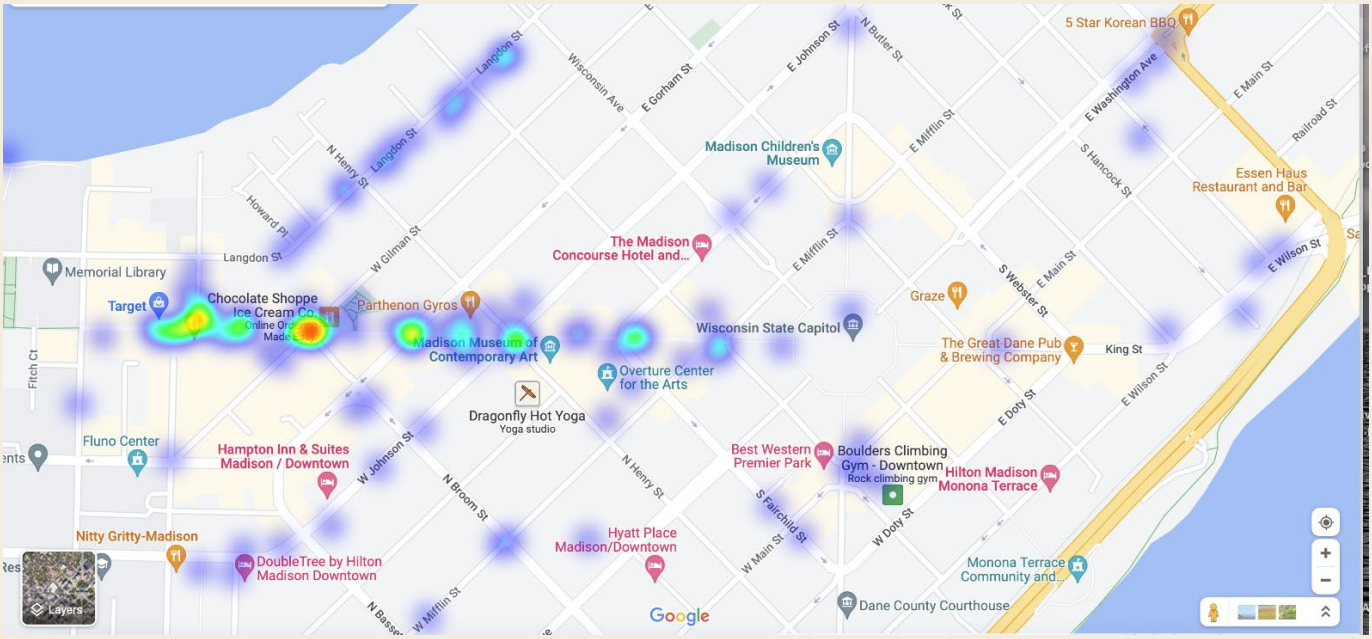


Over 26 Years Old (n=189)

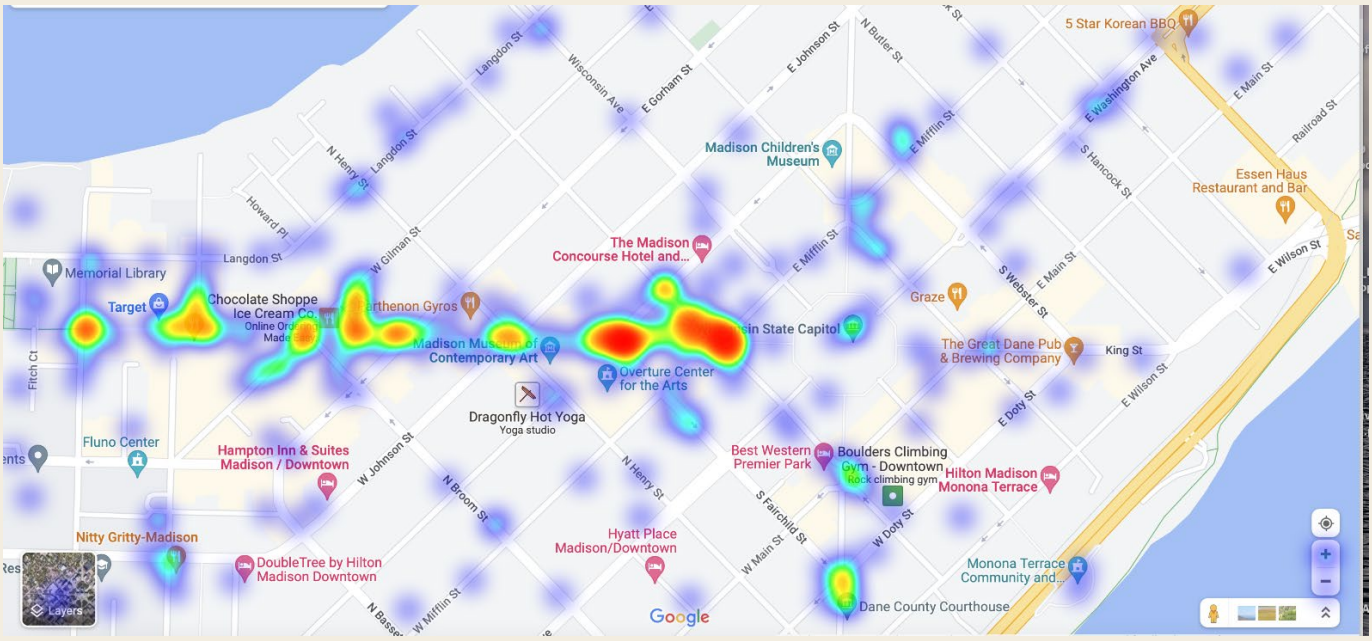


Note: Sample sizes have not been normalized; larger sub-groups will generate brighter hotspots because of the higher number of people that fall into that category.

Lives Downtown (n=72)

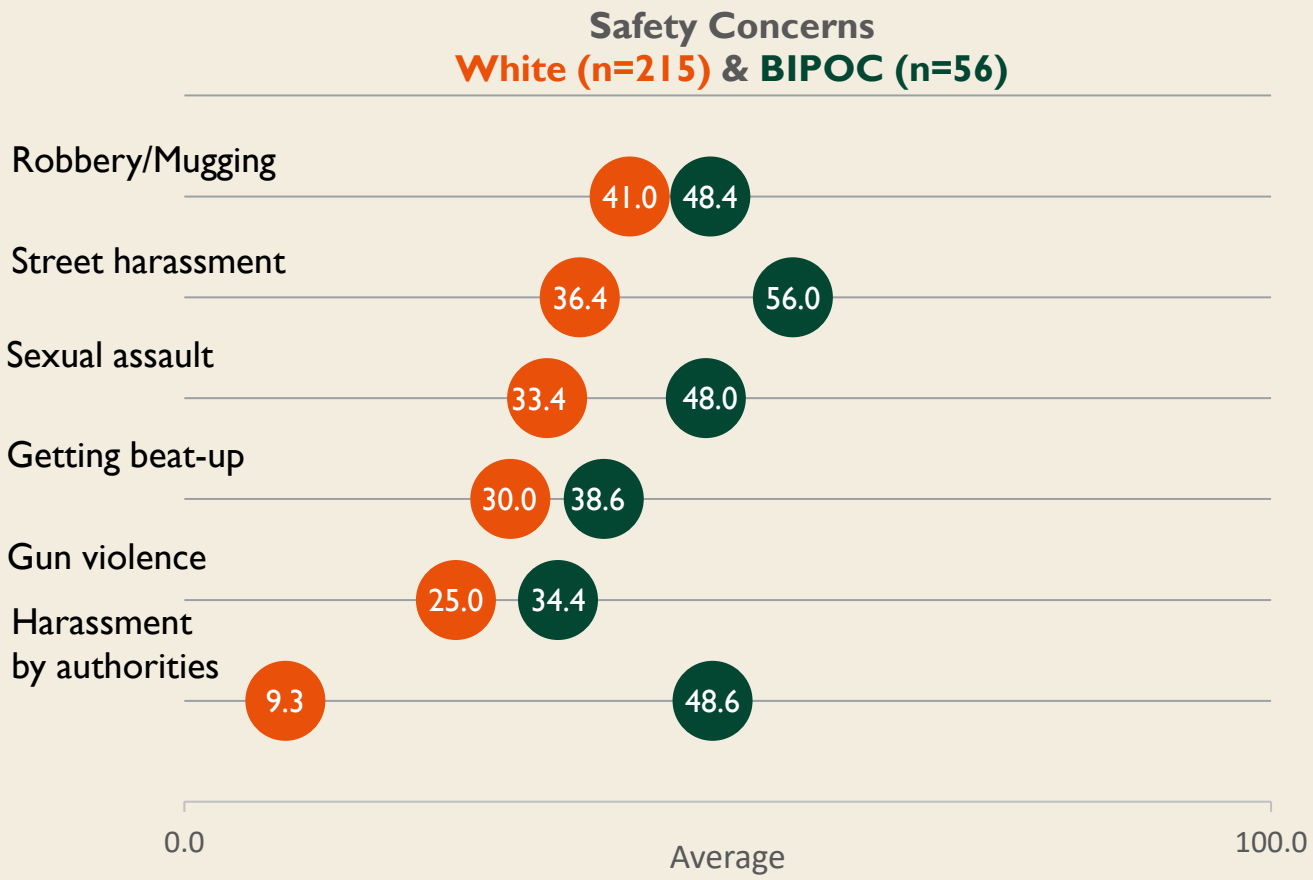


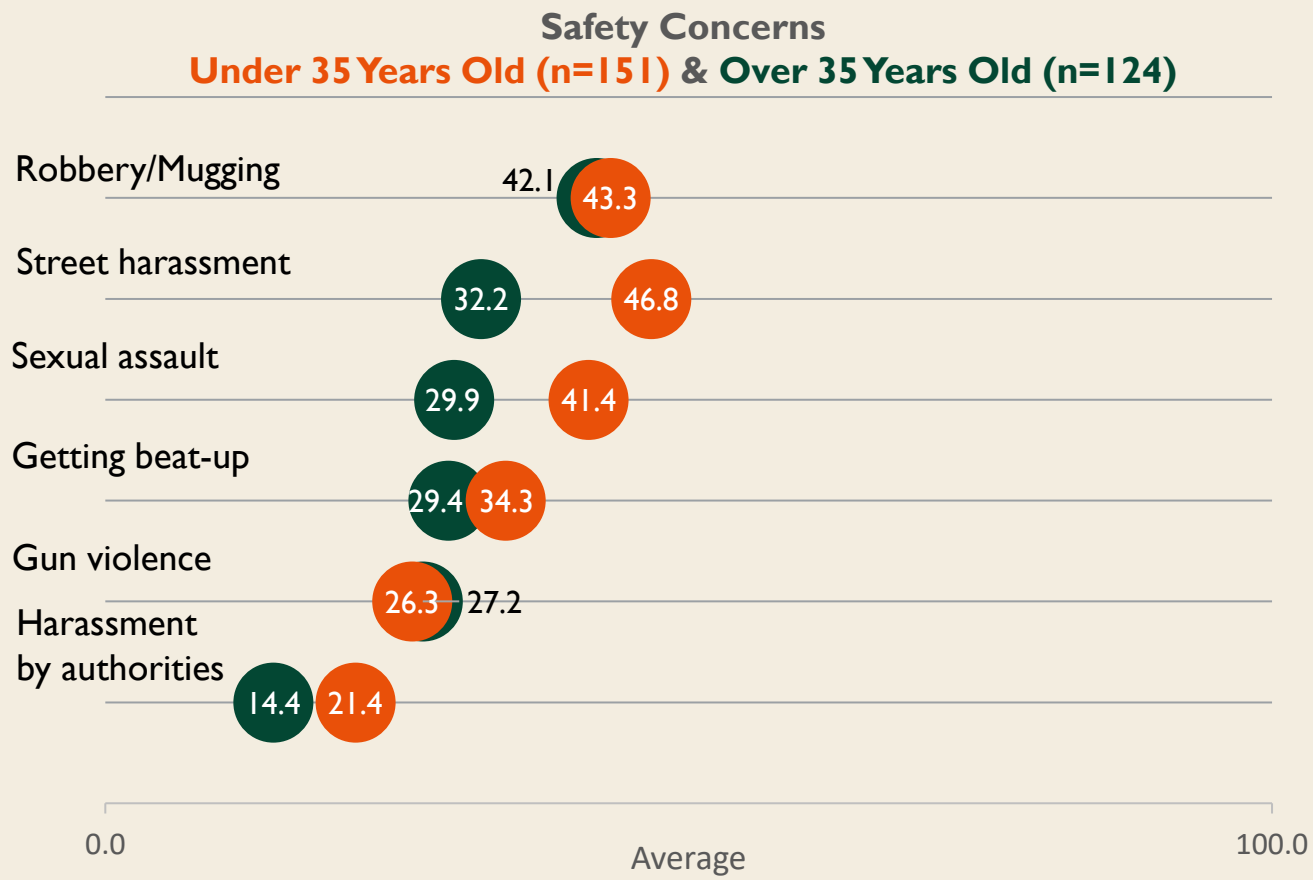
Visits Downtown (n=203)

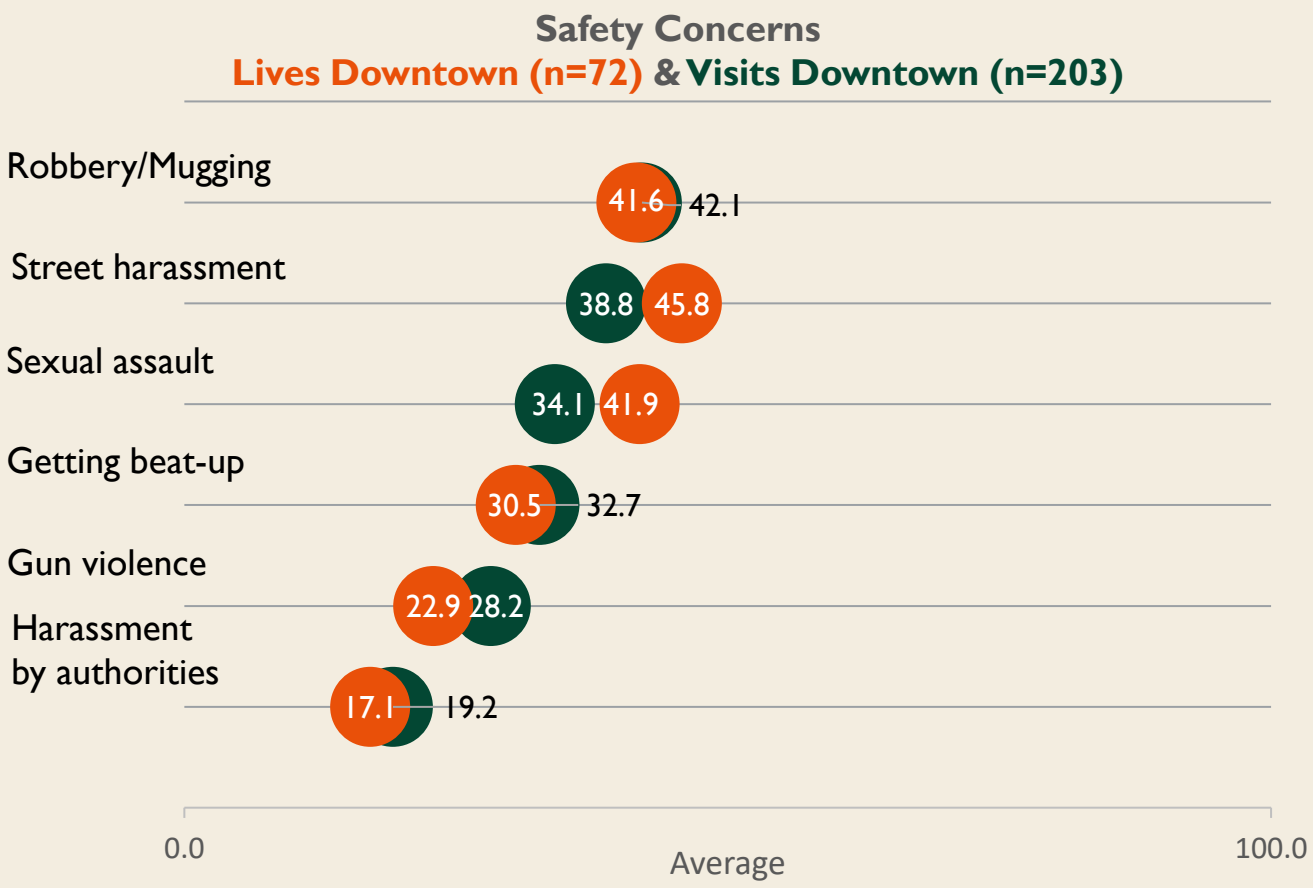


Note: Sample sizes have not been normalized; larger sub-groups will generate brighter hotspots because of the higher number of people that fall into that category.

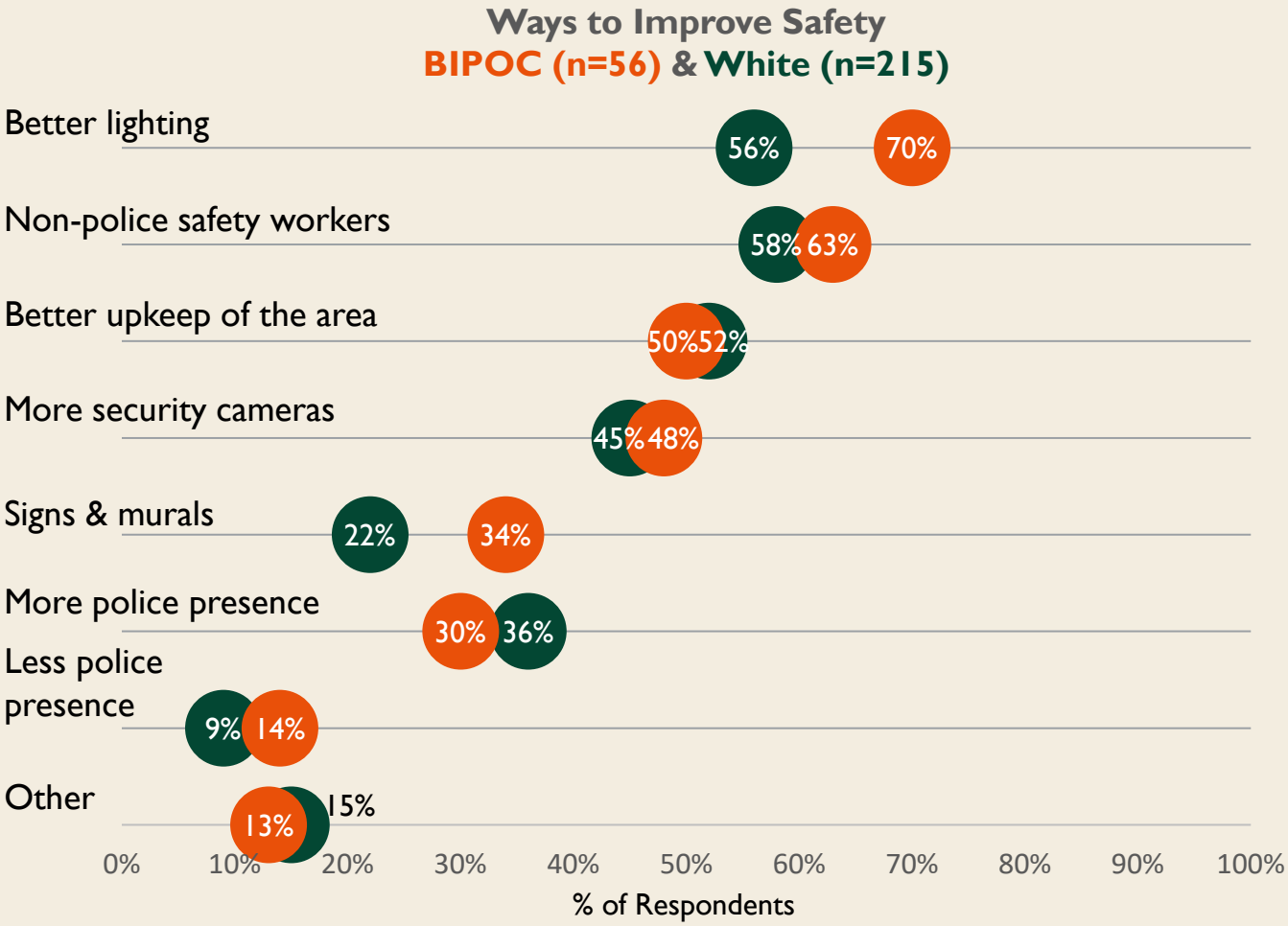
Appendix B – Average Safety Concerns by Race, Age, and Residency

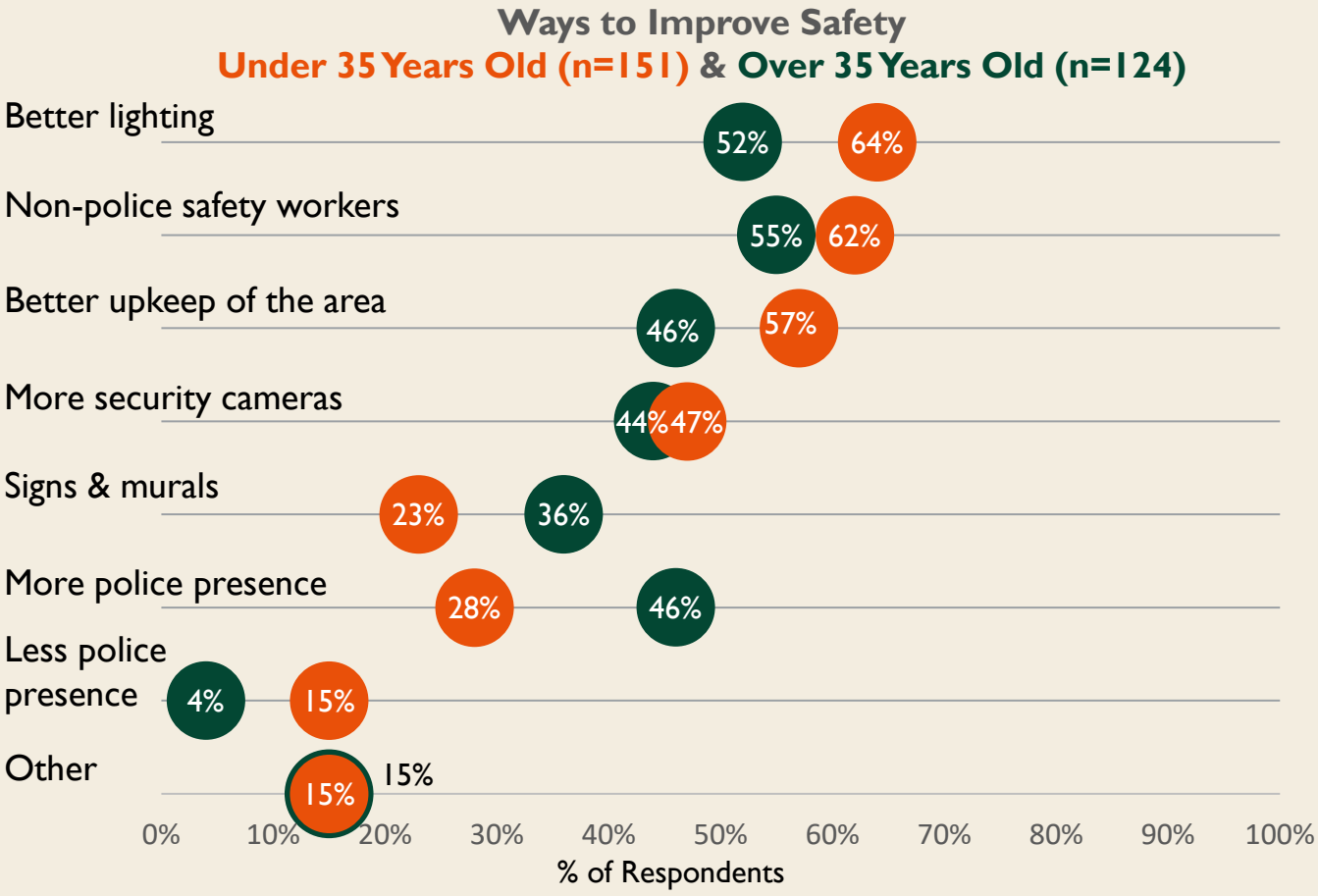


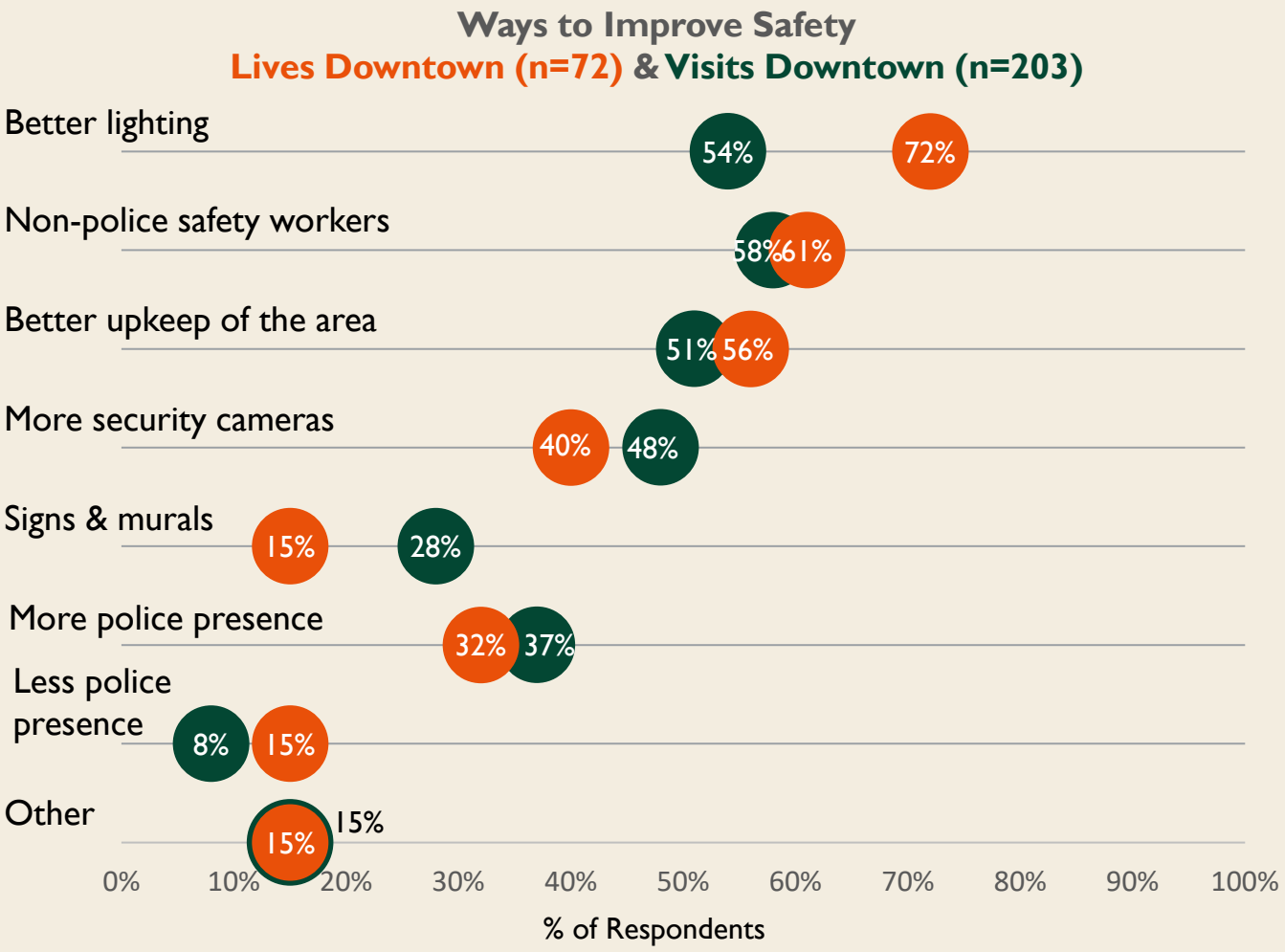



Safety Concerns
Lives Downtown (n=72) & Visits Downtown (n=203)
Robbery/Mugging
41.6
42.1
Street harassment
38.8
45.8
Sexual assault
34.1
41.9
Getting beat-up
30.5
32.7
Gun violence
22.9
28.2
Harassment by authorities
17.1
19.2
0.0
Average
100.0

Appendix C – Ways to Improve Safety by Race, Age, and Residency






Ways to Improve Safety
Lives Downtown (n=72) & Visits Downtown (n=203)
Better lighting
54%
72%
Non-police safety workers
58%
61%
Better upkeep of the area
51%
56%
More security cameras
40%
48%
Signs & murals
15%
28%
More police presence
32%
37%
Less police presence
8%
15%
Other
15%
15%
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%
% of Respondents

Appendix D – Resident and Student Survey

Resident and Student Survey re: Safety Downtown

State Street and the Downtown Madison area are places where people eat, play, meet new people, and have fun. Because of this, it is also a hotspot of gun violence and sexual violence, according to case incident data from Madison Police Department. We want to change that, without pushing out any members of our community, especially BIPOC, LGBTQ+, neuroatypical, feminine-of-center, differently abled or mentally unwell members.

While these populations are not solely responsible for the violence, we recognize that they often get pushed out when communities try to reduce violence because of old assumptions and stereotypes that devalue, exploit, exclude, or blame these groups for shared problems, such as gun violence.

You have been asked to complete this short survey for two reasons:

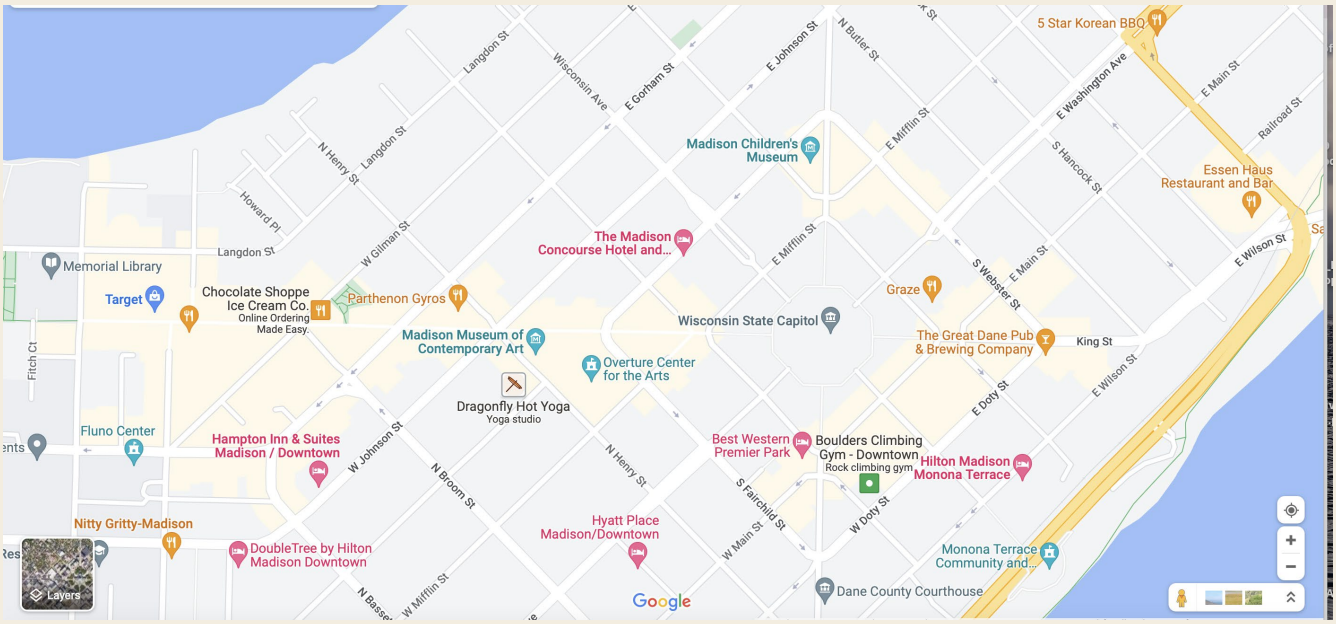
1. We want to know where you feel unsafe on State St and the surrounding areas.
2. We want to know how to make State St and the surrounding areas more safe and welcoming for ALL people who want to be there.

There are 9 questions and it should take you 5-7 minutes to complete it.

You will be registered for a drawing for a gift card if you complete the whole survey and provide your email at the end.

If you prefer Spanish, use this link/Para español oprima aquí: https://uwmadison.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3I6iTUmsHce1TSu

Click on the map below to leave a dot indicating where you feel unsafe on State Street or around Downtown Madison. You can indicate up to five areas.



Please indicate the degree to which you are worried this might happen to you at the spot(s) you selected. 0% means not at all, 100% means very worried. You will need to hit the slider at 0 to enter 0% as your answer.

Not Applicable

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Getting sexually assaulted	
Getting Shot	
Getting Robbed	
Getting beat-up	
Getting harassed by authorities, like the police, for one or more of my identities of how I look	
Getting harassed by other people on state street who are not an authority for one or more of my identities/for how I look	

What about this area makes you feel unsafe? (select all that apply)

- [ ] Poor lighting
- [ ] The people who are there: Drunk men that harass or intimidate people near by hang out here
- [ ] How isolated it is: there are not a lot of people
- [ ] other: _____

What would you like to see happen that would improve the safety of the area? (select all that apply)

- [ ] Better Lighting
- [ ] More police presence
- [ ] Less police presence
- [ ] Non-police safety workers roaming around, handing out water, checking in on people to make sure they are OK
- [ ] Better upkeep of the area
- [ ] Signs and murals with messages of anti-rape, anti-gun or anti-racist culture
- [ ] More security cameras
- [ ] Other _____

We'd like to see if we get a representative response to this survey, so please answer the following demographic questions

In which part of Madison do you live? (If you don't live in Madison, please name your city/town of residence)

- ○ The North Side (North of Packers Ave)
- ○ Central/Downtown Area (between the lakefronts and between Monroe st and Paterson St)
- ○ The East Side (East of Patersen St)
- ○ The South Side (South of Mifflin St)
- ○ The West Side (West of the football Stadium)
- ○ I don't live in Madison _____

In which age cohort do you belong?

- ○ 0-18 years
- ○ 19-25 years
- ○ 26-35 years
- ○ 35-50 years
- ○ 51+ years

Are you currently a student at UW Madison, Madison College (i.e., MATC), or Edgewood College?

- ○ Nope, not a student right now
- ○ Yes, UW Madison
- ○ Yes, Madison College (MATC)
- ○ Yes, Edgewood

Which best describes how people perceive you?

- ○ People see me as white
- ○ People see me as Black, Indigenous or a Person of Color

Which of the following best describes how often you like to go to State St and the Capitol square (e.g., downtown) when you are not worried about a pandemic?

- ○ several times a week
- ○ several times a month
- ○ several times a year
- ○ never, if I can avoid it

Are you typically there during the day or at night?

- ○ Only daytime
- ○ Both, it depends
- ○ Only nighttime for entertainment, food, and drink

Thank you for your time! Enter your email or phone number below to enter into a drawing for a gift card!
If you have any comments or questions, feel free to reach out to Abra Vigna: avigna@wisc.edu or Janae Goodrich: jgoodrich@wisc.edu

This work is funded by a grant to address the violent crime that happens in the Downtown area. You can learn more about it here: https://www.publichealthmdc.com/community-initiatives/violence-prevention/isthmus-safety-initiative-isi

- ○ email _____
- ○ phone number _____

Would you like to receive updates on the project via email?

- ○ Yes, please.
- ○ No thank you.