



TERTIARY STUDENTS' PUBLIC TRANSPORT SAFETY IN MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

PART OF A 17-CITY INTERNATIONAL STUDY

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SUMMARY

This report summarizes the results of a survey of 517 tertiary students in Greater Melbourne on public transport safety undertaken from April to June 2018. The Melbourne survey was part of a 17-city international study on this topic.

In line with other recent research in this area, we found extremely high rates of victimisation in relation to public transport. **Almost four fifths (79.4%) of female students surveyed and an equivalent proportion of LGBTI+ students, said that they had been the victims of unwanted sexual gestures, comments, advances, exposed genitals, groping, or being followed on public transport over the previous three years. Over half (51.7%) of men reported having been victimised.**

Only 5.7% of those who had been victimised reported this to anyone in authority. This is hardly surprising. The public safety messages from police, transport authorities, and tertiary educational institutions do not encourage reporting incidents, instead providing information that emphasises the responsibility of potential victims to protect themselves.

A large proportion of female students report a climate of fear on public transport. A little less than half (45.1%) of female students report feeling 'rarely' or 'never' safe on public transport after dark, as compared to 11.3% of men. A similar proportion of women (58.9%) say they use a plethora of behaviours (from avoiding certain lines and stops, to ensuring they are met at a stop, to constant alertness) to mitigate their risk of victimisation. A little less than half (45.4%) of female students report fear of victimisation as a reason keeping them from using public transport.

While concerns around infrequent, unreliable, poorly coordinated, and overcrowded services were seen as bigger concerns than safety by all users, women were less likely to use all modes and more likely to drive cars and use ridesharing services than men, at least partially because of night time concerns.

The report concludes with recommendations that put the onus on public transport authorities and providers, police, and tertiary educational institutions to embark on a coordinated campaign to encourage reporting of offences and prosecution of offenders.

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INTRODUCTION

THE RESEARCH: TERTIARY STUDENTS' SAFETY ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT

In June 2018, the worst-case scenario for women using public transport happened in Melbourne. Eurydice Dixon, a 23-year-old woman, took a tram home at 11 pm from performing stand-up comedy in downtown Melbourne. She was walking from the tram to her home, through a well-used park just north of the central city, when the young man who had allegedly stalked her after her performance (Smith 2018) is alleged to have raped and murdered her. In January 2019, a similar worst-case scenario occurred, when another young man is alleged to have raped and murdered Aiiia Maasarwe, a 21-year-old Palestinian-Israeli exchange student, 100 metres from the tram she took home from downtown Melbourne (ABC News, 2019).

The immediate response from the police after the murder of Eurydice Dixon was to put the onus on potential victims. “Make sure you have situational awareness. Be aware of your own personal safety. If you’ve got a mobile phone, carry it; if you’ve got any concerns, call the police,” they said in a public announcement to other women (Eurydice Dixon was allegedly carrying a phone and her last text told her boyfriend that she was nearly home). Similarly, Aiiia Maasarwe was also allegedly on her phone to her sister as she was attacked. As Sally Rugg, the Executive Director of Change.org pointed out, these messages “suggest that the police can’t stop men from raping people, so it’s up to the women to take precautions, which is insulting to men, unhelpful and untrue.” (Smith 2018). Many women pointed out that despite intimate partner violence being more common than victimization by a stranger, everyday harassment by men creates a climate of fear in public space. Women constantly police themselves to avoid being blamed for male violence, by authorities who are supposed to support their safety. The continuum between ‘everyday’ misogynist behaviour and violence was further underlined when the site of Eurydice Dixon’s death was vandalised just before a vigil held in her memory the following week, and abusive messages left on the Facebook page of the organizers (Alcorn 2018).

Mobility, as freedom of movement, is a human right. The legal emphasis in the past has been the ability to move from one jurisdiction to another rather than on intra-city commuting (UN 1948: right 13, Blomley 1994), but there is increasing interest in a rights-based approach to mobility within the city (Urry 2016, Sheller 2016, Coggin and Pieterse 2016). **Security of the person is also upheld by the UN Declaration of Human Rights** (1948: right 3). The ability to travel freely within a city, without risk of bodily harm, is necessary to develop educational and economic capabilities, and experiencing a sense of control over one’s environment is essential for full development of wellbeing (Nussbaum 2011). However, the unequal politics of mobility often affects speed, mode, safety, and comfort of journeys, with intersectional aspects of gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, income, and abilities affecting use and experience of urban transport (Cresswell 2010; Whitzman, 2013, Ceccato 2013, Loukaitou-Sideris, 2015).

This report analyses the responses of 517 tertiary students in Melbourne, Australia, to a survey on experiences and perceptions of crime on public transport undertaken April-June 2018. It is part of a 17-city global victimisation study, **the first cross-cultural study to focus on college students’ experiences of gender, crime and mobility.**

The Melbourne report focuses on four research questions:

1. What are rates of self-reported victimization and fear experienced by tertiary students in Greater Melbourne?
2. How do gender, ethnicity and sexuality identities intersect to influence use and experience of transport?
3. How does victimisation and fear affect transport use?
4. In a governance context where public transport is privately provided by international companies with loose state government steering (Stone 2014), where university students have reported the journey between home and study to be riddled with experiences of violence and harassment (AHRC, 2017) and where tertiary education is economically essential to the remaking of Melbourne as a ‘knowledge city’ (Yigitcanlar O’Connor and Westerman 2008), **whose responsibility is it to improve safety on public transport?**

THE MELBOURNE CONTEXT: AN INCREASINGLY INTERNATIONAL ‘KNOWLEDGE CITY’ HIGHLY ECONOMICALLY DEPENDENT ON TERTIARY STUDENTS

As of the 2016 Census, Greater Melbourne had a population of 4.7 million, comprising over 85% of the population of the state in which it is situated, Victoria (ABS 2017). Melbourne is the second most populous city in Australia, which has a total population of 24.2 million. With an annual growth rate of over 2% in the past decade, Melbourne is projected to overtake Sydney as Australia’s most populous city within the next 10 years (Bagshaw 2017). Greater Melbourne is a highly spatially dispersed metropolis, with a geographic area of over 2500 square kilometres extending between 35 and 55 kilometres from the central city to the west, north and southeast (Hancock and Nuttman 2014: 64).

Melbourne’s economy is highly dependent on higher education, as part of a larger ‘knowledge city’ strategy that has been supported by all three levels of government since the decline of the traditional manufacturing sector in Greater Melbourne during the 1980s and early 1990s (Yidgitcanlar, O’Connor and Westerman 2008). Like other ‘knowledge city’ strategies in Barcelona, Stockholm and Dublin, policies focus on clustering institutions, promoting culture and liveability, and supporting diversity and social inclusion. The aims of these policies are to support employment in Information and Communications Technologies (ICT), cultural industries, and medical research, as well as education. Providing and improving these elements has been a crucial part of the 2002 Metropolitan Melbourne planning strategy (Yidgitcanlar, O’Connor and Westerman 2008) as well as its successor, *Plan Melbourne* (Victorian State Government 2017), with sub-regional employment centres associated with suburban university-hospital clusters. In the 2014 state election, the successful candidate for Premier promised to change Victoria’s license plates to read ‘The Education State’, reflecting “a rock-solid foundation for our economic future” (Davey 2014).

Much of Melbourne’s recent population growth has been fuelled by tertiary students, especially international students. As of the 2016 census, there were over 1.4 million university students in the country, with 26%, or

almost 400,000, being international students. Over a third of these students are from China, with a further 25% from South-East Asia and 15% from South Asia (Universities Australia 2018). Greater Melbourne contains all three of Australia's largest universities in Melbourne - Monash, with 60,000 students, University of Melbourne, with 48,000 students, and RMIT University with 47,000 students (Australian Government 2017). The State of Victoria's GDP from international students alone was \$9.1 billion dollars in 2016 (Universities Australia 2018). In 2002, Melbourne had the fourth largest population of international students in the world – after London, New York, and Los Angeles (Yidgitcanlar, O'Connor and Westerman 2008: 67) and the *Times* Higher Education section recently ranked Melbourne as the third most popular city in terms of enquiries about student accommodation, after London and Sydney (Minsky 2016).

Tertiary students are, to some extent, the vanguard of a changing demography of Melbourne and Australia in “the Asian century” (Rizvi 2017). While the Australian census focuses on country of origin and parents' country of origin, a broader definition of those self-identifying as Asian-Australian used by the Diversity Council suggests that 17% of the population are now of Asian origin. The Chinese-origin community is over 1.2 million people in Australia, and Indian-origin Australians number over 650,000. Between 2006 and 2011, businesses owned by Chinese-origin Australians increased by 40% and businesses owned by Indian-origin Australians increased by 72%. Most of these businesses are small to medium sized enterprises, driving new developments in international education, tourism, professional and technical services, the creative industries, and the retail trade of cultural goods (Rizvi 2017: 113-114).

In 2016, the innermost of 32 municipalities in Greater Melbourne, the City of Melbourne, had 227,000 students living and/or studying within the municipality, with 45,000 students calling the central city home. A third of these students are international fee-paying students (City of Melbourne 2016: 4). Within a population of a little under 150,000 in 2016, this meant that a little less than a third of central city residents are tertiary students, many of whom live in purpose-built student apartment complexes. Student housing is generally privately provided, in close proximity to the two universities with the largest central city campuses, Melbourne and RMIT, and is very high priced: \$400/week for a 15 square metre apartment not much larger than a car parking space (Dow, 2016). The predominance of international students in these purpose-built apartments is partly explained by the Australian tradition of students going to university in their hometown, and thus often living with their parents during the university years. International student placement agents in home countries also are known to advise that much of Melbourne, including its public transport system, is unsafe and that it is difficult to find housing other than in these apartments (Fincher and Shaw 2009).

Higher education is the sixth biggest employer in Victoria. Eight percent of Victoria's paid workforce, or 23,555 people in 2010, worked in the higher education sector. But this is only one aspect of the economic impact of tertiary education. Tertiary students are both purchasers and part-time staff in the retail and hospitality industry, and transport, housing, and entertainment offerings are also strongly influenced by tertiary students' needs and preferences (City of Melbourne 2012: 10). Australia's 43 universities had almost \$28 billion in total revenue in 2014, with about 120 non-university tertiary sector organisations bringing in a much smaller \$1.6 billion in revenue. International students alone provide \$5.7 billion in annual revenue, in part due to high overseas student fees (Norton 2016: 41).

PUBLIC TRANSPORT PROVISION IN GREATER MELBOURNE: A TALE OF TWO CITIES

In Australia, the Bureau of Statistics captures journey to study within its journey to work data. Greater Melbourne shows similar trends to other large Australian cities in journey to work, with continuing heavy reliance on private vehicles and longer commuting distances than other OECD countries. Almost three quarters (74%) of commuting journeys are by car, with an average commuting distance of 18.6 kilometres. Only 18% of commuting journeys are by public transport, and 6% are via walking or cycling. Despite attempts to create more education-related employment near suburban housing, and more housing near education employment centres in two metropolitan planning strategies, self-containment (that is, living near one's workplace) has not changed since the 2011 census (ABS 2018). There are strong preferences shown in Melbourne between public transport modes. In 2014, there were 225 million journeys by train, 183 million journeys by tram and 118 million journeys by bus in Greater Melbourne (BITRE 2014).

Unlike the US and Europe, almost 90% of Australian born students attend a tertiary institution in their home city. Over 35% of tertiary students live with their families during their tertiary education, with smaller proportions living with a partner (26%), living in a group household (15%), living alone (5%) and living in a hall of residence (3%) (ABS 2013).

There are nine universities with campuses in Greater Melbourne: Melbourne, RMIT, Swinburne, Federation, Australian Catholic, Victoria, Latrobe, Deakin, and Monash. Four of these universities (Swinburne, RMIT, Victoria, Federation) also offer Technical and Further Education (TAFE) courses, the equivalent of community colleges in North America. There are six further TAFE-only institutions: William Angliss, Melbourne Polytechnic, Box Hill, Kangan, Chisholm, and Holmesglen. With 18 tertiary institutions located throughout Greater Melbourne, several with multiple campuses, public transportation to tertiary education is an issue that touches on social equity, environmental sustainability and economic productivity.

The current situation in most tertiary institutions is one of car dependence. For instance, in the largest campus of Deakin University, in the middle suburb of Burwood, 61% of students and staff drove alone to work in 2012 (Hancock and Nuttman 2014). Conditions in the peripheral suburbs of Melbourne are far worse, with 50% of these areas having 'very low' or 'low' public transport frequency. Yet they have very high needs for public transport in terms of proportion of adults without cars, including many tertiary students – a concept called 'transport disadvantage' (Currie 2010: 34). Mahmoud and Currie (2010), in relation to transport safety research with young people based at suburban Monash University, argue that students living in middle and outer Melbourne tend to be more dependent on public transport and are more likely to travel in the evenings than other residents, two risk factors for victimisation and fear.

The picture emerges, as is often the case, of 'two Melbournes'. In central Melbourne, some local students live with parents, but most international and many local students live in small, expensive and sometimes overcrowded accommodation. However, these students are in walking or short public transport distance to a suite of campuses in the central city and inner suburbs. Melbourne and RMIT are the largest central city universities, but there are also central city campuses of William Angliss TAFE, Federation, Australian Catholic, Victoria and Monash Universities. Middle and outer suburban Melbourne has a suite of campuses scattered and often poorly served by public transport: Monash's largest campus, Deakin, Latrobe, Swinburne, and most of the TAFEs. Many local students continue to live with their families (out of choice or because they are locked out of the expensive rental market), while other local and international students live in shared accommodation (including unlicensed rooming houses), with much more limited transport options. Whether in central city purpose-built student housing or suburban shared housing, international students often complain of being segregated from local students and being treated as 'outsiders' to Australia (Fincher and Shaw 2009).

PUBLIC TRANSPORT GOVERNANCE: WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSPORT SAFETY?

Over a century, from European colonialization to the 1920s, Melbourne built up one of the most extensive tram and train networks in the world. However, in the second half of the 20th century, Melbourne's public transport use fell further and faster than any other city of the Global North, with the exception of Auckland, New Zealand. The decline in public transport use was related to the development of more kilometres of urban freeways than other cities in Australia (Stone 2014: 389-90).

Melbourne's success in developing and managing both a public transport and a freeway network was due to a strong metropolitan planning authority (the Metropolitan Melbourne Board of Works) from the 1880s onwards. However, metropolitan governance was dismantled in favour of direct state government planning in the late 1980s. Under an ideologically driven neoliberal state government in the 1990s, trains, trams and bus networks were separately sold off – the trains and trams to international conglomerates, and the buses to several local companies. Independent transport policy expertise was lost, as the public transport agency took on the role of a franchise regulator, instead of a direct provider (Stone 2014: 396).

There are currently 15 train lines along almost 1000 km of track run by Metro, a company majority owned by Hong Kong-based MTR (Metro Trains 2018a). The 24 tram routes along 250 km of track, the most extensive tram network in the world, are managed by Keolis, a French-based company (Yarra Trams 2018a, 2018b). There are more than 300 bus routes in Melbourne, operated by three companies (PTV 2018a). Seven regional rail lines, still operated by the State Government, also play their part in public transport in an increasingly dispersed city-region (V/Line 2018). All public transport travel on metropolitan buses, trams and train lines incur the same cost, \$4.30 for a two hour unlimited transfer pass (zones have been phased out, with the exception of regional rail), and all use the Myki smartcard ticketing system to automatically deduct that sum. There is free travel within the central business district, an area of approximately two square kilometres.

The train and tram systems run from approximately 5 am to 1 am on weekdays. Buses tend to run infrequently during the day (until 7-9 pm), and often not at all on weekends. On weekends, a Night Network was introduced in 2016, and has since been expanded. It consists of trains running every 60 minutes, trams running every 30 minutes on six (of 24 total regular) lines, and 21 bus routes that run every 30 to 60 minutes (PTV 2018b).

Public Transport Victoria, the agency charged with managing the private contractors, provides 'single stop' information on safety for public transport users. Its website (PTV 2018c) publicizes several different mechanisms to keep passengers safe. From 6 pm until train services stop (usually between midnight and 1 am), there are at least two Protective Service Officers at 200 of the total of 321 metropolitan and regional rail stations. They patrol the platforms, trains, and associated car parks, dealing with "anti-social behaviour, property damage, alcohol and transport related offences as they arise". Authorized Officers (usually known as 'ticket inspectors') primarily check ticket validity on trains and trams, but are also trained to respond to incidents. The tram, train and bus networks all have closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras. At metropolitan train stations there are emergency assistance buttons on every platform and in train carriages, and emergency buttons are also located on trams and buses. Some metropolitan train stations have yellow marked "safety zones" that are well-lit, located near emergency assistance buttons and are in the line of sight for CCTV cameras. In addition, a 2018 campaign focuses on cooperation between police officers and transport operators (PTV 2018d). The underlying message of this information is that PTV treats safety seriously. However, there is no information on this page on how to report incidents or who to contact about safety concerns on the system.

Metro Trains, the franchisee whose majority ownership is the Hong Kong-based MTR group, has its own page, which focuses on 'night safety' instructions for train users. These include: boarding the first car on a train, closest to the driver, if alone; trying to sit near other customers; checking timetables on the PTV application before leaving home; and waiting in the yellow safety zones (Metro Trains 2018). There is no information on this page on how to report incidents or who to contact about safety concerns.

The state government has an independent safety regulator, Transport Safety Victoria, whose mandate is to license and accredit all transport operators (e.g. school and tourist buses as well as public transport), including the provision of training for operators on how to respond to personal safety concerns (TSV 2018a). Once again, there is no information on this page for how the public might report safety concerns.

The Bus Association, an industry body representing bus operators in the state, has its own bus safety information and a community nominated Favourite Bus Driver award. The award, last given in 2016, commended drivers who provided safe spaces, as nominated by a school child and a person with a disability (BAV 2016). This is an excellent initiative, but again the page does not tell bus users who to contact about incidents or concerns.

The Victoria Police (2016) has additional and extensive safety instructions for tram and bus users, including “observe the conditions and any persons around you” when boarding trams and buses, “portraying confidence” in your body language, and being “friendly and confident” when talking to other passengers, but not providing personal information. They suggest to passengers that if they are being harassed, they should tell the person to stop in a loud and assertive voice, to report the person, to consider moving to another spot nearer other passengers, and to trust their instincts. Again, despite recommendations to report the person, they do not provide information as to how best to report incidents or concerns.

Crime Stoppers, a national non-profit crime prevention organisation, the Victoria Police and Public Transport Victoria, launched a very short-lived (two week) campaign called ‘Hands Off’ in 2017 to “stamp out sexual offending and bring those responsible to justice” (Crime Stoppers 2017). The program was criticised for focusing on a small number of individual offenders, whose photographs were included on posters, and by focusing on physical assault, when the range of harassing and coercive behaviours encountered is more extensive (Fileborn 2017). Perhaps more importantly, a two-week campaign is hardly a comprehensive response.

Almost every tertiary education institution has its own advice page for students. Monash University, for example, has a series of short YouTube videos on personal safety, with subtitles in Chinese (simplified and traditional), Indonesian and Malay. The “personal safety when out” video (Monash University, 2016) instructs riders to let people know where you are going and when you will be back; plan public transport journeys beforehand; immediately locate safety features in stations and vehicles; carry keys in your hand when you alight from transport; walk with friends or a group if possible; choose clear and well-lit paths; be alert and avoid texting and talking on your mobile phone; keep one ear free if listening to music; do not carry large amounts of cash; walk away from confrontations; and move to well-lit areas and alerting authorities when feeling threatened.

Study Melbourne (2018), the State Government website for prospective out of state and international students, advertises a bewildering array of apps that alert friends and police if you are in trouble, or simply allow you to be tracked. The onus is thus on riders as potential victims who must be constantly vigilant. They are in need of protection from “others” (authorities, friends, other travellers). This paternalistic trope is unfortunately still common in assault prevention education targeted to women (Fileborn and Vile-Gray 2017).

The overall impression from this plethora of safety instructions from different agencies, companies, and associations is of **a complex and relatively uncoordinated public transport system, with no clear mechanisms to report incidents and no accountability to respond to incidents**. While it is good to have multiple sources of information on personal safety from public transport operators, police, and universities, they are hardly consistent or empowering messages. Some of the information available to public transport users appears to increase choices and options, treating users as rational actors. For instance, the PTV information tells users what safety measures they have taken. However, there is no link to ‘customer feedback’ on that site to suggest improvements or make complaints, let alone links to the police or counselling services if you have had a distressing incident, a disturbing omission given the very low rates of reporting of sexual harassment and assault (AHRC 2017).

Other information, such as the advice offered by Monash University, puts a remarkable level of onus on potential victims to avoid being victimised, rather than saying what the organizations themselves are doing to improve safety, let alone encouraging any form of collective action for safety or putting the focus on offenders (see Whitzman 2007: 91-94 for a description of paternalistic versus empowerment approaches). Nowhere in any of these universities’ personal safety instructions for transport users is an acknowledgement that the

harasser or assailant might be known to the victim, such as a student at the same university, despite the evidence of the Australian Human Rights Commission (2017 – see below) that the majority of harassers and attackers on public transport are students at the same university as the victim. While Monash and the other universities have separate material on consent in a dating context, there were no instructions on how not to harass fellow students on transport, or materials on sanctions should that sort of incident be reported.

In the last two decades, there has been a remarkable shift in response to family violence. It is much easier to report violence by an intimate partner, police are treating assault within relationships much more seriously, there are public campaigns aimed at changing behaviour of assailants, and there is a coordinated prevention strategy (Victorian State Government 2017). **This kind of coordinated response, focusing on primary prevention and enabling women’s rights, has not yet occurred in relation to harassment and assault on public transport in Melbourne.**

2

TERTIARY STUDENTS' SAFETY ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT: AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH

Researchers on violence, harassment and fear have long identified intersectional differences in experience and impact, based on gender, age, abilities, sexuality and sexual identity, race/ethnicity, and income. While men are more likely to experience violence from strangers and acquaintances, women are more likely to experience repeated violence from intimate partners and other family members. Women are also more likely to be sexually harassed than men. Women are more likely to fear crime and violence and constrain their behaviours based on these concerns. Young people are more likely to be victims of violence and harassment but older people, particularly women, are more likely to constrain behaviours because of fear. People with disabilities face higher rates of violence from partners, family and caregivers as well as strangers and acquaintances. LGBTI+ people are more likely to experience violence and harassment, as are people from cultural/ religious/ ethnic minorities. Lower income people face constraints on housing, transport, and employment choices and often are more exposed to harassment and crime as a result of these constraints (Pain 2001, Moser 2004, Garcia-Moreno et al 2004, AHRC 2017).

Particularly over the past decade, this intersectional approach has been applied to safety in relation to active (walking and cycling), public, and private transport. Loukaitou-Sideris (2016) provides a typology of gendered barriers to equal transport mobility. These include cultural barriers, such as women being more likely to be responsible for providing care to children and elders, leading to trip-chaining (multiple stops, for instance, picking up a child at childcare or school on the way from work to home) and carrying bulky items such as groceries or prams. There can be economic barriers, such as less access to private cars and more expensive but better located housing. There can be physical barriers, including absence of land use mix and local services, leading to more complex trip chaining. And there can be psychological barriers, such as women being told that they bear responsibility for their own safety from male violence and harassment, leading to avoidance of some modes and routes, going out only during daylight or only accompanied by others. There are also differences by age, with young women and men more likely to be dependent on public transport. Women with disabilities, lesbians, and some racialized communities (for instance, Muslim women) are more likely to fear harassment and violence on public transport, and lower income women have fewer transport and housing choices and increased fear for that reason (see also Whitzman 2013, Ceccato 2017).

Barriers created by violence, harassment and fear have impacts on individuals, including avoidance of particular transport modes and routes, and foregoing educational and employment opportunities. Assault and harassment on transport can have physical and mental health, as well as economic, impacts (Ceccato 2017). **There are also collective or societal impacts to assaults and fear related to public transport.** Currie et al (2010) mentions the impact of media coverage of several attacks on Indian male students in 2009 on perceptions of safety on Melbourne transport, including an incident in May 2009 where a brutal beating of a student by five men in hoodies on a train carriage was captured by CCTV. Wade (2015) discusses the extensive coverage of these attacks in Indian media that year – 50 major reports between May and July 2009 alone. By the following year, 65% of Indians polled agreed with the statement that “Australia was a dangerous place for Indian students” (Wade 2015), and there was a 50% drop in Indian student visa applications in the second half of 2009, as compared to the same period in the previous year, after a senior Indian government official advised students not to study in Australia. The situation was not helped by the Victorian Police Commissioner advising Indian students to “look poor” (Wade 2015), a comment analogous to the victim blaming that often occurs after well-publicized attacks on women such as the murder of Eurydice Dixon.

The most comprehensive methodology on tertiary students' public transport safety comes from a recent study in New York City. The exploratory survey of 140 female undergraduate and postgraduate students at one central city college took a 'whole of journey' approach: walking from home to a public transport stop or station, waiting for public transport, riding on public transport, sometimes alighting and transferring (which may involve additional walking and waiting), and then walking from the public transport stop/station to college (Natarajan et al 2017: 171). A little over three quarters (77%) of students had experienced or witnessed sexual harassment using public transport, with 7% having been touched or groped. The students rated sexual harassment as less serious than assault, but more serious than robbery, theft or racial harassment – and given that only a little over a quarter of respondents identified as 'White' or European origin, many have presumably experienced both sexual and racial harassment (ibid: 173). Reported protective behaviours ranged from carrying pepper spray to wearing 'modest' clothes, avoiding travelling alone, not making eye contact, and constantly reporting to family and friends where they were going (ibid: 175). **A relevant aspect of recommendations for improvement was the emphasis on joint college/ transit authority responsibility for taking complaints seriously**, and having more visible police and public safety officers, and better lighting, throughout the entire journey (ibid: 177-178).

PREVIOUS AUSTRALIAN AND MELBOURNIAN RESEARCH

In 2016, a comprehensive national study engaged 30,000 students in all 39 Australian Universities (but not other tertiary education institutions). *Change the Course: National Report on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment at Australian Universities* (AHRC 2017) underscored the high prevalence of assault and harassment of young women in tertiary education. University settings included concerns related to the journey to and from education. Around half of all university students (51%) were sexually harassed on at least one occasion in 2016, and 6.9% of students were sexually assaulted on at least one occasion in 2015 or 2016 (AHRC 2017: 3). Women were twice as likely to have been sexually harassed, and three times as likely to have been sexually assaulted, as men (ibid: 6). The majority of students who were sexually assaulted or sexually harassed in a university setting in 2015 or 2016 said that the perpetrator of the most recent incident was male (71% for sexual harassment and 83% for sexual assault). Approximately half of students who were sexually harassed or assaulted in a university setting knew some or all of the perpetrators of the most recent incident, most commonly a fellow student (ibid: 8).

Gender was not the only basis for differences in victimization. Forty four percent of students who identified as bisexual and 38% of students who identified as gay, lesbian or homosexual were sexually harassed in a university setting in 2016, compared with 23% of students who identified as heterosexual. Trans and gender diverse students (45%) were more likely to have been sexually harassed in a university setting in 2016 than women and men. Though sample sizes were small, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students with disability were more likely to have been sexually harassed in 2016 than non-Indigenous students and students without disability. Domestic students (27%) were slightly more likely than international students (22%) to have been sexually harassed in a university setting in 2016. Increased risk of sexual assault followed similar patterns (ibid: 6-7).

The report included travelling to and from education as part of the university setting, and in fact **public transport was the most common location for sexual harassment** – 22% of incidents, as opposed to 14% on university grounds and 13% on a university teaching space. However, the usual stereotype of 'stranger danger' in public space was confounded by the fact that 57% of perpetrators of sexual harassment against women were identified as students from their university. Students who were sexually assaulted in a university setting in 2015 or 2016 were most likely to have experienced the most recent incident at a university or residence social event (21%), but public transport to or from university was the location in 15% of incidents (ibid: 7-8).

Forty of the 1849 written submissions described sexual harassment or assault on public transport, including staring, leering, unwanted physical contact, and offensive comments of a sexual nature. For instance, one woman described being slapped on the bottom by a fellow student as she was waiting to scan her ticket

before exiting a train station. Another, who regularly took a bus at the same time as her professor, was kissed without consent or permission. After that incident, she arranged for her sister to call her and stay on the phone throughout the 20-minute bus ride to avoid communicating with her professor (ibid: 70).

As is common in victimization surveys, only 2% of students who experienced sexual harassment and 9% of students who experienced sexual assault in a university setting in 2015 or 2016 said that they had made a formal report or complaint to the university (ibid: 11).

This study also builds on recent Melbourne-based research on tertiary students' safety in public transport. A 2009 survey of 239 young people aged 18-25 (79% of whom were full-time or part-time students and 71% of whom were female) was publicized through Monash University's student newspaper and related social media.

The survey found that 40% of respondents felt unsafe or very unsafe using public transport after dark.

Like our survey, there were specific questions asked about experiences and concerns in relation to trains, trams and buses. While 30% felt unsafe waiting at a train stop, and 23% felt unsafe travelling to and from trains, buses and especially trams were felt to be safer. Four per cent of respondents had been directly attacked, 27% had been threatened, over 30% had seen someone attacked, and over 60% had seen someone threatened. Over 70% had felt threatened at some time (Currie, Delbosc, and Mahmoud 2010: 4). The survey also found that availability, reliability and frequency rated as slightly more important than personal safety for respondents, and these factors were also rated lower in performance than safety during the day or night (Mahmoud and Currie 2010: 5). In terms of factors deterring young people from waiting at train stations, for instance, long waiting periods as well as 'people drinking alcohol/drunken people' and poor lighting were concerns (ibid: 6).

There was a low response rate for international students (only 7% of respondents), but these young people rated safety at night as a higher priority than local students (Mahmoud and Currie 2010: 6). The study found that more than gender, country of birth, or experiencing or witnessing violence, the most significant explanatory variable was 'feeling uncomfortable with strangers on public transport' (Currie, Delbosc, and Mahmoud 2010: 7). This finding suggests that the young people surveyed may have been unused to public transport, having relied on the 'mom taxi' to primary and secondary school, an increasing reality in a metropolis with poor linkage of public transport and education provision (Carver, Timperio and Crawford 2012). The first ranked measure to improve safety while waiting at train stations was visible security guards in those stations, and similarly, the first ranked measure on trains was increased security guards (Mahmoud and Currie 2010: 9). The overall emphasis was on protection, rather than empowerment.

A crowdsourced online mapping project in 2016 focused on the safety of young women aged 18-25 but attracted responses from older women as well as men. 'Free to Be', developed by Plan International, a children's charity, and Monash University, asked participants to identify safe and unsafe places in Melbourne through dropping colour coded pins on a map. The majority of the places identified were in central Melbourne. Of the 1300 pins, supported by 600 comments, 14% of all the annotations were connected in some way to public transport. Very few of these pins referred to buses, but over 60% referred to rail transport, and more than a third related to safety issues with trams (Plan International and XYX Lab, 2017). Another 2015 survey of 292 Melbourne women who had experienced sexual harassment found just over half of the participants indicated they commonly encountered harassment on public transport (Fileborn 2017).

The location that received the highest number of 'unsafe' pins and comments was Melbourne's main commuter rail station since the 19th century, Flinders Street. While commended for an increasing number of visible Public Security Officers, it also recorded the highest number of sexual harassment and assault (groping) incidents. The crowded nature of platforms and escalators was noted, as was the presence of seemingly inebriated people. A nearby train station, Melbourne Central, is below a busy shopping centre with an extensive food court and has a more modern and open design. Perhaps for those reasons, it is preferred to Flinders Street (Plan International, 2017). Other train stations with less frequent service were also described as unsafe, particularly those accessed via ramps and underpasses. At least one tram route (the 57 tram, from central Melbourne to the western suburbs) was targeted for particular animus, partly because of the 'unpredictable' behaviour of people who seemed drunk or on drugs. Participants described a number of avoidance or protective behaviours, ranging from taking an Uber rather than a train to get home at night, or speed-walking, keeping keys between the fingers, or having 000 (the Australian emergency phone number) on speed dial (Plan International and XYX Lab, 2017).

To summarize previous research, there is a growing interest in tertiary students' transport safety, and a growing understanding that the everyday micro-aggressions of harassment as well as experiences of assault shape constraints in behaviour, including avoiding perceived risk. There is a trend towards understanding public transport safety as encompassing a 'whole journey' from home to destination, and to consider transport from home to education as a responsibility that encompasses transport authorities, tertiary institutions, and all levels of government. Research suggests that differences in experiences based on gender, age, sexuality and sexual identity are clear cut. Differences based on race/ethnicity, income, and disability are more equivocal and/or under-explored.

3

FINDINGS - GENERAL

METHODS

As discussed in the first section, this survey is part of a 17-city study in four different continents, using the same survey instrument, entitled “Transit safety among college students: an international assessment”. The international study is led by Professor Vania Ceccato, from KTH Royal Institute of Technology, based in Stockholm, Sweden. The surveys were conducted during mid-2018 in:

- Europe: Stockholm and Haninge, Sweden; London, UK; Paris, France; Milan, Italy; Lisbon, Portugal;
- North and Central America: Los Angeles and San Jose, US; Mexico City, Mexico; Vancouver, Canada;
- South America: Sao Paulo and Rio Claro, Brazil; Bogota, Columbia;
- Asia- Pacific: Tokyo, Japan; Guangzhou, China; Manila, Philippines; Melbourne, Australia.

The Melbourne study made minor changes to the international survey instrument, substituting the Australian term ‘public transport’ for the American term ‘transit’, and including a set of questions about trams (the international instrument differentiated buses and heavy rail, but not tram or light rail). After receiving ethics approval from the University of Melbourne (ethics approval #1851286.1), the survey was online from April 15-June 30, 2018.

Links to the online survey were distributed using three mechanisms. First, we sent emails followed by phone calls to the student service centres of nine universities and nine TAFEs in Greater Melbourne. Second, we posted on local and international social media sites, including student organisations, urban and transport interest groups with heavy Melbourne usage. These include: “Urban Happiness”, a Melbourne-based urban planning and design group with over 5,000 members; “Where are Our Mates, Melbourne’s PT Ticket Wardens, Today?”, a 30,000 member group tracking the behaviour of tram and train ticket inspectors, who have a very poor reputation in Melbourne; and New Urbanist Memes for Transit Oriented Teens (NUMTOTs), an international transport interest group with over 100,000 members, many from Australia. In addition, the research assistant handed out flyers at the State Library and the main tram terminus for Melbourne University with a QR code.

The survey was created using Qualtrics, an online tool, which allowed easy statistical analysis of results.

GENDER, SEXUALITY, 'RACE' AND AGE OF RESPONDENTS

Eight hundred and eight students responded to the survey, but almost 300 did not complete the very long set of questions, which ended with demographic information. Of the 517 completed responses, a little more than two thirds were from women (Figure 1). This over-representation of women in terms of responses to safety surveys is common in both international (Natarajan 2017) and Melbourne (Currie, Delbosc, and Mahmoud 2010) studies, and points to greater concerns by women about personal safety.

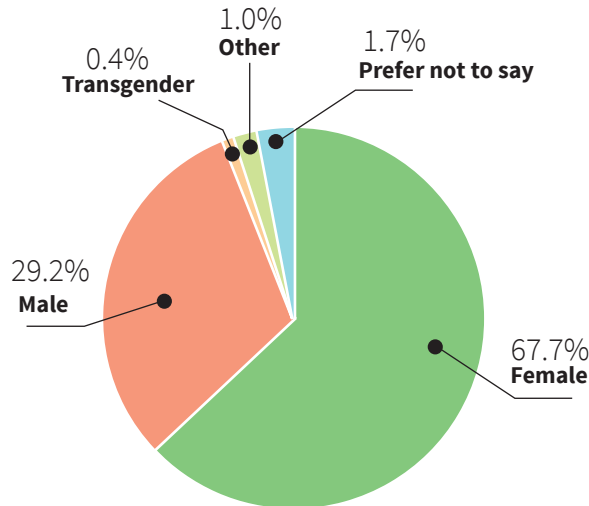


Figure 1. Responses by Gender

The survey asked respondents whether they identified as LGBTQI+, to which 21.5% replied yes (Figure 2). This is a higher proportion of sexual diversity than described in the 2016 Australian census (ABS 2018a and b). However, given that young people are more likely to self-define as gender and sexually diverse (ABS 2018b), and also that rates of concern around personal safety are higher amongst LGBTQI+ students (AHRC 2017), the over-representation of this group is not surprising.

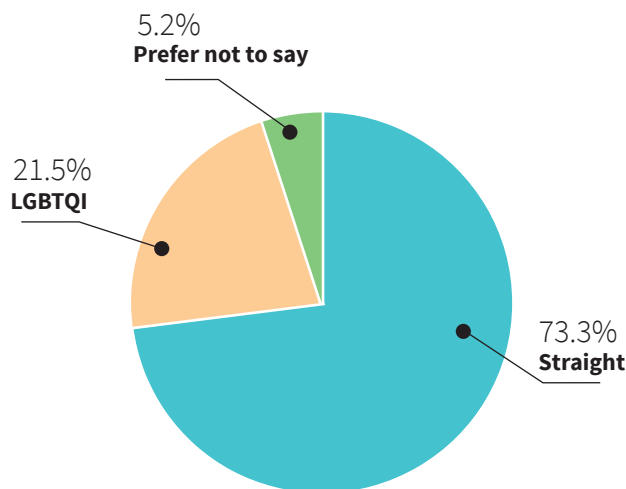


Figure 2. Responses by sexuality

A little over two thirds of students who responded to the survey reported their ethnicity as 'White/ Caucasian'. Of the remaining respondents, 23.8% identified as 'Asian' and 8.5% as other ethnicities, including indigenous Australian students (Figure 3). This is a roughly representative proportion of the student body in Australian universities (see Rizvi 2017 and Australian Government 2018).

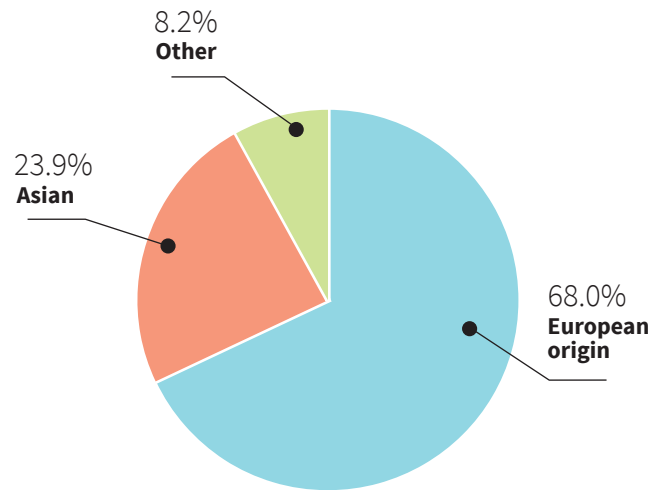


Figure 3. Ethnic origin of respondents

A slightly higher proportion of male Asian students responded to the survey than was the case for non-Asian respondents (34.1% of Asian respondents were male, as compared to 27.7% of all others). There was also a lower proportion of self-identifying LGBTQI+ Asian students (13.8%, as compared to 23.9% for all other students). An equal proportion of LGBTQI+ men and women responded to the survey.

As almost 90% of respondents were from the 18-29 age group, we did not include ‘age’ as part of our intersectional approach. There were a number of other limitations to the international survey, including not differentiating between local and international students, not asking about disabilities, not asking for postcode or other anonymised location of the respondents’ dwelling, and not asking which tertiary institution they attended.

It is worth mentioning that there were some strong negative reactions to the international survey instrument, particularly in relation to asking about ‘race’ of respondents (Figure 4). The most positive online responses to the survey came from international students’ associations, while the negative comments were clustered in the group New Urbanist Memes for Transit Oriented Teens.

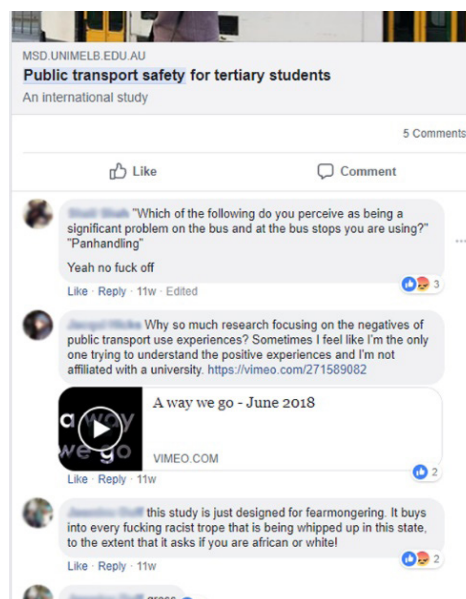


Figure 4. Negative comments in response to the survey

LOCATION OF RESPONDENTS' HOMES AND MODAL CHOICE

Unfortunately, the international survey did not ask respondents questions about their suburb/ neighbourhood or postcode, nor did it ask which tertiary institution they attended. An attempt to differentiate students' locations by known IP addresses is found in Figure 5. Most respondents' IP addresses were clustered in central Melbourne, with fewer respondents from outer suburbs. Several IP addresses were from other states and South-east Asia, but the survey was live in mid to late June, when many students go on vacation or visit their parents.

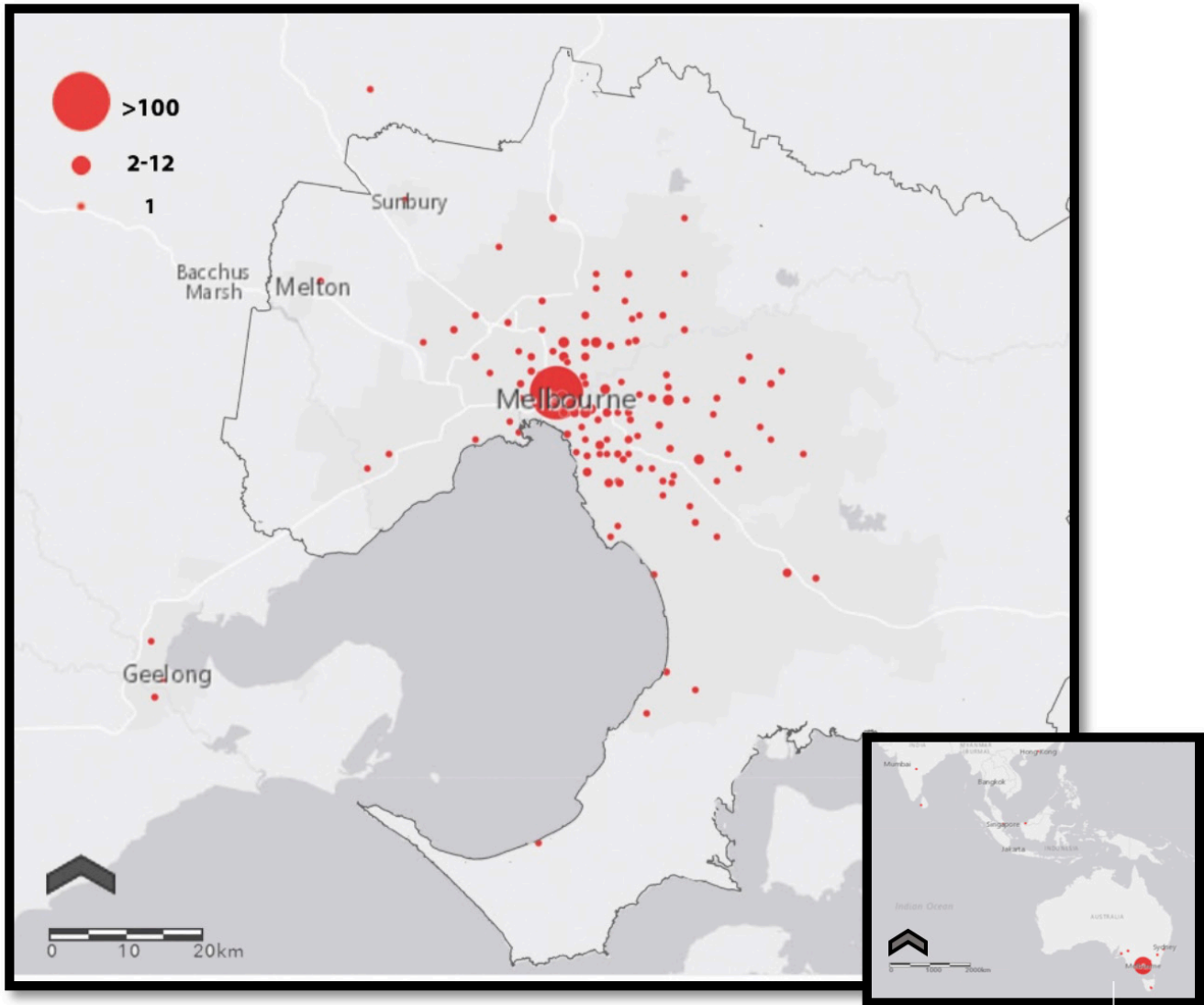


Figure 5. Respondent locations according to IP addresses

The central Melbourne home location of many students is suggested by the fact that the most commonly used mode of public transport was trams (figure 6): 60.9% of respondents use them frequently (3 or more times a week). Trains were the second most common public transport mode, with 49.5% of respondents using trains frequently. Only 27.5% of respondents use buses frequently, and 38.4% never used buses.

These results differ from the general population in Melbourne in two significant ways. First, tertiary students appear to use public transport much more frequently than the general population, where only 18% use public transport for their ‘journey to work’ (although the question asked is different - our survey asked about all journeys, not just journey to study) (ABS 2018). This finding is similar to other Australian studies, which find that young people are the most likely group to take public transport to work or study (ABS 2014). Second, trains are the most used public transport mode for the general population. The surveyed students’ preference for trams is not surprising, given the respondents’ IP addresses were clustered in the inner suburbs, where tram service is concentrated. The relatively low use of buses is typical of the Greater Melbourne population, where previous studies have shown that poor frequency is particularly resented by tertiary students (PTUA 2018).

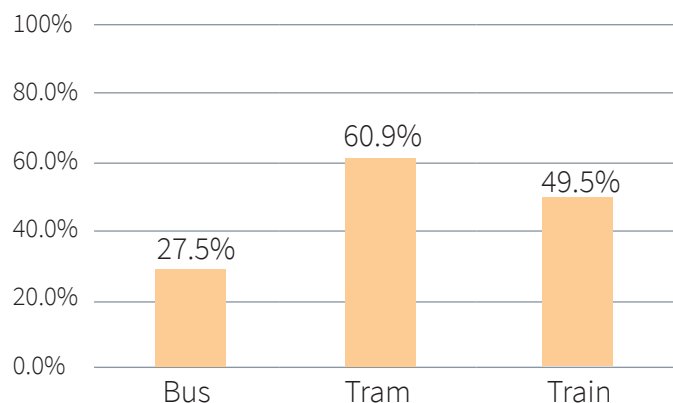


Figure 6. Frequent (3 times a week or more) use of public transport, by mode

Men were slightly more likely than women to use each public transport mode frequently (Figure 7). LGBTQ+ students (68.5%) and Asian students (70.7%) were more likely than other students to use trams frequently, suggesting that they may be more likely to live in central city locations serviced by trams.

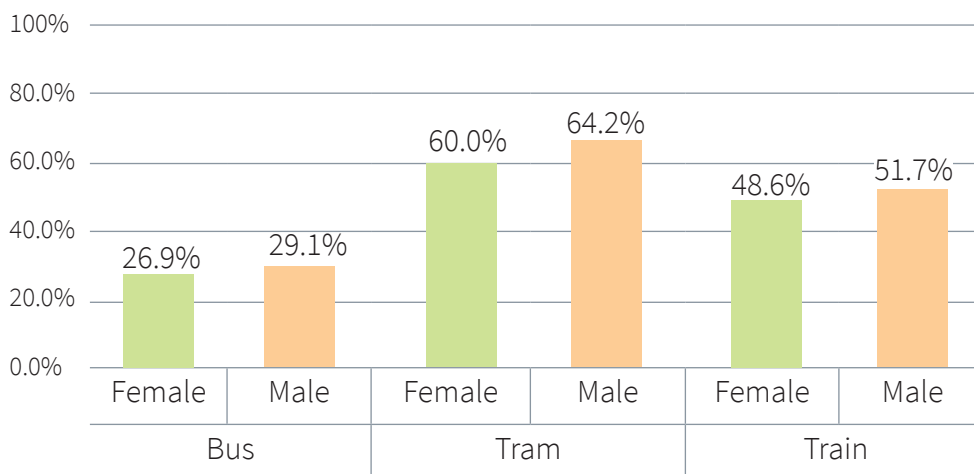


Figure 7. Gender Differences, frequent use of public transport

Turning to private transport options, about one in four of students say they use cars at least three times per week, with a significant difference between male (21.2%) and female (27.1%) respondents (Figure 8). There is significantly less car use amongst LGBTQI+ (21.6%) and Asian (12.2%) students. Car use figures are much lower than the general population for driving to work in Greater Melbourne, 77% (ABS 2018), although the question

asked is different (asking about all journeys, not only the journey to work/ study). A much higher proportion (45.3% of respondents) do not own cars than the general population of Greater Melbourne, where only 8.5% of households do not own one vehicle (.id 2018). This again points to absence of choices for tertiary students, although some might still live at their parents' home and have occasional access to a family vehicle, and others might be part of car-sharing schemes.

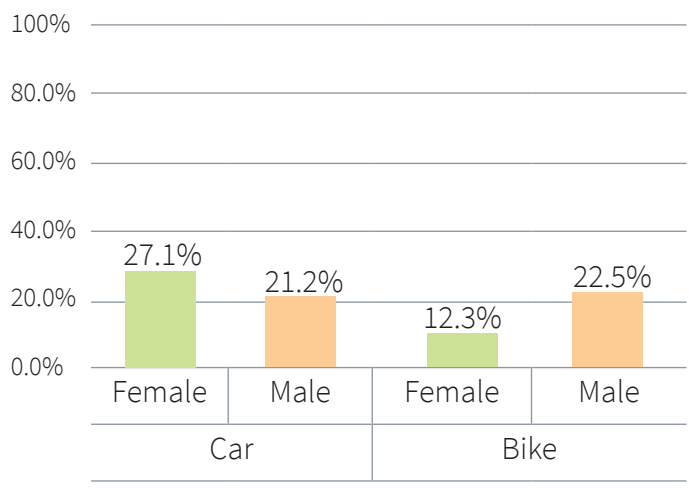


Figure 8. Private transport use by gender: ‘frequent’ (3 or more times a week) travel by car and bicycle

Women use cars frequently much more than men, while the obverse is true of bicycles. This finding is in line with other Australian studies that show that women are more likely to drive passenger vehicles to work or study than men (ABS 2014), and a recent Sydney study that found that only 26% of cyclists identified as female, with women having greater concerns about traffic safety (Bicycle NSW 2016). Again, LGBTQI+ (12.6%) and Asian (10.6%) students were less likely than other students to frequently ride bicycles.

There is also a clear gender difference in terms of frequent (in this case, at least once a week) use of taxis and ridesharing services such as Uber (Figure 9). There is still much less use of taxis and rideshares than other forms of transport, and the likelihood is that these services are used at night, rather than a daytime journey to study. However, the reality of taxis and ride sharing being an increasingly popular student option is recognised by Study Melbourne, the State Government website, which talks about “many people using this form of transport for special occasions, at night, in bad weather or if the destination is not close to public transport.” (Study Melbourne 2018b). Women are less likely to use taxis and more likely to use ridesharing services than men. LGBTQI+ students (17.1%) were most likely to frequently use ridesharing, which may suggest greater concerns around night time safety. Asian students (9.8%) were less likely than other students to use ridesharing services.

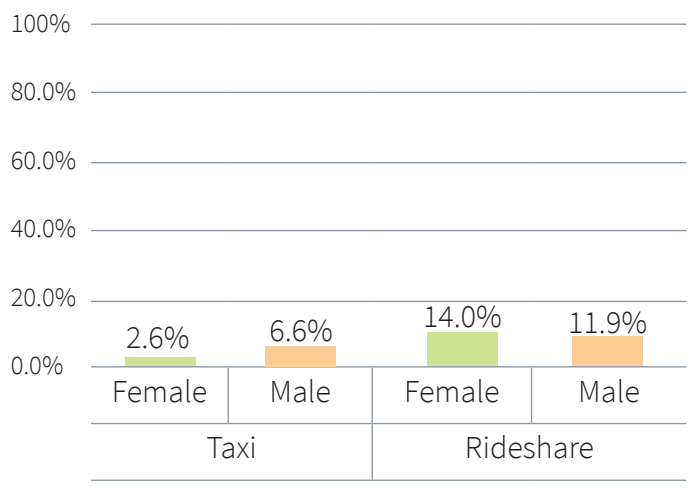


Figure 9. Private Transport: frequent (once a week or more) Taxi and Rideshare use

Turning to distance between home and study, only 7.7% of survey respondents have a one-way commuting time between home and educational institution of less than 15 minutes, as compared to over 40% of the general Australian population. A little over one in five students (20.9%) take between 15 and 30 minutes to get from home to study, as opposed to 29% of the general Australian population's work journeys. One third (33.3%) of survey respondents report one-way commuting times of between 30 minutes and an hour and another third (33.3%) report commuting times of between one and two hours, as compared to about 10% each of the general Australian population (BITRE 2016). A number of respondents pointed out that they do not attend their educational institution on a daily basis, and most have paid employment as well as study. So the location of their home may be chosen not for proximity to study, but by where their parents are living, where they work, or where housing is least expensive.

The stereotype of traffic congestion - drivers sitting around in their cars on a road or highway - is not borne out by Australian evidence: public transport is much slower, and trips take much longer, than cars. The longest commutes – both in terms of distance and trip length – are more common in public transport users living on the urban fringe (BITRE 2016). **Our survey results point to a very high level of transport disadvantage amongst the students who were surveyed: without the traditional private option of the automobile and with infrequent and slow public transport options leading to long journeys to study.** Given the clustering of both students' residences and tertiary institutions within central Melbourne, where public transport provision is much better than outer suburbs, this indicates that public transport needs improvement in terms of speed and frequency.

Comments on the survey back up this sense of transport disadvantage and absence of choice. When asked why they take the train, one student said:

I don't have a choice, I have to, even when there are replacement buses adding an extra hour to my journey.

Another student summarized why she takes the bus:

The dangerous factors like sexual harassment and victimisation are a concern to me, but on the other hand, I'm poor and don't have options, so I have to deal with it.

Given the clustering of respondents within 15 km of central Melbourne, where several tertiary institutions are clustered, and the slow speed of public transport, it is surprising only 15.3% of respondents say they use bicycles frequently. 40.8% of respondents said they did not own bicycles. Fear of collisions was the main reason given for not owning a bicycle. But some comments left by respondents also mention slow speeds, distance, weather, and topography, for example:

I am super unfit, my gears don't work and there's a hill in my way

4

FINDINGS: EXPERIENCES OF VICTIMIZATION AND FEAR

EXPERIENCES OF VICTIMIZATION

The survey asked: “In the last three years have you experienced any of the following while travelling on, heading to, or waiting for the [train/ tram/ bus]” followed by a list of harassing and assaultive behaviors. These behaviors ranged from staring, whistling and sexual gestures; to unwanted sexual and more generally abusive comments; through to genital exposure and masturbation; contact such as groping or kissing without consent; and stalking (being followed off public transport).

Again, one of the limitations of a standard international survey is that intersectionality is somewhat lacking in the questions asked. There are no questions about homophobic or racist comments, and the stalking question assumed that the perpetrator was a stranger (whereas the AHRC survey suggested that many perpetrators were known to be fellow students).

Figure 10 shows different experiences by gender, sexuality and ethnicity. **Four-fifths of women (79.4%) and the same proportion of LGBTQI + students reported having been victims of harassment, groping or stalking over the past three years.** These findings are in line with the recent Australian study of university students (AHRC 2017) which found that 63% of female students and 35% of male students reported having been harassed over the previous year.

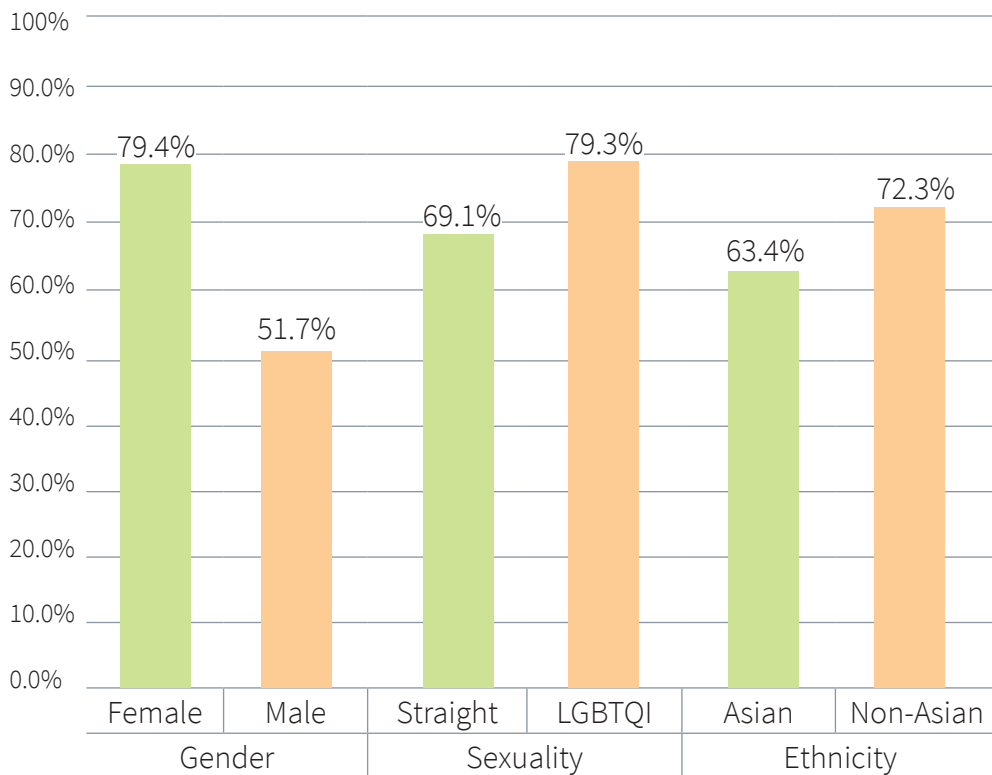


Figure 10. Victimization on public transport over past three years, by gender, sexuality and ethnicity

Unsurprisingly, there is a big difference between women and men, but more than **half of men have been subject to unwanted staring, gestures, comments and sexual contact on public transport**. While rates of sexual harassment are lower amongst Asian than other students, it should be remembered that this cohort had a higher proportion of men and a lower proportion of self-identified LGBTQI+ students.

A little more than two percent of respondents (11 women and one man), said that they had been victims of aggravated assault, robbery or rape on the public transport system over the past three years. A little less than four percent (3.9% or 20 students) reported they had been victims of theft or jewelry snatching, 12 women and 8 men.

Witnessing or knowing someone who has been a victim can also have a significant impact. A little more than one in ten respondents (10.3%) said they knew of someone who had been a victim of aggravated assault, robbery or rape on the public transport system over the past three years.

One LGBTQI+ woman reported:

I was there when a lady was raped in Sunshine train station and had to give a witness report. I had a friend who saw a stabbing at Flinders Street and I know some of the security guards from Southern Cross have some stories.... Public transport is dangerous for everyone and it's not affordable.

A man reported seeing an attempted stabbing on the train, and another witnessed someone trying to steal a schoolkid's bag on the platform while waiting for a train.

A man reported

Have witnessed younger women, uncomfortable, trapped in "conversation" with creepy men

There appeared to be no significant differences in frequency of victimization by transport mode.

Turning now to the types of victimization, Figure 11 shows different experiences by gender. Overall, sexual and abusive comments were most frequent, especially amongst men. However, almost a third of women reported being victims of stalking.

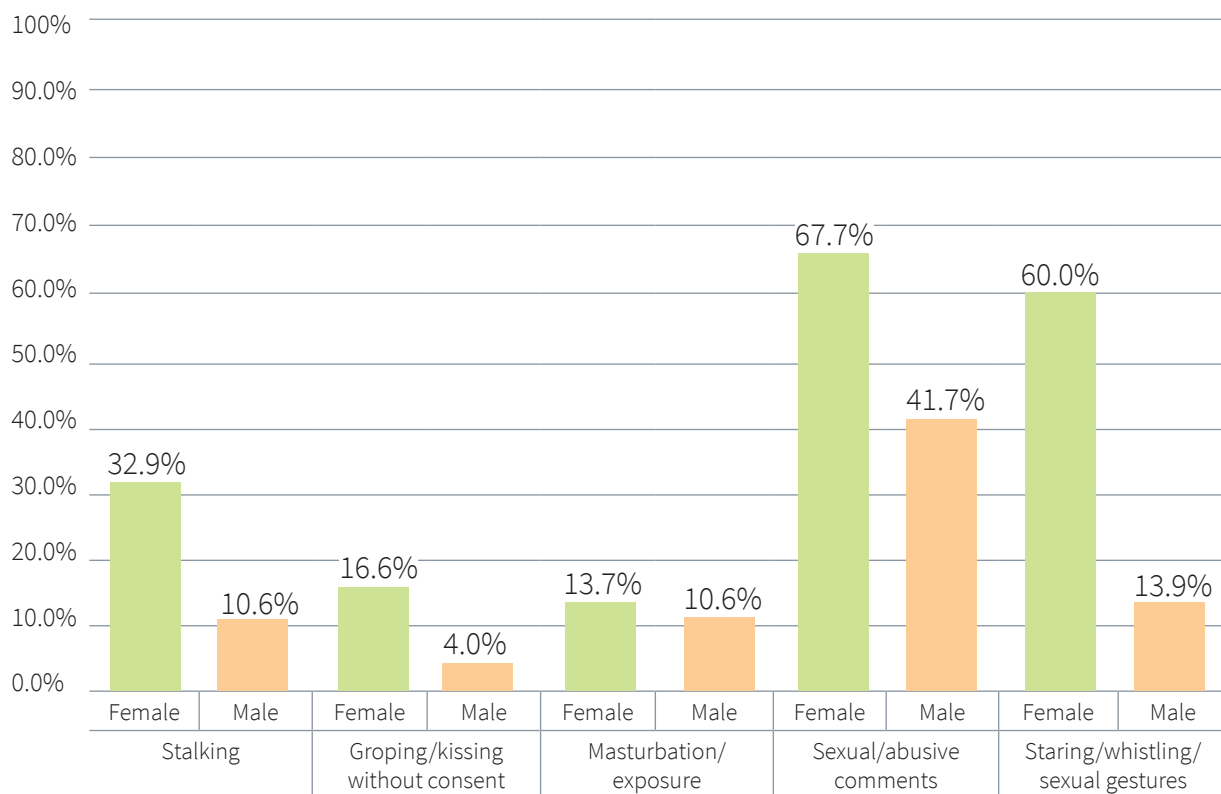


Figure 11. Types of Victimization by Gender.

In terms of ‘other’ experiences, examples provided by respondents include:

- **Theft/ Robbery:** Several people reported having their bags snatched; one Asian woman said cash was taken from her pocket while walking to the train station
- **Assault:** A man reported being ‘bashed’ on a bus
- **Harassment:** A woman reported a man taking photographs of her without her consent while ‘groping’ himself; another gave the example *asking really personal questions and making unwanted advances*
- **Harassment:** A man reported *Someone (I think on drugs) telling me to look out the window while he sat behind me and laughed maniacally (I know that sounds a bit stupid, but it was quite unnerving)*; personal threats; racist comments directed at them

WITNESSING AND REPORTING VICTIMISATION

Even though these experiences of victimization have powerful impacts on fear and avoidance behaviours, the reactions of both witnesses and authorities in Greater Melbourne tends to minimize their severity.

Of the majority of public transport users who experienced some form of sexually-related victimisation, 48.7% said that incident was witnessed by at least one person. However, as Figure 12 shows, the most common reaction was to pretend not to see, or to do nothing.

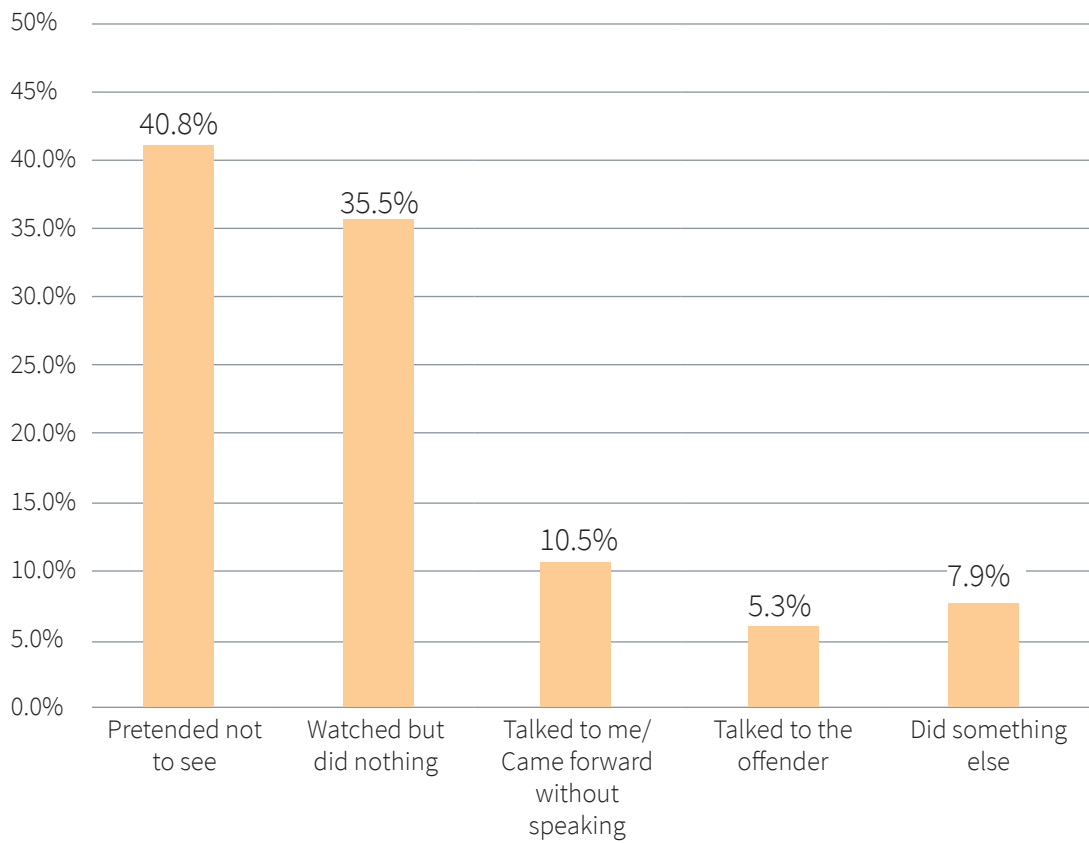


Figure 12. Reaction of witnesses, according to victims

As is common in similar Australian studies (e.g. AHRC 2017), only 5.7% of victims reported the incident to the police, someone in the transport system (driver, Public Security Officer, or station attendant), and/or Public Transport Victoria. Sometimes the incident was reported to multiple authorities. Figure 13 provides reasons why 94.3% of incidents were not reported; multiple reasons could be selected. The most common reason was that it was ‘not serious enough’ but almost half said they did not expect any follow up.

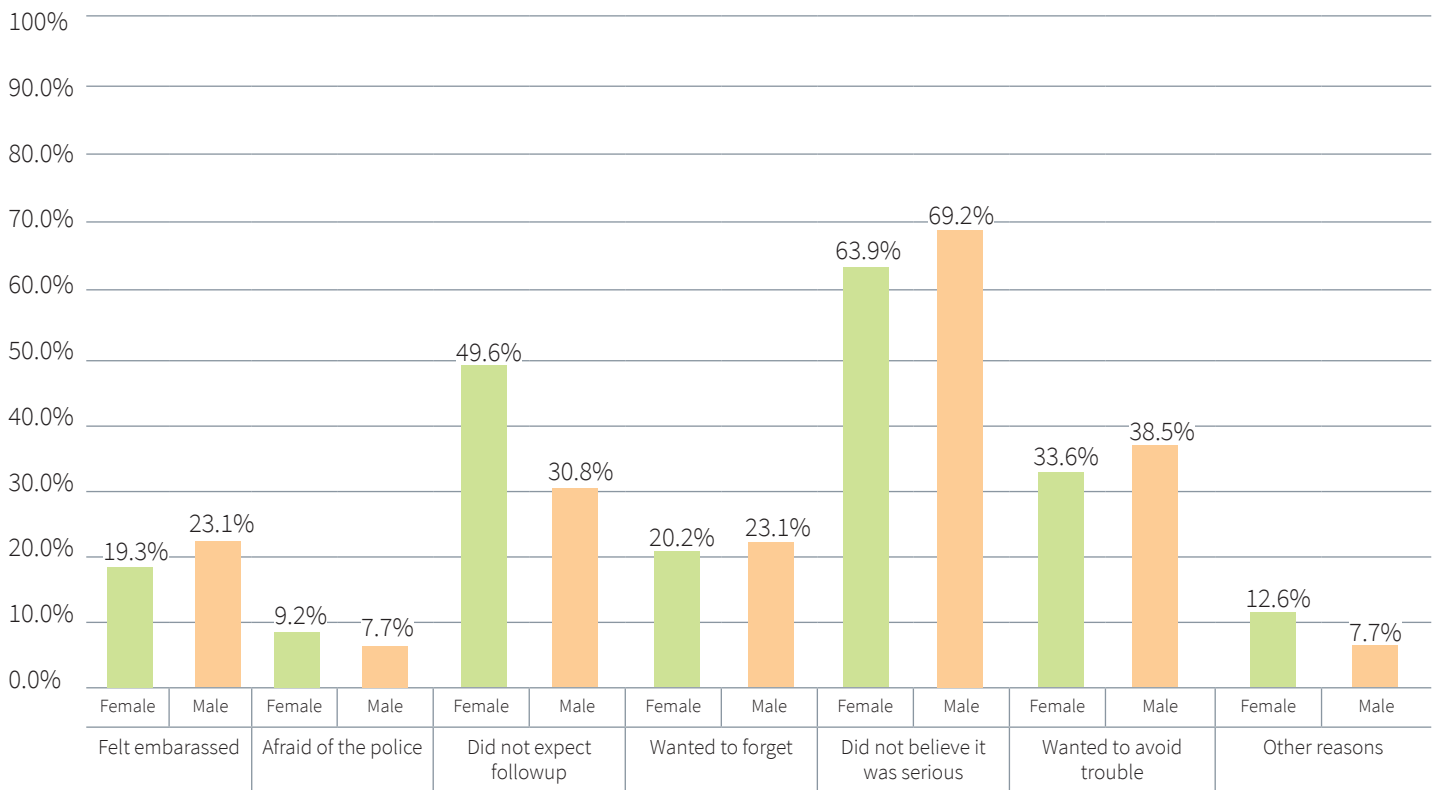


Figure 13. Reasons why incident was not reported, by gender

Intersectionality matters in terms of reasons for not reporting victimization. A majority (60.5%) of LGBTQI+ students and 49.6% of women students (but only 30.8% of men) said that they did not expect any follow-up. Half (52.6%) of LGBTQI+ students, as compared to 69.6% of non-LGBTQI+ students, said that they did not believe the incident was serious enough. A higher proportion of Asian students (40.7%) than non-Asian (34.5%) students said they wanted to avoid trouble. A little less than a third of LGBTQI+ students (31.6%), as compared to 15.2% of non-LGBTQI+ students, said they felt too embarrassed to report.

Perhaps most disturbingly, more than one in five LGBTQI+ students (21.1%), said they did not report crime because they were afraid of the police, as compared to 7.6% of non-LGBTQI+ students. Five respondents reported victimization by Public Safety Officers, which echoes complaints on the Facebook group dedicated to tracking public transport inspectors:

PSOs and police don't make everyone feel safer. In some cases, the opposite.

A woman who did not provide her sexuality stated:

Frankly I don't think they'd care at all. I know people who've been treated like garbage and basically been dismissed by the authorities.

This impression is backed up by the experience of a queer woman who did report a crime:

I reported my wallet theft to the tram driver and he said I was careless and that there isn't much the police can do. I should just go home and report to my bank that it was missing.

FEAR AND AVOIDANCE

Only 2.9% of women, and 2.6% of men report 'rarely' or 'never' safe on public transport during the day. After dark, it is a different story. 45.1% of women and 11.3% of men say they 'rarely' or 'never' feel unsafe on at least one mode of public transport.

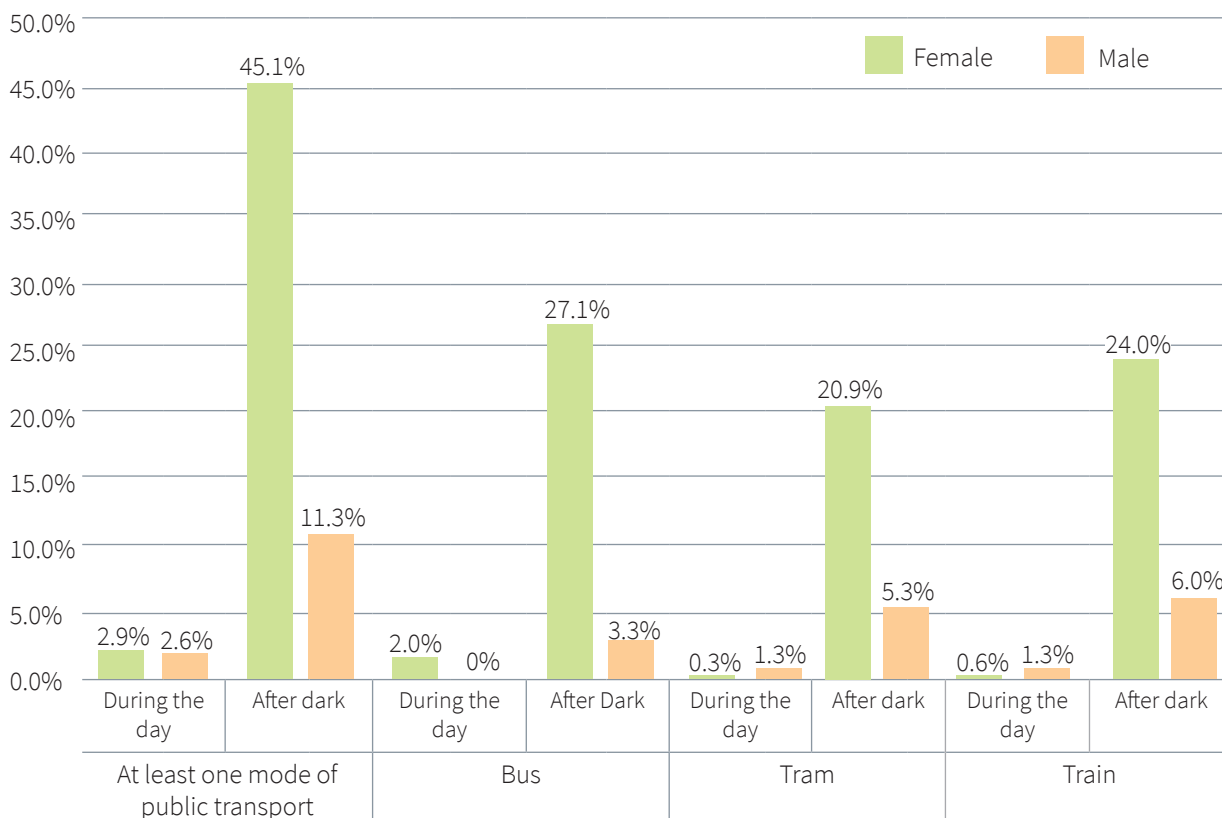


Figure 14. People reported feeling unsafe

This contrasts sharply with private transport options (Figure 15), perhaps explaining why women might prefer to drive or use rideshare.

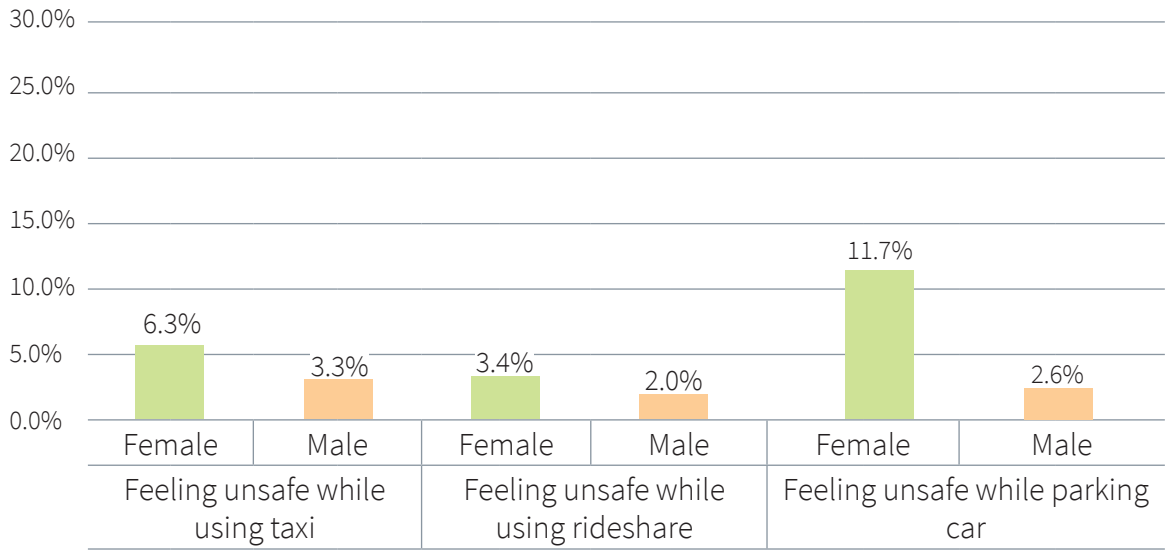


Figure 15. Rarely or never safe by private transport mode

Half the students (50.7%) said they felt the need for precautionary behaviours on public transport (see Figure 16). Women were more likely to take all forms of precautions, including: travelling only during daylight hours on public transport, travelling with someone, avoiding certain lines or stops, taking precautions in clothes and jewellery. A plethora of other precautions noted by respondents included: maintaining constant alertness (not using headphones, ‘just watching my back’, ‘making sure no one sees me use the stop button or cable’, making sure not to fall asleep or zone out), ensuring that phones are charged before using public transport, not taking out phones or other electronic devices, having a phone in hand at all times, remaining on the phone with a friend through the journey, constantly checking in with friends on phones, having a friend meet me at the bus stop, texting friends if someone is following me or making comments, using apps that alert friends if they are not home at a set time... the list goes on and on.

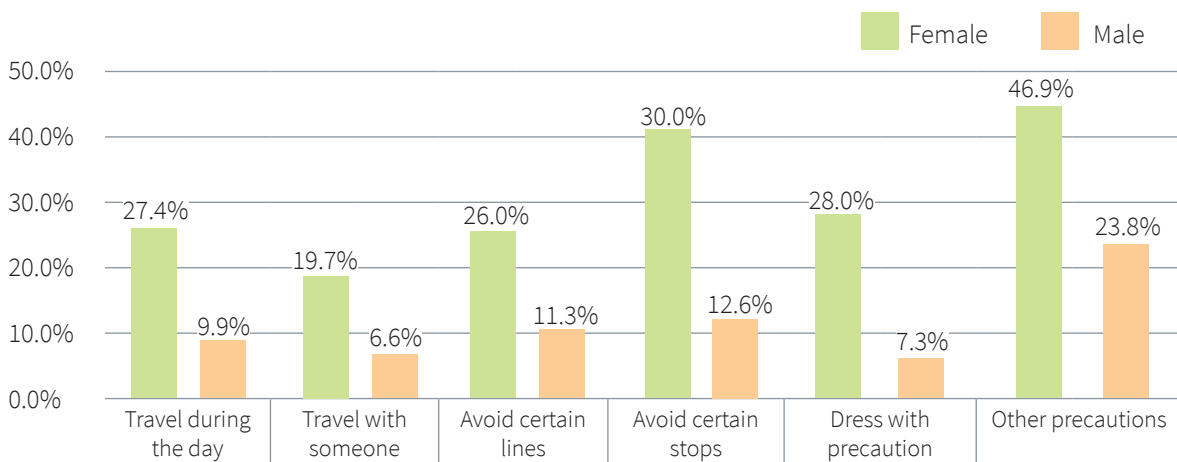


Figure 16. Precautionary behaviours

One female bus rider said her precautions include:

Maintain a level of alertness and sitting near a window, avoiding making eye contact with people who seem potentially threatening. Not sitting at the back at night.

Another tries to maintain a 'do not approach me' stance:

As much as possible travelling during light hours but also how I behave on the tram. Wearing large headphones and crossing my arms. Non-verbal cues that tell people please don't approach I'm not in the mood.

SAFETY AND TRANSPORT MODE CHOICE

Despite the high rates of victimization and fear, and numerous precautionary behaviours, safety was not the foremost concern in not taking public transport more often, for either women or men (Figure 17). Across all modes, concerns about service predominated: unreliable and infrequent service, indirect services that did not take riders where they wanted to go or required many transfers, overcrowded services, and slow journey times. Concerns about overcrowding were expressed by 43.5% of tram users, concerns about infrequent service and not going where riders wanted to go predominated on trains, while concerns about infrequent and slow services predominated on buses. Cost of tickets was particularly a concern on trams, perhaps because they go shorter distances than trains or buses for the same price. Fear of victimization was higher on trains and trams than buses. Concerns about traffic accidents, dirty environments, or lack of information about schedules were infrequently expressed in the Melbourne survey.

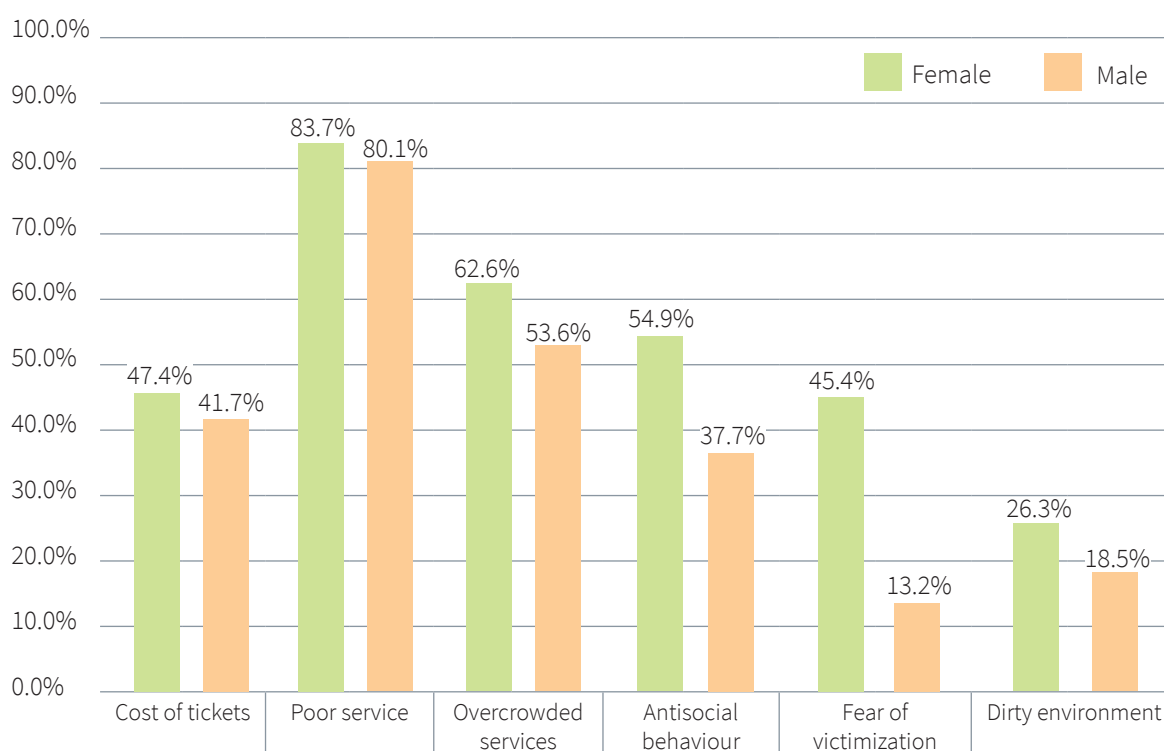


Figure 17. Reasons for not using public transport more often

However, cost, quality of service, overcrowding and safety interact in complex ways. Overcrowding appears to bother women more than men, possibly because some forms of harassment (such as groping in crowded spaces) are easier to commit when people are packed closely together. Similarly, anti-social behaviour may be much more of a trigger to women, who are continually told to be alert to the early warning signs of sexual assault. Lack of frequency and unreliability of buses and trains can lead to situations where women are alone at train stations or bus stops, and perhaps more vulnerable to harassment or attack. Respondents pointed out that if multiple passengers share a ride, it may be less costly as well as safer and more convenient than public transport, especially at night and for shorter distances.

PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL CONCERNS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Respondents were asked about physical design concerns in buses and bus stops, trains and train stations and tram and tram stops. Women had higher levels of concern around design than men, and bus stops in general were considered more of a problem than tram or train stations. When it came to social concerns, drunk people and obscene language were considered a problem in all modes, particularly trams, and women were more concerned than men.

Respondents were asked what improvements to public transport systems would make them feel safer. As is often the case in these kinds of surveys, there was an emphasis on lighting, CCTV and formal surveillance by police and PSOs. More than half (57.3%) of respondents asked for more lighting on tram platforms, with slightly smaller proportions requesting better lighting in trains and on bus stops. Almost fifty percent recommended CCTV on tram platforms and in trains. The third most common recommendation was digital timetables at bus and tram stops. There were no significant differences by gender, sexuality or 'race' in these recommendations.

A much lower proportion recommended 'women only' trains, trams or buses. One respondent pointed out that they would be exclusionary towards LGBTQI+ students.

5

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this report, we have taken a rights-based approach to mobility and security of the person. The survey shows unacceptably high levels of victimization on public transport, leading to endemic fear and a daunting range of precautionary behaviours taken, particularly by women and LGBTI+ students. This climate of everyday harassment acts as a barrier to free and equal enjoyment of educational, working and recreational opportunities for individuals. It also poses a collective threat to Melbourne as a liveable city, its economic vitality as a ‘knowledge city’, and its environmental aspirations of weaning the city off a remarkably high level of car dependence.

The Melbourne survey was part of a ground-breaking study that allows international comparison of tertiary students’ experiences on public transport.

But having a consistent international survey instrument has led to some important questions not being answered by this survey. These limitations include: looking at differences between local and international students, asking whether the victim knew the offender or at least their university (as suggested by AHRC 2017), including disability and indigeneity as intersectional factors, and obtaining more detail as to location of home and educational institutions. We would encourage that this survey be one step in an ongoing research-education-justice campaign to improve tertiary students’ safety on public transport.

Even with these limitations, the survey results include some important findings for Victoria as ‘the education state’ and Melbourne as ‘a knowledge city’.

We asked four research questions: about rates of victimisation and fear; the extent to which gender, sexuality and ethnicity intersect to inform experiences of victimisation and fear; the consequences in terms of avoidance or mode substitution; and whose responsibility is it to address these issues.

RATES OF SELF-REPORTED VICTIMISATION AND FEAR EXPERIENCED BY TERTIARY STUDENTS

The Melbourne survey found that four-fifths of women, and four-fifths of LGBTIQI+ students (79.4% and 79.3% respectively), had experienced some form of sexually-related victimisation in the past three years. Over half (51.7%) of male students had experienced some form of sexually-related victimization. While unwanted sexual overtures and abusive comments were the most common form of victimisation, 13.7% of women reported exposure or being confronted with masturbating men, 16.6% of women reported having been groped, kissed, or otherwise touched without consent, and 32.9% of women reported having been followed or stalked in relation to their journey. A little under 4% of tertiary students reported having been the victims of theft or pickpocketing, while a little over 2% had been victims of aggravated assault, rape, or robbery.

THE INFLUENCES OF GENDER, SEXUALITY AND ETHNICITY

A substantial enough proportion of the 517 respondents indicated that they were male, LGBTQI+ or of Asian origin to allow some analysis of the intersections of gender, sexuality and ethnicity. Intersectional analysis in relation to age, disability, or indigeneity was impossible, due to the limitations of the survey, or its responses in the case of age.

Asian students were more likely to be users of trams than other students, and less likely to be train or bus passengers, drive, ride a bicycle, or use Uber. This suggests that homes and study places were more likely to be in the parts of central Melbourne better served by trams. They were slightly less likely to have experienced victimisation than non-Asian students (but were less likely to be female and/or LGBTQI+ than non-Asians, so this may have been a factor). They were less likely to report victimization to the police, and more likely to say that it was because they 'wanted to avoid trouble'.

Queer women were most likely to have been victimized, and queer men were less likely than straight women but more likely than straight men, to have been victimized. LGBTQI+ students were also most likely to know someone who had been a victim of aggravated assault, rape or robbery, and to have had unpleasant experiences when reporting crime.

CONSEQUENCES OF VICTIMIZATION AND FEAR

Women as well as men were more likely to cite concerns about infrequent, unreliable, slow, and/or overcrowded public transport service than safety concerns as reasons they do not take public transport more often. And indeed, the survey respondents reflected the reality of tertiary students' lives, in having much longer and more frustrating journeys than is common for other Australians because of public transport dependence. Local tertiary students are trapped between being forced to continue to live with parents, or renting in suburbs where public transport service is infrequent, unreliable and slow. Local and international students are forced to pay very high rents in the central city, where public transport is still slow, but perhaps more convenient.

Women were much more likely than men to cite safety concerns as a reason to avoid public transport. They are more likely to drive and to use ridesharing services as a form of mode substitution. Women were also much more likely to undertake a dizzying array of self-policing mechanisms in response to victimization and fear: from avoiding certain stops and lines, to arranging for escorts home from stops, travelling in a group, constantly texting or using apps to have friends track movements, or simply maintaining constant vigilance. There is, of course, a correlation between infrequent services and long waits at bus, train and tram stops that are felt to be dark and isolated.

WHOSE PROBLEM IS IT AND WHAT ARE THE SOLUTIONS?

As discussed in the first section, police, governments, private transport franchisees and tertiary institutions are all aware of the climate of fear and victimization on public transport. Their safety messages tend to reinforce the message that it is transport users' responsibility to ensure their own safety.

There are precedents for a better approach. In 2015, Transport for London, in partnership with the police, launched its 'Report it to Stop it' campaign. This campaign built on a series of videos that encourage women to come forward in reporting just the kind of behaviour discussed in this report: unwanted sexualised staring, remarks, groping, and stalking on public transport. The videos also show the consequences of reporting, with a man being identified and arrested for sexual harassment. There is a designated reporting hotline that can be called or texted 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The hotline is part of positive messaging from Transport for London (2018)

90% of unwanted sexual behaviour on London transport goes unreported. We want you to feel confident on your journey and know exactly where to turn if you need help. If you experience anything that makes you feel uncomfortable, you can report by text or phone.

Text what, where and when to 61016 or call 101.

You'll get a reply within 24 hours.

Your assigned officer will be there to help you through the process.

All of the messaging is specific, empowering and enabling, in stark contrast to the messaging currently employed in Melbourne around safety on public transport:

You can report anything of a sexual nature, including rubbing, groping, masturbation, leering, sexual comments, indecent acts, or someone taking photos of you of a sexual nature without your consent. You don't have to prove that it was a criminal offence or intentional to report it, we can investigate that for you.

The British Transport Police (2017) emphasize that they will follow up and prosecute offenders

A new phase of the campaign 'Every Report Builds a Picture' has been launched which emphasises how your report can make a difference – by collating sexual offences on the railway we can use these to piece together the identity of the offender and bring them to justice.

The campaign was updated after research showed that many people weren't sure anything could be done to catch an offender once a report of unwanted sexual behaviour had been made to the police.

'Every Report Builds a Picture' demonstrates how multiple reports form a 'picture' of the offender and can lead to their arrest and prosecution.

If you experience unwanted sexual behaviour we want you to report it.

No incident or detail is too small or trivial – report anything that makes you feel uncomfortable.

What has happened is not your fault. We will always take you seriously and treat you with respect.

In the first year, the campaign led to a 36% increase in reporting and a 40% increase in criminal charges related to harassment on public transport. Moreover, an evaluation after the first year found that 84% of women respondents agreed that the campaign “made me feel more confident to take action against unwanted sexual behaviour if it occurred” (Campaign 2018).

There are certainly limitations to a criminal justice response to harassment and assault on public transport: encounters can be fleeting, it may be difficult to identify offenders, and it is certainly possible that justice responses will unfairly target marginalised and low-income people (Fileborn and Vera-Gray 2017). Even with these limitations and consequences, their overall impact would be positive. The campaigns take public harassment and assaults seriously, put the onus on the offender to change his behaviour, and indicate that institutions are ready to take everyday misogynistic behaviour seriously. In short, they exhibit a rights-based approach.

We cannot know whether victims knew offenders in this survey but do know from the recent Australian university survey (AHRC 2017) that the two are often from the same institution of higher education. This should inform efforts to improve prevention and response.

We know that racist attacks on Indian students publicized in 2009 had real and immediate impacts on student enrolment and university finances. Whether it is because of human rights or to maintain the engine of economic growth that is tertiary education, it is the responsibility of the Victorian government (PTV, police) AND tertiary institutions to address harassment, crime and fear.

Our first recommendation is that the Victorian State Government work with their own agencies (Victorian Police, Public Transport Victoria, V/Line), the public transport franchisees (Yarra Trams, Metro Trains and the bus companies), and all 18 tertiary institutions in Greater Melbourne to undertake a coordinated campaign to encourage better reporting of sexually related crimes on public transport.

This would include investing in a common hotline, creating publicity materials (including posters, videos, ad campaigns) that encourage reporting by both victims and witnesses, and employing consistent messaging on all these organisations’ websites that put the onus for safety where it belongs: on offenders not to offend, and on the institutions to respond appropriately to offences. This should include public education on consequences of offences.

Our second recommendation is that women and men who report harassment and crime on public transport should be treated respectfully, and their concerns treated seriously. All reports should be immediately followed up on, and all efforts made to arrest, charge and convict offenders. This should entail training of all Public Security and Authorised Officers, drivers, and station attendants in appropriate ways to respond to complaints and concerns from public transport users.

Our third recommendation is that tertiary educational institutions have a role to play in cases where offenders as well as victims are student, including very clear messaging on campus that offences on public transport as well as on campus are an institutional responsibility.

Our final recommendation is that state government recognize that infrequent, unreliable and inadequate services have impacts on both mobility and safety of populations that have lower incomes and less access to cars, including tertiary students. They should consider partnering with ride-sharing services to make ‘the last kilometre’ home from some public transport stops safer and more secure, and also recognize that CCTV, lighting, and officers on trains without a coordinated campaign to address victimization and fear at its root causes is no longer enough.

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