

PERSONAL SECURITY

ON LONDON'S TRANSPORT NETWORK

Recommendations
for safer travel

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1 INTRODUCTION

Who we are

We are the independent watchdog set up by Parliament to provide a voice for London's travelling public.

We are funded by and accountable to the London Assembly. Our aim is to press for a better travel experience for all those living, working or visiting London, and its surrounding region. Our sister organisation, Transport Focus, covers the rest of the UK.

We work with Transport for London (TfL), train companies and others who provide transport services in the capital.

Our expectations for a safer transport network

This summary report lays out the key findings of the research and engagement London TravelWatch did in 2021 to explore the issue of personal security, and presents recommendations for the transport industry, policing authorities and wider society to improve the safety of people travelling in London.

The context against which this report is published is bleak. In 2021, a series of high-profile murders of young women brought into sharp focus the endemic that is male violence.

It made us all sit up and pay attention to the fact that these women were not safe travelling in London; for Sarah Everard, walking home in the early evening; for Sabina Nessa, leaving her home to go out for the evening.

As the pandemic has unfolded, incidents of aggression and conflict between passengers have risen. Again, we have collectively taken a closer look at the underlying issues. A rise in hate crime is often triggered by wider narratives and news cycles. Most recently, a rise in hate crime against people of south-east Asian descent has corresponded with the coronavirus crisis.

These issues are systemic. Whether it is sexual harassment or hate crime, terrorism or anti-social behaviour, London's travelling environment is a key arena in which unsafe situations play out. Providing a safe travelling environment, both on the street and public transport, is a key part of tackling the wider systemic issues.

Personal security means a multitude of things. It means safety from terrorism and those who wish to cause harm to others. It relates to operational safety, ensuring people can travel on the street and public transport network without injury or hazard. But it also means safety of the person, from the actions of other

people. This report focuses primarily on the issues around personal security in relation to the experiences of individuals travelling in London.

As part of our investigation last year, we engaged with the transport industry and policing authorities to get a sense of what is already happening to improve personal security, and where there may be gaps. We also spoke to transport users and organisations representing key user demographics, speaking to over 1,000 transport users as part of our research. We'd like to thank everyone who fed into this research and all the organisations who have shared their expertise, insight and support in developing these recommendations.

There is already a lot of work being done by the transport industry and by policing authorities, including the British Transport Police (BTP). We got a sense of real commitment from those we met in the industry to tackle key issues around personal security. Our recommendations focus on where we feel more can be done to create a safer travelling environment and ensure the legislative framework is sufficient to tackle hate crime and sexual harassment. We also focus on the messaging and tools needed to enable all users and transport staff to know how they can help others stay safe, be good active bystanders and make full use of technology. Lastly, we address the need for authorities to build trust in people where it has been undermined.

We believe these recommendations are needed to improve the safety of people travelling in London, and to ensure the transport industry and policing authorities do all they can to keep people safe. Our commitment, as London's transport user watchdog, is to continue to press transport and policing authorities to do more to improve safety. We hope this report will help focus the minds of those in the transport industry to make sure they too are meeting their responsibilities to keep people safe.

Executive Summary

Personal security is a key issue for people using London's transport network, whether they are walking on the street or travelling on the train, Tube or bus. As with other areas of society, people experience the transport network differently. Some people are far more likely to be victims of certain types of crimes and unwanted behaviour, including sexual harassment and hate crime.

Key recommendations include

- Create a safer travelling environment through CCTV and staff presence
- Make Public Sexual Harassment (PSH) a crime
- Create a playbook for how to be an Active Bystander
- Better use technology to make the reporting process easier
- Authorities need to work harder to build trust in the reporting process

Help people be good bystanders

- 1 Agree on a playbook of good active bystander behaviour
- 2 Communicate this playbook to the public
- 3 Tell people how to report an incident
- 4 Communicate the value of reporting

Significantly, this research found that:

- **Young people, women, disabled and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic transport users were at greater risk of victimisation from other people**
- **38% of disabled transport users have experienced a hate crime or harassment over the last 3 years**
- **Nearly one in four women had experienced unwanted sexual behaviour in the last 3 years**
- **Over 70% of people who felt unsafe have stopped travelling at certain times of the day**
- **Over half of people felt it was neither easy nor straightforward to report a crime on public transport**

The research also revealed clear clues as to what should be focused on next. For example, 63% of passengers would feel more confident in responding to a crime if they had more information about how to help: a clear call to action for the transport industry and policing authorities to give better guidance to the public about how to be an active bystander.

This report outlines 28 key recommendations which should be adopted by decision-makers, transport providers and policing authorities, including the British Transport Police and Metropolitan Police.

Make use of technology

- 5 BTP to roll out their reporting app and share learnings with the transport industry
- 6 TfL to explore options for providing app-based reporting for their transport network
- 7 Establish a cross-industry taskforce to monitor and progress the development of app-based reporting
- 8 TfL to provide WiFi on all London Underground services by their deadline of 2024
- 9 BTP and TfL to work towards standardising CCTV retention times, and explore further avenues for better utilising CCTV systems and body-worn cameras
- 10 Encourage people to report as soon as possible to ensure CCTV can be accessed as evidence
- 11 Encourage people, where it is safe to do so, to share video and photographic evidence of incidents they have witnessed with the relevant authorities

Enable safer night-time travel

- 12 TfL should fully restore Night Tube services as soon as possible
- 13 Weekend night bus services should be protected from cuts
- 14 Ensure the frequency of bus services do not drop below one every 12 minutes
- 15 Protect and increase the number of late-night rail services in the evening
- 16 The Mayor, TfL and policing authorities to work together to promote the Women's Night Safety Charter as part of transport staff training
- 17 Clearly promote how help and assistance is accessed if there is no staff member around when travelling at night
- 18 Ensure bus drivers do not turn away women and vulnerable individuals from bus services

Address societal problems: hate crime and sexual harassment

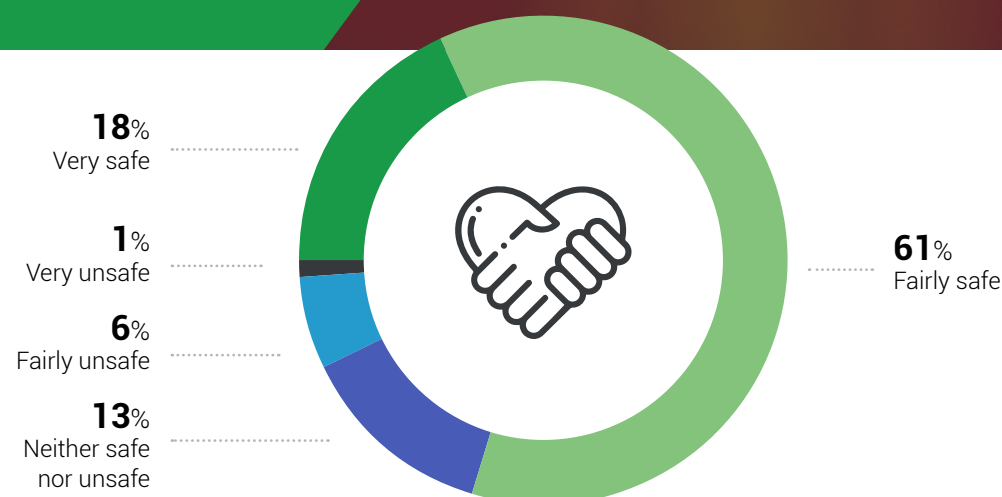
- 19 Make Public Sexual Harassment a criminal offence
- 20 Further investigate whether to make misogyny a hate crime
- 21 Transport providers and policing authorities should improve the way they collect and use data to develop more targeted and effective interventions to tackle sexual harassment and hate crime
- 22 Department for Transport to guarantee long term funding of the Rail to Refuge scheme
- 23 Commit to further education and awareness campaigns to tackle hate crime and sexual harassment and promote active bystander behaviour
- 24 Promote and support awareness of Hate Crime Awareness Week

Build trust and faith in authorities

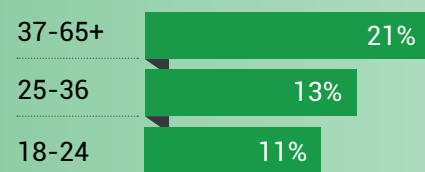
- 25 Build trust and empower people by engaging with communities and representative organisations
- 26 Policing authorities need to better support and educate transport users for all crimes, not just terrorism
- 27 Review and refresh staff and police training to better support transport users
- 28 Ensure information, support and ticketing remains accessible and inclusive for all

What is the current picture?

“How safe do you feel travelling in London?”



Younger transport users were less likely to feel ‘very safe’ than older users



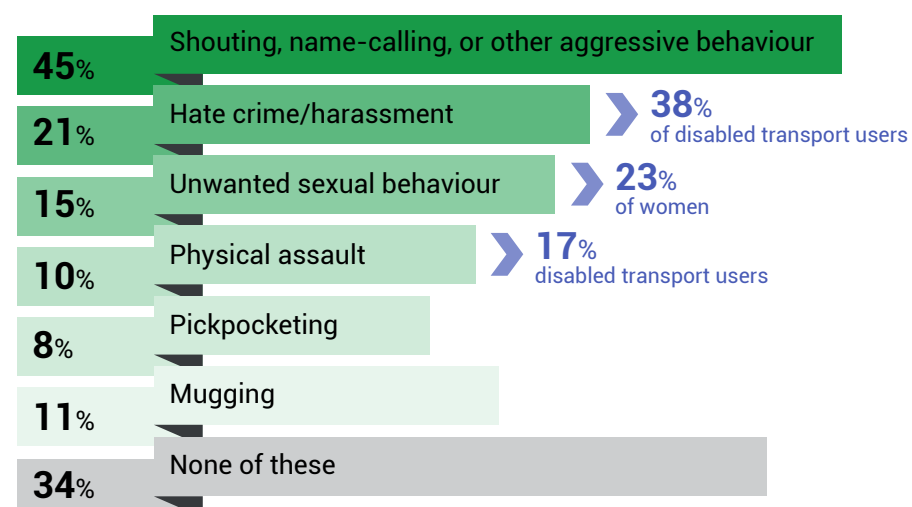
Women were more likely to feel very or fairly unsafe than other users



Disabled users were more likely to feel very or fairly unsafe than other users



Victimisation over the past three years



Young people, women, BAME and disabled transport users were all at greater risk of victimisation

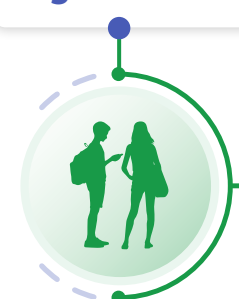
Safety looks and means something different depending on who you are and your past experiences. As with other areas of society, people experience the transport network differently. Some people are far more likely to be victims of certain types of crimes and unwanted behaviour. For many women, people of colour, disabled people and the LGBTQ+ community, for example, feeling unsafe comes with the additional fear of being targeted for who you are. As part of this research, we wanted to draw attention to these diverse experiences.

Age, class and income all affect your ability to travel safely

Many people in this age group were young workers who often had very little choice about what modes of transport they take. They have substantial experience of feeling unsafe on public transport and on the street, but this has little to no impact on their transport behaviours, which are fixed and inflexible unless they are able to work from home or afford alternative ‘safer’ options such as private hire and taxis or to drive.

In our research, this age group saw growing confidence, and a developed set of ‘precautions’ they feel able to implement to keep themselves safe. They were more likely to see themselves intervening in a crime that they witness, but still aware that they are potentially unsafe. People in this age range are also more likely to be night workers or people travelling with children and family members.

Aged 18-19



Aged 20-30



Aged 31-45



Aged 45+



This age group is made up of many less experienced transport users who reached adulthood during the pandemic and have not fully acclimatised to public transport in the context of ongoing restrictions. Women in this age category have experienced cat-calling and other unwanted sexual behaviours, even as children. Being able to travel in groups is highly reassuring, and the prospect of having to travel more independently as they tackle work and university is daunting. The young people we spoke to as part of this project and others in the last year have told us that personal security is a big concern for them.

There were more confident travellers in this age group, although this varies greatly depending on income and age. For older people over 60, travelling can feel much more unsafe. Those with more financial freedom were usually the most able to alter their behaviour around public transport. If they feel unsafe, or even uncomfortable, they have the flexibility to alter their schedules or change mode altogether. This is not the case for many older people who cannot afford alternative transport and rely on public transport.

London's varied travelling environment poses a mix of challenges

Differences between modes

We asked people how safe they felt on different modes of transport, and the results were mixed. Across all modes one of the top concerns was anti-social behaviour, the lower-impact actions and behaviours of other people that can leave people feeling uncomfortable and fearful of situations escalating into something more serious.

On first impressions, anti-social behaviour can seem as if it is harmless. However, some in our working group argued that rowdy behaviour can be highly distressing. Those with sensory impairments, for example, might not know how to interact with drunk passengers, or what threat they may pose. More broadly, rowdy behaviour can escalate unpredictably.

On public transport

While a good proportion of people felt fairly safe on most modes, the Tube, the bus and cycling ranked highest for people feeling fairly unsafe or very unsafe. For users of the Tube and train, a number of people cited the feeling of being trapped and unable to leave a developing situation easily. In contrast, on the bus people felt they could get away from a situation, but it was easier for perpetrators to get on and cause harm.

'I feel safer on a bus because I feel there is a way out, people etc. I have had instances that have happened on the Tube which makes me feel very on edge especially during busy times so I try to stay on buses if there is an option or choice.'

Young woman in focus group

On the street

Within each mode too, the issues of concern varied. On the street, cyclists understandably were highly concerned with collisions or crashes. The next highest concern was unpleasant, rude and aggressive behaviour from other road users such as drivers or pedestrians. This demonstrates the vulnerable position cyclists are in when using the road network, needing to balance their physical safety with safety from the aggression and abuse of other people.

Another significant risk for cyclists is unwanted sexual behaviour, something women are highly exposed to. When we asked cyclists and pedestrians what personal security issues concerned them, we found that it was mostly women for whom this was a concern. For both cyclists and pedestrians, unwanted sexual behaviour was the top ranked concern. This backs up what we know about street harassment more generally, which is endemic.

“

'If I'm honest I don't think there's a particular mode of transport I feel safe on, I've had horrible experiences on almost all of them. I was going to say the Tube, but to be honest I've had a horrible experience on the Tube where I was followed almost the whole way home or where I've had to stay on the Tube until the end of the line in the hope that person will get off before me.'

Young woman in focus group

For **cyclists**, overall concern for **unwanted sexual behaviour** was only **16%**

but for that **16%** of people who were worried about unwanted sexual behaviour, it was the most important issue for them.

For **people walking**, overall concern for **unwanted sexual behaviour** was **28%**

But again for those who said was a concern, it was the most important concern

Personal security concerns shape travel behaviour

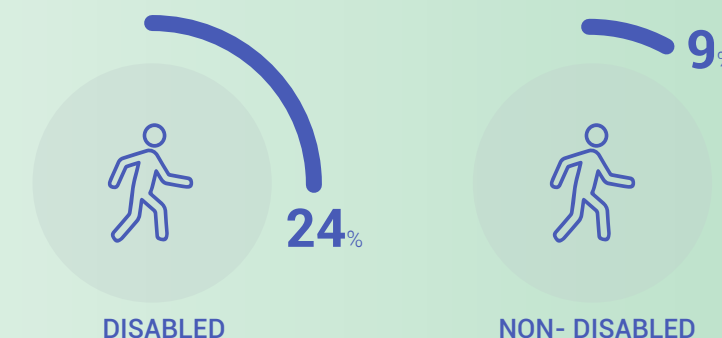
The impact that victimisation and subsequent fear of repeat incidents has on travel behaviour is significant and alarming. For those who told us they felt unsafe when travelling in London, over 70% stopped travelling at certain times of the day, and many chose to take personal precautions like carrying alarms or switching their journeys to other modes of transport.

For disabled people, the decision to stop travelling on certain modes or even at all is far too common. Negative experiences, previous victimisation and repeated failure to be able to travel due to an inaccessible transport network results in the exclusion and marginalisation of disabled transport users.

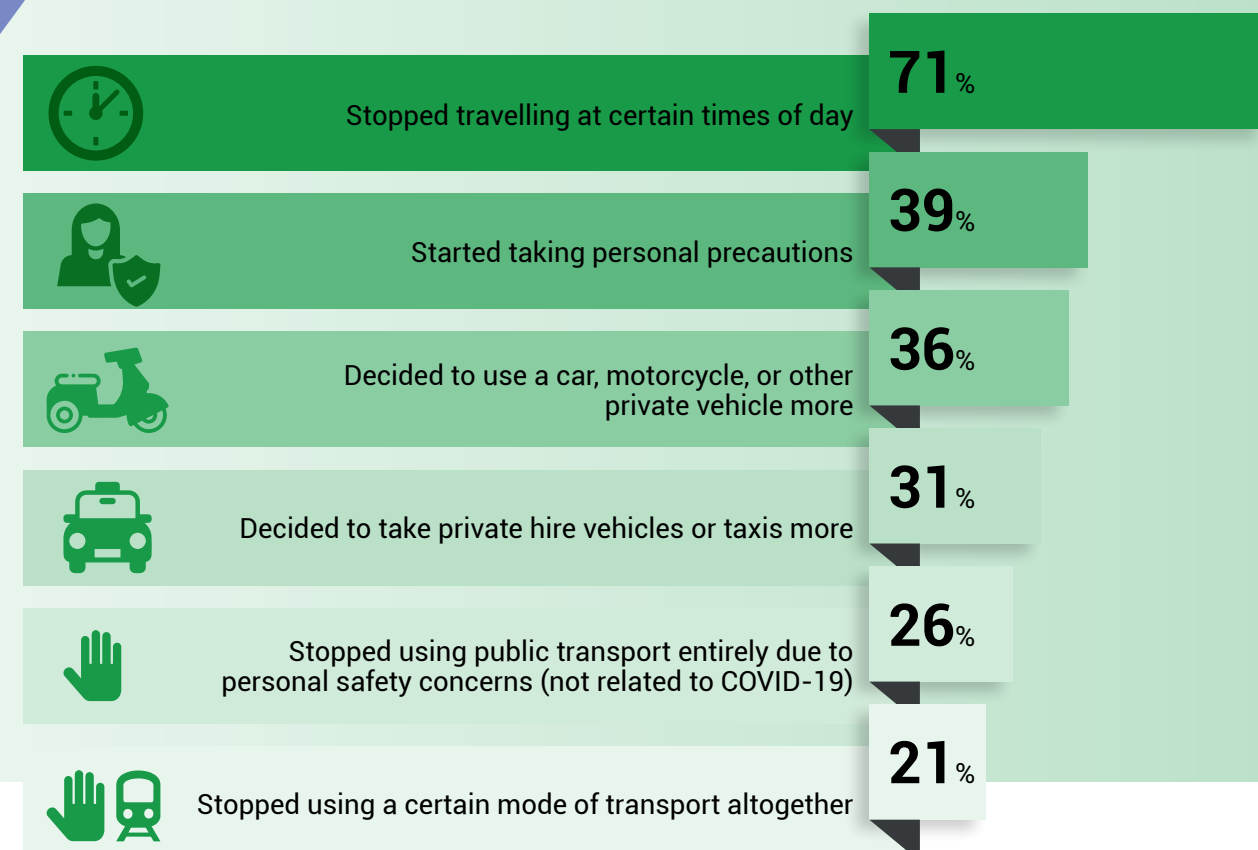
Safety is also a key consideration for most women when it comes to travel behaviour. In a focus group held jointly with the Young Women's Trust, we found that all the young women either 'sometimes', 'often' or 'always' felt unsafe and considered safety when planning their journeys. Concerningly, [research from the Young Women's Trust](#) found that 16% of young women had been unable to apply for a job, turned down a job or left a job because the journey to and from work wasn't safe. This was even more common for young women with a disability or long-term health condition (24%).

It is unacceptable that so many transport users feel unable to continue using public transport, and transport and policing authorities need to do more to create a safe network and rebuild trust amongst all transport users.

Disabled people are more likely to have stopped using a mode of transport altogether due to safety concerns



Among those feeling very or fairly unsafe, what have they done in the past five years?



2 PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

The following recommendations are informed by the work London TravelWatch has done in the last six months to investigate the issues around the personal safety and security of London's transport users.

We believe the following actions are needed to improve the safety of people travelling in London, and to ensure the transport industry and policing authorities are doing all they can to keep people safe.

We have grouped the recommendations into priority areas, but many of the actions required will have a positive impact on all of the priorities, as they all work hand in hand to create a safer travelling environment.

PRIORITY 1

Help people be good bystanders

PRIORITY 2

Make use of technology

PRIORITY 3

Enable safer night-time travel

PRIORITY 4

**Address societal problems:
hate crime and sexual harassment**

PRIORITY 5

Build trust and faith in authorities

PRIORITY 1

Help people be good bystanders

One of the strongest themes of our research was the need for better tools, messaging and guidance to help people be active bystanders. Active bystanders are those who witness or are nearby when a crime or incident happens, and choose to help the victim in the moment, or after. They can also help by reporting or providing information to help identify perpetrators of crimes. We think more can be done to help transport users, and transport staff, be better equipped to help others.

Our research showed that 63% of passengers would feel more confident in responding to a crime if they had more information about how to help. There is a willingness among people to help, but they often don't know how and therefore don't act. Potential bystanders lack a clear playbook for when, if and how to intervene. This lack of clarity can make it difficult for many passengers to intervene: They simply don't know where to start. Nearly all of the people we spoke to trust themselves to know when the behaviour they see is unacceptable, but they don't know what to do next. Understandably, most people worry that the wrong kind of intervention could aggravate the situation or direct the perpetrator's attention to themselves.

The fear of putting yourself at risk is the most significant barrier towards taking action in the event of witnessing a crime, and there is a lack of knowledge around reporting and its value. There are a host of interventions that have been identified by organisations, including TfL and other transport providers, but they aren't promoted or shared. People don't know what is useful: intervening, or will that put me at risk? Reporting after the incident, when it's safe to do so? Mobilising transport users and transport staff to be active bystanders, helping and looking out for others, is a key part of creating a safer transport network.

63% of people would feel more confident in responding to a crime if they had more information about how to help

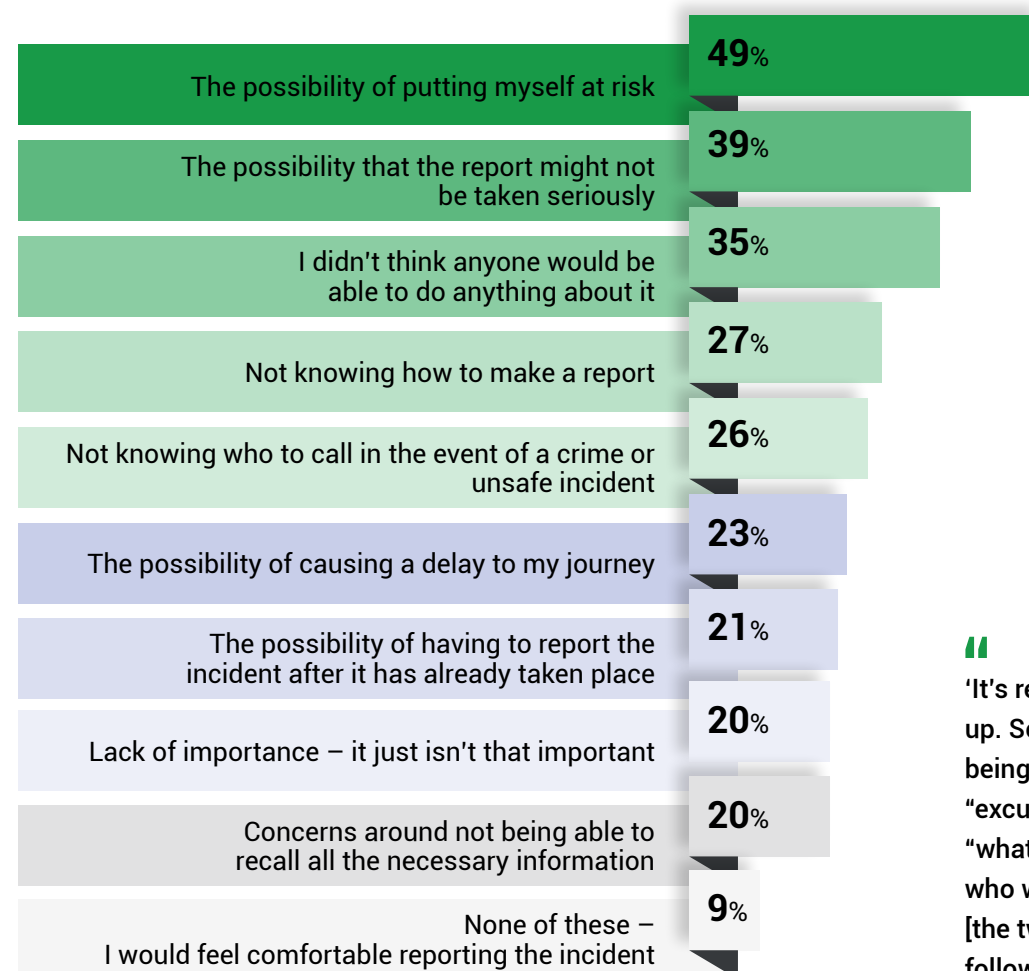


HELP!

'The stigma around London about how everyone behaves on public transport, just not caring about anyone else and being very focused on themselves, that can make you feel quite unsafe as well because you kind of feel like if anything does happen to me, you're just left worrying and so you feel quite unsupported sometimes.'

Young woman transport user

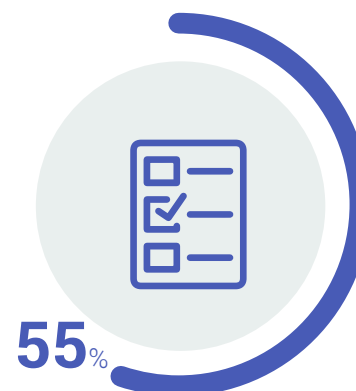
What could make it difficult to report a crime on public transport?



“

'It's really helpful when men speak up. So in one instance when I was being followed, two men were like "excuse me, are you alright?" and "what are you doing?" to the guy who was kind of freaked out by it [the two men challenging him] after following me for about 10 minutes all the way through to the end of the train. So sometimes men can stop other men.'

Young woman transport user



55%

Feel it is neither safe nor straightforward to report a crime on public transport

There are significant barriers keeping bystanders from reporting or intervening

Intervening < > Reporting



Fear of turning the perpetrator's attention on themselves



Not knowing who to call in the event of a crime or unsafe incident



Uncertainty about what is 'actually happening'



Assuming that the report must happen 'in the moment'



Lack of vigilance – 'keeping their head down'



Lack of faith that the report will be taken seriously



Knowing what to say



Sheer frequency of victimisation



Assuming that the victim will ask for help when they need it



Assuming they will fail to record the necessary information

Recommendations

1 Agree on a playbook of good active bystander behaviour

People need a clear list of 'active bystander' behaviours to learn, use and integrate into their everyday travel behaviours. The transport industry should be working towards promoting and normalising active bystander behaviour. The ultimate aim should be a culture change that sees active bystander behaviour become second-nature to transport users and staff in the same way that giving up your seat for someone more in need than you is both common and normalised. TfL recently included a [list of active bystander behaviours](#) as part of their tackling sexual harassment campaign, which is a good starting point, but needs to be developed further.

2 Communicate this playbook to the public

Once agreed, the transport industry need to agree on a communication and education strategy that clearly communicates common situations or incidents and the corresponding actions. This should be available to transport users across digital channels, on posters, leaflets and as part of wider awareness and education campaigns. Proactive engagement with communities, schools, universities and representatives from across relevant sectors is also required.

3 Tell people how to report an incident

Transport users have told us they do not think contact numbers, relevant websites or information about what actually happens when you report something are prevalent or visible enough on the transport network. The transport industry and policing authorities should increase the presence of messages communicating information about reporting across the transport network.

4 Communicate the value of reporting

Most transport users do not think it is worthwhile to themselves or to others to report incidents and crimes. This has resulted in key issues like hate crime and sexual harassment being frequently underreported. The transport industry and policing authorities need to explicitly include in their communications how valuable reports from the public are, whether victims of crime or bystanders, to building intelligence and generating profiles of repeat offenders which can lead to prosecution.

PRIORITY 2

Make use of technology

Technology is already allowing safer journeys: most ride-hailing apps such as Uber allow people to know in advance what taxi they will be using, and let friends or family track their journey, a function used by many of the people we spoke to. The combination of convenience and safety in these apps is an example of what people expect: the same technology that allows them to seamlessly book and pay for taxis also keeps them safe. Uber's emergency reporting system is the kind of feature that many people would value on public transport.

We found that the majority of people would likely use an app to report a crime or unsafe behaviour on public transport. This was even higher for Black, Asian and Minority ethnic people, young people and women, who would value an app to report unwanted sexual behaviour and hate crime. Many people assume that by the time they leave the bus, train or Tube, it is already too late to effectively report a crime. This leads many to argue for a tech-led solution that enables people to report an unsafe situation quickly and easily.

There are already efforts underway by policing authorities to provide reporting function in apps, with the BTP due to launch their reporting app in 2022. For the streets, the Home Office has also launched a pilot online service '[Street Safe](#)' for anyone to anonymously tell the police about public places where people have felt or feel unsafe.

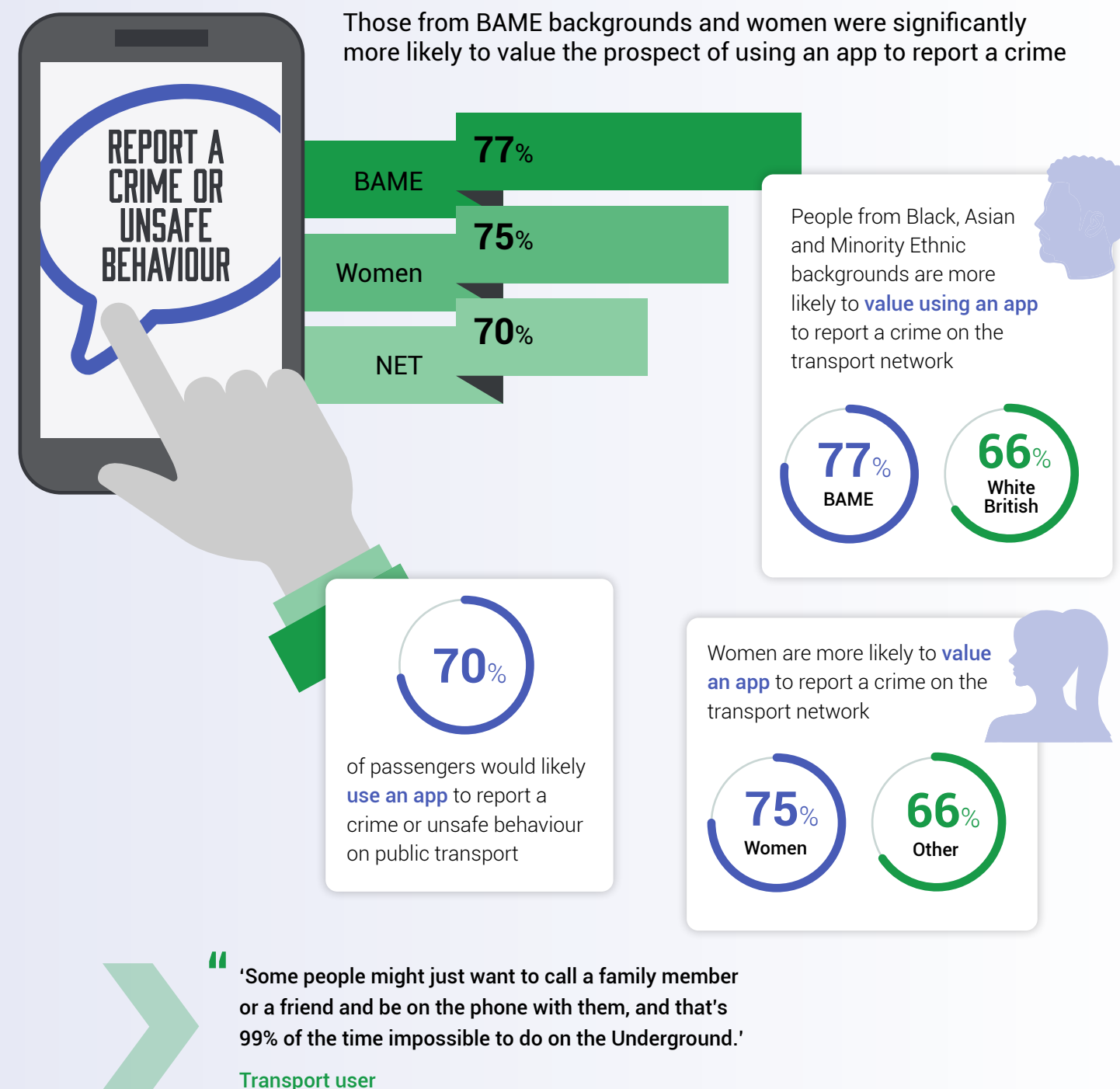
However, many people feel that authorities are not doing enough to make progress in this area, so are taking the development of solutions into their own hands. [WalkSafe](#), for example, is an app that has been

We are now able to purchase tickets, plan journeys and check for live information entirely online or on a host of transport apps. Our respondents felt that while technology on the transport network has visibly improved, technology intended to keep people safe has not kept up with these other developments. Transport users expect technology to deliver both convenience and safety. Whether it the provision of app-based reporting, installing CCTV or making sure there is WiFi across the Tube network, people expect more.

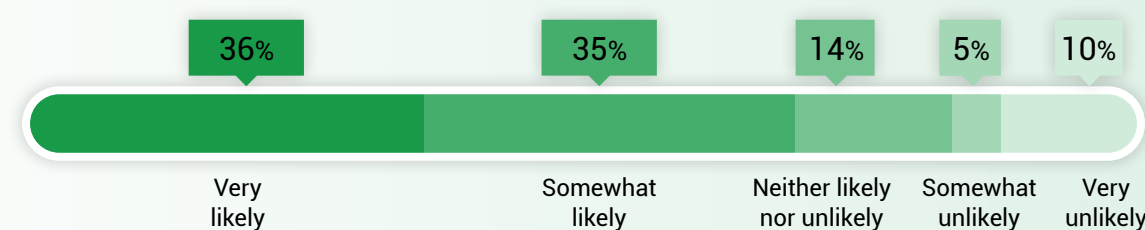
developed to show police and community reports of dangers such as knife crime, sexual assault and mugging, and automatically alerts the user when walking near these dangers. [Visible Platform](#) are another organisation who are developing a platform that provides a national index of harassment on public transport. They focus on TfL's 2013 findings that 90% of all incidents of public harassment go unreported¹, and want to make sure that all incidents of harassment, including those that are not criminal, are reported and recorded. They envisage this data will eventually be available to anyone who needs it so it can be used to better target safety interventions.

Long-term, they are also planning to develop an API (Application Programming Interface) to report in an app. In other words, this would be a tool that allows people to report via an app on their phone.

There has clearly been much progress towards using technology for safety on the transport network. However, there is a risk that efforts become fragmented, patchy and inconsistent if they are not developed in a coordinated way. Transport providers and policing authorities have told us that while the intentions of these apps and services are addressing the right issues, it is only helpful if reports and insight are fed directly into policing authorities; otherwise they are unusable. If this is the case, the transport industry needs to prioritise integrating these solutions into their own offering, because at the moment, others are having to plug the gap that they have left.



If you were to experience something that made you feel unsafe on public transport, how likely would you be to use an app-based reporting feature?



Recommendations

5 BTP to roll out their reporting app and share learnings with the transport industry

The transport industry is already working to better use technology for reporting, with the BTP due to launch their reporting app in 2022. The BTP should continue to work with transport industry colleagues and organisations representing transport users throughout the roll-out of their app, and share learnings with the industry.

6 TfL to explore options for providing app-based reporting for their transport network

TfL have told us they are following the development and roll-out of the BTP app closely, having paused their own investigation into providing a reporting function on their own TfL Go app. TfL should make providing app-based reporting for their transport services a priority, ensuring that whether it is a stand-alone app or in-app reporting function, they commit to implementing a solution as quickly as possible.

7 Establish a cross-industry taskforce to monitor and progress the development of app-based reporting

The transport industry and policing authorities should set up a taskforce to meet regularly to share learnings and ensure app development progresses in a coordinated way. The ultimate objective should be to make the process as simple and streamlined as possible for people, regardless of which mode of transport they may be using. This could eventually look like one single reporting app, or an in-app tool that can direct reports and insights to the relevant authority. The taskforce should have input from relevant parties including organisations representing transport users to ensure solutions have the functionality and accessibility needed.

8 TfL to provide WiFi on all London Underground services by their deadline of 2024

WiFi provides a crucial link for users of the underground, for reporting incidents and contacting friends and family. TfL has already committed to installing WiFi on all London Underground lines by 2024. This deadline should not be missed.

9 BTP and TfL to work towards standardising CCTV retention times, and explore further avenues for better utilising CCTV systems and body-worn cameras

At the moment, CCTV retention periods across the transport network vary from as little as 2 days to 28 days, making it an inconsistent tool for gathering evidence. The BTP and TfL should work together to standardise retention times. They should also work with security providers to explore where CCTV and body-worn cameras can be better used to promote a safe transport network.

10 Encourage people to report as soon as possible to ensure CCTV can be accessed as evidence

Transport users told us they did not know there was a limit on the time they had to access CCTV footage to support a report made. As CCTV retention periods are usually short, much more needs to be done to promote the value of reporting as soon as possible. This should be done sensitively and with awareness of the difficulty many victims face when reporting traumatic incidents. For this reason, CCTV footage should also be retained in relation to reports made by bystanders and witnesses to incidents or crimes. The transport industry and policing authorities should work with charities and organisations supporting victims to communicate this message.

11 Encourage people, where it is safe to do so, to share video and photographic evidence of incidents they have witnessed with the relevant authorities

At the moment, there is no clear guidance on whether it is useful, or when it is appropriate, for bystanders to use their phones and other devices to capture video and photographic evidence if witnessing a crime or unsafe incident. If this evidence is of use, it should be clearly laid out in guidance for bystanders and communicated clearly as part of communications campaigns.

PRIORITY 3

Enable safer night-time travel

“
TfL workers don't tend to be at my local stop off peak or night-time, typically when they're needed the most.”

Young woman in focus group

Our research confirmed that night-time is regarded as the least safe time to travel. While incidents also happen across the transport network during the day, it is at night that perpetrators of crime have the benefit of dark streets and fewer bystanders.

Across almost all demographics, transport users would rather travel during the day than during the night, and, if they can, younger women in particular actively avoid the Night Tube or other late-night transport and opt for a taxi instead. Those who work irregular hours, shifts or night-workers on low-incomes are less likely to have a choice about whether they travel at night on public transport or not. However, it is wholly unrealistic and unacceptable that women should have to choose 'safer' options – it should be safe to travel by public transport at all times.

Unfortunately, growing calls for increased safety measures for people travelling in London come at the same time as the long-term funding crisis faced by TfL and the railways, with cuts to services and halting of plans to improve customer experience and infrastructure investment likely on the horizon. From a personal security perspective, this is concerning for a number of reasons. Firstly, more frequent services reduce the risk of passengers being left stranded or waiting for a long time in dark, unfamiliar or unsafe stations. Secondly, the overall efficiency and reliability of the network has a significant impact on how safe passengers feel.

Whether it was waiting for the bus, Tube, train or other transport modes, people simply do not want to be on their own for an extended period of time, as for many it feels as if this invites opportunities for people to take advantage when no one else is around and there are no bystanders or witnesses. This is particularly important for journeys that are made on the street and in places where there are no 'eyes on the street'.

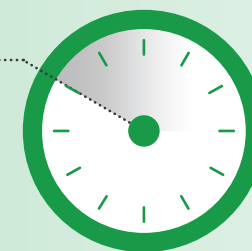
If cuts to staffing levels are included in future plans, this raises further concern. When we spoke to young women in particular, not only did they want staff to be present, they wanted staff levels to increase. One young woman observed 'I feel like there are less transport staff available so sometimes worry that if you needed intervention from a transport worker they aren't around.' Similarly, another mentioned the strong connection with feeling safer when a member of staff was present: 'I prefer it when there is a member on staff on platform I feel more safe. especially if I experience someone between stations in the Tube then I have someone to go to.'

Night-time travel must be a priority for transport providers and policing authorities if London's transport network is to become safer, particularly for women and girls.

73%

believe that late at night is the least safe time to travel

(10pm to early morning)



Women are more likely to have stopped travelling at certain times of the day due to safety concerns

women 48%, other 23%

Feel safest

Late morning
9:30am to 12:00pm

Morning peak times
6:30am to 9:30am

Early afternoon
12:00pm to 4:30pm

Early morning
5:00am to 6:30am

Evening peak times
4:30pm to 7:00pm

Early at night
7:00pm to 10:00pm

Late at night
10:00pm onwards

Least safe

'Bus stops tend to be quite safe but at night, alone, it's a different ball game'

Young woman in focus group

'TfL workers don't tend to be at my local stops off peak / night time, typically when they're needed the most.'

Young woman in focus group

'I don't really know how to define safety other than whether I feel comfortable or not, or if I'm thinking 'oh god, I wish this person would go away'...I tend to never be in places where there is nobody.'

Older woman in focus group

'I've seen so many fights on night buses. Whether it's early in the morning or super late at night, people are drunk and I know you can't drink on a bus but sometimes they do or they are already so drunk that they don't need to.'

Younger transport user

Recommendations

12 TfL should fully restore Night Tube services as soon as possible

The introduction of Night Tube and London Overground services in 2016 was a major step forward, providing safe, CCTV-managed public transport options for those travelling at night. Although it was necessary to close Night Tube services during the pandemic, TfL should work to bring all lines back as quickly as possible.

13 Weekend night bus services should be protected from cuts

Night bus services are an essential part of London's night-time public transport network. While the Night Tube is vital for covering large areas of the capital, many Night Tube journeys involve bus journeys at either end as they rarely take people close enough to home or work without changing to another service. Additionally, for those who do not live near Night Tube services, such as in south London, night buses are the only form of public transport available and must be protected.

14 Ensure the frequency of bus services do not drop below one every 12 minutes

When bus services drop below one per 12-minute frequency, they are no longer regarded as 'turn up and go' – they require checking a timetable or planning in advance. As people may have to wait around for much longer periods of time for a bus it can make them feel less safe. Maintaining frequent and reliable bus services, including at night, should be a priority. London TravelWatch's campaign to Free the Bus includes recommendations for how transport authorities can give the bus priority on London's roads to ensure they are reliable and frequent.

15 Protect and increase the number of late-night rail services in the evening

As with TfL, in the coming months and years the National Rail network is likely to see significant changes to services due to major reform and difficult financial circumstances. Unfortunately, many of those who live outside of central London and rely on the train to get around at night, face an often-inconvenient service pattern that makes it difficult to plan safe journeys home late at night. A number of National Rail lines provide all-night services to places such as St Albans and Horley – but not necessarily to outer London. An opportunity for change lies ahead in the coming years as Great British Railways is set up. Providing more consistent night service patterns for outer London areas with poor night-time connectivity should be a priority.

16 The Mayor, TfL and policing authorities to work together to promote the Women's Night Safety Charter as part of transport staff training

TfL are signed up to the Women's Night Safety Charter, which provides a clear set of tools and guidance for venues and organisations to help keep women safe at night. However, it is not clear when travelling on TfL services how or if this guidance is integrated into staff training or operational practices. When we spoke to the Night Tzar's team and the Deputy Mayor for Transport, they told us they would be refocusing efforts on promoting the Women's Night Safety Charter after a pause due to the pandemic. This should include promotion and engagement across TfL's network, and incorporate guidance for bystanders on public transport.

17 Clearly promote how help and assistance is accessed if there is no staff member around when travelling at night

Transport users, particularly women and young people, told us they wouldn't know how to get help if something happened and there was no staff member around. This shows not enough is being done to promote and signpost to emergency help points, call points or information about numbers to call. This should be part of wider improvements to communications across the network. Easy and clear signage on the train, bus or at stations or stops would help passengers feel that they are not alone or unsupported when they feel unsafe. If there are no staff members around, it should be clear to people where help points or telephones are. This is particularly important for many disabled people, especially wheelchair users, who in the event of unstaffed platforms and stations may be entirely reliant on help points in an emergency.

18 Ensure bus drivers do not turn away women and vulnerable individuals from bus services

It is TfL policy for staff to not turn away young people, vulnerable people or people in distress from their services, and they should never leave them stranded. Unfortunately, there have been [recent cases](#) of people being turned away, including one story of school-aged girl who was turned away for having a broken Oyster card. Bus drivers should be supporting transport users, particularly women and girls, to travel safely and not be stopping anyone who may be unsafe from using services.

PRIORITY 4

Address societal problems: Hate crime and sexual harassment

Hate crime

Hate crime and hate incidents are about 'who' the victim is, or 'what' the victim appears to be. Offenders commit the crime based on race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or gender. Hate crime remains a pressing issue for London transport users, and there were 1,782 hate crimes reported to the BTP in 2020/21ⁱⁱⁱ. However, the actual number of hate crimes is likely to be far higher, as many incidents go unreported.

Our findings echoed what is already widely known. In particular, Black, Asian and Minority ethnic transport users and those with visible religious dress are far more conscious of hate crime, and personal victimisation was common. For many of these people, the threat comes from an escalation of a more routine argument. Relatively few are victimised 'out of the blue' – an argument over seating, queueing or other minor issues will escalate suddenly into a hate crime. In the post-Covid world for example, a disagreement over face-coverings could escalate quickly.

Others with protected characteristics face specific issues too. Many LGBTQ+ transport users we spoke to have a fear of victimisation when travelling. This threat is even more considerable for those who dress

in a gender non-conforming way, and many LGBTQ+ transport users feared giving public displays of affection on public transport. More widely, reports of hate crime from LGBTQ+ people are low and reflect the lack of trust people have that their report will be handled appropriately. Many LGBTQ+ hate crimes in the UK are under-reported, with four out of five LGBTQ+ people who have experienced a hate crime in the past 12 months saying they did not report it to the police^{iv}.

For disabled people, fears about harassment and hate crime are all too often realised. In recent years recorded incidents of disability hate crimes have risen, and many of the disabled people we spoke to had experienced physical assault while travelling. Of the transport users we spoke to, 38% had experienced hate crime or harassment while travelling, and were more than twice as likely to have experienced physical assault while travelling in the past three years.



More likely to experience hate crime and harassment

26%
BAME

16%
White British

Disabled people are more likely to have experienced physical assault while travelling in the past three years

17%
Disabled

8%
Non-disabled

Disabled people are more likely to have experienced hate crime or harassment while travelling in the past three years

38%
Disabled

17%
Non-disabled

“

'I hate arguing so if I see it coming, I just take myself out of the situation. Anything can happen when you start arguing with someone. It could lead to a fight or something worse.'

Older man transport user

“

'I've experienced hate for being gay...My girlfriend is always very wary, she doesn't want hassle whereas I'm a bit more in your face. She'd be like, "oh no, I can't hold my partner's hand or kiss them," she'd be much more reserved about it because she'd think it would cause trouble.'

Older woman transport user

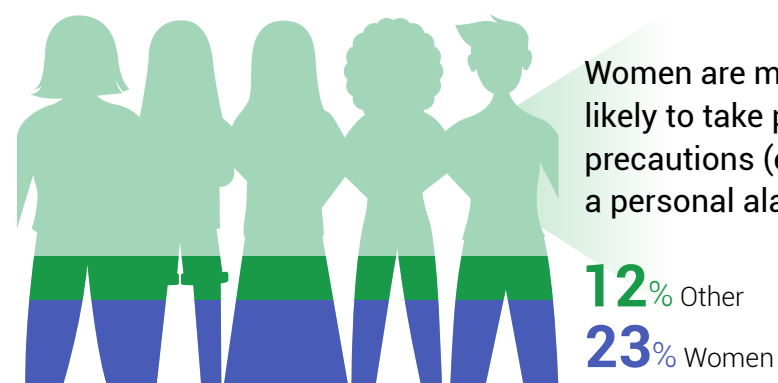
Sexual harassment

In our qualitative research, virtually every woman had experienced sexual harassment on public transport. Many have been cat-called from a passing vehicle on the street, and are often highly aware of the threat of intimidating and unsafe experiences on bus, train or Tube. Victims of unwanted sexual behaviour reported being deliberately made to feel uncomfortable and unwelcome on public transport, feeling as if offenders are attempting to 'put them in their place.' Those we spoke to felt it was essential that solutions tackled the wider issues of misogyny and the way women are treated in society.

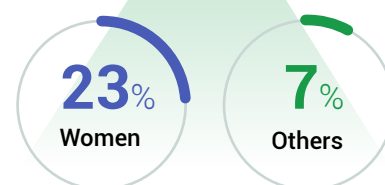
Public sexual harassment (PSH) is the most common form of violence against women and girls and the data is damning. A report by the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for UN Women UK published in March 2021 showed that 71% of women of all ages in the UK have experienced some form of sexual harassment in a public space, rising to 86% among 18-24-year-olds^v. The two main reasons women of all ages cited for not reporting

incidents are: 'I didn't think the incident was serious enough to report' (55%) and 'I didn't think reporting it would help' (45%).

Many organisations and campaigners have been working hard to raise awareness of the pervasive and constant harassment that women and other marginalised genders face on a daily basis, demanding action from decision makers. [Our Streets Now](#) and [Plan International UK](#) have been campaigning to make PSH a crime to address the gap that exists in existing legislation. Making PSH a crime will help tackle harassment faced by those who walk and cycle in London as well as public transport users, as it will cover behaviours such as making lewd comments, pressing against someone in a sexual way on public transport, cornering someone, catcalling and persistent sexual propositioning. In December 2021 the Law Commission recommended criminalising PSH, offering hope that a change to law will come soon.



Women are more likely to have experienced unwanted sexual behaviour in the past three years while travelling



'I was on my regular bus home and someone touched me inappropriately. I kind of pretended it didn't happen, because I couldn't believe it had happened. You just expect to be able to travel safely, but it made me incredibly anxious, ashamed, vulnerable, dirty.'

Woman transport user

'I wouldn't report verbal harassment because I think it wouldn't be taken seriously.'

Young woman in focus group

'We should push focus onto consequences to the people making transport unsafe as well as keeping us safe'

Young woman in focus group

Recommendations

19 Make Public Sexual Harassment a criminal offence

By making PSH a crime, transport and policing authorities would be better able to police the whole transport network, including 'in-between' spaces just outside stations, on the street or at bus stops. PSH should be defined as unwanted sexual behaviour, actions or gestures, which could be verbal, non-verbal or physical, in public places. The existing legal framework is fragmented, incomplete and disjointed and there is no piece of legislation that specifically protects people from PSH. The result is that many acts of abuse and sexually harmful behaviour fall through the legal cracks, despite the immediate and longer-term harm they cause to victims. For more details, see [Plan UK's legal briefing](#).

20 Further investigate whether to make misogyny a hate crime

Policing authorities have told us that making misogyny a hate crime would enable police forces to more accurately record when a crime was motivated by hatred of someone's sex or gender, helping to form patterns, identify trends and better police the transport network. Proponents argue it would help correctly identify incidents faced by individuals who experience hate based on multiple factors, including race, sex and gender. Support for this solution however is not as widespread as the call for making Public Sexual Harassment a crime, and there is still more research needed to see whether this is the most appropriate solution, or if an alternative would be more effective. Regardless of what is decided, a strengthening of the tools available to policing authorities to protect those who face victimisation based on multiple identifying characteristics is needed.

21 Transport providers and policing authorities should improve the way they collect and use data to develop more targeted and effective interventions to tackle sexual harassment and hate crime

There is a lack of data and insight available to transport and policing authorities about hate crime, hate incidents and sexual harassment, in large part due to under-reporting. Authorities should ensure that other recommendations are followed to build trust amongst people that reporting is worthwhile, and to make sure people trust their report will be taken seriously, even if not a crime, and that their stories and experiences are valued and useful. Organisations such as [Visible Platform](#) are already working to address this gap, and TfL and other authorities should continue to work with them to develop better sources of data and insight.

22 Department for Transport to guarantee long term funding of the Rail to Refuge scheme

The Rail to Refuge scheme offers free train travel to women, children and men fleeing domestic abuse. Since its inception in April 2020, Rail to Refuge has helped 2,265 survivors, including 650 children, reach safety^{vi}. Without continued funding the scheme could cease to exist from April 2022 onwards, as the newly developed Great British Railways Transition Team absorbs functions of the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) who currently deliver the scheme. As RDG moves to become part of Great British Railways Transition Team, the Rail to Refuge scheme should be continued through long term sustainable funding via the Department for Transport. This will ensure that adult and child survivors can access routes to safety when they need to.

23 Commit to further education and awareness campaigns to tackle hate crime and sexual harassment and promote active bystander behaviour

The recent campaigns by the [RDG](#), [National Rail](#) and now [TfL](#) to tackle sexual harassment on public transport have run alongside with TfL's [Hands Up hate crime](#) campaign. These campaigns have been welcomed by those fighting to tackle these issues. As part of the sexual harassment campaign, a clear set of 'active bystander' behaviours that transport users can refer to was shared. In future campaigns, we would like to see these bystander behaviours agreed across the transport industry and policing partners and incorporated into messaging and communications across London's transport network.

24 Promote and support awareness of Hate Crime Awareness Week

Hate Crime Awareness Week is a specific week each year dedicated to raising awareness of hate crime. [The campaign was set up in 2009](#) and aims to bring people together to stand in solidarity with those affected by hate crime, to remember those lost to hate crime, and support those who need ongoing support. Hate Crime Awareness Week provides an opportunity to raise awareness and engage communities on the issue of hate crime and should be promoted and supported by all transport providers.

PRIORITY 5

Build trust and faith in authorities

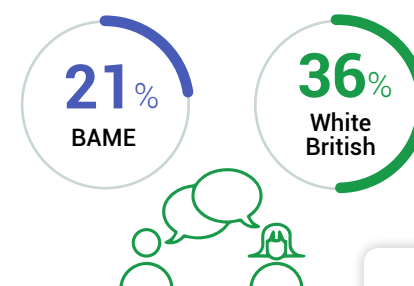
Unfortunately, our research found that underlying all of the issues outlined so far is a lack of trust and faith in transport providers and policing authorities, particularly by those most likely to experience feeling unsafe. For many women, people of colour, disabled people, older people and LGBTQ+ people, past experiences of not being taken seriously, or a belief that the incidents are just not worth reporting, presents a major barrier.

When discussing the reporting of crimes and incidents, a number of focus group participants felt unsure about whether there is any point reporting something, with one young woman saying 'I wouldn't report verbal harassment because I think it wouldn't be taken seriously'. This echoes our other findings, with transport users telling us they think the BTP are mainly there to deal with terrorism rather than hate crime, sexual harassment or anti-social behaviour.

There is a lack of awareness of what can be reported and what is worth reporting, something which needs to be much clearer and obvious to all transport users, including women. For disabled people, the reasons for underreporting are often connected to reporting-fatigue. Many disabled people have to report so frequently, for issues of personal security but also in relation to inaccessible services or failure to receive assistance when needed, and are often let down. These experiences greatly undermine trust in the process.

Many of the reasons for distrust are wider than just the transport network and exist across society. They arise from a combination of negative past personal experiences but also wider perceptions about the police, which are not helped by high-profile news stories detailing the misconduct of police officers, as in the case of Sarah Everard, who was murdered by a police officer. For certain groups and demographics, awareness of historic issues including over-policing and fear of targeting based on factors such as race undermine trust. While these issues need to be addressed systemically, there is much that can be done to rebuild the trust needed to convince London transport users it is worth reporting crimes and incidents and that they will be taken seriously.

Those from BAME backgrounds are less likely to strongly agree that they would be **comfortable talking to the British Transport Police**



Disabled people are more likely to argue that travelling in **London has become less safe in the last five years**



Those from BAME backgrounds are less likely to **text the British Transport Police in the event of an unsafe situation**



'Very recently my friend and I had just walked into a train station and we had 2 police officers come over to us and speak about a number to text if we felt unsafe, I felt that was really good to know. Should be more of that definitely.'

Young woman in focus group

'I think sometimes, even for me, going to the police, having to fill out a formal complaint and tick off my gender or sexual orientation on there and out myself, it is going to be more uncomfortable and maybe relive trauma. It may make me second guess whether I actually want to do this.'

Younger transgender transport user

'I'm less likely to report things out of fear of how that would be received and potentially receiving insensitive questions. So when I reported [an incident of pickpocketing and assault] they said "oh yeah we reviewed it and in future maybe hold onto your phone next time." So that kind of made me feel like even calling the police won't help.'

Young woman in focus group

Recommendations

25 Build trust and empower people by engaging with communities and representative organisations

Experts have spoken strongly of the need to go further than the transport network to spread awareness and education and transport providers and policing authorities should work to further the regular engagement they do. This means engaging schools and universities or sports, nightlife and entertainment industries, and working with organisations and charities to talk to and answer questions and concerns of transport users.

26 Policing authorities need to better support and educate transport users for all crimes, not just terrorism

It is the responsibility of policing authorities to educate, convince and reassure people that the BTP and Metropolitan Police are there for all incidents, not just terrorism. We, alongside organisations representing women and other marginalised groups, are concerned that insufficient information is available to victims of violence, abuse and harassment on public transport to help them report and access appropriate support. The transport industry must prioritise raising awareness of support mechanisms available for users of public transport who experience unwanted behaviours or crimes.

27 Review and refresh staff and police training to better support transport users

Worryingly, we've been hearing stories and accounts from people about transport staff providing no support or being dismissive when approached by people for help. The overall customer experience has an incredibly strong impact on shaping perceptions of transport providers and policing authorities and whether they can be trusted to help. Refresher training on the importance of providing supportive, proactive support to transport users is essential. Better training is also needed for police and prosecutors to respond to unwanted behaviours on public transport, particularly sexual harassment and sexual assault.^{vii} It is crucial that the police take reports of all unwanted behaviours seriously, including sexual harassment and hate crime and provide a sensitive and trauma-informed response to victims.

28 Ensure information, support and ticketing remains accessible and inclusive for all

The barriers that exist to people travelling in London are extensive, particularly for disabled people, older people, those on low incomes and women. The transport industry and policing authorities must remain mindful of these barriers and work to address them, going further where needed to make sure services and support is accessible. For example, while it is essential that technology is better utilised, many people, including older people, do not have access to a mobile phone, or do not wish to use their mobile phones in public for fear of theft or mugging. Traditional communication channels such as posters and leaflets must be available to provide information about services, delays and changes as well as information about how to report crimes and incidents. It is also essential that ticketing remains accessible with paper tickets always available alongside e-tickets. This will ensure accessible options remain for people who do not have bank accounts or access to digital payment, as well as survivors of domestic abuse, as identified by the rail to refuge scheme.



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- ii. TfL Guidelines for Planning Bus Services
- iii. [btp_annual_report_2020_21.pdf](#)
- iv. LGBT Action Plan (publishing.service.gov.uk)
- v. [APPG-UN-Women_Sexual-Harassment-Report_2021.pdf](#) (unwomenuk.org)
- vi. [Rail-To-Refuge-Impact-Briefing-Dec-2021.pdf](#) (womensaid.org.uk)
- vii. [Download.ashx](#) (suzyamlplugh.org)

Thank you to everyone who took the time to speak to us, send us a written response or fill out our survey. If you have any questions or would like to contact us, please email info@londontravelwatch.org.uk or sign up to join our digital community of transport users and help us continue to represent London's travelling public.

EMAIL US TODAY



SIGN UP FOR UPDATES



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