Toolkit for Gender-Sensitive Data

IMPROVING THE SAFETY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT
This toolkit is one of four designed by the TramLab team to help improve public transport safety for women and girls. These, alongside a substantive report, have been developed for the Victorian State Government, public transport service providers and policy makers, and related organisations and professions.
The *Victorian Government* acknowledges Victorian Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land and water on which we rely. We acknowledge and respect that Aboriginal communities are steeped in traditions and customs built on a disciplined social and cultural order that has sustained 60,000 years of existence. We acknowledge the significant disruptions to social and cultural order and the ongoing hurt caused by colonisation.

The *TramLab Team* acknowledges the First Nations peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our universities are located and where we conduct our research. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present. TramLab is committed to honouring First Nations peoples’ unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.
Improving the Safety of Women and Girls on Public Transport (TramLab) is a collaboration between La Trobe University, RMIT University and Monash University’s XYX Lab.

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Sexual violence is an umbrella term to describe physical and non-physical forms of violence of a sexual nature, including rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, unwanted touching, sexual coercion, sex trafficking, female genital cutting, child sexual abuse, child marriage, enforced sterilisation, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, and forced pregnancy. Sexual violence is usually treated as distinct from domestic and family violence, although sexual violence may form part of a pattern of domestic violence.

**SEXUAL ASSAULT**

In the ABS Personal Safety Survey, sexual assault is defined as: “An act of a sexual nature carried out against a person's will through the use of physical force, intimidation or coercion, including any attempts to do this.”¹ This definition includes a range of penetrative and non-penetrative sexual offences, including rape. It does not include unwanted touching (defined as 'sexual harassment') or any acts that occurred before the age of 15 years (defined as 'sexual abuse').

Legally, each Australian state and territory defines rape and sexual assault differently. Under Victorian criminal law, ‘rape’ covers non-consensual sexual penetration and ‘indecent assault’ covers all other non-consensual sexual acts. Outside of the legal definitions, sexual assault and rape are often used interchangeably.

**SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

The legal definition in Victoria describes sexual harassment as unwelcome sexual behaviour, advances or unwelcome requests for sexual favours which cause a person to feel offended, humiliated or intimidated. Sexual harassment is an unlawful act under civil law rather than criminal law and it is only unlawful in specified areas of public life, including the workplace, educational settings, the provision of goods and services and accommodation.² Some acts of sexual harassment may also constitute a criminal offence, such as sexual assault, upskirting, stalking or indecent exposure. Workplaces and other organisations can be liable for vicarious sexual harassment if they fail to take reasonable steps to prevent the behaviour.

¹ ABS (2017).
Introduction

Sexual harassment and assault are widespread and affect many women and girls in their journeys to, on and around public transport. These actions can generate fear and anxiety, causing many women and girls to change their behaviour daily to protect their safety, including changing the routes they take and self-restricting their mobility. The TramLab project aims to change these levels of fear and vigilance by helping to make journeys on public transport safer.

Background

Despite the fact that women’s use and experience of public transport is different from men’s, this difference is seldom considered. The research undertaken in TramLab found that the factors impacting on safety and perceptions of safety for women and girls on and around Victorian public transport are complex.

Figure 1 details some of the many factors that impact on perceptions of safety and increased risk for women on public transport and in surrounding environments. Women’s experiences of safety are too often dominated by both real and perceived threat and vulnerability, particularly to sexual assault. Sexual harassment and gendered abuse is a persistent reminder of that vulnerability. The effects of this vulnerability differ from woman to woman, but are under-acknowledged by wider society and can have a significant impact on women’s general mobility as well as their use of public transport.

This complex situation makes it difficult to tackle safety for women and girls. International research confirms that no stand-alone initiative is sufficient and there are no simple solutions. Instead, there is a need for multi-faceted, coordinated and complementary initiatives and interventions. To achieve this requires the development of gender-sensitive actions across all aspects of public transport governance and operations plus cross-party collaboration. It also requires full recognition by society of the particularities of women’s experiences, especially on public transport. Any solution necessarily extends beyond public transport and involves interwoven responsibilities across the whole of society.
FIGURE 1: FACTORS IMPINGING ON PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY AND INCREASED RISK.3

Highlighted boxes are factors most relevant to this toolkit.

- **Public Transport**
  - **Staff** may not have authority, skills or sensitivity to intervene
  - **Service reliability** lack of information
  - **Open access** gives easy access for predators and unpredictable people
  - **Inattention** travellers unaware of surroundings during travel
  - **Vehicle design** exposing postures, entrapping seating

- **Individual**
  - **Gender** being a woman = high risk of victimisation
  - **Other Attributes** age, disability, ethnicity, income, sexuality, etc.
  - **Personal Negative Experiences**

- **Stories**
  - **Media Reports**
  - **Television and Movies**
  - **Friends' or Relatives' Negative Experiences**

- **Other People**
  - **Deserted** no potential allies, lack of informal oversight
  - **Unpredictable People**
  - **Bystander Inaction**

- **Spatial Conditions**
  - **Isolated** underpasses, car parks, access ways
  - **Crowding** permits groping and plausible deniability
  - **Poor Lighting** under-lit and over-lit
  - **Lack of Maintenance**

- **Perceived Vulnerability**

- **Increased Risk**

- **Perception of Safety**

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3 Adapted and expanded by XYX team from Yavuz and Welch (2010): 2495
Aims and Methodology

Commencing in 2019, the TramLab team undertook an evidence-based research project on safety for women and girls on and around public transport. The team reviewed existing international literature, policy and initiatives; gathered and analysed reporting data from Victorian public transport providers; and conducted interviews with women users and key stakeholders. A series of intensive workshops also explored the perspective of service providers, the co-design of solutions with women and girls, and designing for gender specificity with local government and other stakeholders.

The TramLab team then investigated how four interventions implemented with a gender-sensitive lens would work in the Victorian context in order to develop a practical toolkit for each intervention. This set of toolkits provides flexible gender-sensitive guidance for publicly-funded and other services to implement evidence-based best practice within the context of public spaces and public transport in Victoria and beyond.

The gender-sensitive toolkits are focused on the following critical areas:

- communication campaigns for raising awareness around gender issues
- placemaking and safety measures through a gender-sensitive lens
- data collection and analysis with a gender lens
- training for all involved in public transport to understand the issues.

These four areas were selected as being both achievable and having a high impact. Note that alternative means of reporting are under development by other entities.

This toolkit on gender-sensitive data aims to:

- outline the rationale and value of collecting and analysing gender-sensitive public transport data
- emphasise the importance of data that meets both the needs of women and girls and those of transport providers
- provide a suggested minimum data set for reporting women’s and girls’ safety on public transport
- outline data collection, analysis and evaluative strategies for public transport providers
- emphasise the importance of public transport provider staff skilled in the collection and analysis of data for optimum efficacy.

To develop this toolkit, the TramLab team drew on the most recent research and their collective knowledge and experience. In-depth interviews with stakeholders and providers were conducted to gather further input.
**General Recommendations: Safety for Women and Girls on Public Transport**

This table summarises the requirements for sustainable, multi-level, systemic change to improve safety for women and girls on public transport. The following recommendations are to assist in the development of evidence-based interventions with clear outcome measures and a strategic plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION</th>
<th>REASON</th>
<th>HOW TO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>IMMEDIATE</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a policy framework for common principles, concepts and definitions for safety for women and girls, and of sexual violence and harassment across all Victorian public transport systems.</td>
<td>Lack of shared agreement around these principles, concepts and definitions results in ambiguity, confusion and prevents action.</td>
<td>Commission a Prevention of Gender-based Violence on public transport framework drawing on the TramLab findings and aligning with the Victorian Gender Equality Act 2020, Safe and Strong and Free from Violence strategies, and the Change the Story framework.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Within the overarching policy above, develop a framework for gender-sensitive data collection and analysis across all Victorian public transport systems to measure the extent of issues and monitor trends. | Current paucity of sustained, reliable, coherent and comparable data obscures the issues and prevalence, and the efficacy of interventions. | Framework needs to:  
• train a gender-sensitive data workforce  
• establish a common minimum data set  
• detail how and how often gender-sensitive data are to be collected and analysed. |
| Prioritise women’s diverse uses, needs and experiences of public transport spaces in the formulation of any public transport policy, planning and processes to embed a culture of gender sensitivity in identifying and responding to violence against women and girls on public transport. | Women use public transport more than men, are more likely to be public transport dependent, and often have more complex trips. Current gender bias in assessing needs and performance of public transport. | Re-focus public transport from prioritising commuters. Engage in meaningful consultation with women in all matters involving mobility, public transport and transport spaces. Mainstream co-design with women into the planning and design process. |
| Challenge possible gender bias in all decision-making processes and frameworks. | Gender bias is often hidden by what appears to be gender-neutral language, but is male-centred by default. Change is slow and correcting this bias requires conscious effort. | Ensure language in all written documents (policy, reports, communications, etc) highlights the divergent perspectives of women and girls. |
FIGURE 2:
HOW THE TOOLKIT STRATEGIES AND INTERVENTIONS INTERACT AND SUPPORT EACH OTHER TO IMPROVE ACTUAL AND PERCEIVED SAFETY FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT.

1. **Gender-sensitive Communication Campaign**
   - **TOOLKIT 1**
   - Increase awareness and education
   - Promote men's responsible behaviour

2. **Gender-sensitive Placemaking**
   - **TOOLKIT 2**
   - Generate sense of 'belonging' for women and girls on public transport
   - Increase usage at 'unsafe' times

3. **Gender-sensitive Training**
   - **TOOLKIT 4**
   - Increase accessibility
   - Improve timetable connections by PT providers
   - Improve awareness of gender-factors
   - Increase of reported incidents
   - Better responses to incidents
   - Promote trust in system

4. **Gender-sensitive Data**
   - **TOOLKIT 3**
   - TramLab Research
   - Reliability, comprehensive and comparable data
   - Generate sense of 'belonging' for women and girls on public transport

5. **Clear leadership and comprehensive strategy**
   - Co-ordinated and consistent policy framework
   - Informed decision making

6. **Improved timetable connections**
   - Easy reporting of incidents
   - By PT providers
   - By others
Quality data that are available and comparable are essential for effective intervention, and are crucial in directing evidence-based measures to address, protect and further ensure safety / prevent violence against women using public transport. Quality, comparable data support evaluation of prevention and safety strategies, contribute to awareness raising, assessing costs of violence and staffing resources, and lobbying for adequate resources and responses. Evidence from the TramLab research showed a lack of coordinated and gender-specific data collected by public transport providers and other key stakeholders in Victoria. Victorian public transport data collection methods would benefit from a more gender-sensitive approach that will improve and align with both organisational and women’s and customers’ needs.
Why Gender-Sensitive Data for Public Transport?

“Real time incident and direct reporting is preferred by women yet existing systems do not allow this to occur.”

“Women do not report sexual harassment or assault on public transport because they fear it may not be taken seriously or dealt with sensitively by PT providers or police. They also fear they may have to go to court.”

REPORTING

Sexual harassment and even sexual assault are too often not taken seriously by those in authority – there are many highly publicised cases of this failure. In the Victorian public transport context, current user-unfriendly reporting methods and frontline staff poorly trained in supportive and gender-sensitive responses further contribute to women’s reluctance to report.

The table below details some typical responses to women talking about or reporting sexual harassment:

### TABLE 1: TYPICAL RESPONSES TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT REPORTING.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disbelief</td>
<td>Women lack credibility; they exaggerate and can’t be believed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trivialisation</td>
<td>There is no problem. No harm done. It’s a low impact ‘crime’ (if indeed it is a crime. There is a risk of criminalising ‘generally accepted behaviour’).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naturalisation</td>
<td>It’s pointless to fight the inevitable. Boys will be boys, it’s normal behaviour and a minor nuisance to be tolerated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normalisation &amp; Normalisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim-blaming</td>
<td>Women should protect themselves; it’s their fault (what was she wearing? what was she doing there? what was she thinking?). Women experience shame and blame if something happens to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&amp; Stigmatisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abdication</td>
<td>It’s not my job (it’s cultural, nothing to do with designers, planners, etc)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evidence from the TramLab Co-design Workshop demonstrated that, while both data gatherers and data givers agreed on the need for specific incident details, there was also some mismatch between priorities. Women wanted to know how their information would be used and the help available, and providers wanted to know more organisational issues – such as the location of the incident and how public transport use was affected.

The fractured nature of current public transport provision in Victoria means that there are varying levels of sophistication in reporting regimes. Some rely on reports relayed by front-line staff, which are too variable to be useful. This is especially so because some organisations are heavily male dominated and staff may not see the need to pass reports on.

**TECHNOLOGY**

There are numerous opportunities to harness new technology to enhance the timely collection of quality data and optimise their use. For example, a smart-phone app for direct reporting by users is being developed by other entities under the auspices of the Victorian Department of Transport and Department and of Premier and Cabinet and is essential for improving safety as well as collecting data. An accompanying common incident reporting platform with user-friendly web-based interface for direct reporting would also be useful.

**PUBLIC TRANSPORT CULTURE**

Many of those working in public transport need further training, education and support to understand that reports of sexual harassment and assault should be taken seriously and formally reported (see Toolkit 4). Some parts of the public transport system are male dominated, which can make it more difficult for these staff to understand or recognise why women are reporting incidents and how to respond sensitively.

**OVERCOMING FRAGMENTATION**

The many different organisations involved across the Victorian Government, including the public transport providers and operators alongside other extended bodies, and the different regulators and legislative frameworks they operate under, create numerous challenges. Reporting channels are not currently aligned, and often there are different definitions, methods, analyses and usefulness across the various stakeholders. Participants in our study expressed frustration that a useful level of information was often lost by the time it was finally collated in one place.
3.2

Actions Framework for Gender-Sensitive Data

The essential first step to understanding the magnitude of any social issue is monitoring via the ongoing systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of data on the incidence, prevalence, and risk factors.\(^7\) Data are used to track the problem and determine who is being affected and if rates are increasing or decreasing, and to compare data across populations and over time.\(^8\) These data then inform subsequent steps along an intervention pathway. This aligns with the recent Victorian Gender Equality Act 2020, as the legislation aims to put the right tools in place to plan, measure and track progress towards gender equality, and to improve policies, programs and services for the Victorian community.\(^9\)

To improve on this problem, a minimum data set for reporting women’s safety on public transport has been developed that guides public transport providers and stakeholders in the optimal elements of gender-sensitive data collection and monitoring. This will ensure data quality and consistency across systems, reflect the needs of women and girls and allow for ease of monitoring and evaluation of future violence prevention strategies. These minimum data set should be collected irrespective of the type of reporting mechanism. This will require staff to be trained in effective data collection.

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7 Shields and Feder (2016).
8 Basile (2003).
Goals: Gender-Sensitive Data Collection and Analysis

**IMMEDIATE**

- Require providers to collect a consistent data set for reporting women’s safety on public transport (page 18) and use it to monitor future initiatives.

- Implement minimum data-sharing to distinguish from previous minimum data, sharing capacity and other improvements as a priority.

- Implement gender-sensitive data systems to measure the prevalence and impact of violence experienced by women on public transport.

- Progress data-sharing. Require providers to collect data that allows police and public transport to combine and capitalise on monitoring to improve violence prevention and response efforts.

- Develop a user-friendly public transport reporting tool/app that meets all quality data criteria, can be used in future evaluations of public transport safety initiatives, and resolves issues of current poor reporting systems. Platforms should be visually similar across all public transport providers and capture the same data items, for ease of analysis and synthesis across organisations.

- At the workforce level, train and recruit staff who are skilled at data analysis.

**WITHIN 12 MONTHS**

- Invest in data collection and development with outcome indicators to track and monitor improvements.

- Harness emerging technology (that meets all data criteria) and encourages real time incident reporting to transport provider/police. This would enable women to share their experiences and facilitate the identification of hotspots.

- Develop a quality assurance approach to data collection. Monitor data collection practices through regular data quality audits, report on findings and work to change practice accordingly.

- Investigate using the national population survey to explore the extent of sexual harassment and assault on public transport. Results would provide a better estimate of the size of the problem and survey methods may reach more victims/survivors than traditional public transport data surveillance methods.

**WITHIN 24 MONTHS**

- Fund and prioritise new technologies, data sharing and analysis.

- Use data to develop evidence-based interventions with clear outcome measures and a strategic plan to improve safety for women and girls on public transport.
### Gender-sensitive Minimum Date Set Requirement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reporter Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of incident</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic Location</td>
<td>Post Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Route/line Information</td>
<td>Type of Offence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journey Location</td>
<td>Verbal Intimidation: Catcalling, lewd comments, propositioned, approached, verbal threat, laughed at discomfort, other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the transport</td>
<td>Non-Verbal Intimidation: Leered/stared at, lewd gestures, flashing, public masturbation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiting for transport</td>
<td>Physical Intimidation: Followed/stalked, way blocked, chased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessing transport</td>
<td>Physical Assault: physically hit, punched, kicked, shoved/pushed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Sexual Assault: Unwanted touching, groping, rape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Public Transport</td>
<td>Technological Abuse: Surreptitious photos, up-skirting, air drop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train</td>
<td>Public Transport Staff Involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro</td>
<td>Response Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V-Line</td>
<td>Response Provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus</td>
<td>Follow Up Require</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxi</td>
<td>Follow Up Provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ride Share</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Perpetrator Information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporter Details</th>
<th>Perpetrator Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability/Disability</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Known to Reporter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Optional Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporter Details</th>
<th>Perpetrator Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Known to Reporter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Public Transport Staff Details | |
|-------------------------------| |
BEST PRACTICE RESPONSE TO WOMEN AND GIRLS
Women and girls reporting sexual violence and harassment on public transport expect and deserve a culturally sensitive, timely and effective service response to reported offences. Systems support with comprehensive gender-sensitive data collection, organisational leadership, foundational and ongoing workforce training, mentoring and supervision is required to ensure the response occurs (Toolkit 4). Best practice methods of responding to women involve active listening and inquiring about the woman’s needs, empathic validation of their experience and assisting them with further support. This includes consistent follow up contact with women who report, to ensure their needs have been met and that public transport service improvement occurs.

DATA SHARING
Data sharing agreements need to be created and implemented to establish the secure sharing of public transport incident data between organisations to enable better monitoring of trends. Privacy concerns can be overcome with the right government framework in place. Data sharing will provide a better and more holistic monitoring to enable proactive rather than reactive safety interventions to occur.

“ONLY 18% OF DATA SETS SHARED BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT PROVIDERS AND STAKEHOLDERS WERE CLASSIFIED AS HIGH QUALITY.”

TramLab research
IMPROVING THE SAFETY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS
Summary

The first step in tackling safety for women and girls on public transport is to establish comprehensive data collection and analysis to capture a true picture of the issue. The problem is that the current data are neither readily available nor able to be integrated across stakeholder and public transport reporting systems. Coupled with the significant underreporting of incidents by women who face structural and personal barriers to reporting, the true scale of sexual violence and harassment on public transport is largely unknown to providers.

There is an urgent need for change within the Victorian public transport sector data collection and analysis processes to help improve women’s safety. These require government and organisational investment for sustained change and the improved safety of women and girls on public transport. This starts with the government leading the policy agenda and driving a coordinated and integrated program of change. Any future violence prevention initiatives require clear program logic models and comprehensive process, impact and outcome evaluation.

Gender-sensitive data collection is a vital component of this, including:

- a range of reliable real time/live- and post-incident reporting options for women
- existing online platforms and websites need to be altered and improved to allow for ease of incident reporting
- providers must respond to reports
- clear government policy, with concurrent systems change
- use of new technology to:
  * link systems so that reliable, accurate data can be collected, analysed and monitored more easily
  * facilitate increased customer engagement
  * use of social media that enables monitoring of customer/public opinion (this may be more efficient than existing data collection practices, such as satisfaction surveys).

With improved reporting comes greater service demand. Workforce training for all staff at all levels is required on gender equity, workplace culture, public transport and women’s safety, and violence prevention, to enable an effective response to victims/survivors when it occurs (see Toolkit 4).
Links to Key Resources


**OTHER TOOLKITS IN THIS SERIES:**


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FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS RESOURCE, OR TO SHARE FEEDBACK AND SUGGESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT:

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