

yourground

YOUR SPORT • YOUR LEISURE • YOUR PLAY • YOUR PLACE • YOUR MARIBYRNONG



yourground

MARIBYRNONG REPORT | OCTOBER 2021

This research took place on the lands of First Nations people across Victoria and we acknowledge them as Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands and waters upon which we depend.

We recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. In particular, the YourGround team would like to acknowledge the peoples of the Kulin Nation on whose land we work.

YourGround is a collaboration between the Monash University XYX Lab and CrowdSpot.

If you have any queries in relation to the YourGround project, please contact Nicole Kalms:

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CrowdSpot is an award-winning, Melbourne-based digital consultancy specialising in map-based community engagement and data collection. Their mission is to help create quality spaces in a social, inclusive and engaging process. They do this by connecting decision makers with targeted community groups through the use of online map-based social survey tools.

XYX Lab – Gender and Place research lab, Monash University, Melbourne. The XYX Lab is the first research group in the world of its kind to address the complex intersections of space, gender and identity through design practice. Situated in the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture at Monash University, it draws on an interdisciplinary team of researchers, including experts in architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, communication design, design theory and design thinking methodologies.

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Definitions

Gender-diverse people

Gender diverse refers to people who identify with a gender or genders outside of the binary of female and male.

Women

This research recognises that women are not a homogenous group. When we use the word Woman or Women, the XYX Lab and CrowdSpot acknowledge that they are not a homogeneous group. Women represent enormous diversity in their cultural background, socio-economic status, where they live, their sexuality, abilities, and age. The term is therefore inclusive of all women, including ciswomen, trans-women, and intersex women.

Girls

The term girl is for participants that are female identifying and under the age of 18. Any person under the age of 18 was required to check with a parent or guardian before submitting a response.

Executive Summary

The YourGround Victoria project is a social research project that surveys women and gender-diverse people to map their perceptions of safety when exercising and recreating for health and wellbeing in Victoria's open spaces, including those of the City of Maribyrnong. It is a collaboration between the Monash University XYX Lab and CrowdSpot. The project took place within the context of COVID-19 and was conceptualised to understand equity and access to, and use of, public spaces, particularly for exercise and recreation during the periodic lockdowns across Victoria.

This report for the City of Maribyrnong is a supplement to the *YourGround Victoria Report* and, therefore, should be read in conjunction with it.

Women and gender-diverse people in the City of Maribyrnong supplied a total of 207 pins to the YourGround survey over a thirteen-week period from April to July 2021. 14% of the pins in Maribyrnong were safe ones, a lesser proportion than the map overall. These safe pins were mainly placed in public parks. Like other respondents across Victoria, Maribyrnong respondents appreciated their local green spaces especially for exercise.

Key activity spots for Maribyrnong included:

- ***Footscray CBD:*** considered unsafe because of the behaviour of other people, particularly those under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- ***Maribyrnong River Trail:*** the lack of or poor lighting was the major concern along the length of the trail. Some parts were also considered too isolated to be used by women and gender-diverse people if they were alone.
- ***Footscray and Cruickshank Parks:*** attracted both safe and unsafe pins. Lighting was again the main issue although concerning behaviour of other people was a feature of Footscray Park.

The reasons that YourGround respondents overall identified as impacting on perceptions of safety included lack of or poor lighting, concerning behaviour from other people in the area, limited ability to see what or who is ahead of them. Maribyrnong respondents repeated that pattern overall but with less of an emphasis on the behaviour of other people. That, however, rocketed up for certain parts of the LGA. In addition, some locations were perceived to be isolated and therefore risky for women and gender-diverse people to enter.



Introduction

1.0 Introduction

The YourGround project is a collaboration between the Monash University XYX Lab and CrowdSpot surveying women and gender-diverse people to understand their perceptions of safety when exercising and recreating for health and wellbeing in Victoria's open spaces.

In Australia, 87% of women have experienced at least one form of verbal or physical street harassment.¹ While there is less research into the experiences of gender-diverse people, there is strong evidence that their experiences are similar.² Gender-based harassment reinforces the socialised position of women and gender-diverse people as not equal to men. For most, these experiences strongly affect where they go and how they are able (and feel able) to occupy public spaces. Consequently gender has an outsized impact on women and gender-diverse people's health and wellbeing. In particular, for many, exercising in public space is stressful and the

anxiety that comes from it acts against the multiple physical and mental health benefits of exercise. For example, the vicious assault of a woman runner in north Melbourne in 2019 led to many local women being fearful of using the area for their exercise and recreation; some have not returned.³

YourGround aims to provide data and insights into access and inclusivity to public spaces for women and gender-diverse people and to drive urban design initiatives in line with Victoria's Equality Act 2020. YourGround Victoria was supported by 25 Local and State Government partners, including the City of Maribyrnong, 22 additional LGAs plus Respect Victoria and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. The data was crowdsourced over a thirteen-week period from April to July 2021.

- 1 Johnson and Bennett, 2015.
- 2 Fileborn, 2012, 4, AIHW, 2020a
- 3 XYX Lab, 2020.





Methodology

2.0 Methodology

For a full discussion and explanation of the YourGround methodology, please refer to Section 2.0 of the *YourGround Victoria Report*. This section provides a brief summary.

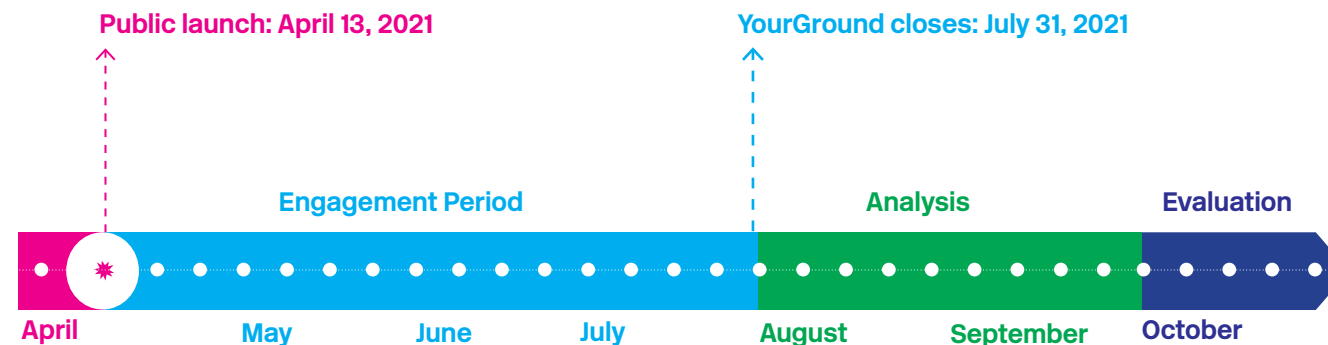
The YourGround project was an online spatial survey to gather, or crowdsource, information about perceptions of safety from women and gender-diverse people. YourGround was designed to reduce the barriers to engagement for women and gender-diverse people through interactive, visual, and intuitive means. It is unique in its applied theme of collecting recreational safety-related experiences and perceptions.

Crowdsourcing

Crowdsourcing personal experiences is a technique that is particularly useful for illuminating stories and issues from people whose voices are not always heard. Previous projects show that sharing experiences via digital platforms is proven to connect, empower and support women and girls, and it has enormous potential to effect positive change.⁴

4 Kalms, 2017.

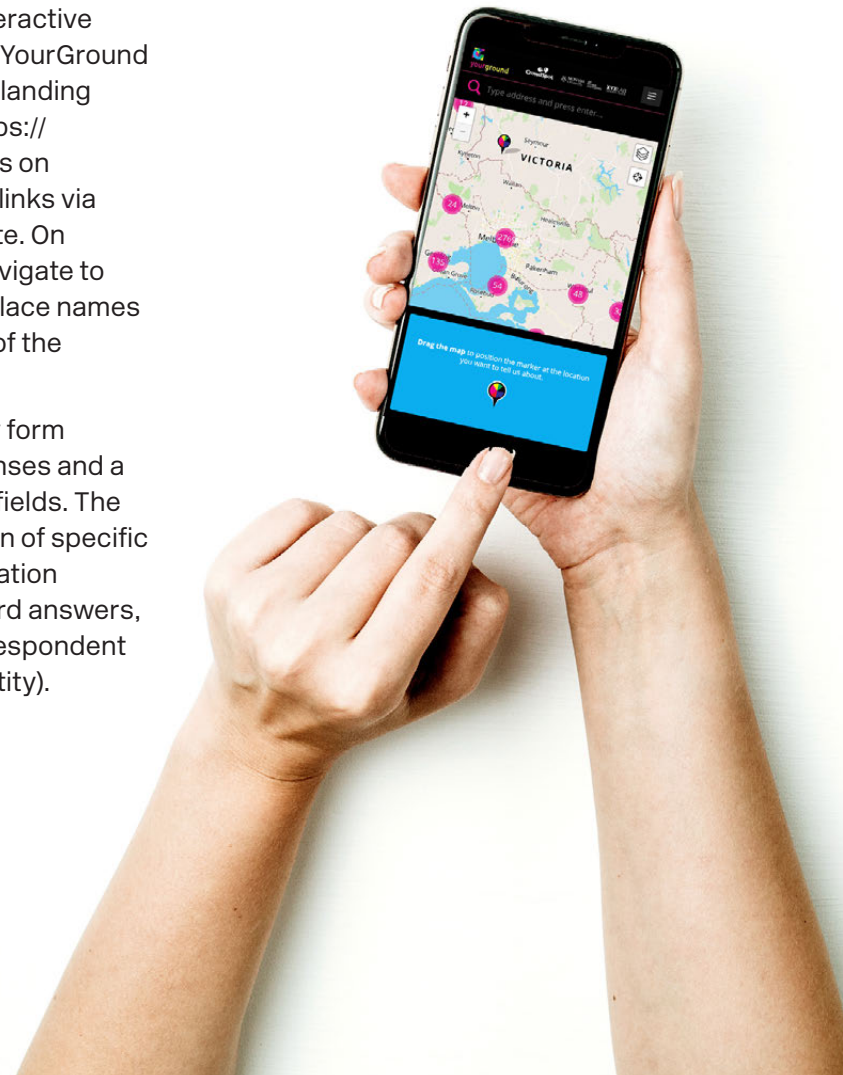
FIGURE 2.1
PROJECT TIMELINE



Survey Design

Community involvement, through the interactive map, was at the heart of the project. The YourGround map was accessed either via the central landing page (yourground.org) or the domain <https://yourground.crowdspot.com.au>. QR codes on posters and other printed collateral, and links via social media connected directly to the site. On the website, participants were able to navigate to precise locations. In addition to English place names on the base map, the traditional owners of the Country were marked.

Once a location was selected, the survey form contained a mix of predetermined responses and a limited number of open-text description fields. The survey therefore contained a combination of specific and open-text questions (type of pin, location category, description of incident, standard answers, etc.) and general information about the respondent (including gender, age, and minority identity).



Contributing to the Map

There were three ways people were able to actively contribute their input to the map:

1. 'Add a Spot' to the map via the survey form.
2. Comment on existing pins already on the map.
3. 'Support' existing pins already on the map by clicking the 'Support' button.

Ethics Approval and Moderation

Because YourGround involves questions that delve into personal and potentially sensitive matters, ethics approval was required by Monash University. Only the research team had, and continues to have, access to any identifying data provided by participants (emails).

All free text entries were monitored and moderated regularly through both moderation filters that were triggered if text included an extensive list of profanities and through daily checking of free text entries by the YourGround team.

Limitations

Crowdmapping is a means for gathering impressions and stories from a wide range of people, especially those whose voices are not always consulted. However, it is not a probability sample. This means that any percentages generated will be indicative, not representative. That said, when many stories and data are gathered, common themes can be discerned and this report considers those themes and their prevalence.

Recruitment

A communications campaign targeting women and gender-diverse people was coordinated by the YourGround team and implemented by the City of Maribyrnong communications team. The campaign consisted of a range of media collateral and outreach, both targeted and general. At the launch of YourGround and part way through the submissions period, the project was covered by television, radio, print and other media (see *YourGround Victoria Report*).

Analysis Process

This data collection process built a valuable user-generated spatial dataset to help form a range of location-based insights for improving recreational experiences in public space. The large dataset enabled investigation of multiple axes of information. In particular, the series of standard answers generated a common number of primary axes along which the data could be organised. All free-text questions provided further information and were coded to gather trends.

The data was also analysed geographically and the Greater Melbourne metropolitan LGAs have been broken into three zones: city, inner suburban ring and outer metro ring. Some of the results recorded in this report for the City of Maribyrnong are analysed alongside the other LGAs in its zone (city, see yellow zone in Figure 2.2).

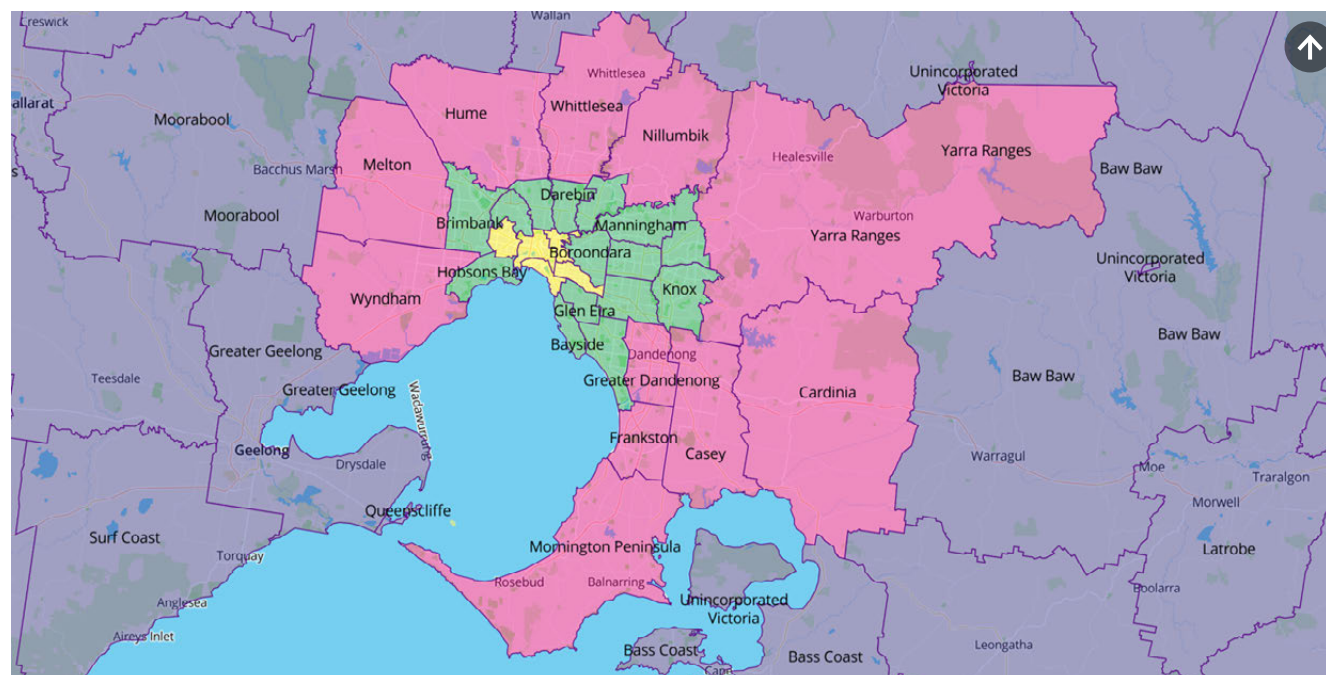


FIGURE 2.2
MAP OF METRO
DIVISIONS
USED FOR
YOURGROUND
VICTORIA

- City LGAs
- Inner Suburban LGAs
- Outer Metro LGAs
- Regional LGAs



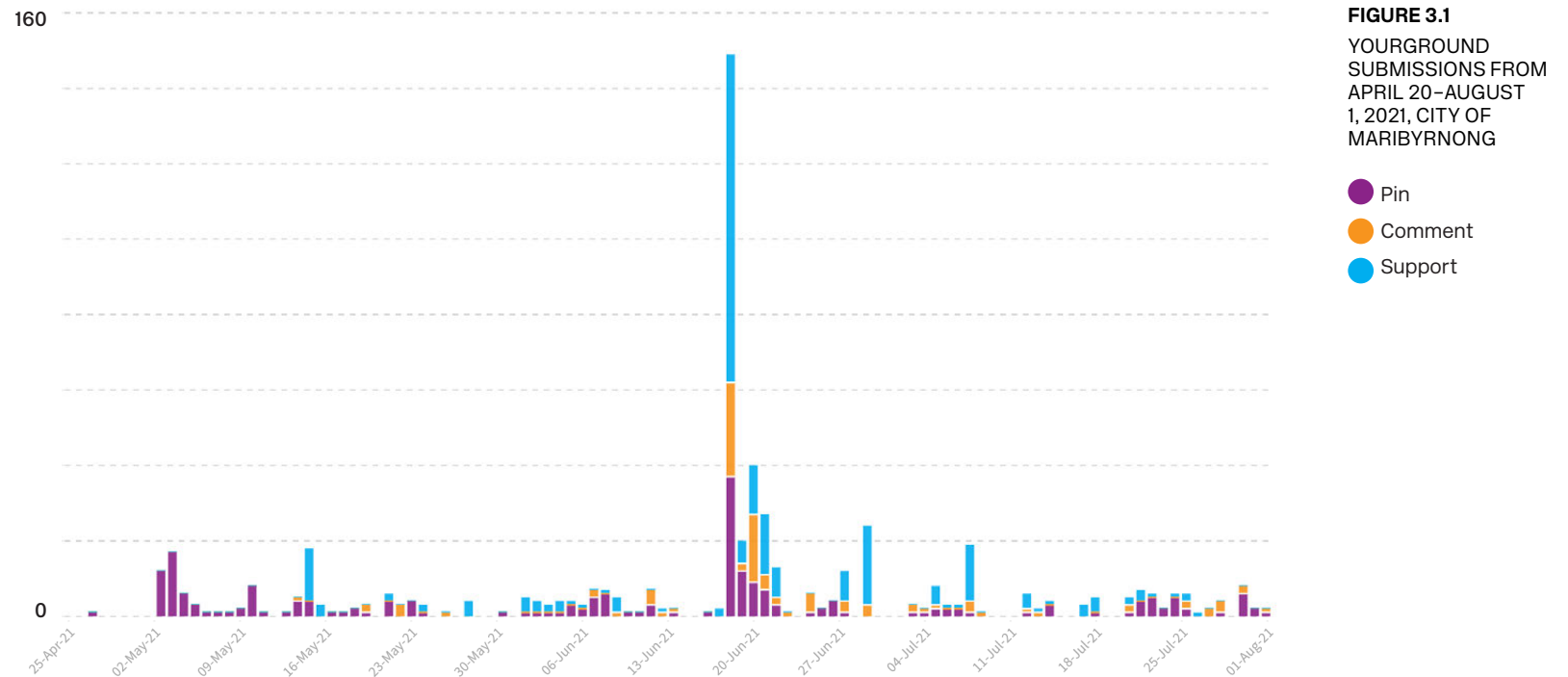
Participation

3.0 Submissions

The data analytics collected by YourGround includes a combination of both active and passive participation. Active participation refers to user interactions where people have submitted their input by either adding a pin, comment or 'support'. Passive participation refers to cases where users have explored the map – viewing and reading various contributions – without actively making any kind of submission.

In total, there were 3,629 active participants and 62,960 unique page views, which means that there were 59,331 passive participants. There were spikes in interest, particularly one of 18,965 page views (and passive participants) on 18 June following the publication of interim results in the media and the embedding of the map within online articles in The Age (see Appendix B of YourGround Victoria Report).

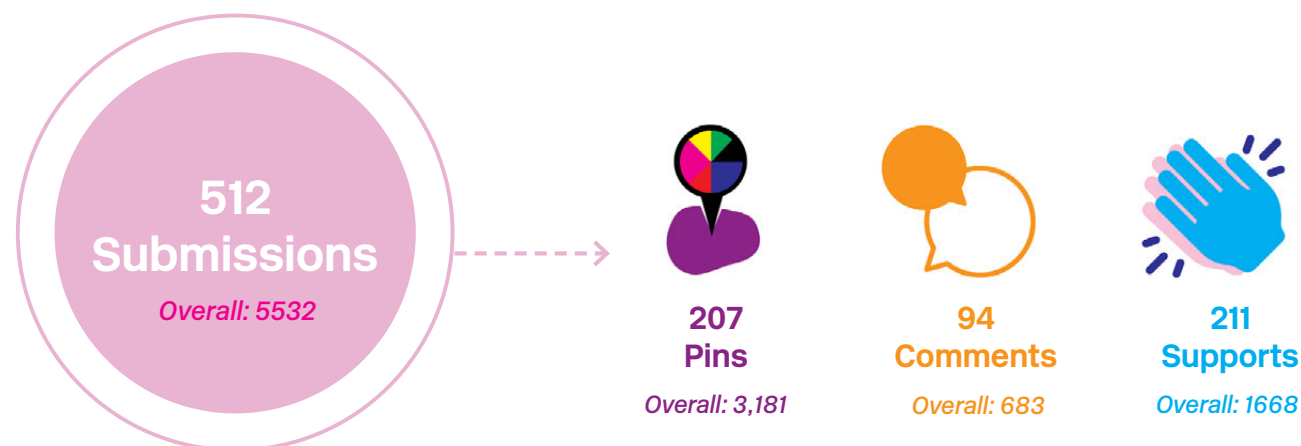
Figure 3.1 outlines the total number of submissions per day over the engagement period for the City of Maribyrnong. There is one main spike which relates to The Age publication.



Submissions

There were 207 pins placed within the boundaries of the City of Maribyrnong LGA. This represents 7% of the total number of pins submitted to YourGround. There were a total of 512 submissions within Maribyrnong, comprising these 207 pins, plus 94 comments and 211 'supports'. Note that the survey was not designed for men, and so the data from the 14 men who participated in YourGround in Maribyrnong has not been included.

FIGURE 3.2
CITY OF MARIBYRNONG TOTAL SUBMISSION



3.1 Respondent Data

The following demographic data is based on the number of pins submitted in the City of Maribyrnong. Note that those making comments or supporting pins were not asked any identifying questions and so are not included. Crowdsourced surveys are not representative, but it is useful to compare the response rates to assess whether the survey has reached minoritised groups of women or to understand possible biases in the data.

GENDER IDENTITY

Table 3.1 shows a breakdown of the identity data collected by YourGround.

Like the overall YourGround map, the City of Maribyrnong pins were overwhelmingly placed by respondents who identified as female. Maribyrnong had very similar proportion of non binary / non-conforming and LGBTIQ+ participants to the full survey, but a much higher proportion of persons with a disability respondents.

Gender	Maribyrnong (n = 207)		Overall (n = 3181)	
	Pins	%	Pins	%
Female	196	95%	3,024	95%
Non binary / Non conforming	5	2%	76	2%
Prefer not to say	4	2%	74	2%
Prefer to describe	2	1%	7	0.2%
Other demographic factors				
LGBTIQ+	26	13%	456	14%
Migrant / Refugee	8	4%	212	7%
Person with a disability	25	12%	185	6%
First Nations	3	1.4%	59	1.9%

TABLE 3.1
GENDER AND
IDENTITY OF
RESPONDENTS

AGE

Table 3.2 shows the age range of respondents to YourGround in Maribyrnong and the full Victoria map.

Almost half the pins on the overall YourGround survey were placed by those aged between 30 and 44. City of Maribyrnong respondents had a much higher proportion in this age group (59%) and generally had less respondents under the age of 30.

Age	Maribyrnong (n = 207)		Overall (n = 3181)	
	Pins	%	Pins	%
<15	0	-	12	0.4%
15-19	4	2%	94	3%
20-24	9	4%	194	6%
25-29	16	8%	402	13%
30-34	40	19%	512	16%
35-39	40	19%	581	18%
40-44	44	21%	444	14%
45-49	32	15%	376	12%
50-54	12	6%	262	8%
55-59	4	2%	167	5%
60-64	3	1%	69	2.2%
65-69	1	0%	41	1.3%
70-74	2	1%	23	0.7%
74-79	0	-	2	0.1%
80+	0	-	2	0.1%
Total	207		3181	

TABLE 3.2
AGE RANGE OF
RESPONDENTS

OCCUPATION STATUS

Participants were asked their occupation or employment status and were able to select more than one category. Three quarters of City of Maribyrnong participants were employed, slightly under the proportion overall (77%). Table 3.3 shows that Maribyrnong respondents had a slightly lesser

proportion of all the other occupation categories gathered by YourGround, particularly parents of dependent children but a slightly higher proportion of students and unemployed than the survey overall.

Occupation status	Maribyrnong (<i>n</i> = 207)		Overall (<i>n</i> = 3181)	
	Pins	%	Pins	%
Employed	155	75%	2,453	77%
Parent of dependent children	30	14%	508	16%
Student	26	13%	336	11%
Retired	4	2%	90	3%
Unemployed	8	4%	82	3%

TABLE 3.3
OCCUPATION
STATUS OF
RESPONDENTS



Analysis

4.0 General

The YourGround interactive map allowed participants to place pins in precise locations throughout the City of Maribyrnong and across Victoria. Participants could then select whether that location was 'safe' or 'unsafe'. More unsafe pins were added than safe ones – just 18% of the overall pins were safe pins. This is not unusual for this kind of survey. The City of Maribyrnong respondents placed a lower proportion of safe pins: 14% (Figure 4.1).

A minimum of 200 pins per LGA allows for a more comprehensive picture of the experiences of women and gender-diverse people. The Maribyrnong dataset just meets this minimum.

5 For example, the crowdsourced Free to Be Five Cities project in 2018 had an overall 22 : 78 good to bad pins. Within that, Sydney recorded 25 : 75. Plan International & XYX Lab, 2018.

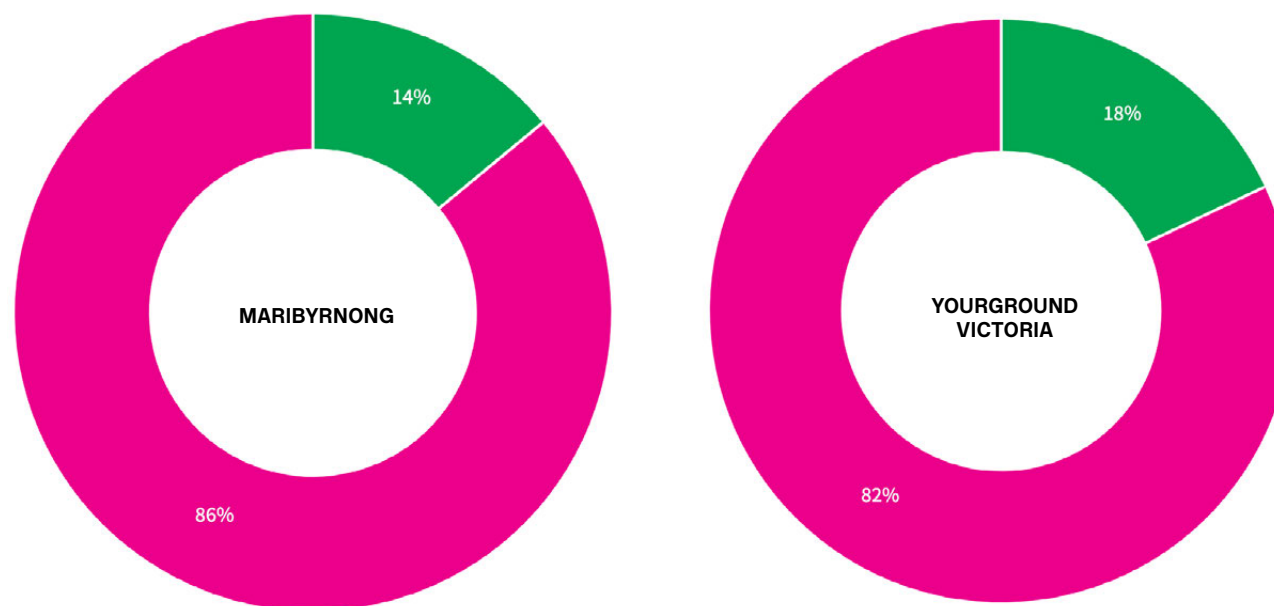


FIGURE 4.1
MARIBYRNONG
SAFE TO UNSAFE
PINS COMPARED
TO OVERALL
YOURGROUND
VICTORIA
SUBMISSIONS

Figures 4.2 and 4.3 reveal how the safe and unsafe pins are spread across the environment typologies and activities (see also Tables A1 and A2, Appendix A). For the map overall, 35% of all pin placements were on streets, 24% on parks and 18% on trails. Maribyrnong had a similar distribution, but higher for the street pins (37%), slightly higher for parks (26%)

and much higher for trails (22%). Like pins in parks across Victoria, Maribyrnong had a much higher proportion of safe pins than it did for the streets: 3% for its street pins and 36% for parks.

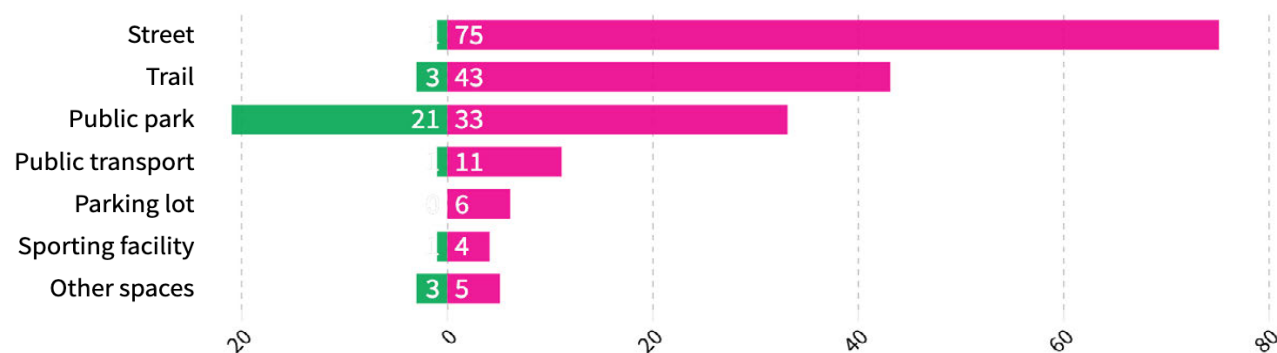


FIGURE 4.2
MARIBYRNONG PINS
BY ENVIRONMENT
TYPOLOGY (SEE ALSO
FIGURE 4.7)

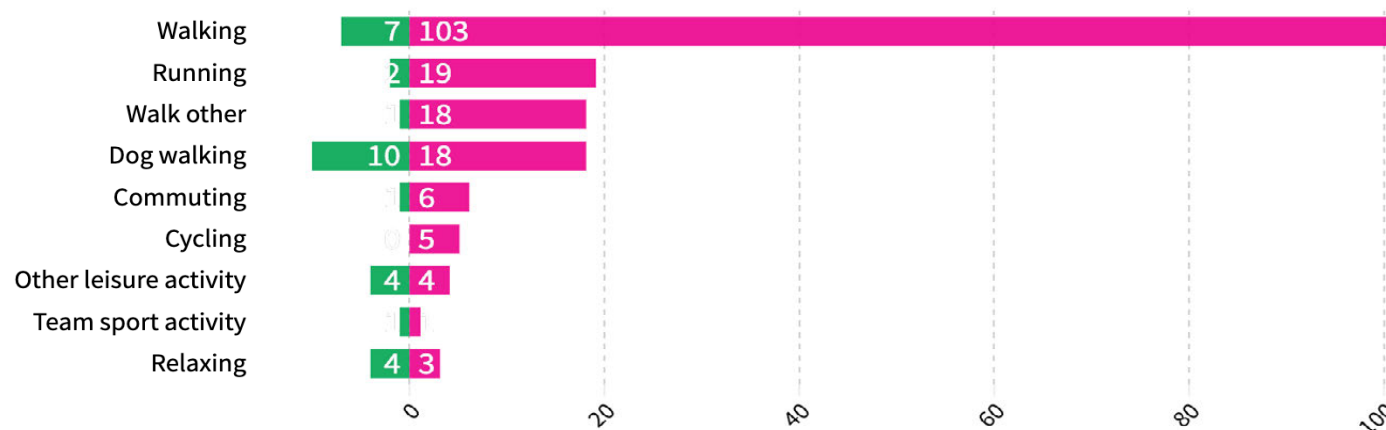
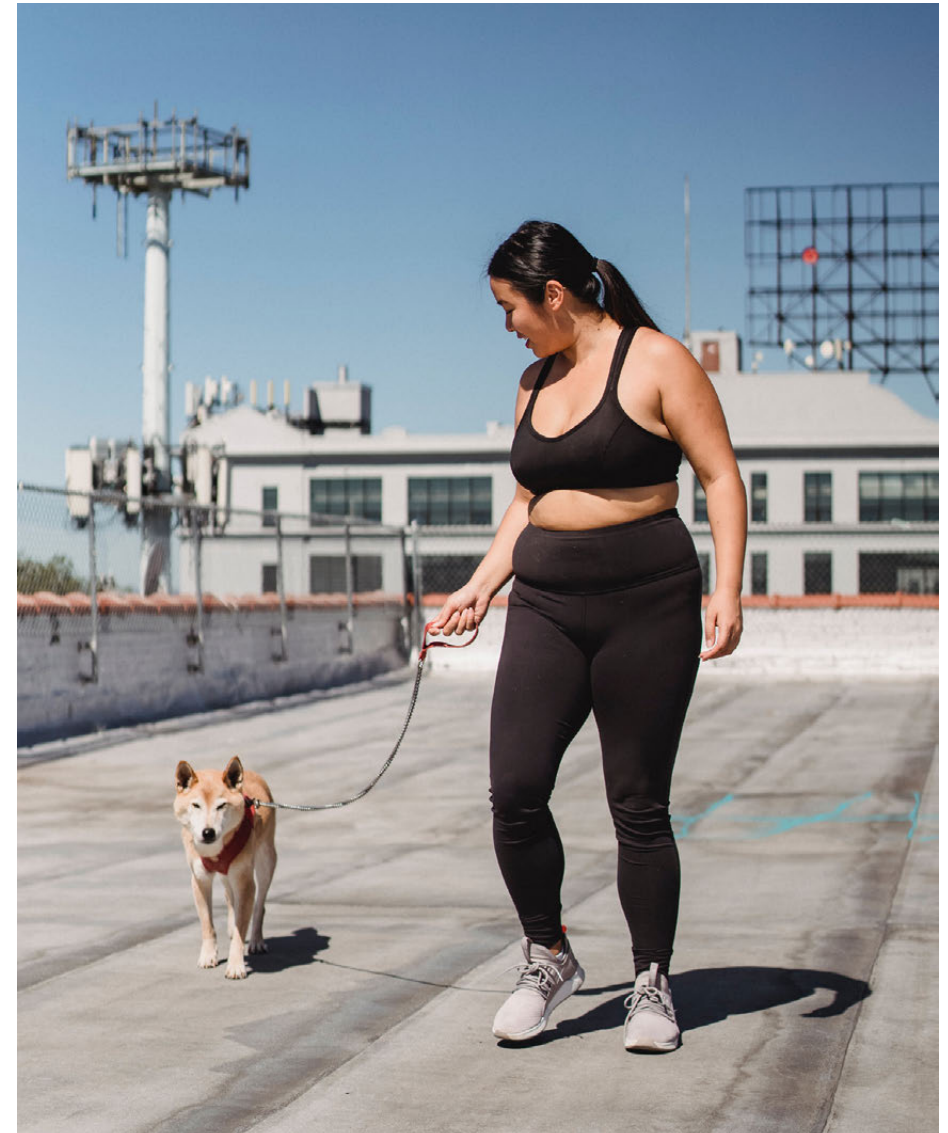


FIGURE 4.3
MARIBYRNONG PINS
BY ACTIVITY (SEE
ALSO FIGURE 4.8)

● Safe pins
● Unsafe pins

The distribution of activity is very similar to the overall map, with walking the major activity recorded – 52% of all pins in both cases. Dog walking in Maribyrnong had a higher proportion of safe pins than the full YourGround survey but general walking a lower proportion.

Figure 4.4 includes all pins added to the YourGround Victoria map in the City of Maribyrnong. There is a clear concentration of data points in Footscray and Yarraville. The largest cluster is in Footscray CBD, reflecting its position as a key retail, hospitality and entertainment area in Maribyrnong.



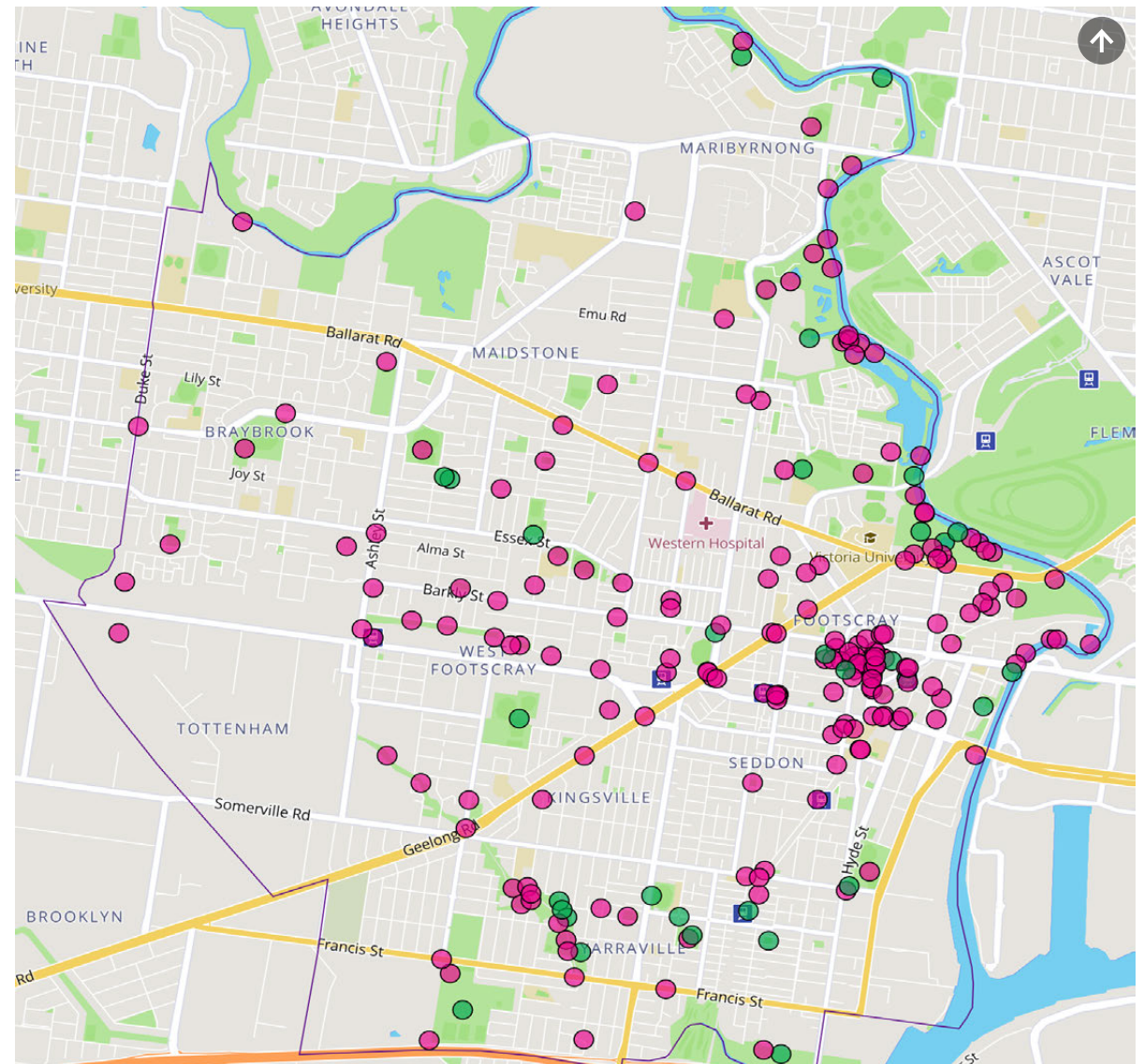


FIGURE 4.4
SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF PINS FOR
THE CITY OF MARIBYRNONG

- Safe pins
- Unsafe pins

4.1 Safe Pins

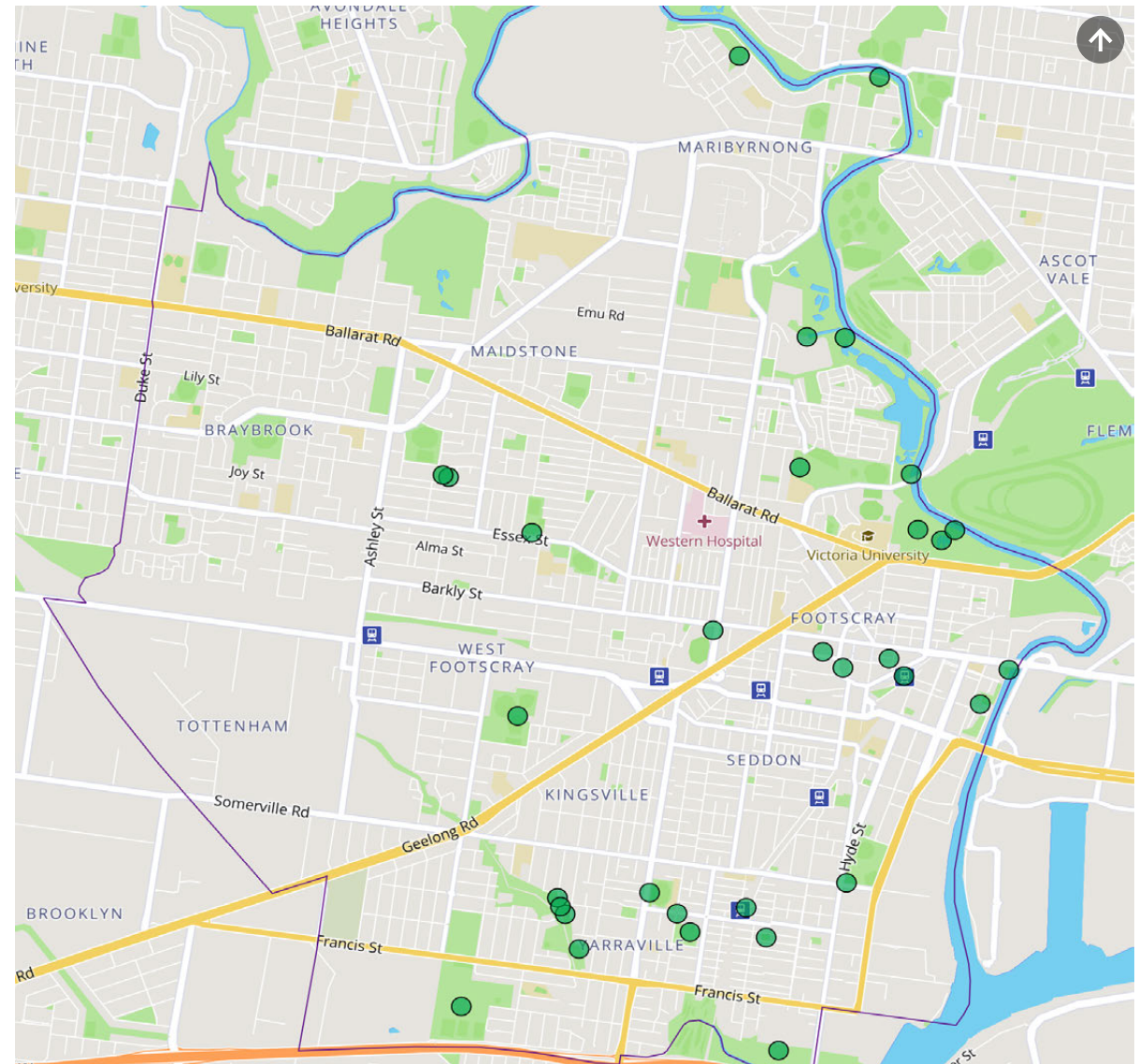


FIGURE 4.5
LOCATIONS OF SAFE PINS IN
MARIBYRNONG

● Safe pins

With just 30 safe pins across Maribyrnong it is not possible to deduce any major conclusions; however, these pins do replicate the same ideas of what constitutes safety found across Victoria. For example, in the full YourGround survey, a high proportion of safe pins were placed in the public parks and on trails; Maribyrnong repeated this pattern but even more so with more than three-quarters of the safe pins in these locations. Particularly favoured spots were Shepherd Gardens and Footscray Park (Footscray Park is discussed further in Section 5).

Like other green spaces across Victoria, Maribyrnong parks and trails were well used during the COVID lockdowns when any nearby green spaces became a magnet for participants undertaking their allowable daily exercise. YourGround respondents noted that because more people were using these spaces, they generally felt safer:

I love this park and it was a saviour during lockdown when it was busier.

35–39, FEMALE, WALKING, ANYTIME, NEWELLS Paddock

This is a great place to walk during the day. It's easy to see in the distance and know who else is around. The pathway is really wide for cyclists and walking. More people used this space during COVID lockdown and it became a really valuable open space for the community.

30–34, FEMALE, WALKING, DAYLIGHT, STONY CREEK WALK, YARRAVILLE

However, like other safe spots discussed in the YourGround Victoria Report (Section 5.1, Safety Caveats), there were some caveats around the safe designation of some of the Maribyrnong safe pins.

Great spot for family sport and daytime activities. Needs consistent night time lights. If this reserve had lights for the evening women would feel safer running here.

40–44, FEMALE, WALKING, DAYLIGHT, MCIVOR RESERVE, YARRAVILLE

Qualifications and caveats for Maribyrnong sites included not using the space at night or alone, and a wariness about the level of passive surveillance if no one else is around. Isolated spaces are one issue, but so too is a space being occupied by people whose behaviour might dominate the space:

This is a great family friendly playground where people are friendly and it's a safe and welcoming place to play. However, in the evening there are often young people hanging around and I feel unsafe walking through here at night on my way home from the station.

30–34, WALKING, DAYLIGHT, FELS RESERVE, YARRAVILLE

Safety is not only about fear of attack, it is also about the ability to freely occupy public space. Dominant or aggressive users of a space can contribute to a sense that not all people – women and gender-diverse people in particular – are welcome or able to use the area. This restricts use for exercise impacting on health outcomes.

4.2 Unsafe Pins

There were 177 unsafe pins across Maribyrnong (Figure 4.6). The cluster of unsafe spots in Footscray CBD is apparent, but there are other concentrations as well.

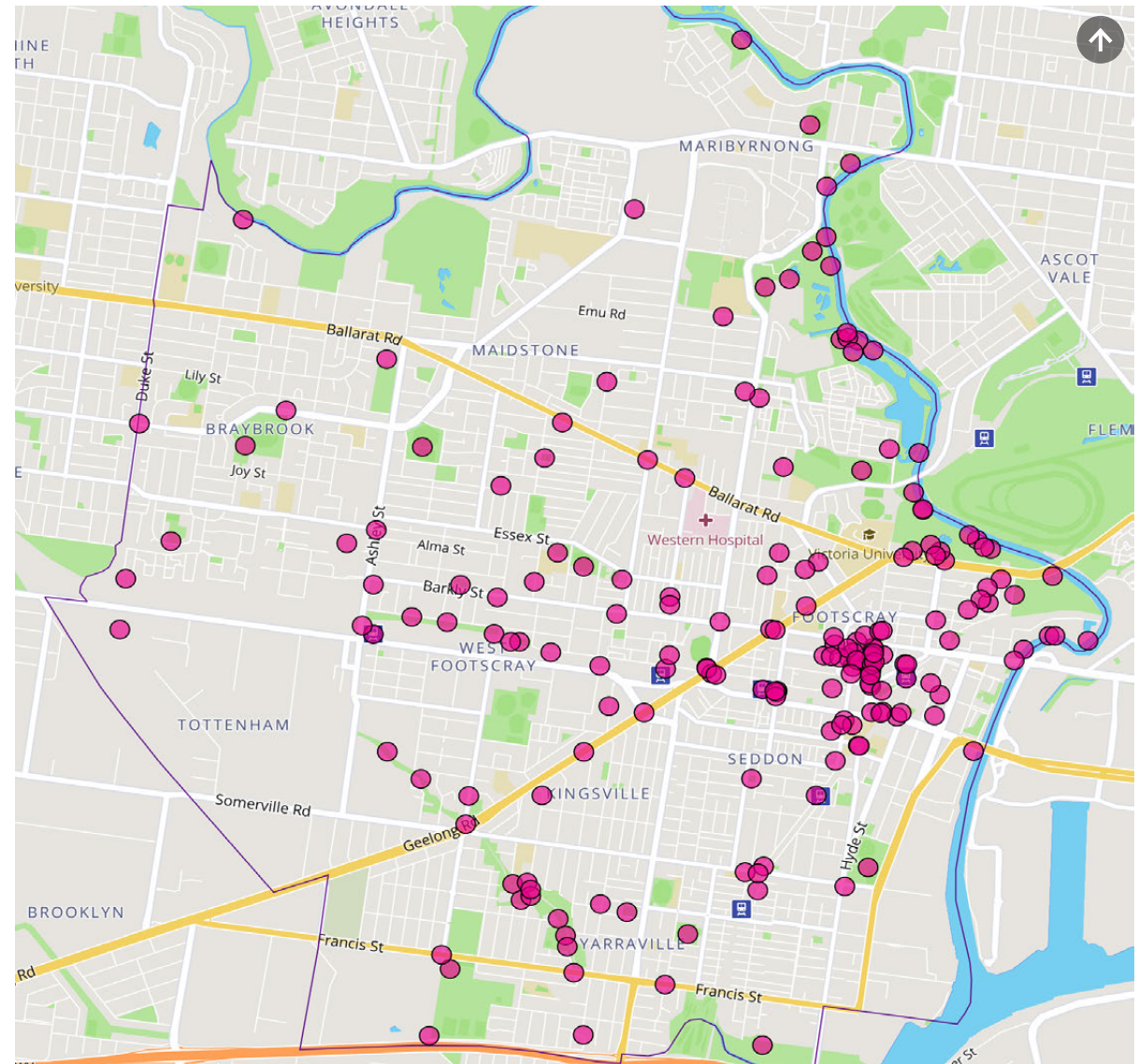


FIGURE 4.6
LOCATIONS OF UNSAFE PINS IN
MARIBYRNONG

● Unsafe pins

Environment Typology

STREETS

42% of unsafe pins were on the streets of Maribyrnong, a higher level than the proportion for the whole survey, but lower than the other LGAs in the city zone, Figure 4.7 (and Figure 4.2). The Nicholson and Paisley Streets area of Footscray attracted many pins and these are discussed in Section 5.

For the other street areas, poor lighting was the main problem. This exacerbated issues caused by poor maintenance and narrow footpaths:

This area is very dark, the footpaths are narrow and vehicles are parked with their rear ends hanging over onto the footpath. The path is also unstable and has many cracks in it.

45-49, FEMALE, WALKING, AFTER DARK, WALTER STREET, SEDDON

Brilliant vegetation here, but very poor lighting. At night creates feeling of entrapment. Alternative is to walk on the road instead of the footpath but limited light makes it feel dangerous as cars will have difficulty seeing you. I really don't like walking through here but often have no alternative as I live nearby. More lighting please.

30-34, FEMALE, WALKING AFTER DARK, PENTLAND PARADE NEAR SOMERVILLE ROAD

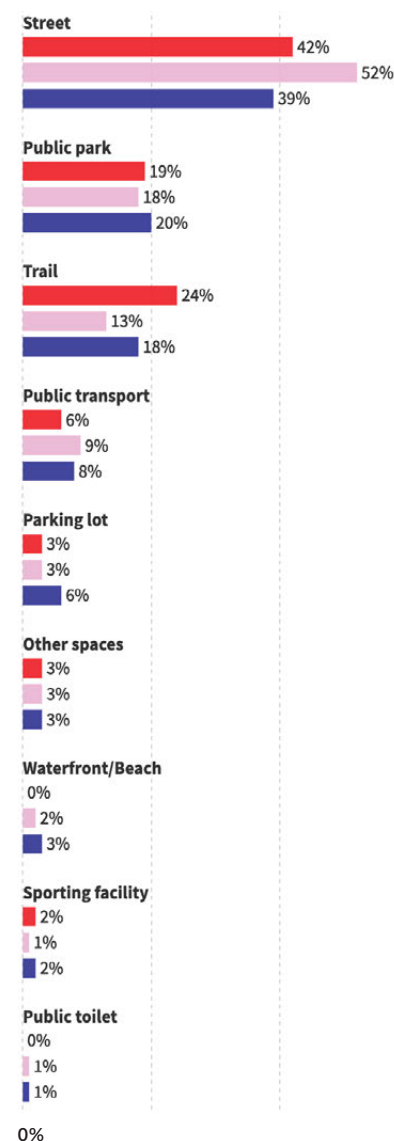


FIGURE 4.7

PROPORTION OF UNSAFE PINS BY ENVIRONMENT TYPOLOGY, MARIBYRNONG, CITY ZONE LGAs AND FULL YOURGROUND SURVEY

- Maribyrnong
- City LGAs
- All submissions

100%

Women and gender-diverse people learn to 'read' the physical and social aspects of a public space for clues around risk. Lighting and poor maintenance are both factors that can trigger high alert levels (see also detail on the Ashley Street Underpass in Section 5). As the following quote notes, nothing has to have happened for a public space to be considered risky – the physical characteristics of a location are enough:

There are seats near to the bridge on victoria uni side. As you walk under the [rail] bridge towards uni from footscray city primary school at night time you don't know what is around the corner and it is dark. A number of us call it rape alley but i dont think there has been an incident there.

40–44, FEMALE, WALKING AFTER DARK, RAIL OVER BRIDGE, CORNER NICHOLSON AND PILGRIM STREET

15% of the street pins were concerned with traffic problems and layout of roads causing risk to injury from vehicle traffic:

This is a terrible intersection for pedestrians. Cars travelling along Ashley Street regularly run the red light even though there is a pedestrian crossing.

70–74, FEMALE, WALKING, ANYTIME, ASHLEY STREET AND SOUTH ROAD, BRAYBROOK

Extremely busy intersection, trucks in every direction and unwelcoming for pedestrians. It's the only way to get to Kingsville from west footscray station and requires you to cross 15 car lanes on foot.

30–34, WALKING, ANYTIME, GEELONG ROAD AND GEELONG STREET, WEST FOOTSCRAY

Other users of footpaths could also cause issues. As with trails (noted below), cyclists and walkers sharing a path can cause problems.

This is a shared path for bikes and pedestrians, and countless times as a walker with a pram I have nearly been run over by speeding bikes, including an electric bike which almost collided with my toddler. You cannot see around the bend and the path is narrow!

35–39, FEMALE, WALKING, ANYTIME, NAPIER STREET JUST WEST OF RAIL OVERBRIDGE, FOOTSCRAY

TRAILS

The trails in Maribyrnong attracted almost one quarter of its unsafe pins. More than half of these were along the Maribyrnong River Trail, discussed in detail in Section 5.

The Sunshine Footscray Trail also attracted a number of pins particularly where it ran through Lions Park parallel to Rupert Street. Like other trails (and parks) in Victoria, a major problem was lack of or poor lighting. In particular, runners and dog walkers tend to want to use trails and parks for their exercise before and after standard hours of work; during the winter months, these hours are dark. This strongly affects the ability of women and gender-diverse people to exercise.

There are no lights on this part of the Sunshine Footscray trail, despite it being popular with cyclists, runners and walkers. In winter it is dark until after 7am and from 5pm. Many women have no choice but to exercise then. I constantly look over my shoulder when I'm running here in the dark and cannot relax. Good lighting would help a lot.

35–39, FEMALE, RUNNING, DAWN/DUSK

This path is great for activities such as running, walking, skating and cycling as it is one of the few paths in West Footscray that doesn't cross several roads or driveways. However at night it has very poor lighting which makes it feel unsafe and dangerous.

40–44, FEMALE, RUNNING, DAYLIGHT

I like to run along this path early morning but do not in winter as it is still dark and feels unsafe due to poor lighting and bushes near the path.

50–54, FEMALE, RUNNING, DAWN/DUSK

The trail is squeezed at one point along its length and this 'pinch' point was the other concern for those YourGround respondents wanting to use it:

After dark this is terrifying for women walking and cycling from station. I've had men stop me to demand I talk to them when no one else is around, I've had a man yell abuse at me also when no one else was around. It's a great spot for predators to ambush a woman. Lighting on the ground near the pinch point and the bushes would prevent hiding spots.

35–39, FEMALE, CYCLING, ANYTIME

The 'pinch' point in the path here makes it hard to see who is ahead. I have also seen men loitering in the bushes. The area feels more isolated and scary.

30–34, FEMALE, RUNNING, ANYTIME

Like other trails across Victoria, shared path behaviour was also a problem for some respondents along these trails.

The pinch point is very dangerous and I have almost collided with people here on my bicycle.

COMMENT

PARKS

The proportion of unsafe pins in parks was higher than the full Victoria survey. The main park of concern was Footscray Park, which is discussed in Section 5. Other park pins echoed the issues highlighted in parks across Victoria, particularly around lighting and the ability to see ahead.

No lighting in the park at night. Unable to safely use the pathways, dog park or oval. During covid times or any in fact the park and oval cannot be safely used by the community.

45–49, FEMALE, WALKING, DAYLIGHT, YARRAVILLE GARDENS

I used to walk home through this park each night with my knife in my hand. It's terribly lit, and once a man followed me into the park and started to run up to me so I sprinted away.

25–29, NON BINARY / NON CONFORMING, WALKING, AFTER DARK, BEATONS RESERVE, YARRAVILLE

For nearly one third of those who placed pins in parks, it was the lack of people in the park that was unnerving because it meant a lack of passive surveillance:

The walk between the Pipemakers Park car park and the park itself is a bit dodgy on weekdays and dusk/dawn periods. There aren't many people around, and there's little visibility. I've been harassed by multiple men here - a few times, men have just emerged from the bushes and followed me, trying to talk to me. It can be really scary if you're alone.

35–39, FEMALE, DOG WALKING, ANYTIME, PIPEMAKERS PARK

This is a great under-utilised spot! When I was here mid-morning, there wasn't a soul around and while that made it peaceful, I thought it was a bit unsafe for a female because it's very far from buildings and there are hidden parts down by the water. It would be nice to have a coffee cart or something here on weekends, it's a perfect backdrop!

40–44, WALKING, DAYLIGHT, STONEY CREEK RESERVE, YARRAVILLE

Isolated spaces can become less so with more people around and this last comment suggests an attraction of a coffee cart to increase usage. However, that usage is often qualified by YourGround participants. The presence of dog walkers and families made a place feel safe for respondents, but the presence of those under the influence or seen to be behaving inappropriately had the opposite effect:

I think council have tried to make an effort to turn this area into a community area, but 9 times out of ten it's occupied by drug users and drunks. Have had several threatening encounters here.

30–34, FEMALE, WALKING, ANYTIME, CHAMBERS STREET PARK, FOOTSCRAY

Activity

Walking was the most dominant type of activity recorded by City of Maribyrnong respondents, Figure 4.8 and Figure 4.3. This was a higher proportion than for the whole YourGround Victoria map, but not as high relative to the other city zone LGAs. Running as an activity in Maribyrnong was also a higher proportion than the other LGAs and the whole map.

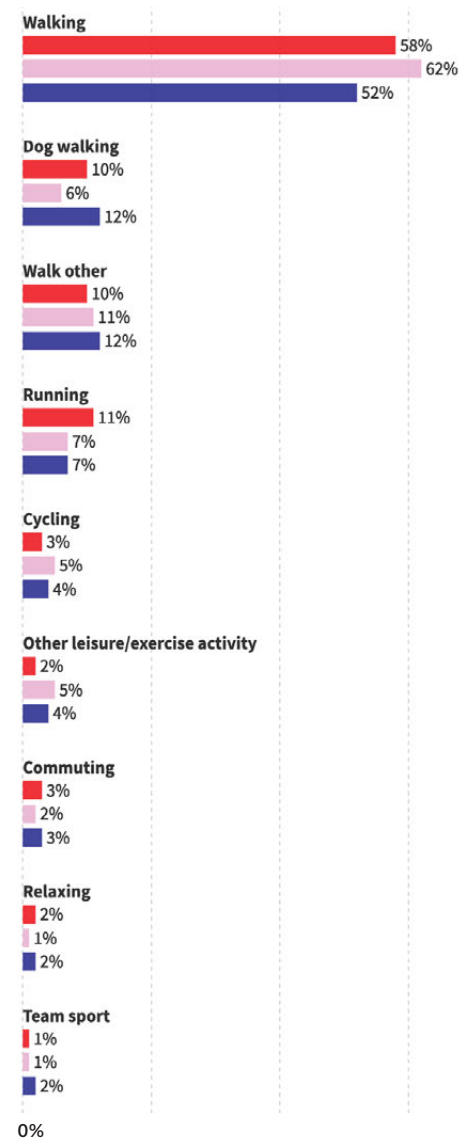


FIGURE 4.8
PROPORTION
OF UNSAFE PINS
BY ACTIVITY, BY
MARIBYRNONG, CITY
ZONE LGAs AND
FULL YOURGROUND
SURVEY

- Maribyrnong
- City LGAs
- All submissions

100%

Reasons for lack of safety

Participants were offered a choice of standard reasons why a location felt unsafe plus the option to add further text which was then coded by the YourGround team. These reasons are summarised in Figure 4.9 which also shows the answers for the city zone LGAs and for all of YourGround Victoria.

Across Victoria, the top three concerns for YourGround respondents were poor lighting, the behaviour of other people and hard to see ahead, in that order. City zones shifted that order, with behaviour the main concern, followed by poor lighting, with no people around in third place. However, Maribyrnong respondents placed a greater emphasis on lighting – more in line with respondents across the full survey listing it the top concern. Poor lighting was also a major reason for feeling unsafe in the parks, as discussed above.

Concern about the behaviour of other people drops significantly for Maribyrnong, particularly relative to the other city zone LGAs, but also compared to the full survey.

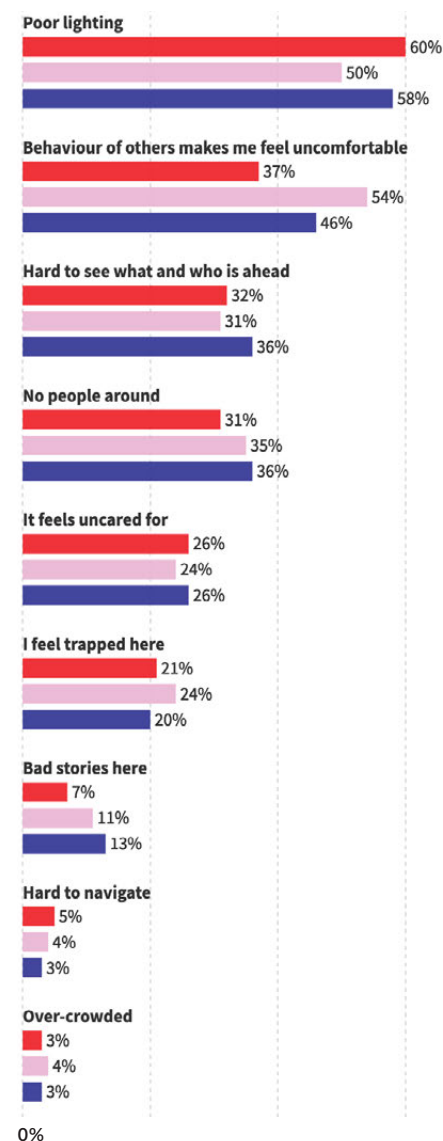
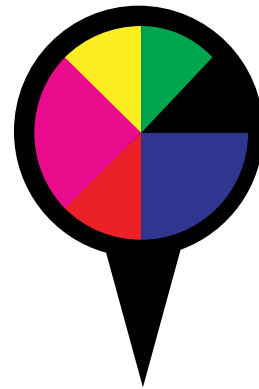


FIGURE 4.9
STANDARD ANSWER
REASONS FOR
UNSAFE PIN,
MARIBYRNONG, CITY
ZONE LGAS AND
FULL YOURGROUND
VICTORIA SURVEY

● Maribyrnong
● City LGAs
● All submissions

100%



Key Activity Spots

5.0 Key Activity Spots

The intensity of submission activity is visible in Figure 5.1.

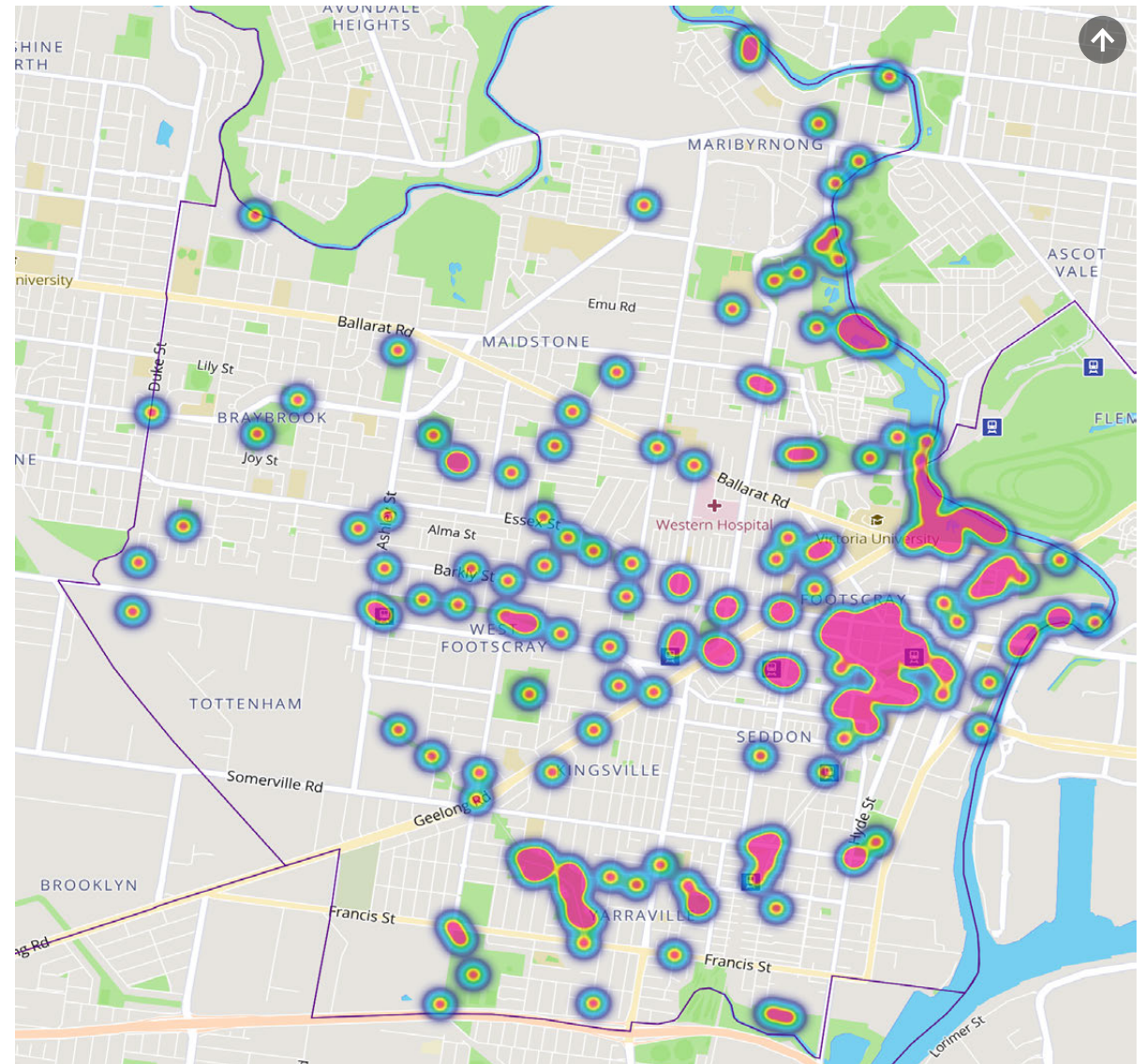
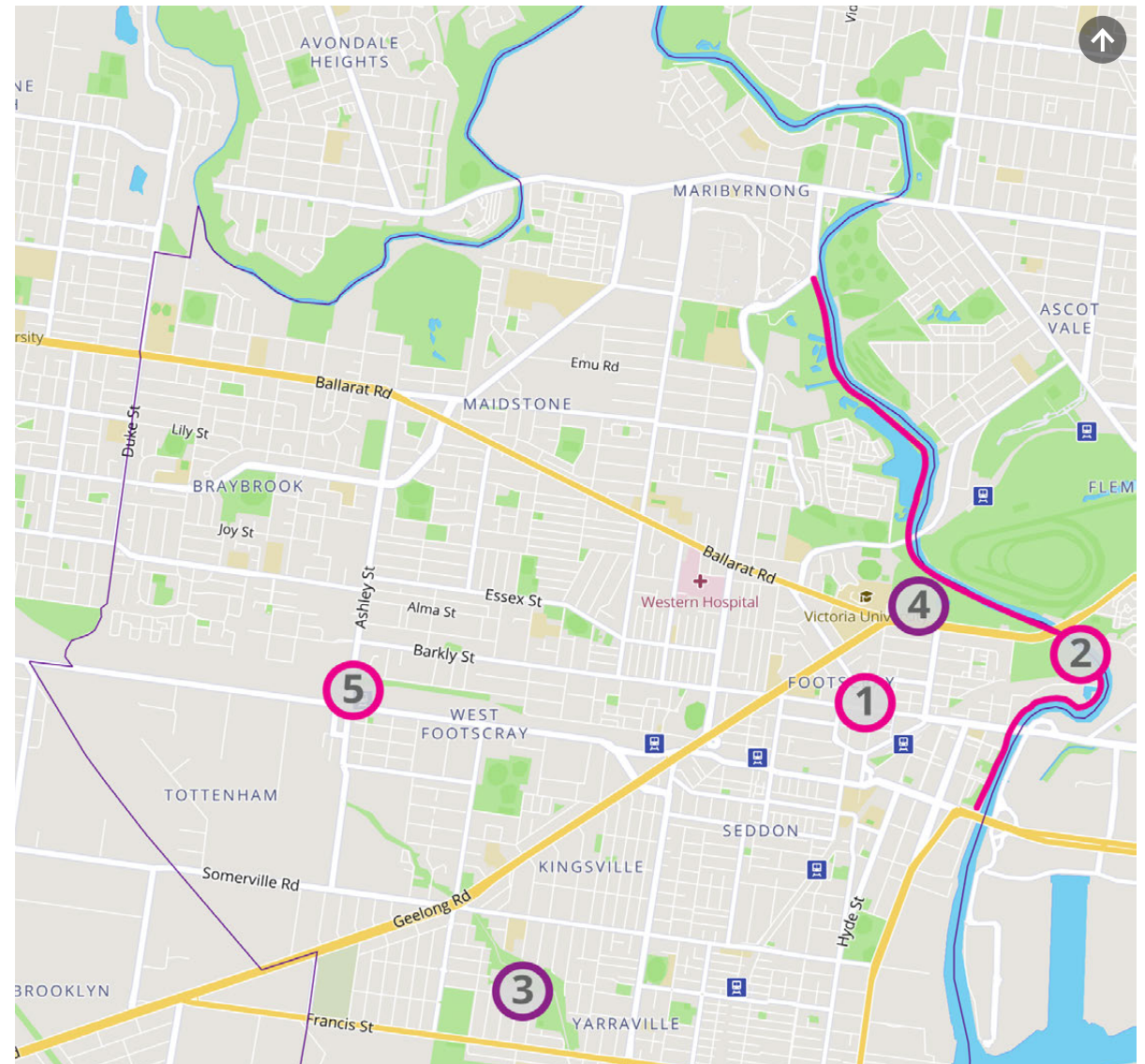


FIGURE 5.1
HEATMAP OF ACTIVITY FOR ALL CITY
OF MARIBYRNONG SUBMISSIONS

FIGURE 5.2**MOST ACTIVE AREAS IN
MARIBYRNONG**

- Identified as unsafe
- Identified as both safe and unsafe

- 1 Nicholson and Paisley Streets, Footscray
- 2 Maribyrnong River Trail
- 3 Cruickshank Park, Yarraville
- 4 Footscray Park
- 5 Ashley Street Underpass



The key activity spots are determined by the level of ‘activity’ (number of comments plus number of ‘supports’) a pin receives. Pins in close proximity or same location are combined. Figure 5.2 locates the most active YourGround spots in the City of Maribyrnong.

1 – Nicholson and Paisley Streets

These two streets are at the centre of the Footscray CBD, part of Nicholson is a pedestrian mall. While poor lighting was overall the main safety concern for those who placed pins across Maribyrnong, it barely featured as a concern for this area. The overwhelming issue was the behaviour of other people causing concern, particularly visible drug use and dealing.

I avoid this place when it is dark or people start to congregate here. Despite council investment, it feels barren and attracts people who are drunk.

40–44, FEMALE, DOG WALKING, DAWN/DUSK

Often filled with people intoxicated with illicit substances and drug dealing activity.

COMMENT

It's impossible to feel safe here after dark, people with erratic behaviours are passing. I try to keep near people who 'look safe' in the hopes the erratic people will leave me alone.

35–39, NON BINARY / NON CONFORMING, LGBTIQ+, WAITING FOR BUS, AFTER DARK

Drug and alcohol use was cited by a number of the respondents placing pins in this area. Those under the influence can be unpredictable and prone to verbal abuse and harassment.

Live in the area, have had multiple men try to approach me even after I've made it clear their advances were unwelcome. Have had people try to follow me into my apartment building.

20–24, FEMALE, WALKING, ANYTIME

There was also a report of theft in “broad daylight” in the mall.



The walk is amazing before sunset. After sunset, with no lighting you can hardly see anything. The other side of the river has much better lighting.

25–29, FEMALE, DOG WALKING, AFTER DARK

2 – Maribyrnong River Trail

Across Victoria, trails attracted a lot of pin, comment and support activity, both safe and unsafe. This is especially so on trails which are continuous for long distances and have sections that feel safer or unsafer than others. The Maribyrnong River Trail attracted both a number of pins and a mix of pin types. Like other waterways in Victoria, the trail links a series of green spaces including Pipemakers, Burndap and Footscray Parks and Newells Paddock. It also links to other walking paths.

Pins were distributed along the path with a couple of clusters, one by Jack's Magazine and another along the stretch by Footscray Park. In general, the issues were similar throughout the length of the trail. Some parts of the trail were considered safe offering a strong connection to nature:

The Maribyrnong River Trail is a lovely place to relax and exercise. The space is open and spacious, with a variety of native plants and a wonderful place to spot a variety of birds.

60–64, FEMALE, WALKING, DAYLIGHT, NEAR JACK'S MAGAZINE

But, like other parks and trails across Victoria, there was a strong caveat of not being safe after dark. Poor lighting and lack of lighting was overwhelmingly the most common reason why respondents felt unsafe on the trail:

As a female runner I feel uncomfortable running early morning or in the evening as the lighting is shocking. Really well looked after trail but missing this key safety feature. I have to change when I run to ensure there is daylight.

30–34, FEMALE, RUNNING, ANYTIME

Agreed. Early morning and after dark rides solo are out for me for the same reason along the entire trail. It means I don't exercise as much during winter. Being unsafe impacts my health. No exaggeration.

COMMENT

I feel safe here during the day, but I would never walk along here alone in the evening. It is secluded and dark, which is a shame because I have to change my behaviour in order to exercise during daylight hours.

25–29, FEMALE, RUNNING, DAYLIGHT

I love running and riding on the river trail. But on dusk there are fewer people around and it is really hard to see. Light posts were installed on some of the trail (a small section) but they don't have any lights in them, they are just posts!

50–54, FEMALE, RUNNING, ANYTIME

As was identified in the *YourGround Victoria Report* and noted earlier, many people like or need to exercise before or after standard hours of work. During the winter months when these times are dark, a lack of or poor lighting prevents this use, particularly for women and gender-diverse people. This was especially noted by runners and dog walkers.

A number of respondents also noted that they would not use the trail on their own. While this was especially so after dark, for some parts of the trail were too isolated and secluded.

After dark, it is not safe to be a solo woman on the path. There's a couple of parts (mostly not practically accessible for me) along the path that I would feel safe, but it is a couple hundred metres here and there. There are massive swathes where I don't feel safe.

35-39, FEMALE, CYCLING, ANYTIME

The Maribyrnong River Trail is well maintained and a beautiful walking/cycling track, however I would not walk here alone. I like that there is seating along the trail. I feel unsafe when men are loitering amongst the trees.

50-54, FEMALE, PERSON WITH A DISABILITY, WALKING, DAYLIGHT

Like other trails across Victoria, shared path behaviour was also a problem for some respondents on the Maribyrnong River Trail:

This is a shared walking and cycle path, but the cyclists ride very fast along this trail. My friend was run over by a cyclist, and both herself and the cyclist were injured. I think pedestrians and cyclists should be separated for everyone's safety and enjoyment - it is frustrating for the cyclists to overtake and the pedestrians can't walk easily.

30-34, FEMALE, WALKING, ANYTIME

A lot of cyclists (usually male) don't slow down for pedestrians in this area. The path is not so wide and there are often a lot of people walking here.

40-44, FEMALE, LGBTIQ+, WALKING, ANYTIME

Safety is not only about fear of attack, it is also about feeling welcome. Aggressive users of a space can contribute to a sense that women and gender-diverse people are not welcome or able to use the area restricting their ability to exercise.

3 – Cruickshank Park, Yarraville

This park borders both sides of Stoney Creek but attracted different responses from respondents on each side: generally the northeast side was considered safe, but the southwest side not. The main element that divided them was the lighting levels. To the east of the bridge that crosses Stoney Creek within the park, recent lighting has made a difference:

The new lighting has really helped this to feel safer and dawn/dusk.

40–44, FEMALE, WALKING, DAWN/DUSK

As was noted for the Maribyrnong River trail and parks and trails across Victoria, there were caveats to any safety. In particular, using the area at night or solo:

Agree new lighting is great at dusk/dawn but any time outside of these times when it's dark it's an awful unsafe place to be. I walk my dog at 6pm most nights and it's pitch black and not comfortable at all. More lighting is needed so we can all walk and feel safe.

COMMENT

Big park. Behind houses. Lots of vegetation. Would never walk alone after dark. During day busy and full of dog walkers and great place.

45–49, FEMALE, DOG WALKING, ANYTIME

I walk my dog every morning and night around the park. It's so great in daylight but anytime after 5.30pm it's so dark and there is no adequate lighting. I have spoken to so many other women who feel the same. Lighting in the park will help so so much!

35–39, FEMALE, DOG WALKING AND RUNNING, ANYTIME

In contrast to some areas feeling isolated, a number of comments on pins highlighted an issue that came with the park being busy at certain times:

As an older person I don't feel safe on the footpaths in the park anymore. Way too many bikes, scooters, electric scooters going way too fast and literally running people off the path. I have been injured on several occasions. 12 weeks ago I was run off the path and badly sprained my ankle [...] It's now making me really nervous every time I go, especially on weekends when the park is busy.

COMMENT

This [west side of the bridge] is a really dangerous corner - bikes riders come over the bridge really fast and forget that pedestrians may be walking on the footpath. I feel very unsafe for my dogs on this corner and have to put them on leash otherwise they get run over by bikes, skateboards and scooters going really fast on the bridge.

COMMENT

At the end of Drew Street near the bridge there were a number of comments about construction trucks parking on the pathway making it unsafe to navigate. This may only be a short term issue for the period of construction, rather than a long-term problem.



4 – Footscray Park

Footscray Park attracted both safe and unsafe pins along with comments on the pins and supports.

The duck pond and surrounds at Footscray Park feel safe during the day. There are always people around as it is next to a playground and a popular destination. Generally enough people here to feel like it's not too isolated.

45–49, FEMALE, RELAXING, DAYLIGHT, FOOTSCRAY PARK

We love walking our dog in this space because it's off leash and open and large which is so important. It's very beautiful on the river. Lots of people walk dogs here.

35–39, FEMALE, DOG WALKING, ANYTIME

As with other parks and trails across Maribyrnong and all Victoria, the main safety matter in the park was poor lighting which impacted exercise options:

Early morning when there isn't a lot of light it is difficult to see who might be around the next corner or bush whilst going for a run.

45–49, FEMALE, RUNNING, DAWN/DUSK

Following close behind in terms of concerns was the behaviour of other people. Respondents cited sexual harassment and drug dealing:

I was on my way to meet friends for a picnic in the middle of the day. Walking down the hill I saw a man behind me, following me. When I turned around again, he was masturbating in broad daylight.

30–34, FEMALE, PICNICKING, DAYLIGHT

I've been approached here a few times while taking a break from jogging. Drug deals happening late afternoon at the old playground up the track bring in unwanted behaviour. I feel unsafe here [...] when men approach and try to touch me after bagging a gram when I'm stationary for 5 minutes.

30–34, FEMALE, WALKING, DAYLIGHT

Another respondent highlighted a lack of (or poor) facilities restricting the ability to cater for and attract people with disabilities:

No lighting, no benches for people to rest (especially an issue for people with disability/elderly), toilet block shut a lot of the time and just stairs leading to them so aren't accessible for people with disabilities.

25–29, FEMALE, PERSON WITH A DISABILITY, WALKING, ANYTIME

5 – Ashley Street Underpass

This underpass by Tottenham Station runs beside a busy road. Like other underpasses and tunnels across Victoria, it was considered unsafe by YourGround participants:

This pedestrian underpass is totally unfit for purpose and is the only place to cross the train line on foot for kilometres. It is too narrow, dark, and often wet and muddy. You cannot ride a bike through or easily pass someone else while pushing a pram.

30–34, FEMALE, WALKING, ANYTIME

I'd agree. The lighting is poor and I've felt uncomfortable. Daytime is just as bad. [...] Also, it feels very unsafe when cars and trucks drive through over the speed limit.

COMMENT

I'm too scared to use this station. There's not much parking and I don't feel confident walking to my car, or riding my bike to and from the station.

35–39, FEMALE, WALKING, AFTER DARK

I literally refuse to use this station, even though it's very conveniently located for me. It feels SO unsafe. The entry tunnel has blind spots and bad lighting, and the walk to car parks is not well lit or safe-feeling. It just makes me feel trapped. My husband says that even with all his male privilege, he wouldn't use it either.

COMMENT

As noted earlier, women and gender-diverse people 'read' the physical and social aspects of a public space for clues around risk. Underpasses and tunnels are too often dark, poorly maintained and entrapping – all of which are factors that can trigger high alert levels. The underpass to Victoria Street from Middle Footscray Station also received some activity and for similar reasons: poor lighting, entrapping and poorly maintained.

This report for the City of Maribyrnong is a supplement to the *YourGround Victoria Report* and, therefore, should be read in conjunction with it.

Overall

The experiences of women and gender-diverse people captured in YourGround Maribyrnong illuminate key aspects of the environment that impact their perceived vulnerability. Importantly, the project revealed how these also varied depending on the activity being undertaken.

YourGround shows that places are seldom perceived as wholly safe or unsafe for all people and at all times. This reveals the complex experiences of the physical environments through which women and gender-diverse people pass. It also highlights their strategies to mitigate the risks of being in and occupying public spaces. With this information, local governments and communities can forge strategies – based on evidence – that will improve perceptions of safety so that women and gender-diverse people can freely use their local environments.





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Appendices

Appendix A - Data Tables

Environment	Safe pins	Unsafe pins	Total	% of all safe	% of all unsafe	% all pins
Street	1	75	76	3%	42%	37%
Public park	21	33	54	70%	19%	26%
Trail	3	43	46	10%	24%	22%
Public transport	1	11	12	3%	6%	6%
Parking lot		6	6	0%	3%	3%
Sporting facility	1	4	5	3%	2%	2%
Other spaces	3	5	8	10%	3%	4%
Total	30	177	207			

TABLE A.1
NUMBERS OF PINS BY
SAFE AND UNSAFE,
BY ENVIRONMENT,
MARIBYRNONG (SEE
FIGURE 4.2)

Activity	Safe pins	Unsafe pins	Total	% of all safe	% of all unsafe	% all pins
Walking	7	103	110	23%	58%	53%
Dog walking	10	18	28	33%	10%	14%
Walk other	1	18	19	3%	10%	9%
Running	2	19	21	7%	11%	10%
Cycling		5	5	0%	3%	2%
Other leisure activity	4	4	8	13%	2%	4%
Commuting	1	6	7	3%	3%	3%
Relaxing	4	3	7	13%	2%	3%
Team sport activity	1	1	2	3%	1%	1%
Total	30	177	207			

TABLE A.2
NUMBERS OF
PINS BY SAFE AND
UNSAFE, BY ACTIVITY,
MARIBYRNONG (SEE
FIGURE 4.3)

*** CITY LGAs INCLUDE:**

- Maribyrnong
- Melbourne
- Port Phillip
- Stonnington
- Yarra

Environment	Maribyrnong	City LGAs*	All
Street	42%	52%	39%
Public park	19%	18%	20%
Trail	24%	13%	18%
Public transport	6%	9%	8%
Parking lot	3%	3%	6%
Sporting facility	2%	1%	2%
Waterfront/Beach	0%	2%	3%
Public toilet	0%	1%	1%
Other spaces	3%	3%	3%

TABLE A.3
PROPORTION OF
UNSAFE PINS BY
ENVIRONMENT
TYPOLOGY,
MARIBYRNONG, CITY
ZONE LGAs AND
FULL YOURGROUND
SURVEY (SEE FIGURE
4.7)

Activity	Maribyrnong	City LGAs	All
Walking	58%	62%	52%
Dog walking	10%	6%	12%
Walk other	10%	11%	12%
Running	11%	7%	7%
Cycling	3%	5%	4%
Other leisure activity	2%	5%	4%
Commuting	3%	2%	3%
Relaxing	2%	1%	2%
Team sport	1%	1%	2%

TABLE A.4
PROPORTION
OF UNSAFE PINS
BY ACTIVITY, BY
MARIBYRNONG, CITY
ZONE LGAs AND
FULL YOURGROUND
SURVEY (SEE FIGURE
4.8)

Standard reasons for lack of safety	Maribyrnong	City LGAs	All
Poor lighting	60%	50%	58%
Behaviour of people here makes me feel uncomfortable	37%	54%	46%
Hard to see what and who is ahead	32%	31%	36%
No people around	31%	35%	36%
It feels uncared for	26%	24%	26%
I feel trapped here	21%	24%	20%
Bad stories here	7%	11%	13%
Hard to navigate	5%	4%	3%
Over-crowded	3%	4%	3%

TABLE A.5
PROPORTION OF
REASONS FOR LACK
OF SAFETY BY YARRA,
CITY ZONE LGAs AND
FULL YOURGROUND
SURVEY (SEE FIGURE
4.8)

yourground

YOUR SPORT • YOUR LEISURE • YOUR PLAY • YOUR PLACE • YOUR MARIBYRNONG