

Addressing Gender-Based Violence and Harassment (GBVH) in the Public Transport Sector



Why is addressing GBVH important to the transport sector?

Service users / passengers

Public transport systems are an important gateway to access essential opportunities. Investments in safe and well-designed transport infrastructure can increase economic empowerment by improving mobility and access to better-paid work, education and healthcare.

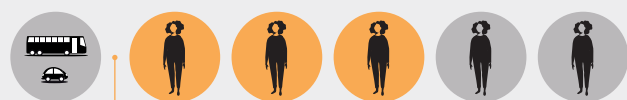
However, the perceived and actual risk of violence and harassment can reduce women and girls' freedom of movement and equal access to markets and services. Surveys show that passengers often experience threatening and unwelcome behaviour while using public transport.

Research on [São Paulo's metro system](#) found that sexual violence is concentrated at the busiest central stations, during rush hours, and at stations that also attract other forms of violence and public disorder.

The [online safety map "Free to Be"](#) identified transport hubs, trains and bus stations as prime locations for harassment. In five cities (Delhi, Kampala, Lima, Madrid and Sydney), young women and girls can use geolocating to drop a "good" pin on locations where they feel safe and a "bad" pin where they feel unsafe.

Transport workers

Women transport workers often experience [high levels of violence and harassment](#) by colleagues and supervisors as well as the public, partly because transport is a male-dominated sector, the work involves regular contact with the public, and workplaces are often mobile and isolated.



GLOBALLY, **3 IN 5 WOMEN** REPORT EXPERIENCING SEXUAL HARASSMENT ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Source: [Gallup](#) data from 143 countries

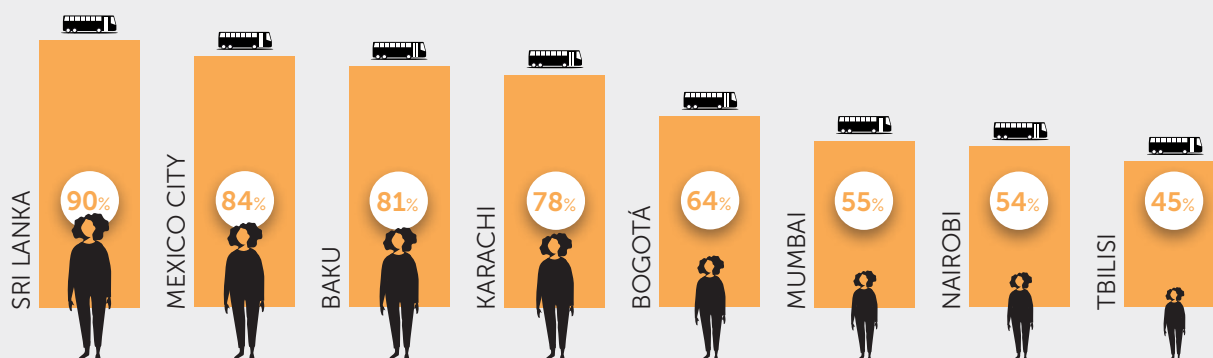


1 IN 4 WOMEN TRANSPORT WORKERS SAY THAT VIOLENCE AGAINST THEM IS A REGULAR OCCURRENCE IN THE TRANSPORT SECTOR,

Source: [European Transport Federation survey](#) data from 24 European countries

Crowded public transport systems can increase GBVH risks through factors such as close proximity between service users, transitory environments, and anonymity to commit acts of GBVH.

Women's experiences of sexual harassment on public transport



Note: Caution should be exercised in making comparisons between cities, due to slightly different survey sizes/methodologies.
Sources: [Sri Lanka](#), [Baku](#), [Karachi](#) and [Tbilisi](#); [Mexico City](#); [Bogotá](#); [Nairobi](#); [Mumbai](#)



What are the benefits of addressing GBVH?

Addressing GBVH in public transport can have the following benefits:

- Improves the safety and physical and emotional wellbeing of workers and passengers who may experience, witness, or live in fear of violence and harassment.
- Increases profitability of operators if customers feel safer. Research in the UK shows that the [number of public transport users would increase by 10 per cent](#) if passengers, especially women, felt safer.
- Avoids reputational damage to transport companies and protects their relationships with service users who may protest or boycott them if they believe safety is not being prioritised.
- Builds confidence among potential investors who believe a transport company is safe and secure.
- Increases economic growth by enabling women's mobility and access to economic opportunities, education and employment.
- Improves health and safety, leading to lower absenteeism, staff turnover and improved productivity among workers, which in turn has financial benefits for transport companies.



What are the risk factors?

Risk factors that increase the likelihood of GBVH in transport sector operations include:

- Poor lighting, for example around transport hubs where passengers need to walk, and around stops and platforms where passengers may be waiting.
- Unsupervised spaces without the physical presence of transport workers such as guards or conductors, or without CCTV.
- Absence of emergency buttons for passengers and operators.
- Overcrowding, with higher risk of users being subjected to physical violence and sexual harassment at peak times.
- Lack of clear codes of conduct so workers and transport users know what behaviours are acceptable and how to report incidents and concerns related to GBVH.

Risks also vary depending on country-level or municipal factors such as how women are treated in society, legal and regulatory frameworks, and trust in local authorities to investigate reports of sexual harassment or violence (see accompanying note on Emerging Good Practice for the Private Sector for further guidance on risk factors).

What can investors and companies do?

	Examples of entry points	Case studies
 <p><i>Leadership and company culture</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop company policies and procedures to address GBVH, including in supply chain (either as a separate policy or integrated into wider company policies). • Involve transport users in design, implementation and monitoring. • Engage expertise to collect and monitor GBVH-related data via safety audits and surveys. • Increase women's leadership in transport companies. • Put in place monitoring systems at the highest levels for regular reporting on GBVH 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bengaluru, India: Bus company Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTCL) created a Women's Safety Committee with members from the commuters' association, civil society organisations and police. The committee commissioned a survey of bus users, which led to the installation of CCTV in buses and bus stations, gender sensitisation training of male drivers and conductors, and targeted recruitment and training of women drivers and conductors.
 <p><i>Policies and procedures</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish codes of conduct and protocols to address GBVH for transport workers and those using public transport. • Ensure codes of conduct are publicly disclosed and widely accessible to all users and workers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kenya: A toolkit for public minibus transport providers (Matatus) includes a Customer Service Charter to improve safety for women passengers. It clearly states that sexual harassment is unacceptable and all reports will be investigated. Details are provided about how to make a complaint. The charter is displayed in buses and bus stations.



	Examples of entry points	Case studies
 <p><i>Grievance mechanisms and investigation procedures</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop confidential grievance reporting, referral and support systems for workers. Establish safe and confidential complaints procedures for passengers, using technology where appropriate. Include options to report anonymously. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quito, Ecuador: As part of the UN Women Safe Cities programme, the city of Quito installed "Tell me Kiosks" in public transport stations for women to find help and report violence to trained staff. Drivers have also been trained on how to help women who have experienced violence or harassment, including how and where to report incidents.
 <p><i>Recruitment and performance assessment</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess and revise HR policies, materials and training to address any barriers to recruiting and retaining women transport workers. Assess the risk of GBVH in recruitment and performance processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Almaty, Kazakhstan: EBRD worked closely with Almatyelectrotrans (AET) public transport company to hire women bus drivers. Successful recruitment strategies included new company policies and procedures, proactive outreach and recruitment of women, a new company grievance system and improved facilities for both women and men.
 <p><i>Training and awareness raising</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver periodic mandatory training to drivers and transport workers on gender sensitivity and how to report and refer incidents of GBVH. Conduct awareness campaigns to provide information to transport users, such as what is unacceptable behaviour and how to report an incident. Use transport infrastructure such as signage and tickets to disseminate messages to change behaviour around GBVH more broadly in communities and public spaces. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marrakesh, Morocco: UN Women worked with private bus company ALSA to integrate the issue of sexual violence prevention in bus drivers' training modules. Anti-sexual harassment videos are regularly broadcast on the buses. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: The World Bank and The States Office of Women's Affairs set up electronic kiosks on the Supervia train system to raise awareness about GBVH. In the first year, the kiosks provided information about support services to 53,700 rail passengers. Almost 40 per cent of users reported having experienced some type of violence.
 <p><i>Work with contractors and suppliers</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include transport contractors in training sessions and awareness raising. Include assessment of gender and safety risks in bidding process for contractors. Vet contractors for prior incidents of contracts being terminated or suspended due to insufficient action to prevent and respond to GBVH. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ha Noi, Viet Nam: As part of the bidding process for the ADB-funded Ha Noi Metro Rail System, bus station contractors had to include social and gender considerations in their bids. The winning contractor employed a social and gender specialist to provide regular reports to the transport board. The rail project also developed HIV/AIDS and anti-trafficking training for contractors and local communities.
 <p><i>Physical design</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install surveillance cameras and increase security guard presence at stations and on trains. Security guides will themselves need to be required to adhere to clear codes of conduct related to GBVH. Develop procedures to prevent surveillance operators from using security cameras to harass or abuse transport users and workers. Install emergency buttons for passengers and drivers. Provide and maintain lighting in dim areas, at bus/metro stops and en route to them. Provide real-time route information, timetables, and a phone number for emergencies. Ask bus drivers to let passengers get off in between bus stops and closer to their destinations in the dark. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cairo, Egypt: EBRD is supporting the Egyptian National Railways (ENR) to address sexual harassment on trains. Starting with a gender assessment and survey of 2,000 railway users, ENR identified several measures to improve women's safety, including improved lighting, surveillance cameras, trained security staff in the most crowded stations, and a customer hotline. ENR have also launched a gender training course for staff and is currently working on a public awareness campaign to prevent sexual harassment.



Resources for addressing GBVH in transport

[VAWG Resource Guide on Transport World Bank](#), Global Women's Institute, IFC, ICRW, 2015. Guidance on how violence against women and girls affects programming in the transport sector.

[Women's Safety and Security: A Public Transport Priority](#), International Transport Forum (ITF), 2018. Report by a selection of ITF stakeholders on how to design public transport systems that are safe and secure for women.

['What Works' in Reducing Sexual Harassment and Sexual Offences on Public Transport Nationally and Internationally](#), British Transport Police and Department for Transport, 2015. A rapid evidence assessment of best practice on reducing sexual offences on public transport.

To find out more, please see [Addressing Gender-Based Violence and Harassment: Emerging Good Practice for the Private Sector](#).

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