

|Women &Transport

Global Conundrum: Women's Safety in Public Transport

By Abiria News Team

How do you feel while aboard a Metro or bus?

The truth is that men and women's experiences while in public transport differ significantly in terms of physical security and safety.

While men are more likely to suffer violent attacks, women on the other hand continue to be victims of sexual violence.

Experts have said that a city cannot be inclusive without considering the issue of women's safety in public transport. Indeed, women's security becomes even more critical as it is women, rather than men who mostly depend on public transport for their mobility needs.

Research shows that in many cities around the world, women and girls bear the brunt of violence ranging from leering looks and offensive gestures to unwanted touching and sexual assault.

A recent poll in France showed that 100 of 600 women surveyed in two outer Paris suburbs have experienced at least some form of sexual harassment on trains.

In Mexico City's public transport system, 65% of women still experience violence in transit vehicles and public

spaces in the transport system such as Metro and bus stations.

Recent research by Hollaback and Cornell University based on 16,600 interviews in 22 countries found that 80-90% of women had been harassed in public. The research includes shocking evidence of the extent of public harassment, including that 66% of German women had been groped or fondled and 47% of Indian women had witnessed someone exposing themselves in public. Personal security is a particularly important issue on public transport, where space is restricted.

51.4% of women interviewed in Bhopal, India, by WRI EMBARQ had to face sexual harassment while using public transport and 49% of men had witnessed women being harassed.

In Kathmandu, Nepal, about one in four (27 %) people stated that personal insecurity was one of the main problems associated with public transport, with twice as many women as men (30% compared to 16%) highlighting this.

In South Africa 38% of household heads questioned said that they are (very) unsatisfied with security levels when walking to and waiting at Minibus taxi stops.

To reduce such cases, agencies such as the World Bank are putting more emphasis on prevention which include among other interventions, training of transport staff on physical security and gender related topics and using communication campaigns to raise awareness and to change social norms, attitudes and overall behavior related to violence against women and girls.

Public transport stakeholders have a pivotal role to play. London's public transport operator, Transport for London (TfL) uses information technology to enhance women's safety. For instance, the Technology Innovation Portal at TfL allows users to submit innovative technological ideas and solutions to meet key challenges, like women's safety.

The future of public transport is also curved around women's safety. What's your role?