

BECAUSE I AM A  
**GIRL**



Plan International UK

# STREET HARASSMENT

**IT'S NOT OK**

Girls' experiences and views

Jessica Southgate and Lucy Russell

# CONTENTS

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The names of the girls and young women who are quoted in the blue boxes in this report have been changed to ensure their anonymity.

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"If you normalise and accept street harassment then you're starting to say it's ok for the next thing to happen, and it's an escalating process. It's a basic human right to be able to walk around and just live your life. No one is taking it seriously."

**LINDSAY, 28, EDINBURGH**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## ABOUT PLAN INTERNATIONAL UK

Plan International UK is a global children's charity. We work to give every child the same chance in life. But not every child is born with the same opportunities. When you're a girl it's even harder to be safe, to be in school and to be in charge of your body. We're working to give every girl the chance to take on the world.

Through our global programme **Safer Cities**, running in cities including Cairo, Kampala and Hanoi, we have been shining a light

on the challenges faced by girls in some of the world's major cities. Lack of safety, cultural norms that limit when and where girls can travel around their city, plus girls and their families' fear of abuse and harassment mean that every city contains no-go areas, threatening girls' freedom and autonomy to move safely around the place where they live. In the UK we run STAND with Girls in Edinburgh, Cardiff, Oxfordshire and Leeds. Through this, girls assess the areas they live in for safety, services and how the needs of girls are met locally.

**66%**

**OF GIRLS IN THE UK HAVE EXPERIENCED SEXUAL ATTENTION OR SEXUAL OR PHYSICAL CONTACT IN A PUBLIC PLACE<sup>1</sup>**

**38%**

**OF GIRLS EXPERIENCE VERBAL HARASSMENT LIKE CATCALLING, WOLF-WHISTLING AND SEXUAL COMMENTS AT LEAST ONCE A MONTH<sup>2</sup>**

**15%**

**OF GIRLS ARE BEING TOUCHED, GROPED OR GRABBED EVERY MONTH<sup>3</sup>**

## SECTION 1: OVERVIEW

This research emerged from Plan International UK's work to uncover the reality of growing up a girl in the UK today. Our report, *The State of Girl's Rights in the UK (2016)*<sup>4</sup>, found that girls didn't feel safe in the classroom, online or on the streets, and that experiences of harassment were so widespread that many felt that this was just 'part of growing up'.<sup>5</sup> We heard a clear message from girls that they considered harassment to be a problem, and one that they wanted to find solutions to.

Around the world harassment and the threat of harassment can have serious implications for girls' freedom, autonomy and perceived safety. In both the UK and internationally, evidence shows that harassment of girls and women in public places is widespread and profoundly affects their lives. This is a particular issue for girls, as harassment – and the behaviours that allow it to happen – often starts at a young age and is likely to be experienced more frequently by adolescent girls and younger women than by older women or their male peers.

This report reflects the voices of girls we interviewed and sets out what they think about harassment, how they experience it, and the things they want to change. It is based on focus groups and polling involving girls from across the UK, evidence from literature and research, and interviews with leading experts on the subject of harassment in public places.

We explore some of the innovations being developed, including work in Nottinghamshire to record misogynistic incidents as hate crime, efforts by the police and transport authorities in London to increase reporting of unwanted sexual behaviour on public transport, and some of the creative ways girls and women have resisted harassment in their everyday lives. We define street harassment as a form of gender-based violence and on the continuum of violence against women, as well as considering how other identity characteristics – like race or sexual orientation – intersect with gender to mean girls experience harassment differently.

This work is part of a growing global movement – including leading experts interviewed for this report and organisations like Hollaback!, Stop Street Harassment and Everyday Sexism – to shine a light on harassment and resist its widespread acceptance.

Plan International UK's global programmes have shown that work can be done to make public spaces safer for girls. This report aims to amplify girls' voices and their priorities for change to encourage everyone to take the harassment of girls seriously and take steps to end it.

Nora and Sophie, 15, London



## SECTION 2: THE PROBLEM – HOW GIRLS DESCRIBE STREET HARASSMENT

All of the girls we spoke to had stories of intimidating and unwanted behaviour, with many having witnessed and experienced harassment from a very young age – some as young as eight years old. This often happened when they were in uniform – travelling to and from school or college – which they felt made them a particular target.

Worryingly, harassment was such a prevalent part of girls' lives that some felt they were taught to expect sexual harassment, because so many had experienced it, and often on such a regular basis. Almost two-thirds (63 per cent) of girls in our polling had experienced unwanted sexual attention, including catcalling, sexual comments and being started at, or sexual exposure. A third (35 per cent) had experienced unwanted sexual contact, including being touched, groped or grabbed. Academics we spoke to confirmed that many women felt it was just 'part of growing up' and something they had to get used to. They also described the harassment of girls starting at a young age, and often being more pronounced in the teenage years. Girls felt that being seen as young, and as less likely to 'fight back' or tell anyone what happened to them, made them particularly vulnerable.

Girls described being 'catcalled', experiencing unwanted touching or invasions of their personal space, alongside more serious incidents of being groped, grabbed or 'flashed at' in public. A small number reported technology being used as part of the harassment they experienced, with a quarter (26 per cent) of girls in our polling having been filmed or photographed by a stranger without permission, and almost one in ten (9 per cent) having been the victims of 'upskirting', having their underwear photographed whilst wearing it, without their consent. In focus

groups they described all these acts of harassment as frightening, threatening and intimidating, making them want to 'disappear', and talked about the shock, shame and embarrassment they felt when it happened. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) and Black, Asian or another Ethnic Minority (BAME) girls talked about the dual discrimination of being harassed both for their ethnicity or sexual orientation, as well as their gender.

Harassment is so prevalent in girls' lives it can happen in any of the spaces they occupy, and overlaps between the different worlds they inhabit. Girls could often name specific locations near where they lived which were virtual 'no-go zones', because they feared harassment in those places. They described being particularly targeted when on their own, when out walking or jogging, when travelling to and from school, as well as in busy, central areas like main high streets where something might happen but no one could see who did it. They talked about being shouted at or beeped at from passing cars, as well as experiencing unwanted touching or staring on public transport. Girls felt particularly vulnerable on nights out or working in night-time venues. They were very conscious of potentially predatory behaviours around bars and clubs.

Whilst the evidence we explore in this report tells us that girls and women are overwhelmingly the targets of harassment and boys and men are overwhelmingly the ones who perpetrate harassment, there is very little research into the motivations of boys and men who harass girls and women. More research is needed to better understand the motivations behind harassment, as well as how to prevent it in the first place.



"One time someone asked me to get in a car and I was just like, "No!". I walked away and they were driving alongside on the road at the same speed as me like they were following me..."

Then they turned down the side of the road and I thought they'd gone, but they actually went down there to park their car. They came and walked up to me, and I was really scared because I was by myself at the time..."

My phone was upside-down, but I pretended to be on the phone and was trying to make out like my dad was coming to pick me up. From him hearing that, he just turned around, put his hood up and moved away..."

"Now my parents are more cautious about when I'll be home and going out after dark, which affects my plans and my work if they can't always pick me up."

**MALIKAH, 19, BIRMINGHAM**



“It’s like a constant cycle, we’re [girls/women] always facing sexual harassment in some way whether it is just in the street or in town or wherever. I think there is still a long way to go [for women’s rights in the UK].”

**SOPHIE, 18, GLASGOW**

### SECTION 3: THE IMPACT OF STREET HARASSMENT

Street harassment has a clear impact on where girls go and what they feel free to do. Girls spoke about the range of emotions they felt when they were harassed. They talked about being embarrassed and ashamed for having attention drawn to them, disoriented and confused about who was doing the harassing and why, angry but in fear of what might happen if the situation escalated, and helpless but feeling responsible for making sure they stayed safe. These complex and often contradictory feelings could be hard to process – both girls and professionals said that minimising harassment when it happened was one of the ways in which people dealt with it. It is clear that the cumulative effect of these daily events can take its toll and have a damaging impact, with research showing that harassment and ‘everyday sexism’ can contribute to trauma-like symptoms in women and can have a negative impact on well-being and self-esteem.

The potential threat that harassment posed was constantly in the back of the minds of the girls we spoke to, with these kinds of behaviours seen as the ‘thin end of the wedge’ along the continuum of gender-based violence.

Although many wanted to react to harassment when it happened, the fear of escalation or being ‘victim blamed’ often stopped girls from doing so – thinking that people’s reactions to any potential retaliation would be: **“You shouldn’t have said anything.”** This meant many ‘played along’ with a situation – such as engaging in conversation when they did not want it, or feeling like they had to respond to requests for their name, number or information about where they were going – even if they did not want to.

Research shows that people who experience harassment are likely to change their lives, activities or behaviour in some way as a result of their experiences, meaning they often feel unsafe in public spaces and on public transport. Girls we spoke to were clearly always alert to the possible risk involved in travelling and being in public spaces, describing multiple ways in which they changed their activities or behaviours to avoid the potential risk of harassment. They talked about limiting their access to certain places, not travelling at certain times of day, mentally planning possible ‘escape routes’ or taking alternative journeys

– even if these were not the most direct – to avoid potential harassment.

Girls described using a number of avoidance and self-protection techniques to not have to interact with people or be able to ignore them, like trying to appear unavailable or unapproachable, or methods such as having **“a screen shot of a phone call so I pretend I’m on the phone”** or wearing headphones so **“if someone talks to you, even if you do hear them, I can act as if I can’t hear them”**. They often cited an invisible or fictional boyfriend to get other boys to stop talking to them, or said they only went to certain places with boys or their parents to be left alone. They spoke about moderating how they looked, feeling anxious about what they wore and trying to avoid drawing attention to themselves.

Girls said that these kinds of preventative activities were **“considered as givens, that you have to do in your everyday life”** as a girl. But as Dr Fiona Vera-Gray told Plan International UK in interview, when you consider the extent to which girls constantly have to think about how to avoid the potential

risk of harassment, **“you start to see how much it limits their ability to have space to themselves; to think and plan and design and create.”**

Adults often failed to recognise girls’ reality or invalidated their experiences with the way they reacted when they were told about experiences of street harassment. Those in positions of authority or care, such as parents, carers or teachers, were those most likely to give girls advice on how to ‘stay safe’, with their messages centring around what to wear, how to behave, where to go, who with and at what times. Girls were very clear that there were gender differences between how they were spoken to about safety and how their male peers were, telling Plan International UK in focus groups **“the girl has to walk all the way around, change how she dresses...but it’s never like, ‘boys, let’s have a discussion about how not to harass women’.”** Girls felt that all this was deeply unfair and placed the responsibility on them to avoid harassment rather than telling those who harassed them to stop.

## SECTION 4: GIRLS' PRIORITIES FOR CHANGE

Girls' number one priority was for a world where they could feel safe and free, without the constant potential threat of harassment. As one girl said: *"We shouldn't have to tolerate it."*

Girls wanted action from across society to stop street harassment from happening, including clear messages that communicated that this kind of behaviour was 'not ok' and that challenged the social norms perpetuating gender inequality.

The lack of common understanding about what constitutes harassment, and whether those behaviours are socially acceptable, contributed to the fear girls expressed about not being believed or having their experiences minimised. Girls said it was important to know their rights and felt there should be advertisements stressing this in public places where harassment happens, like on transport and in high streets.

Across the board, participants spoke about the urgent and paramount importance of working with boys and young men to improve their attitudes, knowledge and awareness about how unwelcome stranger harassment is and the impact it can have on girls' lives. Girls wanted work to be done with boys from a young age to challenge their attitudes, to question gender stereotypes, to develop empathy with girls and help *"solve the problem at the source"*. There was a strong call from both professionals and girls for better education and awareness for all young people to explore consent, healthy relationships, street harassment and other forms of gender-based violence through relationships and sex education across the UK.

While more work is needed to understand which bystander interventions are effective in which contexts, girls told Plan International UK that positive bystander intervention can make a big difference when harassment happens. Where

people had intervened it often stood out as a particularly positive experience for girls, and in many cases the inaction of witnesses to street harassment played a key role in the negative impact an incident had on girls – intensifying feelings of embarrassment, frustration, shame or anger when people saw but did not help. Girls said they wanted bystanders to: **step up** and take action if it was safe to do so; **check in** with girls if they saw something happen and ask them if they were ok; **acknowledge** and recognise what had happened, helping to validate girls' feelings about the experience; and **listen to girls** about what they wanted to happen next.

The fleeting nature of harassment incidents, the challenge of identifying or finding a perpetrator, having little evidence to go to authorities with and not wanting to go through the 'hassle' of reporting, all contributed to putting girls off from telling anyone in authority what had happened to them. As street harassment is widely trivialised, many girls felt that no one would take them seriously if they did report it. But some professionals we spoke to stressed the value of reporting to build a better picture of the problem. Girls felt more could be done to raise awareness of their rights, of what kinds of behaviours they can go to the police about or what might constitute a criminal offence, and that information should be provided about where to go if they did want to report an incident.

Girls also want to be supported by professionals in public spaces tackling and preventing harassment and responding seriously to their complaints. They wanted professionals in positions of social responsibility who may witness harassment – including in schools or universities, on or around public transport or bouncers and staff in night-time venues – to be there for girls to report to and get help from if they want it.

## SECTION 5: POLICING STREET HARASSMENT: MISOGYNY AS A HATE CRIME

'Hate crime' is a term used to distinguish "forms of violence and microaggressions directed towards people on the basis of their identity, 'difference' or perceived vulnerability". Whilst street harassment is not commonly viewed in this way, there are growing calls for misogyny – a dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against women – to be labelled as a hate crime to encompass a range of gender-based harassment.

Although it has been enthusiastically embraced by some, the usefulness of the categorisation of misogyny as a hate crime

remains a live debate, and divided views amongst the professionals Plan International UK spoke to. Those in favour of the concept believe that explicitly naming harassment, discriminatory attitudes and prejudicial targeting of women on account of their gender as misogyny, and therefore as a hate crime, challenges the idea that street harassment is trivial. Feedback and evaluation from Nottinghamshire Police and Nottingham Women's Centre indicates that the approach may empower the police to act on street harassment and encouraged reporting from women.

## SECTION 6: RESISTING STREET HARASSMENT: IDEAS AND INNOVATIONS

The global movement to call out sexual harassment and declare "It's Not OK" is growing. Innovations span from Japan to Delhi to Egypt to New York using apps to track harassment, art to express the impact of harassment and social media to spread women and girls' stories. The approaches span from on-the-street action, to encouraging support from bystanders, to specific projects for public transport and to preventative work in education.

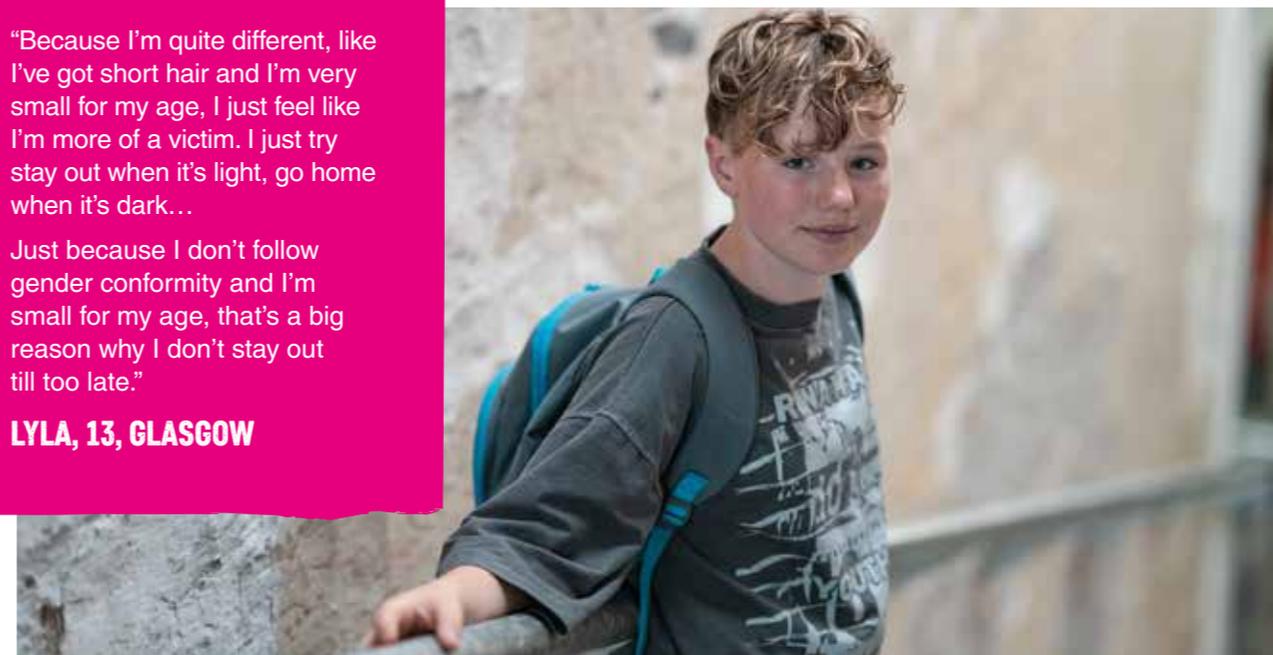
The UN Women's Global initiative "Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces" has developed evaluation tools and policies for the prevention and response to sexual harassment.

In the UK, Nottinghamshire Police Force have trialled the use of misogyny as a hate crime, exploring how this impacts on reporting, women and girls' understanding of the crime and public recognition of it as an offence.

"Because I'm quite different, like I've got short hair and I'm very small for my age, I just feel like I'm more of a victim. I just try stay out when it's light, go home when it's dark..."

Just because I don't follow gender conformity and I'm small for my age, that's a big reason why I don't stay out till too late."

**LYLA, 13, GLASGOW**



## CONCLUSION

This is a critical time to think about street harassment. As the #MeToo movement has shown, raising awareness of the pernicious and widespread impact of sexual harassment on girls' and women's lives can make a real difference – forcing changes in the law, improving the likelihood that women will be believed when they share their experiences, and bringing perpetrators to justice. This same attention must now be paid to girls' experiences of all forms of sexual harassment, and their voices must be at the heart of this work.

Gender-based harassment takes place in the wider context of other inequalities, so taking steps to address these in the broadest sense will be essential to eliminate harassment. Harassment can be experienced very differently by girls depending on different aspects of their identity, with sexual harassment frequently intersecting and overlapping with homophobia, transphobia and racism, and this must be taken into account to effectively challenge street harassment.

As this report makes clear, street harassment is an almost universal experience for girls around the UK, to the point that some even consider this to be a normal part of growing up. Girls start to experience these behaviours as early as when they are in primary school, go on to be targeted in their uniforms as teenagers, and then continue to be harassed as they become young adults. These experiences are widely trivialised, creating a culture of acceptance and normalisation – making it harder for girls to tell someone what has happened and get the help they might need.

Girls spend considerable time and effort to try and prevent harassment from happening



– changing what they wear and where they go. Girls can name long lists of things they have been told to do to 'stay safe' and entire areas of the places they live that have become virtual 'no-go zones' in their efforts to avoid harassment. Girls have a right to move freely, express themselves and participate in activities and education without worrying about the potential of harassment in public spaces that should be used and enjoyed by everyone.

Girls have told us that they find this situation unacceptable, and they want to change it. Many of the professionals we spoke to also reinforced the message they were hearing from girls and women, that *"I don't want to be treated like this every day"*.

Girls need to hear a strong message – that society understands this, that they are supported and that they will be listened to and believed – so that they can feel empowered to speak out when it does happen. Given the pervasive nature of harassment and the culture that enables it to continue, we all have a part to play in tackling this problem.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

At the heart of this report are girls' voices and their calls for change. What emerges first and foremost is that girls would like their experience of street harassment and the negative impact it has on them to be recognised and taken seriously. Street harassment is part of a wider culture of gender inequality and cannot be tackled through one mechanism or one single approach, but by combining community, education, professional responses, policing and policy change to tackle the problem.

### THE PUBLIC

# 1

#### JOIN US TO SAY – IT'S NOT OK

Girls have a right to move safely around public spaces. We call on police forces, transport bodies, local authorities and corporations who can have an impact on the spaces and businesses girls use day-to-day to run public messaging campaigns. We encourage these bodies to run campaigns so that from a young age, girls hear a clear message that says they should not have to tolerate street harassment.

Such campaigns need to

- spread awareness,
- encourage public intolerance of harassment,
- ensure that girls and women know where they can go if they experience harassment and
- show that people who report harassment will be taken seriously.

**We welcome the initiatives across the UK which are already running this message.** Plan International UK will initiate its own campaign to amplify this message.



# 2

#### BYSTANDERS – CALL IT OUT!

Bystanders can be any member of the community that witness an incident. Ordinary people taking even the smallest action can be a catalyst for change. A quick check-in for example, or an acknowledgement that a girl has a right to be in a space, feel safe and not be harassed, can reduce the negative impact of a girl's experience of harassment. Bystander training is needed to show community members how to support girls who experience harassment and how to **safely** intervene if witnessing harassment. Such training can be offered by unions, local authorities, community groups, business leaders and more.



## EDUCATION AND YOUTH SERVICES

# 3

### BOYS CAN GENERATE CHANGE

International evidence shows that involving boys and young men is key to challenging and ending all forms of violence against women and girls. Boys and young men can have a central role in generating change. They need to be supported to change their attitudes, develop knowledge and increase awareness of the impact of harassment, and they need support to challenge their peers and be able to respond positively when girls disclose experiences to them. Such work requires dedicated time and capacity in **both** education and youth settings, and must be delivered by trained and informed experts that work from principles of gender equality.



# 4

### GIVE YOUNG PEOPLE RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION

Young people need comprehensive relationships and sex education. Specifically, boys need education on gender roles and masculinity that addresses respect, consent, and the nature of gender-based violence in both intimate relationships and interactions with strangers. Space and time should be given to help young people understand the impact of sexual harassment in public places.

We welcome the commitment of the UK government and the devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to improve Relationships and Sex Education. Given the government is currently consulting on the future shape of Relationships and Sex Education in England, this is an ideal time to get the content of such lessons right and meet the needs of young people who are asking educators and policy makers for change.

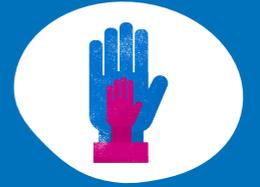


## POLICE, POLICY AND GOVERNMENT

# 5

### STREET HARASSMENT IS GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Government – national, devolved and local – must explicitly recognise street harassment as a form of gender-based violence and commit to tackling it through budgets and strategies, as well as through its obligations under national and international law. To be effective, this approach must go beyond the ‘usual suspects’ of policy making; it should be considered in strategies for public transport, town planning, the night-time economy, for example. These strategies must recognise that harassment is disproportionately directed towards girls and is experienced in different ways by LGBTIQ+ and BAME girls. The UK’s obligations under Article 5 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and Article 40 of the Istanbul Convention clearly requires government to take steps to tackle harassment. At the local level, the public sector Equality Duty within the Equality Act (2010) should be used as an instrument to make decisions around planning, licensing, schools and other factors that impact on the local environment in order to proactively tackle harassment and make spaces safer for girls.



# 6

### BUILD A PICTURE OF WHAT’S HAPPENING

Police and Crime commissioners should take a lead in national data collection to measure not only the scale and nature of sexual harassment, including public harassment, but also the impact. This should include specific data on girls’ experiences and be able to reflect their intersectional experiences of harassment by different identity characteristics. Existing data that could shed further light on girls’ experiences, including hate crime data, should be broken down by gender and age. This will help to build a picture of the true scale and nature of girls’ and women’s harassment in public.



7

### LISTEN TO GIRLS

They are the experts on their own experiences and what changes they want to see. Those developing policy and solutions to street harassment must involve girls and young women from a diverse range of backgrounds. Plan International's Safer Cities programme runs safety audits led by girls across their cities and supports them to feedback to local authorities. We want to see this model rolled out across the UK. This engagement with girls shouldn't be limited to violence against women professionals; we want to see town planners, night-time economy businesses, transport planners and the police listening to girls, as well as local and national governments.



8

### GIRLS NEED THE RIGHT TO REPORT AND SUPPORT

Girls need to know what their rights are and where they can go for help if they are harassed. Police forces, in partnership with businesses, community groups and public bodies, should make clear, accessible information available about what behaviours would be considered a police matter or constitute a criminal offence, alongside information about what to do if someone wants to report an incident. We welcome the existing initiatives to improve reporting and would like to see support for police forces to share learning and impact measurement, innovative methods for police forces to share learning and impact measurement as well as support to build and develop innovative methods that make it easy to report.

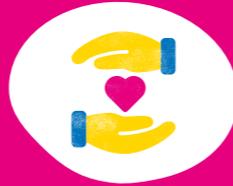


### LOCAL SERVICES

9

### MAKE YOUR SPACE A SAFE SPACE

Training or guidance should be developed for adults with responsibility for public places, such as bus drivers, shop security staff and university staff. Such professionals could take on the role of 'public safety guardians' and play a greater part in responding to harassment when they see it, and be trusted adults who girls know they can report to.



"On my way here [to the photo shoot] I was like, 'I've never been harassed, I'm fine', but sitting down and thinking about it I'm like, 'Literally this happens all the time!' So I think just to explain to people that it's not OK."

**JESS, 16, GLASGOW**

# STREET HARASSMENT

## IT'S NOT OK

Girls' experiences and views

FULL REPORT

# SECTION 1

## INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Plan International UK is a global children's charity. We work to give every child the same chance in life. But not every child is born with the same opportunities. When you're a girl it's even harder to be safe, to be in school and to be in charge of your body.

As part of our commitment to ending all forms of discrimination against girls, Plan International UK runs the world's largest global girls' rights campaign, *Because I am a Girl*, highlighting the inequality faced by girls every day. The campaign calls for girls to be free from violence, as well as for them to get a quality education, the skills and support they need. We focus particularly on helping girls aged 10-19, as adolescence often brings an increased threat of abuse or violence and a denial of rights and choices.

Through our global programme **Safer Cities**, running in cities including Cairo, Kampala and Hanoi, we have been shining a light on the challenges faced by girls in some of the world's major cities. Lack of safety, cultural norms that limit when and where girls can travel around their city, plus girls and their families' fear of abuse and harassment mean that every city contains no-go areas, threatening girls' freedom and autonomy to move safely around the place where they live. In the UK we run STAND with Girls in Edinburgh, Cardiff, Oxford and Leeds. Through this, girls assess the areas they live in for safety, services and how the needs of girls are met locally.

Plan International UK's work around the world has demonstrated that girls often face specific disadvantages as a result of both their age

**"It's just like in what world is that acceptable? I've been touched before, I've had people say things before, you just think, are you from a different planet?!"**

**RACHEL, 23, MANCHESTER**

and their gender. Our 2016 report *The State of Girls' Rights in the UK*<sup>6</sup> highlighted that girls faced harassment throughout their lives, and that they did not feel safe or free on the streets, online, or in the classroom. A strong theme to emerge through this work was the extent to which harassment in public places caused girls to limit where they went, and develop strategies to try and avoid or limit the amount of harassment they faced. With a clear indication from girls that this was a priority for them, we developed this report to investigate with girls and professionals the nature and extent of street harassment in the UK.

Girls that we spoke to were clear that street harassment was an almost universal part of growing up. Without exception, they all had stories of intimidating and unwanted sexual behaviour that made them feel uncomfortable when they were on the streets, travelling or in public places. They said that the harassment of girls started from a young age, and continued throughout adolescence and into young adulthood.

Evidence from research in Canada, Australia and from Hollaback! confirms this pattern, with many women recalling their first experience of street harassment taking place when they

were children, and younger women reporting much more harassment than older women.<sup>7</sup> The largest international study into street harassment across the world found that 90 per cent of British women report their first experience of street harassment before the age of 17, seventy per cent before the age of

15, and a shocking 10 per cent before they even turn ten.<sup>8</sup> Similarly in Australia, four out of five women say they first experienced street harassment when they were under 18, and more than a third were first harassed between the ages of 11 and 15.<sup>9</sup>



Thea, 20, and Anais, 18, London

## WHAT IS STREET HARASSMENT?

'Street harassment' is generally understood as an umbrella term that describes unwanted and face-to-face sexual attention from strangers in public spaces that is targeted at girls and women by boys and men who they don't know. **Bristol Zero Tolerance**, for example, describe a set of behaviours that encompasses a wide range of possible gender-based harassment, including for trans, non-binary and gender-fluid young people:

*"Unwanted comments, gestures, and actions forced on a stranger in a public place without their consent and directed at them because of their real or perceived gender (whether male, female or non-binary)."*<sup>10</sup>

Street harassment, therefore, can include unwanted whistling, staring, comments, shouts, sexual name-calling, persistently talking to someone, or asking for their name and phone number, even when they have said no. It can include being photographed, filming, upskirting, being followed, flashing, public masturbation, groping, sexual assault, rape and hate crimes.<sup>11</sup>

Plan International UK commonly heard that harassment happened to girls in a number of locations, throughout the day and in different parts of their lives. As one from the participants in the Nottingham Women's Centre 'Because I am a Woman' film says, *"... the thing about street harassment is that it doesn't have a particular place or a particular time – it's happening everywhere and anywhere and at any given time and place"*.<sup>12</sup>

Street harassment is a type of sexual harassment, and as such should be seen as a form of **gender-based violence**. Understanding these behaviours as being part of the **continuum of violence against women and girls** is a theory first set out by Professor Liz Kelly. It is a useful lens to understand how different forms of sexual

violence are connected. It describes how violence such as rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment of all kinds is underpinned by social norms of entitlement that allow and encourage these behaviours to be directed (primarily by boys and men) towards girls and women. Thinking in this way *"enables the linking of the more common, everyday abuses women experience with the less common experiences labelled as crimes"*.<sup>13</sup>

Some people have suggested that the phrase 'street harassment' is too narrow and fails to capture a range of other types of harassment that can be experienced in public places, for example, harassment on public transport, taxis, online, or in clubs or bars. It might also miss out other types of unwanted behaviours that do not appear to be direct harassment, such as comments like "Cheer up luv". It also does not explicitly reference that it is gendered power dynamics at play, leading academic Dr Fiona Vera-Gray to suggest that *'men's stranger intrusions on women in public space'*<sup>14</sup> may be one term that could capture this range of harassment types.

Although the majority of the incidents described to us came from strangers directed towards the girls, other incidents, such as being catcalled or surrounded by a group, could also come from people they knew, for example, boys from their school. Girls themselves often do not distinguish between the harassment they experience in these spaces, and through the focus groups we ran for this report, harassment in a number of different types of spaces was raised. Online, in the street, or at school, harassment clearly impacts on girls' lives and limits their freedom. The frequency and pernicious nature of the harassment, combined with limited adult reactions, sends a message that sexual harassment should be tolerated as part of daily life.

Given the benefit that having a widely understood term brings and the opportunities this provides to continue to build an international solidarity movement, 'street harassment' remains a helpful and appropriate term. We use this term throughout this report to refer to all types of sexual harassment in public spaces, including public transport and public social places like bars and clubs.

We recognise that while the majority of girls experience street harassment, not all girls will experience harassment in the same way. Through this report, we aim to emphasise the gendered nature of such harassment and highlight how it intersects with other identity factors, profoundly changing how it feels to the person experiencing it (see page 42-44 for more on this). We look at how experiences of

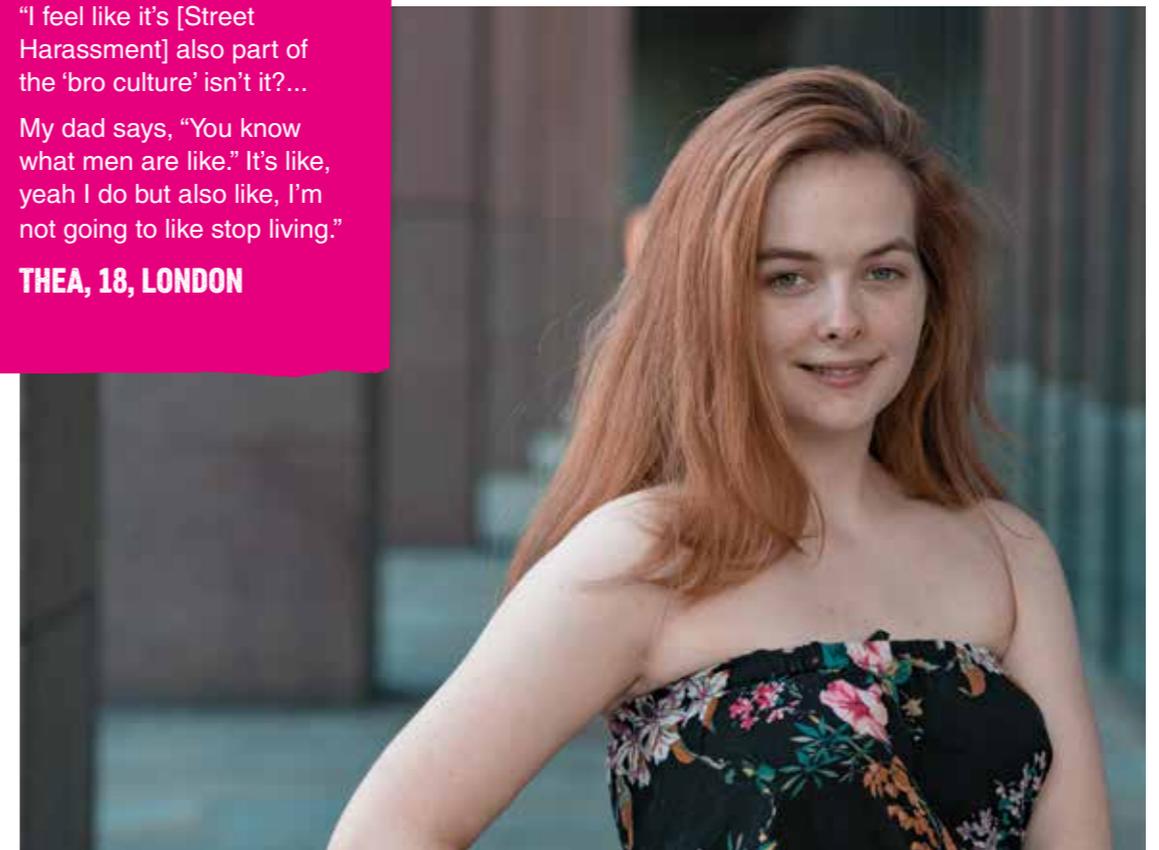
harassment in public overlap with harassment in schools, colleges and universities, however we do not address how this extends to the workplace as this was outside the scope of this project.

There is no source of national UK data that can give an accurate picture of the extent of the problem as it affects girls, so the picture we build has been drawn from a number of different sources. Data that can be disaggregated by gender, age and other identity characteristics that would reveal to what degree girls experience harassment in public, for example on the way to school or when travelling on the bus, does not exist. We recommend that any further work to challenge public harassment must address these gaps as a matter of priority.

"I feel like it's [Street Harassment] also part of the 'bro culture' isn't it?..."

My dad says, "You know what men are like." It's like, yeah I do but also like, I'm not going to like stop living."

**THEA, 18, LONDON**



## RESISTING STREET HARASSMENT

Over recent years there has been a growing movement of girls and women, men, trans and non-binary people around the world saying, “no more” – fighting back against street harassment and challenging its place as a social norm. These efforts have included the global Hollaback! movement, which has grown out of the USA in 2005.<sup>15</sup> It encourages women to record and map the types of harassment they experience and now runs training and workshops to help make public and online spaces safer. Similarly, by encouraging women to report a wide range of day to day harassment experiences, the UK Everyday Sexism project<sup>16</sup> has shone a spotlight on the scale of the problem and called out the range of ways girls and women face sexism on a daily basis.

Girls’ and women’s ability to travel safely and freely has been core to the global demands for an end to harassment. The rape and murder of Jyoti Singh in Delhi in 2012 sparked women’s rights marches across India calling for an end to violence against women and highlighted the issue of women’s rights to travel safely on public transport. The 2014 film shot undercover, ‘10 Hours of Walking in NYC as a Woman’<sup>17</sup>, reached 10 million hits on YouTube in less than 24 hours, suggesting the harassment it revealed both resonated with some and perhaps shocked others who were less aware of the lived reality of travelling in public as a woman.

Having identified the scale of unwanted sexual behaviour on London’s public transport system, Transport for London (TfL) and its policing partners, the British Transport Police, Metropolitan Police and City of London Police found that younger women (aged 16 to 24) were more likely to experience unwanted sexual behaviour when using public transport.<sup>18</sup> The most common incidents included groping and touching, body rubbing, sexual comments and staring. This partnership of organisations led on a campaign to stop unwanted sexual behaviour. Project Guardian<sup>19</sup>, the partnership

initiative between Transport for London and its policing partners, and the Report it to Stop it campaign made it clear that unwanted sexual behaviour such as groping, rubbing, leering and sexual comments were not acceptable and encouraged people to report them, making it clear perpetrators would be pursued. The social media campaign developed as part of this had more views than any other TfL had run to date, indicating how much this problem resonated with people.

Legislation and policing practices are changing to reflect changing public attitudes. Within the UK, a number of police force areas have begun to record misogynistic acts as hate crimes (for more information see page 77) and the UK government announced in June 2018 that it planned to introduce a law to make upskirting a criminal offence. In Belgium, a law was passed in 2014<sup>20</sup> criminalising behaviour considered to “express contempt” towards a person due to their gender or reduce someone to a “sexual dimension”, with penalties of up to a year in prison and/or a fine.<sup>21</sup> France recently unveiled a bill to criminalise sexist remarks or gestures in public places, introducing on the spot fines of €90 as well as a 24-hour emergency number to call or text to report incidents.<sup>22</sup> In Washington, D.C., USA, the ‘Street Harassment Prevention Act’, passed in May 2018, has committed to collect data on harassment, train staff in public bodies to recognise and intervene, develop education campaigns and provide grants for programmes addressing the problem.<sup>23</sup>

Fighting back against harassment is not new. In the 1970s the ‘Reclaim the Night’ marches identified that male violence against women made women feel unsafe in public spaces, and women marched through the streets to reclaim them as safe. Sadly, however, there is still a need today to call for women’s rights to move safely and freely around the world and in all walks of their lives.

“One of my best friends, she wears a hijab. We were just in town and it was about 5 o’clock on a Sunday so a lot of the shops were closing down, so it wasn’t quiet but there was only a few people around, not more than usual. And then someone walked past and he nudged her and he kind of turned round and was like, ‘Go back to your country’. We didn’t know what to do so we just walked on, we didn’t say anything to him...”

She actually stopped wearing the hijab after that experience because she felt that upset by it.”

**RAISA, 17, BIRMINGHAM**



## GENDER AND PUBLIC SPACE

The ways in which boys and young men experience, use and think about public space is likely to be very different from girls and young women. Research in Amsterdam, for example, into girls' and boys' use of public playgrounds (one of the first public spaces children learn to negotiate) observed that girls were marginalised, assuming the status of a 'minority group', and that boys outnumbered girls in how frequently and how long they participated and in the 'network and territory they controlled'.<sup>24</sup> In research led by Professor Emma Renold<sup>25</sup>, girls described widespread gender-based harassment, entrenched sexism and 'banter' which impacted negatively on their well-being and freedom of movement. One 13-year-old girl gave an example, saying "boys older than me like whistle at you and like stare at you and like wink at you and like shout, 'Oi, you over there' or something," while another girl (also aged 13) said "[t]here's these little kids on the bus... pointing at me saying oh that girl has big tits."

Boys, in contrast, can experience other types of threat and intimidation in public space, as seen in some of the harms facing young people, through serious youth violence and gangs. Death and injury from knife crime tends to affect young men in particular, for example.<sup>26</sup> The most common reason given by young men for committing a violent offence is self-defence and this is also the reason most frequently given for carrying a knife,<sup>27</sup> suggesting that some young men can feel a profound sense of threat and potential harm in certain public spaces. What can also be overlooked, however, is that girls in these contexts face specific gendered threats, such as being exposed to violence and sexual exploitation through gangs.<sup>28</sup>

Other personal characteristics, including age, ethnicity, faith, gender identity, disability and social location also impact on young people's

experiences of public space. Whilst most boys are much less likely than girls to experience sexual harassment in public, gay, bisexual, trans or non-binary boys<sup>29</sup> can also be victims of harassment,<sup>30</sup> with sexual harassment often intersecting with homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. Stonewall reports that three in ten LGBTIQ+ people (29 per cent) and more than two in five trans people (44 per cent) avoid certain streets because they don't feel safe there.<sup>31</sup> Whilst we have focused specifically on girls in this report, addressing the discriminatory attitudes that underpin gender-based harassment of all lesbian, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTIQ+) young people must go hand in hand with efforts to tackle the harassment of girls.

Girls that Plan International UK spoke to for this report thought that there were considerable differences in how boys and men thought and behaved, and remarked that it would be unlikely for women to harass other people because they understood what it felt like to be on the receiving end. They also thought that a girl harassing a boy would be unlikely to cause fear, and there was amusement at how unlikely that behaviour would be:

**"I think if a girl went up to a boy and asked about his colour underwear and squeezed his bum people would be like: 'What are you doing?!'"**

**NYASHA, 14, BELFAST**

As the girls we spoke to identified, young women are socialised to think constantly about their own safety and take personal responsibility for staying safe frequently by restricting their access to public places. In the UK, girls are significantly more worried than boys about being followed by a stranger (34

per cent of girls compared to 19 per cent of boys), with catcalling and other forms of street harassment highlighted as major crime and safety issues by girls.<sup>32</sup>

**"If I was harassed my next thought is always – are they going to follow me and hurt me? I don't think a boy would ever look at a female calling out at them and think: 'Oh they're going to hurt me'."**

**KHADIJA, 19, EDINBURGH**

Girls we spoke to felt that boys were much less likely to be brought up with the same considerations about their own personal safety. They were also unlikely to understand how their behaviour might affect girls or impact on the choices girls make about where they go or what they do. As Sam, 22, said: "*It wouldn't affect them so why would it affect a girl?*"; and Grace, 18, commented: "*Men will never know how scary it can be – they will never know what it's like to be afraid of walking down the street at night.*"

This report shows that sexual harassment (in all the spaces where they experience it) has a profound effect on how girls form their identities and learn to take up space in the world. As one youth worker said:

**"When you're younger you're trying to come up with your identity. You then question yourself more: am I too sexy, am I wearing the right clothes? It's just another confusion – to suddenly be sexualised at a time when you're also developing physically. It can be really confusing."**

**AMANDA, 46, YOUTH WORKER, MANCHESTER**

The journey to fully eliminating street harassment is likely to be a long one, involving significant shifts in attitudes and overall increases in gender equality in all its forms. As Superintendent Ricky Twyford, who was involved in the original Project Guardian to tackle unwanted sexual behaviour on London transport, said: "*This is going to be a constant cycle of work to eradicate the wider problem of misogyny that has existed for a long time – the battle to address it is going to be a long one.*"

With the current high profile of the #MeToo movement and a strong call for women's experiences of sexual harassment to be understood and their stories listened to, now is a key opportunity to make girls' voices heard and create the change they too want to see.

"I'm so used to it [Street Harassment], it's just become normal. You think to speak up but because they're boys, men, you feel like you'll get in trouble and anything could happen. It could go from something really small to something big so I don't bother."

**FATHEMA, 17, CARMARTHEN**



## METHODOLOGY

This report covers findings from a literature review, guided by the initial themes from *The State of Girls' Rights in the UK* report 2016, a series of interviews with professionals, and themes from four focus groups with girls and young women in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Focus groups were held with one university group and three youth community groups in autumn 2017. Youth workers participated in two of the groups. In Northern Ireland, the youth group was open access and attended by young people of many faiths and none. In Scotland, a young woman with expertise in this subject area also took part. She has been specifically identified in the text.

Overall, 31 young women aged 14 to 28 took part. Nine described themselves as having a disability. Twelve described themselves as heterosexual, six as lesbian, gay or queer

and eight as bisexual. Twenty-one described themselves as White, and ten as Black, Asian or another Ethnic Minority (BAME). Five preferred not to say.

Girls' words have been used to illustrate key themes through the use of quotes throughout this report. These have been written verbatim with editor inserts and slight edits for clarity.

Experts were chosen for interview through selective sampling and based on the themes to have emerged from the literature review. Overall, 16 experts were spoken to, of which ten were full interviews and six were shorter and less structured telephone calls on specific areas or questions.

In June 2018, we also carried out polling through Opinium of 1,000 14-21-year-old girls and young women across the UK.

## DEFINITIONS

The concept of gender refers to the norms, expectations and beliefs about the roles, relations and values attributed to girls and boys, women and men. These norms are socially constructed; they are neither invariable nor are they biologically determined. They change over time. They are learned from families and friends, in schools and communities, and from the media, government and religious organisations.

Plan International UK defines a girl as being anyone under the age of 18 who identifies as female, and a young woman as being

aged up to 25. We refer to 'girls' throughout to refer to our conversations with both girls and young women. We use trans, intersex and questioning plus other identities often included in this community (LGBTIQ+) to refer to the wide diversity of sexuality and gender identity-based cultures with which girls may associate. We use the term 'trans' as an umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth, and non-binary to mean a person who does not identify as only male or female. BAME is used as an acronym to refer to people who are Black, Asian or another Ethnic Minority.



“Some boys slut-shame girls. They’ll say about their skirt being too short...Once me and my friend were stood talking at the corner of the street, and then this car pulled up and the guy started saying ‘Your skirts are too short, you’re sluts’ or something like that.

What do you do in that situation? We were just on the corner of the street, just come back from school.”

**EVE, 17, GLASGOW**

# SECTION 2 THE PROBLEM: HOW GIRLS DESCRIBE STREET HARASSMENT

**“We’re taught to expect sexual harassment, because everyone experiences it.”**

**ALEXIS, 17, MANCHESTER**

What became shockingly clear as we carried out this work, was how prevalent harassment was amongst young women, and how much a part of daily life these experiences were, indeed, in the polling Plan International UK conducted to support this work we found that 66 per cent of girls in the UK have experienced unwanted sexual attention or sexual or physical contact in a public place. Thirty-eight per cent of girls are experiencing verbal harassment like catcalling, wolf-whistling and sexual comments at least once a month. Fifteen per cent of girls are being touched, groped or grabbed every month and only 20 per cent of girls said someone had responded in a way they found helpful.<sup>33</sup> This is supported by evidence from a Girlguiding UK survey<sup>34</sup>, which found that 37 per cent of 11 to 16-year-old girls, and 63 per cent of 17 to 21-year olds, reported experiencing street harassment often or sometimes.

In research carried out in Wales<sup>35</sup>, girls described being angry about having to live in a sexist culture but feeling like they had to ‘put up’ with everyday sexism and experiencing pervasive pressure to conform to this. The research found that verbal sexual harassment was common but that few children could talk about this with a parent or teacher and most did not know how to deal with harassing comments.

In an interview with Plan International UK Dr Fiona Vera-Gray, a leading academic in this field, described how messages that girls received about harassing behaviours as they grew up created a culture in which harassment became normalised. She described a pattern she uncovered through her own research of girls experiencing and processing harassment in stages. This might start with an early incident, at perhaps aged seven or eight years old, when something ‘out of the ordinary’ would happen such as being wolf-whistled at or an adult man saying “you’ll look pretty when you’re older”. In looking to adults to make sense of this, the response they got often suggested that this was “all part of growing up” and that the girls themselves were responsible for controlling

**66%**

**OF GIRLS IN THE UK HAVE EXPERIENCED SEXUAL ATTENTION OR SEXUAL OR PHYSICAL CONTACT IN A PUBLIC PLACE**

**38%**

**OF GIRLS EXPERIENCE VERBAL HARASSMENT LIKE CATCALLING, WOLF-WHISTLING AND SEXUAL COMMENTS AT LEAST ONCE A MONTH**

the situation by acting or behaving differently, changing what they wore or where they went.

*“Essentially, they’re being told that the reason this happens is not because of society, not because of those men, it’s because of you. You need to be in control of whether or not you’re going to stop this happening.”* Dr Fiona Vera-Gray

In adolescence, when girls became teenagers and developed a sense of a sexual self, they might feel they were in control and empowered, and perhaps enjoy the attention they received from these kind of behaviours. This frequently changed in their later teens, which Dr Vera-Gray commonly found in her research to happen between 15 and 17 years old but could be much older, when girls suddenly realised that they were not in control. This often happened as a result of something scary happening to them, such as someone following them or an experience of violence.

*“Just seeing that even when you’re not trying at all and you still get [harassment], you realise it has nothing to do with me and my control of the situation.”* Dr Fiona Vera-Gray

In focus groups with Plan International UK, girls were very aware that they could be perceived as vulnerable because of a combination of their age and their gender. Other factors, like having a disability or being perceived to be particularly ‘weak’ because of their physical size or their ethnicity, could make this worse. One young woman, for example, perceived the harassment she experienced being as a result of stereotypes about ‘submissive Asian women’.

Many girls felt that harassers exploited the perceived vulnerability of younger women, thinking they could “get away with it” more easily as girls were less likely to “fight back” or report what had happened to them. They also thought that harassers played on an anticipated fear amongst girls that they would not be believed if they did tell anyone.

**“It could be, if you’re really young, it’s like will you be believed, when someone’s got so much control over the situation? But if you’re older, people are going to possibly believe you because you’re more mature.”**

**RAYHANA, 18, MANCHESTER**

**“It’s worse when you’re younger. There’s a sexualisation of young girls, and young girls are less likely to fight back.”**

**SYDNEY, 28, EDINBURGH**

Some young women Plan International UK spoke to reflected that it was such a prevalent part of their lives that they had become desensitised to it as they got older, thinking: “*Oh no, not this again*”, and some felt that harassing experiences were much harder to respond to and process when girls were younger.

**“More younger people would be more hurt and scared, where you might develop a bit more anger when you’re older.”**

**CHARLOTTE, 25, MANCHESTER**

These comments chimed with comments from professionals who observed that girls were less likely to report than adult women. For example, Inspector Ruby Burrow of Nottinghamshire Police, told Plan International UK: “*Generally [the police] don’t get reports from children, reports tend to come through an adult. You have to be quite well informed – it is the well-informed individuals who are making reports about this kind of thing, it doesn’t tend to be a child who says ‘that behaviour is unacceptable’.*”

## WHO DOES IT?

Evidence tells us that girls and women are overwhelmingly the targets of harassment and that boys and men are overwhelmingly the ones who perpetrate harassment. As Carol Gardner said in one of the first major studies on this subject, in the lives of girls and women, *“public harassment abuses are frequent reminders of the ever-present relevance of their gender”*.<sup>36</sup>

Girls said they experienced harassment from boys and men of all ages, saying that *“anyone’s capable of doing it”*, *“you get it with men of all ages”* and that *“scum bag behaviour”* can happen throughout life. Within this, however, they particularly identified groups of teenage boys and young adult men as harassing them more frequently:

**“The abuse you would get walking up the street from people who were 18, 19, 20 was wild.”**

**LUCY-ANNE, 19, BELFAST**

**“It usually happens in a group of lads and they start shouting something.”**

**CHLOE, 18, BELFAST**

It was by no means only younger men doing the harassing, however, with girls identifying men in their *“late 20s, early 30s”* as well as *“older, middle-aged men”* as continuing to harass them.



Research from the USA and Hollaback!’s international surveys tell us that girls and women are overwhelmingly the targets of harassment and that boys and men are overwhelmingly the ones who perpetrate harassment.<sup>37</sup>

Research also indicates that there may also be a few men who use street harassment, including groping, as a ‘rape test’: they may attempt rape depending on how assertively a woman responds to street harassment.<sup>38</sup> PhD research currently under way and funded by the British Transport Police, is exploring patterns of sexual offending behaviour on public transport to attempt to establish the motivations of those who perpetrate these kind of offences.

“There was this one time me and my mum were going up to the shop. My mum, I mean she looks much older than me, she’s in her 50s, and we were walking and there were these builders sitting on the wall and they were visibly checking both of us out. I could see them sort of looking us up and down. This was a few years ago too. I firstly felt really disgusted by that ‘cause it was obvious that I was like about 11 or whatever and with my mum. And stuff like that happens fairly often. It like puts me off like going places really.”

**SOPHIE, 15, LONDON**



## WHY DOES IT HAPPEN?

*“The uniqueness of misogyny is the acceptance of it.”* Inspector Ruby Burrow

There is very little research into the motivations of boys and men who harass women. What there is, suggests that street harassment is one of the ways in which men performatively ‘prove themselves’ in peer groups, with women playing a role as capital in this exchange.<sup>39</sup> One study found that men were more likely to sexually harass strangers when in a group, mainly due to the anonymity this context provided and the role that engaging in sexual harassment played in group bonding.<sup>40</sup>

Reflecting on her own research, Dr Maria Garner suggested that men may stand to gain more by maintaining this status quo than by challenging it; that even men who claim, *“I’m not that guy”*, and who are critical of other men’s behaviours, continue to play along and remain complicit in public harassment. She stressed that we still do not know enough about individual men’s motivations and choices when they intrude on girls and women when they are on their own, outside of group contexts, and the sense of entitlement and potential gains that might drive this behaviour.

Men in focus groups from an evaluation of Nottinghamshire Police’s Misogyny Hate Crime policy (ref page 77)<sup>41</sup>, confirmed some of these findings, saying: *“It’s a performance. So if a male does it, it’s a performance of what he thinks it is to be male.”* And *“When you’re of an age where, rightly or wrongly, the people around you influence you more than you influence yourself and it’s that pressure of fitting in that maybe allows that to happen.”*<sup>42</sup>

Girls also felt that harassing women served a certain social purpose between boys and men, enabling them to *“demonstrate their manhood”*, put them at the top of their social chain, or impress one another. Girls felt there was strong *“pressure to conform”* amongst young men, and that this involved treating girls and women as objects.

**“Most street harassment will happen when the guy is in the company of other men. So it’s more about what they will think about it rather than whether it’s wanted. She’s very much an object in that interaction. So whether or not it’s unwanted isn’t really in their mind, because guys aren’t doing it because they want to date you, they’re doing it to demonstrate their manhood.”**

**LINDSAY, 28, EDINBURGH**

**“It reasserts their role as men by objectifying women.”**

**ANA, 21, EDINBURGH**

**“...To make them look like the best one in the group – they think it’s impressive [to intimidate girls] in a group situation with other lads.”**

**NATASHA, 25, YOUTH WORKER, SHEFFIELD**

The mantra ‘boys will be boys’ was frequently referenced as providing a benchmark that excused public harassment. ‘Lad culture’, ‘banter’ and ‘lad games’ were also identified as drivers. Girls gave examples, including boys asking girls out ‘as a joke’, attempting to ‘pull’ girls based on a points system, playing games like ‘get a redhead’ or trying to lose their virginity by ‘going with the ugly girl’.

**“A lot of the time it’s in the name of male banter and cheap laughs; they think those kinds of things are funny to do.”**

**SAM, 22, EDINBURGH**

Cultural messages about what was considered an acceptable way to demonstrate attraction towards or interest in women were often referenced, including films picturing the relentless pursuit of women by men as ‘romantic’, and the kinds of sexualisation of girls and women celebrated on popular reality TV shows.

**“It’s just teaching them from a young age that they can do anything they want.”**

**JORDAN, 18, SHEFFIELD**

Girls and professionals alike felt there was a general failure amongst men to provide good role modelling to younger generations, or to ‘police’ their friends’ behaviour and prevent harassment from happening.

**“It’s because their [men’s] role models when they’re young are so ‘manly’, they don’t treat women nicely.”**

**CHLOE, 18, BELFAST**

Girls gave examples of parents effectively ‘teaching’ boys to harass, which in some extreme cases included adults actively encouraging boys to catcall and objectify women. Some said this could come from older women as much as men, but that older men were more likely to perpetuate the behaviour.

A number of girls explained harassment in the context of power imbalances and gender and structural inequalities. They described this both as a cause of street harassment and a reason for why it wasn’t taken more seriously.

**“Because you’re a girl you’re seen as lesser.”**

**LUCY-ANNE, 19, BELFAST**

**“It’s ingrained in society that we hear about girls and women experiencing really bad things that happen to them every day.”**

**SAM, 22, EDINBURGH**

The minimisation of harassment was seen to perpetuate the behaviour. This normalisation was seen as attached to the fear of being seen as a ‘woman complaining’ or that other people would dismiss the behaviour as trivial, complimentary or a joke.

## TYPES OF HARASSMENT OF GIRLS

### 'Catcalling'

The behaviour most commonly reported by the girls Plan International UK spoke to was being shouted at or 'catcalled'. This is demonstrated elsewhere, for example with 65 per cent of girls in one survey in Wales saying sexual harassment was one of the main issues they faced, and that 'catcalling' and using words like 'slut', 'slag' and 'whore' were common amongst their peers.<sup>43</sup>

"People driving by and shouting at you. That's the worst."

NYASHA, 14, BELFAST

Girls described the **fear**, **shock** and **shame** catcalling caused them, and the impact this had on where they went and what they felt free to do. Being shouted or beeped at by men in moving vehicles was seen as a particular problem, with girls describing an acute sense of **being singled out**, drawn attention to and **wanting 'to be swallowed up'** when this happened. Not being clear about who the person was, whether they knew them or knowing how to respond made these experiences worse.

### Unwanted touching and physical harassment

"Nothing's worse than just sitting somewhere and feeling something touching you."

KELSEY, 18, BELFAST

Girls frequently experienced unwanted touching or invasions of their personal space which went unchallenged. Girls also described behaviours that may not be categorised as

criminal but which were often experienced as intimidating. The feeling of being 'stared at' was commonly identified, for example, and led to similar feelings as catcalling – **shame**, **embarrassment** and **wanting to 'disappear'**. Hair, whether afro, redhead or dyed bright colours, was described as being a particular entry point for men feeling entitled to speak to girls or touch them.

Girls described acts that were experienced as **threatening** and **intimidating**, like people getting too close, interrupting them or making an excuse to touch them, for example putting their hands on their waist to move past them in a doorway. These sorts of behaviours could be read either as unwelcome overfamiliarity or deliberate intimidation, for example when groups of boys or men lined a path or blocked a doorway. Importantly, the frequency of such behaviours means that they should not be seen as isolated small incidents but instead they need to be viewed for their cumulative impact.

"Me and my friend, we were in 4th year, it was outside a kebab shop, there was a group of men who would follow up and walk into the shop with us and stand either side of the door, so we had to walk through them, and they would say stuff to us. And that was actually terrifying, because they followed us."

ROSIE-MAE, 17, BELFAST

A small but worrying number of girls in focus groups reported incidents of more serious physical and sexual harassment, including being grabbed and groped. A number talked about incidents that happened on nights out, including being groped in a queue and being pinned up against a wall on a night out. These types of experiences are also commonly

# 63%

OF YOUNG ADULT WOMEN (AGED 18 TO 24) HAD EXPERIENCED INAPPROPRIATE SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR IN NIGHT-TIME VENUES

reported elsewhere. The case studies highlighted in this report add to the reports of physical and sexual assaults. One Drinkaware survey found almost two-thirds (63 per cent) of young adult women (aged 18 to 24) had experienced inappropriate sexual behaviour in night-time venues; 76 per cent felt **disgusted** and 71 per cent felt **angry** as a result.<sup>44</sup>

One girl described an incident of having been grabbed by a man when she was out shopping with her mum.

"I was at an ATM with my mum... I remember it so clearly, we were shopping, and a guy came along and whispered in my ear: 'It's national grab an arse day', and he grabbed me... I was 15, with my mum, doing Christmas shopping. People always say 'keep yourself safe, don't wear this, don't go to these places' but like how possibly could I have avoided that? Don't go outside!?"

LUCY-ANNE, 19, BELFAST

One girl, for example, described having had to witness a man masturbating in front of her. Whilst this was not a common occurrence described in focus groups, these kind of sexual acts, including men exposing themselves, are often named in apps and online reporting platforms such as Hollaback! on which women can record harassment experiences. This kind of offence has also been reported by academics:

"[Flashing and public masturbation is] a huge and common experience for girls in adolescence who are under 18."

DR FIONA VERA-GRAY<sup>45</sup>

Crime survey figures for England and Wales show an increase in adult victims of sexual assaults in part due to overall improved reporting from women who are victims of indecent exposure or unwanted sexual touching.<sup>46</sup>

### Girls in school uniform

Girls frequently described witnessing and experiencing harassment at a very young age, sometimes as young as eight years old. In all of the cases described, girls felt sure that the age of the girls being targeted must have been clear to the harasser, particularly when the girls were in school uniform or travelling around school time. They were **shocked** that this did not appear to stop men from harassing and commented on how badly the harassment could affect them.

A survey by Plan International UK has found that 35 per cent of girls wearing school uniform have been sexually harassed in public. More than a third of girls in the UK have received unwanted sexual attention such as being groped, stared at, catcalled and wolf-whistled while wearing their school uniform in public. The survey also found that

# 35%

OF GIRLS WEARING SCHOOL UNIFORM HAVE BEEN SEXUALLY HARASSED IN PUBLIC

"It started at the age of 13..."

People do come up to me when I'm in my uniform. They assume I'm 16. I've told them I'm 13 or 14 and they don't believe it."

**REBECCA, 15, LONDON**



MORE THAN

1 in 3

GIRLS IN THE UK HAVE RECEIVED UNWANTED SEXUAL ATTENTION SUCH AS BEING GROPED, STARED AT, CATCALLED AND WOLF-WHISTLED WHILE WEARING THEIR SCHOOL UNIFORM IN PUBLIC

one in seven girls had been followed while in uniform, eight per cent said they had been filmed or photographed by a stranger without their permission or someone had taken a photograph up their school skirt (known as upskirting). One in eight girls said their first experience of unwanted sexual attention or contact in a public place was when they were 12 years old or younger.<sup>47</sup>

“I can remember walking down a road in Sheffield with my sister and her friend and they were about ten at the time and some older man wound his window down and whistled at them and it just made me feel sick – like how can you not see they’re children?”

NATASHA, 25, YOUTH WORKER, SHEFFIELD

Girls described what they saw as the sexualisation of young girls in the minds of adults, identifying a clear parallel between girls reaching puberty, developing physically and the attention they received from men. Some said that looking older as a young woman was “worse”. Those who described themselves as “developing early” in particular talked about both unwanted sexual attention from strangers

and sexual bullying in the classroom, and the fear and intimidation this could cause.

“I think as soon as a pair of tits are in their [a boy’s] face, that’s it.”

SARAH, 21, SHEFFIELD

“I used to be quite breasty, I used to have the horns beeped at me two three times a day.”

RACHEL, 23, MANCHESTER

Those who were slightly older often reflected back on how much worse the harassment had been when they were younger or talked about having witnessed the harassment of younger girls and how shocking and **distressing** they found it.

“Young girls especially, who are already under pressure, or who are developing boobs and have their period and they feel like little girls, and then suddenly they’re sexualised – which is completely new to them – it’s a really scary situation for them.”

GEORGIA, 20, MANCHESTER

Concerningly, girls felt that being in school uniform made them a particular target. They described feeling **sexualised** and **fetishised** by “older men targeting school

1 in 7

GIRLS HAVE BEEN FOLLOWED WHILE IN UNIFORM

1 in 8

GIRLS SAID THEIR FIRST EXPERIENCE OF UNWANTED SEXUAL ATTENTION OR CONTACT IN A PUBLIC PLACE WAS WHEN THEY WERE 12 YEARS OLD OR YOUNGER

girls”. Data gathered through the Bristol Street Harassment Project survey<sup>48</sup> found 58 per cent of people had first experienced harassment when they were between 10-15 years old, with one saying: “First time I was harassed on the street, I was 13 and in my school uniform during secondary school. I was walking home and around three older men on the other side of the road whistled at me.”<sup>49</sup> Similarly, staff from the Angelou Centre (for BAME women) reported girls not wanting to go anywhere after school as they were sexually harassed and approached in the street by adult men they did not know when in uniform.<sup>50</sup>

“To be perfectly blunt, it was the fetishism of school uniform, school girls. And you’re like, I literally just come out of a six-hour day at school, can you please not? I have other things to worry about – but that is what it is. That school girl thing. It definitely is a thing... It’s the whole like, you know that Robin Thicke song ‘she’s a good girl’, ‘Blurred Lines’ – it’s like ‘she won’t do anything either because she’s a good girl’. It’s a really warped pervy old man thing. But that is something you have to be aware of.”

LUCY-ANNE, 19, BELFAST

Despite being on their way to or from school, girls clearly did not feel safe and were extremely self-conscious about their uniform and how much of a ‘target’ they felt it made them.

“I’ve never experienced harassment like I did then [at school]. Men would ask if they could take a picture with me in my uniform. It was awful. Before that I used to be walking home, and I was so scared walking home.”

FFION, 25, EDINBURGH

“Someone did it to me when I was in school uniform, I developed early and had breasts and stuff, and I was like 12. You kinda get scared.”

ZANELE, 20, MANCHESTER

“I’m not allowed to go out in my uniform any more. My mum says I look older than I am.”

NYASHA, 14, BELFAST

## Technology used for harassment

Online, just as offline, girls report high levels of harassment. A small number of girls in our focus groups reported being harassed using technology, for example having their underwear photographed without consent on a phone camera, or 'upskirting' as it is often referred to.

**"In school they made a game to see how many girls' skirts you could flip up and see how many people would see, and the most people to see her underwear the better... One girl actually had to leave the school after [because she was bullied after this happening to her]."**

**KELSEY, 18, BELFAST**

**"That happened to me in primary school [aged about nine]. There was a competition to take photos and see what colour underwear you were wearing."**

**ROSIE-MAE, 17, BELFAST**

Whilst digital spaces can be a source of great enjoyment and connection, girls also report high levels of harassment which can lead to them feeling **'squeezed out'** and **silenced**. In a survey carried out for Plan International UK, 23 per cent of girls felt harassed by someone contacting them regularly on social media, and 83 per cent<sup>51</sup> believe they should be taught how to cope with sexist, racist or other discriminatory behaviour.

Other evidence has suggested that technology is likely to be used as part of the harassment girls and women experience. A survey of 591 people carried out to support the Nottingham Misogyny Hate Crime policy, for example, found 17.3 per cent had experienced unwanted photos being taken on mobiles, with 6.8 per cent reporting upskirting.



## Gender and identity-based harassment

Wider inequalities and prejudices shape girls' experiences of harassment, and those targeted by public harassment are often targets of discrimination elsewhere in their lives. Whilst street harassment affects girls and women of all backgrounds, research suggests that it disproportionately affects people who are Black, Asian or another Ethnic Minority (BAME) as well as LGBTIQ+ people.

LGBTIQ+ girls told Plan International UK about intersecting experiences of sexual harassment, homophobia or transphobia, BAME girls described racialised sexual harassment and young women with disabilities described a pronounced feeling of vulnerability to harassment due to a combination of gender, age and disability. Plan International UK's survey data also found that BAME and LGBTIQ+ young women reported higher rates across all experiences of harassment. And while 38 per cent of 14-21 year-olds girls in Plan International UK's polling reported unwanted sexual attention – including catcalling, wolf-whistling, being stared at or sexual comments – at least once a month, this rose to 42 per cent of BAME and 49 per cent of LGBTIQ+ young people. And while 34 per cent of 14 to 21-year-olds reported having been followed, this rose to 43 per cent of BAME and 50 per cent of LGBTIQ+ young women.

LGBTIQ+ girls described instances where harassment rapidly escalated into homophobia. Testimonies in Stonewall's report on hate crime and discrimination describe similar instances of harassment and abuse that can be both sexual in nature and combined with homophobia.

**"I think women who are gay or less feminine appearing have a more horrendous time in general... people who are threatened with rape because they look 'butch' or not feminine."**

**FFION, 25, EDINBURGH**

In an interview, leading Australian academic Dr Bianca Fileborn confirmed that forms of harassment often overlap and co-occur, meaning hate crime and sexualisation often cannot be disentangled. Her research found that women in same-sex relationships often experience harassment differently, with one partner receiving homophobic abuse because of their gender presentation, while the other might experience sexualised harassment if she is perceived to be more 'feminine'.

Harassment can also contain a racialised dimension. This is supported by evidence given by Marai Larasi, Director of Imkaan, that many black and minority ethnic women and girls are victimised in ways that include racialised abuse when she spoke to the Women and Equalities Committee as part of their inquiry into sexual harassment in public places.<sup>52</sup> In a film made by Imkaan and ERAW, 'I'd Just Like to Be Free', featuring young black and minority ethnic women talking about their experiences of harassment in the UK, one young woman says: *"My experiences are different as a black woman than they are for my white friends. I should be 'up for it' or I am 'fair game' or I shouldn't care if my body is touched in a specific way."*

**42%**

**OF 14 TO 21-YEAR OLD BAME WOMEN REPORTED UNWANTED SEXUAL ATTENTION AT LEAST ONCE A MONTH**

Examples from professionals and girls alike confirmed that sexualised comments directed at BAME girls and young women were frequently based on racialised stereotypes about the community they were perceived to belong to. BAME girls described being followed or looked at when in a racial minority locally, or men talking to them in the language of their perceived country of origin or feeling entitled to look at them or touch them. Girls said they felt sure the same thing would not happen to a boy or a man, and that these behaviours were different from those directed towards their white friends.

**"There's always loads of men who'll say things like 'ni-hoa' or 'konichiwa' trying to ask where I'm from... I've never really thought about it being a gender-based thing until now, but they'd never say that to a guy."**

**MIZUHO, 20, EDINBURGH**

**"It's like a micro aggression, because they try to use your race as a compliment, but I don't want to be complimented because of my skin colour. I think it's a big issue, it's the kind of thing that only happens to girls. I have a little brother and no one ever comes up to him."**

**KHADIJA, 19, EDINBURGH**

There were times when it was unclear to girls Plan International UK spoke to what the motivation of the harassment may have been, for example, a girl of colour who was shouted at and then egged in her school uniform, leaving her feeling both **embarrassment** and **confusion**.

“I was in my school uniform, my primary school uniform actually, and this guy honked me and I wouldn’t turn around and he kept honking so he egged me. I told my sister but he was already gone. It really hurt. I was with my friend so I wasn’t as scared as I would have been, but I was just in shock. I thought – ‘Why would you egg me?’ It was pretty scary, if I was on my own I would have been really scared. You don’t know what to do [at that age] – I just stood there for about five minutes in shock.”

**ZANELE, 20, MANCHESTER**

It is also possible that there are unrecognised gender dimensions to hate crime as a whole; however, this is currently difficult to analyse as the Home Office does not break down hate crimes in England and Wales by gender.<sup>53</sup> There has been an overall increase in recorded hate crime of 48 per cent over the last three years, which may partly reflect increased awareness and efforts to improve reporting but does suggest a worrying trend. Muslim women, for example, are more likely to be abused or attacked than men in all settings, representing 56 per cent of those attacked or abused, particularly if they are visibly Muslim, and the largest proportion of perpetrators in these instances are white men.<sup>54</sup> This suggests that “anti-Muslim hatred at a street level is a mixture of gender abuse, hatred and



racism” and that this is affecting women’s **self-confidence, independence, mobility** and **what they choose to wear**.<sup>55</sup> Without further data about how all forms of hate crime affect girls and young women specifically, and the routes they may take to report or prevent this, a specifically gendered dimension may well be overlooked in this policy space.

The experiences of young women with physical and learning disabilities emerged as an issue in one discussion. The fear of potential harassment, and the potential vulnerability girls with disabilities may be perceived as having as a result of gender, age and ability, was highly significant in where the girls chose to go and what they felt safe to do. Street harassment was equated very closely with bullying.

These experiences emphasise that gender-based harassment takes place in the wider context of other inequalities, prejudices and power dynamics, including racism, homophobia, transphobia and ableism, which must be taken account of to effectively challenge street harassment. Viewing street harassment through this intersectional lens sheds light on the social markers that “*situate women in hierarchal relation to each other*” and the subsequent way in which harassment is “*experienced by women in multiple ways, some of which are shared and some of which are not.*”<sup>56</sup>

## WHERE DOES IT HAPPEN?

### ‘When alone’

Girls often talked about being harassed when they were alone in public spaces, particularly when passing certain areas where groups of men (both young and old) congregate, or around public transport interchanges – and particularly while waiting for buses.

The examples girls gave in focus groups in the UK tended to be quite location-specific, centring around a particular underpass or cluster of shops, for example. One young woman talked about not wanting to go through a particular underpass without her boyfriend as there was always a group of boys there that would stare, shout things and deliberately intimidate her. Another described in detail her journey to school, and the older boys who would shout sexualised comments at her by the same bus stop and on a particular stretch of road. In each session, girls looked at a map of the city and were able to point out specific spots where the majority of the harassment they experienced had happened, with many of them sharing similar views on particular places they avoided when they were alone.

### Busy and central areas

Areas with high densities of people and a high level of anonymity often featured in girls’ stories of harassment. Similarly, girls described harassment experienced when travelling on foot – walking or jogging – and particularly highlighted times when they were shouted at or beeped at (or even had things thrown at them) from passing cars.

Studies suggest that public harassment frequently takes places in crowded areas, where large numbers of people cross paths and there is a high degree of anonymity. This is frequently around public transport stations

and interchanges or in areas considered to be easily ‘walkable’, with one study of 7,800 worldwide street harassment incidents finding the probability of street harassment increased as the degree of ‘walkability’ increased.

### Public transport

There is no national UK data about the prevalence of harassment across all transport networks, but self-reported survey data shows consistently high reporting amongst women. London is the area to have gathered the most comprehensive data on safety and unwanted sexual behaviour on public transport, and this has highlighted that younger women (aged 16 to 24) are more likely to experience unwanted sexual behaviour. While 11 per cent of adult women report unwanted sexual behaviour on public transport, for example, this rises to 18 per cent amongst 16-34 year old women.<sup>57</sup> In a separate international survey carried out by the Thomson Reuters Foundation and YouGov, London was also rated 9th worst of 15 of the world’s largest capitals in terms of women reporting public transport to be safe and 10th worst for women reporting being verbally harassed by men.<sup>58</sup>

Recorded reports from Project Guardian, a partnership project launched in 2013, found that offences commonly reported on transport include rubbing, groping, masturbation, leering, sexual comments, indecent acts or the taking of photographs without consent. The most commonly reported sexual offences reported on the railways, according to the British Transport Police (BTP), include groping, rubbing, and stroking, accounting for 55 to 60 per cent of overall BTP sexual offences, as well as offences ‘outraging public decency’ including taking images of a sexual nature of someone in public without that person’s consent (also known as ‘upskirting’) and public

masturbation. Another of the most common offences reported is exposure (8 per cent). Incidents involving penetration, such as assault by penetration and rape, are reported less frequently and account for about 1 per cent of sexual offences reported to BTP.<sup>59</sup>

Both Superintendent Ricky Twyford, and Siwan Hayward from Transport for London, raised the issue around the victimisation of younger women and girls on public transport and the barriers to reporting. Sexual offence crime data shows that girls are the main victim group on the bus network, often travelling to and from school, but the true extent of all sexual harassment of girls travelling is unknown due to under-reporting.

A rapid evidence review of what works to prevent sexual harassment on transport, carried out by Dr Anna Gekoski, Dr Jackie Gray and others, found a number of initiatives to combat the problem. The review recommended that the public be informed about initiatives being implemented to reduce unwanted sexual behaviour on public transport and be told whether or not they are effective.<sup>60</sup> It also recommended that personal request stop schemes on buses, allowing women to get off closer to their destination, be tested for viability, as well as for transport agencies to widen their safety initiatives to the areas immediately around public transport, where serious sexual assaults often take place. In an interview with Plan International UK, Dr Jacqueline Gray also suggested there was value in tackling other low-level incivility and unwelcome male behaviour on transport, like 'manspreading' the practice whereby a man, especially one travelling on public transport, adopts a sitting position with his legs wide apart, in such a way as to encroach on an adjacent seat or seats.

A number of girls had experienced harassment on transport, where "you're really squished together" or where it can be hard to identify a perpetrator or their intention. Indeed, Transport



for London described this in written evidence to the Women and Equalities Committee as a 'target rich' environment, with the majority of sex offenders caught on public transport holding a clear preconception of the victim they were seeking to target.<sup>61</sup>

Work by Dr Jackie Gray suggests that the rates of prevalence of harassment on public transport indicate that specific work is needed to reduce offending in this space, and it should be made known that the police are prioritising the issue to tackle the problem.<sup>62</sup> In interview, she told Plan International UK: "People need to know 'we are looking out for you, you are safe, we will respond where we can', – it is important women know where they can go."

Siwan Hayward, Head of Transport Policing at Transport for London also agreed that harassment on transport "does affect women's journey choices and therefore constrains how women use the city and use public space". Through Project Guardian, partners involved learnt about high levels of harassment amongst young women, especially girls travelling in school uniform on the bus network:

"Especially on the bus network, the reports that were coming through were nearly all reports from girls under the age of 16, and

nearly all reports from girls who are travelling at school travel time: so girls travelling in school uniform, being harassed and experiencing unwanted sexual behaviour. There is clearly an issue and problem there." – Siwan Hayward, Transport for London

Examples she gave included sexualised behaviour or conversations from other young people that made girls feel uncomfortable but that they were unwilling to report, as well as experiences of harassment directed towards them. Buses, she explained, are particularly difficult to police, given how many officers would be required to cover the network and the design of vehicles that make it easier for a harasser to escape undetected. This makes ensuring girls safety while travelling particularly challenging in London, and suggests that girls travelling on buses outside of London may experience similar levels of harassment that goes unreported.

### Out at night

Young women that Plan International UK spoke to were very conscious of potentially predatory behaviours in and around night-time venues like bars and clubs, both as customers and as staff. This often correlated with areas where there were large populations of students and young people. They described aiming to stick together in groups, the risks of being separated from friends and having to fend off unwanted male advances. Much of this behaviour was sadly seen as to be expected: "You just think 'whatever', you take it." Indeed, research shows that young adult women are much more likely than men of the same age to report many negative consequences of drunken nights out, including the fear of vulnerability and incidents of 'low-level sexual molestation'.<sup>63</sup>

One described the fear she had felt when she realised she had lost her friends on a night out and was being singled out by a particularly predatory man.

"I had a really scary experience recently. I'd lost all my friends in a bar and this guy grabbed me by the arm and was like 'Where are you from?' and he said, 'Where are your friends?' I went to the toilet and when I came out him and his friends were waiting for me. I turned around and he pinned me to the wall and he had me against the wall and he was like 'You're so pretty' and I said, 'I have a boyfriend' and he said, 'I'm sure he won't mind'. He leaned in and all I could do was duck and literally jump out from under his arms."

LUCY-ANNE, 19, BELFAST

Young women who had worked in bars described a culture that promoted harassment of female staff. They talked about managers explicitly recruiting attractive young women to attract male customers, and enabling or failing to prevent harassment by creating an environment where the customer was 'always right' and workplaces did not deal with harassment when it was reported.

"I've worked in a pub and once a group of boys knocked something over just so I had to clear it up in front of them... sometimes it [harassment] is a bit more demeaning."

SAM, 22, EDINBURGH

### Harassment in schools

Whilst the school environment was out of the immediate focus of this research, it was clear that girls often did not distinguish between the places in their lives where harassment took place. Girls Plan International UK spoke to raised many experiences of sexual harassment in school, or by boys they knew who went to

22%

OF WOMEN IN THE UK REPORTED SOME EXPERIENCE OF SEXUAL TOUCHING, GROPING, FLASHING, SEXUAL ASSAULT OR RAPE WHILE THEY WERE IN OR AROUND SCHOOL

their school, including incidents also involving homophobia and racism. Examples included girls having their photos taken and shared without their consent, being “punched in the boobs” by boys in corridors and being stalked by a male classmate. Some of these instances had started in primary school.

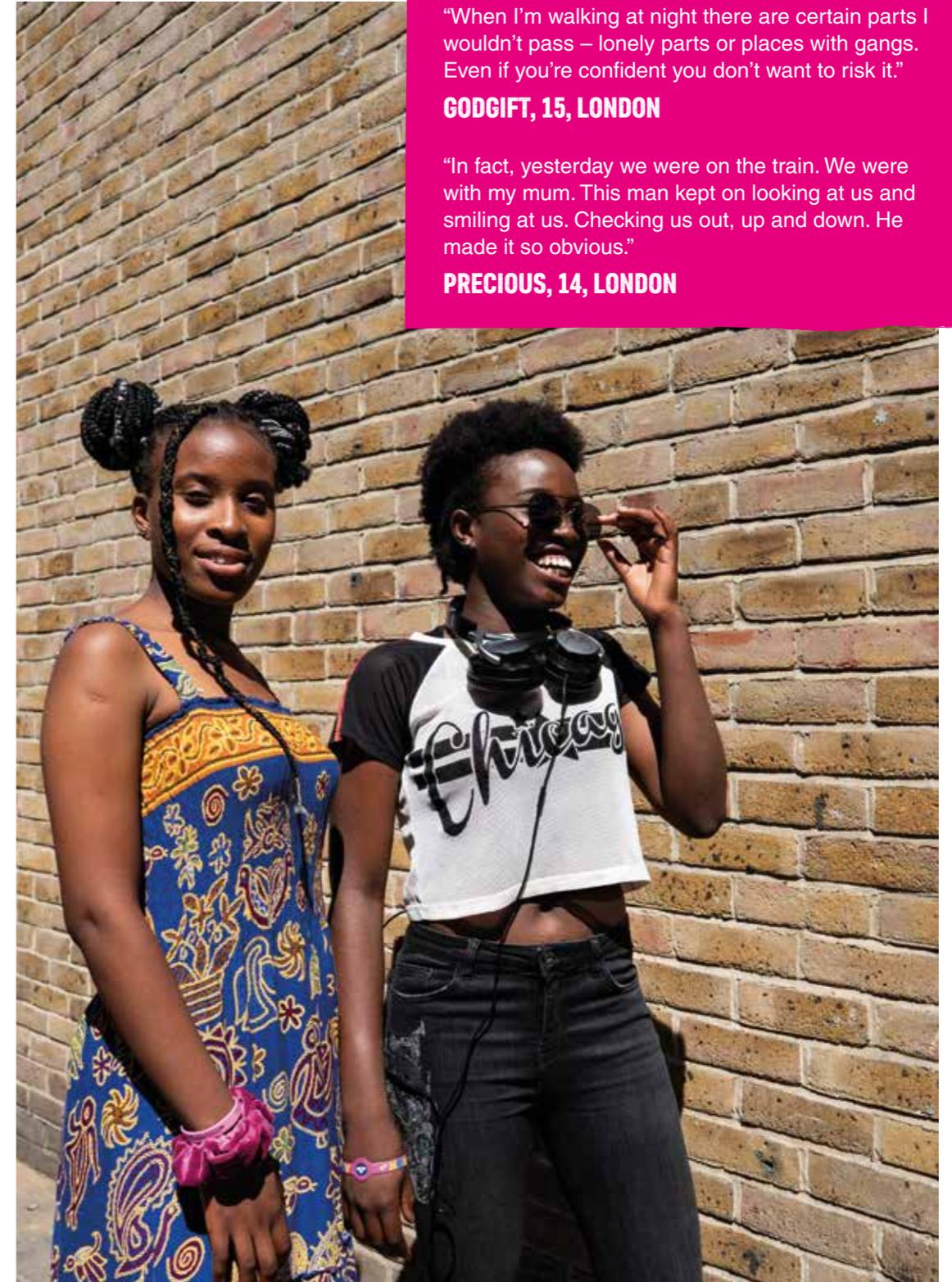
We know from our previous research that sexual harassment can be prevalent in schools. One in five women (22 per cent) in the UK reported some experience of sexual touching, groping, flashing, sexual assault or rape while they were in or around school and two-thirds of victims of reported sex offences

66%

OF VICTIMS OF REPORTED SEX OFFENCES ON SCHOOL PREMISES ARE GIRLS OR WOMEN, WITH 94% OF ALLEGED PERPETRATORS MEN OR BOYS

on school premises are girls or women (66 per cent) with 94 per cent of alleged perpetrators men or boys.<sup>64</sup>

As this section demonstrates, the range of ways in which girls experience harassment, which cuts across times of day, types of harassment and multiple locations, suggests how wide-ranging this behaviour is. Any strategy that attempts to address harassment must also take account of the intersectional way in which different girls can experience harassment in different ways – depending on other identity characteristics – in addition to their age and gender.



“When I’m walking at night there are certain parts I wouldn’t pass – lonely parts or places with gangs. Even if you’re confident you don’t want to risk it.”

**GODGIFT, 15, LONDON**

“In fact, yesterday we were on the train. We were with my mum. This man kept on looking at us and smiling at us. Checking us out, up and down. He made it so obvious.”

**PRECIOUS, 14, LONDON**

"I saw the other day: top ten tips women should take on to avoid being raped, and one of the things in the list was you know don't wear your hair up in a pony tail because it's easier for a man to grab a hold of, or don't wear your make-up a certain way as it can be, like, sort of seductive to a man. And when I was thinking about it, I was, if anything you should be like teaching a guy, like, top ten ways to suppress your feelings so if you wanted to rape a woman how to like suppress those feelings!..."

Why should a girl have to change the way that she would like to happily dress, that makes her feel confident, just to avoid a man who can't control his feelings to, you know, cause harm to another woman?"

**EMMA, 17, GLASGOW**





## CHANGING BEHAVIOURS

**“I feel like I restrict my behaviour or the things I do to minimise the behaviour of other people.”**

**FION, 25, EDINBURGH**

Research with people who experience harassment has found that they are likely to change their lives, their activities or their behaviour in some way as a result of their experiences, which frequently has a negative impact on how safe they feel in public spaces and on public transport.<sup>71,72</sup> Dr Fiona Vera-Gray described how the daily experience of street harassment can lead girls and women to feel constantly on edge and adopt strategies in an attempt to anticipate and avoid unwanted attention.<sup>73</sup> She described this as the ‘safety work’ that girls and women do, like not wearing certain clothes, not taking certain bus routes, walking home with their keys in their hands, wearing headphones or pretending to talk on the phone. The result, however, is that girls and women *“might report feeling safe but actually it’s having an impact on how free we feel to be in public space in the way we want to”*.

Girls we spoke to described multiple ways in which they changed their activities or behaviours in response to the risk of harassment. This included having a series of ‘no-go areas’ that affected how free they were

to travel and move around where they lived. For one girl who was frequently harassed in venues whilst working for a security firm, this also affected the places she felt comfortable working and the shifts she could take something her male colleagues did not have to consider.

Girls were clearly always alert to the potential risk involved in travelling and being in public spaces. Similarly, the 2016 Girlguiding Girls’ Attitudes Survey found 67 per cent of girls (aged 11 to 21 years old) changed their behaviour to avoid feeling unsafe.<sup>74</sup> Girls in our focus groups described subconsciously limiting the places that they went to, or changing the things they would do, *“as a protective mechanism”* without even realising they were doing this. They talked about limiting their access to certain places, taking alternative journeys to avoid potential harassment – even if they were not the most direct – not travelling at certain times of day, or mentally planning possible escape routes. They said that these were *“considered as givens, that you have to do in your everyday life”* as a girl.

**“If it’s anywhere near dark, I always have a plan in my head about what I’m going to do.”**

**NYASHA, 14, BELFAST**

## SELF-PROTECTION METHODS

**“How am I going to get them to leave me alone, how am I going to deal with this one?”**

**MIRIAM, 18, SHEFFIELD**

As we have explored in the previous section, harassment and the threat of harassment can have serious implications for girls’ freedom, autonomy and perceived safety. In our focus groups girls told us that harassment plays a significant restrictive role in their lives and avoiding harassment occupies their thinking and planning time on a daily basis.

**“You start to see how much it limits their ability to have space to themselves; to think and plan and design and create.”**

**DR FIONA VERA-GRAY**

Girls described using a number of avoidance techniques and self-protection methods so that they did not have to interact with people or would be able to ignore them.

### Creating a ‘protector’

**“I have a screen shot of a phone call so I pretend I’m on the phone.”**

**NYASHA, 14, BELFAST**

Travelling with parents, only going to certain places with a boyfriend, or taking a pet out with them, were used as form of protections to feel safe. One girl described how she feels when she has to travel a certain route with her boyfriend, because there was often *“a group*

*of lads”* who would stand either side of the pavement at a certain point along the route she took. Girls had many examples similar to this, which they found frustrating, particularly because when they had been alone in those same places at around the same times, they were likely to have been harassed. This limited where they felt comfortable going and how they were able to travel. Girls felt that, the fact that they were often alone when harassed also contributed to the ‘invisibility’ of street harassment in the eyes of boys and men in their lives, who would never witness harassment when they were present.

**“If I’m out with my mum and dad, I’m safe.”**

**MIRIAM, 18, SHEFFIELD**

Girls often cited an invisible or fictional boyfriend to get other boys to stop talking to them or tried to manage themselves safely out of the situation by giving a wrong number. This carried additional anxiety with it that they might be ‘found out’ and potentially make the situation worse if the harasser reacted badly.

### Appear unavailable

**“I wear headphones so then if someone talks to you, even if you do hear them, I can act as if I can’t hear them.”**

**JORDAN, 18, SHEFFIELD**

Some would suggest they were in a same-sex relationship or not interested because they were lesbian or queer, which could also be a strategy employed by a group of friends.

“It’s nothing agreed, you’re just like, ‘I’m going to pretend to be your girlfriend’. You just give eyes to each other – to get this really creepy guy away from me.”

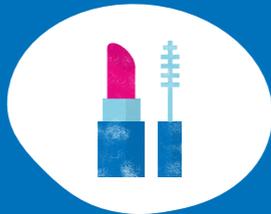
**LUCY-ANNE, 19, BELFAST**

Girls would try to appear unwelcoming to avoid people approaching them by putting on a front or a particular ‘look’, described variously as “bitch face”, “death stare”, “your grumpiest most aggressive face” or trying to “look as suspicious as possible”.

None of the girls spoken to described feeling able to safely just tell the person attempting to engage with them to go away, that they were not interested or that they found their actions offensive or upsetting.

“I would personally love it if girls would fight back more, but it’s dangerous to do.”

**SAM, 22, EDINBURGH**



**A NUMBER TALKED ABOUT DELIBERATELY ‘DRESSING DOWN’, WEARING “GROSS STUFF”, BAGGY CLOTHES OR NO MAKE-UP TO TRY TO AVOID ATTENTION. AT THE SAME TIME, THEY OFTEN FELT CRITICISED FOR NOT ‘MAKING AN EFFORT’, AND OBSERVED THE GENDERED DOUBLE STANDARDS ATTACHED TO CLOTHING**

## Changing clothing

Girls spoke about moderating how they looked, trying to avoid drawing attention to themselves, or feeling anxious about what they wore.

At the same time, many were trying to develop their own identity and sense of aesthetic style and balancing the two was a source of frustration. The choice to dress in the way they wanted brought with it additional anxiety about whether they were likely to be, or had been, harassed because of what they were wearing. The fear that what they were wearing would be used to blame them if they did experience harassment also weighed heavy on their minds. One girl described how before she left the house wearing a new hat that day, she’d thought about how she would react if anyone looked at her or shouted something.

“After a certain time, even if it’s still light out, I will take off things that attract attention.”

**KELSEY, 18, BELFAST**

“It’s just so wrong because boys can just walk around wearing no T-shirt or anything but it’s like, as soon as you’ve got a shoulder out, it’s like, ‘Oh God a human body!’... but then you get [if you wear something more dressed down] like, ‘What are you wearing that for, it’s gross, it’s not girly?’”

**CHLOE, 18, SHEFFIELD**

“I was about to sort of walk upstairs to get ready to properly leave out the door. And then I walked past my mirror and thought I should change to my trousers and so I changed my denim skirt to trousers like these. So I did do that, but I’d say, I think it was unconsciously, because of worrying that people would look at me and I just thought, ‘Oh I’m on public transport, my skirt might be too short.’”

**NORA, 15, LONDON**



## VICTIM BLAMING

Girls we spoke to knew they may experience ‘**victim blaming**’ for any potential negative consequences if they did retaliate to harassment. Girls suggested that people’s reactions to any escalation would be “*you shouldn’t have said anything*”. As a result, this meant girls either tried to ignore harassment, or often ‘played along’ even if they did not want to, saying that “*somehow you feel like you can’t respond*”. This made them feel incredibly angry and frustrated, as well as, feeling helpless as they had been targeted against their will. But at the same time, they also felt somehow responsible for making sure they stayed safe and avoided any further problems.

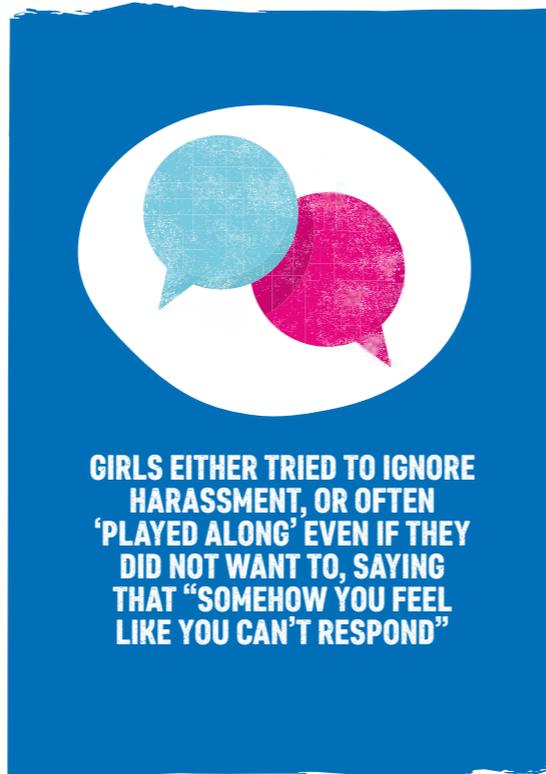
**“If you get angry at them there’s a high chance that might turn into something more threatening. So it starts with something innocuous, with a ‘compliment’ but you don’t know where it leads.”**

**SYDNEY, 28, EDINBURGH**

**“Everything is always the girl’s fault, she can prevent it. You were either asking for it or whatever.”**

**LUCY-ANNE, 19, BELFAST**

Many wanted to respond more forcefully than they feel safe to. A small number of (mostly older) young women described talking back directly to their harasser – for example, ‘*Can I help you?*’ to someone staring at them – but this was much less common.



Girls often felt disappointed about adults reinforcing the message they got from the harasser: that this was a normal part of girlhood, not to be taken seriously, or to be treated as ‘complimentary’. Double standards of behaviour and victim blaming were also frequently referenced, demonstrated, for example, by people asking girls what they were wearing when they were harassed; girls also made parallels to other situations, such as girls being blamed when boys shared explicit photos of them. Girls also identified very clear gender differences between how they were spoken to about safety and how their male peers were addressed.

## ADULTS REINFORCE SAFETY MESSAGES

Adults in positions of authority or care, for example parents, carers or teachers, were those most likely to give girls advice on how to ‘stay safe’. Although clearly well intentioned and with the safety of girls in mind, their advice was described by girls as centred around what to wear, how to behave, where to go, who with and at what times; girls felt that the onus was on them to ‘keep themselves’ safe. Some thought this placed unreasonable limitations on their freedom and liberty, and that this contributed to the potential ‘victim-blaming’ narrative that led them to feel responsible for avoiding harassment and to ‘blame’ when it happened.

The kinds of examples of things adults told girls about how to respond to harassing behaviours included:

**“Don’t talk to strangers, stay away from dodgy men.”**

**“Keep yourself safe, don’t wear this, don’t go to these places.”**

**“Don’t be wearing a wee low-cut top or walking on your own or drinking too much.”**

**“Don’t be too drunk – you’re an easy target.”**

**“Don’t lose your friends.”**

**“Keep your keys between your fingers.”**

Parents or carers in particular were likely to give messages about clothing and make-up before girls left the house, making comments on or applying rules about specific items of clothing. Girls thought there was an inherent problem in these requests and that adults were essentially saying, “*Don’t look pretty and you’ll be fine.*”

School and teachers were as likely to police the appropriate wearing of uniform as they were to give safety messages about being in certain areas and avoiding activities that might implicate or damage the reputation of the school. Again, girls felt that the responsibility was being put on them to limit where they went and be responsible for preventing the unwanted behaviour of others.

**“We were always taught in school about certain places to avoid, like certain parts of town.”**

**KELSEY, 18, BELFAST**

**“My school expressly said, if one of you were seen here, you will be suspended... because you’ll bring the school into disrepute.”**

**LUCY-ANNE, 19, BELFAST**

**“The girl has to walk all the way around, change how she dresses. You think about it every time you leave the house. But it’s never like, ‘Boys, let’s have a discussion about how not to harass women’... My dad never sat my brother down and said, ‘This is how you respect women’ but my mum definitely sat my sister down and said ‘You can’t walk that way to school.’”**

**GRACE, 18, EDINBURGH**

## MINIMISING GIRLS' EXPERIENCES

The lack of common understanding about what harassment is, and whether those behaviours were socially acceptable, contributed to the wider fear girls expressed about not being believed or having their experiences minimised. Adults often failed to recognise their reality or invalidated their experiences through the way they reacted when they were told about experiences of harassment.

Girls thought that a generation divide was partly the reason why some people felt that harassment was not a problem, and that the degree to which someone was currently likely to experience harassment personally affected whether they thought it was a problem. Older adults, particularly of their parents' generation, were identified as being 'from a different generation' who had grown up thinking it was 'normal'; girls referred to older women 'not getting it' and older men not seeing 'what the problem is'. Indeed, recent polling showed a strong correlation between a woman's age and whether or not she considered wolf-whistling to be acceptable, with older women being much more likely to think it is ok or complimentary.<sup>75</sup>

Laura Beth Nielsen's research showed that men in particular were said to demonstrate a lack of empathy or respect for women they don't know, and their inability to relate to the experience personally seemed to be a barrier to them understanding how it could feel to be on the receiving end. Girls said that talking to men – whether fathers, brothers, boyfriends or friends – about their experiences was seen as very difficult by girls, with men frequently getting defensive and girls feeling they had to defuse these difficult conversations. Examples given by both girls and professionals of the responses frequently heard from men included: "I don't see it happening, so I don't believe you", "Not all men are like that", or "It happened to me once and I took it as a compliment". Evidence shows that men in particular frequently underestimate the extent

to which women are the targets of offensive or sexually suggestive remarks.<sup>76</sup> One girl, for example, talked about how invalidated she felt by the things her Dad said to her:

**"Because [men] don't see it they don't think that it happens.... [My Dad] is a building site manager, and I was saying about how I had recently been walking down some new developments and every time I walked past there I was getting loads of stuff shouted at me, and he was saying, 'Building sites aren't like that any more – they're actually really good environments for women to work in'... And I felt really invalidated that I said that all these things had happened, and he said 'That doesn't happen'. And then the conversation is ended, because he said, 'I know something about this and that doesn't happen therefore what you said didn't occur', which is even more infuriating than the thing in the first place."**

**FFION, 25, EDINBURGH**

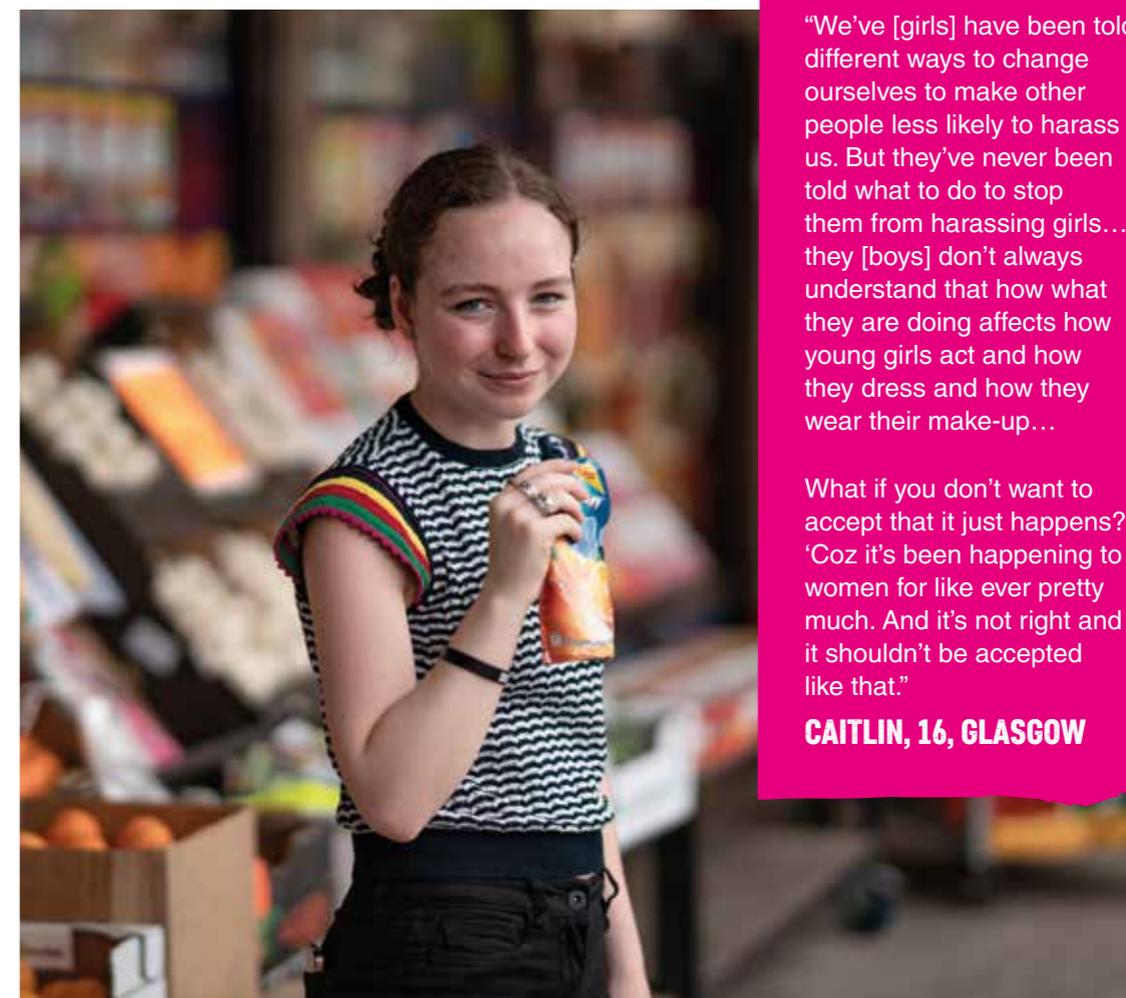
These experiences were echoed in conversations with professionals, including Dr Bianca Fileborn. In her survey of 292 adults who had experienced street harassment in Melbourne, Australia, participants had mixed experiences when they shared their experience with others, receiving victim-blaming and dismissive responses. Heterosexual, cisgender male friends and partners were often cited as responding particularly poorly to disclosure, particularly in comparison to female and LGBTIQ+ peers. Men, it was said, when told about harassment could either feel personally offended as though they (or all men) were under attack or respond by attempting to justify or minimise the harasser's behaviour.<sup>77</sup>

Girls felt that the minimisation of harassment can perpetuate the behaviour. By causing them to be reluctant to speak out for fear of having their experiences dismissed as trivial, complimentary or a joke, they felt that this minimisation created a culture that allowed harassment to continue happening. Research suggests that minimisation can lead those who experience it to feel that they have overreacted, or that their fears are unfounded, which in turn can lead to self-doubt, low self-esteem or self-worth, and feelings of despair over time.<sup>78</sup>

Taken together, the impact of harassment, alongside the way in which girls feel they are

held personally responsible for preventing or controlling it, shows that harassment plays a significant – but largely unseen – role in their lives. Rather than fearing they will be victim-blamed or have messages that they should curtail girls own freedoms to reduce the risk they face, girls wanted to hear stronger messages that emphasised this behaviour was not their fault, and that they had a right to enjoy the places they lived safely and without the threat of harassment constantly in the back of their minds.

**That's why Plan International UK's campaign is called 'It's Not OK.'**



**"We've [girls] have been told different ways to change ourselves to make other people less likely to harass us. But they've never been told what to do to stop them from harassing girls... they [boys] don't always understand that how what they are doing affects how young girls act and how they dress and how they wear their make-up..."**

**What if you don't want to accept that it just happens? 'Coz it's been happening to women for like ever pretty much. And it's not right and it shouldn't be accepted like that."**

**CAITLIN, 16, GLASGOW**



“On the train. I had this big long skirt which is see-through but it’s got like short shorts at the top and I was wearing heels and I was dressed up. And I was standing there on my phone and I was taking selfies and I look over – there’s him on the opposite corner to me. I can see him looking at me from the corner of my eye, like, I’m looking. And then I see him angle towards the wall a bit and so I can see him masturbating. The whole time his eyes are piercing me. I kind of move and then like he moves. So I could see it still happening. So I get off the train. That wasn’t even my stop, I got off because of him. Then I realised he was still on the platform, like he came off with me. Who’s going to go that far?... you could see basically everything and no one said something...”

Precaution wise people say, “Oh you should cover up to not get hit on.” No! I want to be able to dress however I want to be dressed, I like to show my skin! I like to feel free, I want to be able to wear what I want and act how I want without the danger of a man doing anything to me.”

**ANAIS, 18, LONDON**

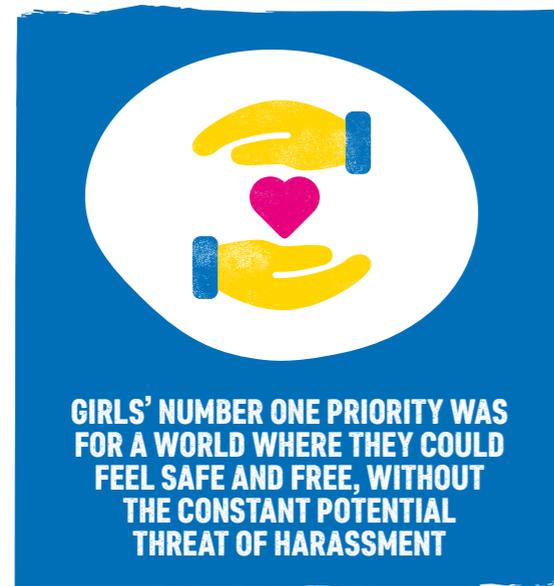
# SECTION 4 GIRLS' PRIORITIES FOR CHANGE

In this section, we explore the priorities girls identified for tackling harassment, and some of the possible solutions that professionals have explored in more depth.

## IT'S NOT OK

*'We deserve better'*

Girls' number one priority was for a world where they could feel safe and free, without the constant potential threat of harassment. As girls said: *"We shouldn't have to tolerate it."* They wanted action from their peers, the community and people in positions of authority to stop street harassment from happening. Many of the projects professionals had been involved with were about reinforcing the message they were hearing from girls and women: *"I don't want to be treated like this every day."*



## PUBLIC AWARENESS RAISING

*'People need to know it's not acceptable'*

Public harassment is frequently first experienced at a young age and so the importance of raising awareness with both girls and boys from a young age about the unacceptability of this behaviour was strongly emphasised by professionals and girls. As Dr Jackie Gray told Plan International UK in interview, *"One way of permeating culture is making those other messages visible everywhere"*, to encourage people to think about how street harassment feels and how they might react if they saw it.

Girls felt more could be done to raise awareness amongst young women of their rights, of what kinds of behaviours they can go to the police about or what might constitute a criminal offence, and to provide information about where to go if they do want to report an incident. They felt that this was not something they currently saw and did not feel this was made a public priority. For Bristol Zero Tolerance, for example, producing a leaflet of ways you might respond to street harassment with examples of what others have done, was a way of empowering girls and women through sharing resources and information.

Wider work to challenge gender-based inequality as well as racism and homophobia, also play a role in challenging harassment. Work directly with young people that

challenges social norms and campaigns that aim to change public opinion can help to break down the perception gap between men's own behaviours and attitudes and what they believe their peers are thinking and doing. This could help support wider social disapproval of harassment.<sup>79</sup>

**"Education and making people more aware; just more awareness everywhere to make people stop."**

**RAYHANA, 19, MANCHESTER**

*"The first time I experienced a wolf-whistle I think I was like 7 or something, just going to the shop. They were just kids my age, playing on the street. They'd probably seen other people do it and so just did it..."*

*And at the time it was the idea of, 'if guys did it, it's because they like you, right?'"*

**SARAH, 18, BIRMINGHAM**



## WORKING WITH BOYS

Girls' most frequently named priority for change was addressing the culture that perpetuated the harassment of girls and trying to "solve the problem at source". Girls felt work needed to be done with boys to challenge their attitudes and the gender stereotypes they may have been exposed to. This was a frequently named priority from girls: to address the culture that perpetuated harassment of girls and "solve the problem at source." Girls described the need to help boys develop empathy with women as human beings, not just because 'she could be your Mum or your sister'. This kind of education needed to 'start young' because the attitudes that supported harassing behaviour were "already bred into them from such a young age."

**"I think people need to know what's not acceptable because I think women [accept] a lot [of harassment] because that's what women do; [girls] need to learn from an early age that no one can call us those names."**

**AMANDA, 46, YOUTH WORKER, MANCHESTER**

Encouraging this type of education was seen to be extremely challenging by the professionals that we spoke to, however, especially when doing so could cause boys to lose friends or social status. It is also extremely important to ensure that boys are not encouraged to take any action that may expose them to violence or harassment themselves.

In focus groups to support forthcoming work from Plan International UK on boys' attitudes to gender equality, boys told us that they feel that they are expected to be tough and not show their feelings or emotions. This reflects the work of Promundo on 'The Man Box' which concluded that that boys are socialised to be 'strong' and not show 'weakness', and that they learn about gender roles through watching how other men act, react to and interact with them, and model their own behaviour on this.<sup>80</sup>

It was felt by professionals that work could be done with boys to challenge their peers' harassment and the behaviours that promote harassment, even when 'an event' was not taking place. As Dr Bianca Fileborn said, "Guys need to tell their mates not to do it and not to give them 'man brownie points' when they do."<sup>81</sup> While some boys Plan International UK spoke to felt that it was important to challenge sexist behaviour, they struggled to think about clear examples of where they had done so and had few examples of how they might do this in future.

One study suggests that anti-sexual harassment training needs to move beyond merely informing and educating, towards challenging and questioning dominant, patriarchal forms of masculinity and the ways in which these are repeated and passed on from one group or generation of men to another.<sup>82</sup> It was suggested by both the girls and the professionals that exploring gender stereotypes, masculinity and mental health with boys and young men could serve as an appropriate gateway to open up conversations about harassment. Youth practitioners and academics wanted to see an increased focus on exploring the gendered power dynamics inherent in harassment could help address the gap in young people's understanding about consent and how it relates to sexual harassment.

Important lessons can be drawn from the discussions around engaging men. These include the importance of creating safe spaces to discuss gender equality, that recognise the diversity of boys and men and provide an intersectional approach to talking to boys about their identities as young men. Professionals need to create conditions that allow boys to redefine the social norms and expectations put on them.<sup>83</sup>

Work with boys could also involve supporting them to respond appropriately to girls and women if they disclose harassment; to actively listen, validate their experience, and understand the role that the girl or woman would like them to play without feeling the need to step in or take action.



**"Boys should be educated more. They should be told by their parents not to do it [Street Harassment]...I think it's better for the parents to say it because you usually respect your parents more than your teachers, and what they say means more to you. I think that parents should teach their sons to respect girls and tell them that they're not just to be cat-called. They are other human beings and they should be respected."**

**KATIE, 15, LONDON**

## RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION

Clear connections were drawn by girls between street harassment, consent, and healthy relationships, and there was a strong call for better education and awareness to address this. It was observed by those Plan International UK spoke to that merely 'telling' young people that something is wrong is less likely to be impactful than examining the root causes of why it happened in the first place. Girls felt that more time should be given in school to address issues like street harassment. As Jordan, 18, from the North of England, said, girls need workshops to address "stuff that's not really spoken about because people are embarrassed, or it's not seen as [being as] big of an issue as it really is." This type of education could cover a range of information to support and empower girls:

**"Educating young people about what is violation, what is harassment, but also showing them how people feel like [when harassed] – give them the opportunity to speak up in an easy way and educate them in the sense that if they feel violated, then it's legitimate if you feel harassed."**

**LEAH, 22, MANCHESTER**

Street harassment is not generally covered in Personal, Social and Health Education/ Relationships and Sex Education, however some tools have been developed to help schools address the issue. As a way to open up conversations that allow young people to explore the gendered power dynamics inherent in harassment and focus on young women's bodily autonomy, Dr Fiona Vera-Gray and colleagues developed lesson plans and session guidance for schools.<sup>84</sup> As well as highlighting street harassment as an issue in its own right, these discussions can also serve as a gentle entry point to discuss other

experiences further along the scale of gender-based violence. Another example of a schools-based approach is the national resource kit for Wales produced following research by Professor Emma Renold: *'AGENDA: a young people's guide to making positive relationships matter.'* Which looks at a wide variety of subjects including gender roles, positive relationships and sexual harassment.<sup>85</sup>

There has been an increased focus on 'teaching consent' in schools and higher education, with the aim of addressing behaviours that can lead to sexual harassment and assault, and this was discussed by a number of girls and professionals. In the university context, consent workshops have been carried out in a number of institutions. Evaluation suggests that participants in these workshops felt that myth busting, learning about definitions and having a safe environment to discuss consent were all valuable parts of these sessions, and 91 per cent of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they had taken away a better understanding of sexual consent as a result.<sup>86</sup> Some research suggests, however, that in the schools context, whilst young people may now have more a developed understanding of what it means to 'give' consent they do not necessarily understand how to 'get' consent,<sup>87</sup> suggesting there remains a significant gap in understanding of what is (un)welcome behaviour. There were also criticisms from girls that some of the efforts to reduce negative behaviour, particularly on university campuses, were 'too little too late'.

**"It's far too late to tell 20 year olds that in order to have sex you need consent."**

**FFION, 25, EDINBURGH**

## THE ROLE OF BYSTANDERS

**"They don't say or do anything"**

In our survey only one-fifth of girls (20 per cent) of girls said someone had responded in a way they found helpful.<sup>88</sup>

The inaction of people witnessing street harassment played a key role in the impact that these incidents had on girls. In many cases, bystanders witnessing but not responding to the event could become part of the problem – intensifying feelings of embarrassment, frustration, shame or anger when people saw but did not step in to help or validate the girls' experience that what happened was not acceptable. One girl talked about feeling judged by fellow passengers when she tried to report an incident on the bus of a man staring at her crotch and not looking away, with one person complaining that she was holding up their journey. She told Plan International UK:

**"Recently I had a horrific experience on a bus and the driver was great, he said, 'Let's phone the police about this guy'. But the passengers, this middle-class, middle-aged couple who were like 'We just want to get home, just go and sit upstairs'. And I turned to them and said 'It's not my job to move because there's a pervert on this bus'... The people on the bus are witnessing this and they couldn't give a shit – they don't say or do anything."**

**LINDSAY, 28, EDINBURGH**

Girls thought the British were particularly bad at intervening in situations, and that people frequently justified non-intervention to themselves. As one such example, London was rated 3rd worst (of 15 of the world's largest capitals) by women for confidence that other people would come to their assistance if abused on public transport.<sup>89</sup>

Only a few girls had positive examples of people stepping in. When bystanders who were general members of the public had intervened it often stood out as a particularly positive experience for the girl. Feeling that they had 'an ally' in that situation was considered to be "a massive thing". Dr Bianca Fileborn's research on the role of bystander intervention in the prevention of sexual violence found that few people who reported being harassed had experienced any bystander intervention. The role of people with an position of authority was also very important to young people.

When asked what kind of policy they would want to see in operation, particularly in places with security staff, girls said they wanted staff to be much more proactive and respond seriously to their complaints:

**"If you're touching someone who doesn't want to be touched or you're not with that person, you're out straight away."**

**RACHEL, 23, MANCHESTER**

A few girls had examples of bar staff or security stepping in when they saw unwanted sexual contact and being responsive to what girls wanted to happen. These stood out as positive stories; for example, a bouncer checking if a girl wanted someone thrown out of a venue for groping her, or a bus driver asking if his passenger wanted support in contacting the police in the example described.

**"It was great, he [the bouncer] told him [the customer] to leave and he had to go home."**

**FFION, 25, EDINBURGH**

## WHAT MAKES A GOOD BYSTANDER?

Bystanders can be any member of the community that witnesses an incident. Ordinary people taking even the smallest action can be a tool for change. A quick check-in for example, or an acknowledgement that a girl has a right to be in a space, feel safe and not be harassed, can reduce the negative impact of a girl's experience of harassment. To be able to support girls, people need guidance on what makes a good bystander.

More work is needed to understand which bystander interventions are effective in which contexts; the impact and effectiveness of bystander interventions; and the role these could play in prevention.

Knowing how and when to intervene in a situation is complex and context-dependent. Research by Bianca Fileborn into bystander interventions from the victim/survivors perspective suggests that, although highly variable in outcome, where bystanders do intervene this often reduced the perceived harm of an incident of street harassment, and can help victims feel some form of justice has been achieved.<sup>90</sup> As Molly Ackhurst, London Hollaback! co-ordinator told us: *"I read bystander as standing by someone and reinforcing the choices and words that they voice, not speaking for them"*. Intervention may not always be safe and can escalate a situation if not handled appropriately. Potential bystanders should be encouraged to feel a sense of responsibility and to learn more about appropriate bystander strategies, and that to engage people the work must expand beyond education settings to the broader public. There is an exciting opportunity for community groups, businesses, unions and similar organisations to take a leadership role in training their staff or members in such skills.

**"If people had more awareness about what they should do, then maybe people would get more involved in trying to keep that person [being harassed] safe."**

**JORDAN, 18, SHEFFIELD**

Girls told us the principles they wanted bystanders to follow were to:

- 1. Step up:** take action if they felt it was safe to do so, recognising that identity discrimination can also have a negative impact on the person considering stepping in. Demonstrate or encourage good bystander behaviour in future by making sure other people saw what they are doing.
- 2. Check in:** check in with girls and ask them if they're ok, focusing on the girl and not the harasser.
- 3. Acknowledge:** acknowledge and recognise what has happened, helping validate girls' feelings about the experience.
- 4. Be led by girls:** ask girls what they wanted to happen, not 'come to the rescue' or take matters into their own hands or not respect a girl's wishes.

**"You want someone to say to you 'Are you feeling ok?' and 'You feeling alright?'"**

**ROSIE-MAE, 17, BELFAST**

**"Even if they went up to you and went 'Just ignore them'."**

**KELSEY, 18, BELFAST**

Girls' priorities are supported by the 'Five D's of bystander intervention' shared by Hollaback!:

- **DIRECT** – intervening in the situation, if it is safe to do so
- **DISTRACT** – attempting to interrupt and engage with the person being harassed

• **DELEGATE** – asking someone for assistance, such as a bus driver or school teacher

• **DELAY** – check in with the person who was harassed after the event to see how they are doing

• **DOCUMENT** – if it would be helpful, record the incident.<sup>91</sup>

## TELLING SOMEONE THAT IT HAPPENED

### Barriers to reporting

Professionals we spoke to suggested that people who experience harassment broadly say that they have what happened to them to be acknowledged; to have their experience validated and understood as wrong; to be pointed in the direction of good services and support; for their experience to be recorded (but not necessarily resolved with a criminal justice outcome); and to be treated fairly. As one girl told Plan International UK:

**"Having someone reacting and taking action: that sounds like utopia."**

**ANA, 21, EDINBURGH**

Overall, the girls Plan International UK spoke to felt ambivalent about reporting street harassment to authority figures. Most said they would like to have the option to report harassment if they wanted, but thought they would be unlikely to do so. There was general confusion amongst girls about whether they could report harassing behaviours and about what was considered unacceptable in the eyes of the law. Some girls, for example, had interpreted tabloid headlines about areas such as Nottingham categorising misogyny as a hate crime to mean that *"wolf-whistling was now illegal"*, whilst some who had been the targets of particularly serious incidents

had not even considered telling an authority figure. Only one girl had reported an incident to the police, who had taken a statement from her – an experience she described as feeling confirming and validating.

**"We're not told to report; my natural experience wouldn't be to report."**

**SAM, 22, EDINBURGH**

**"People who are victims shouldn't be scared or have reservations thinking that it's not going to be taken seriously."**

**ZANELE, 20, MANCHESTER**

Some of the reasons the girls were reluctant to report included the trivialisation of public harassment or the view that it should be treated as complimentary; feeling that no one will take them seriously; a fear of reprisal from the perpetrator; and downplaying the harm as a coping mechanism. Not knowing whether or not an incident could be reported or if there were any avenues for the police to investigate what happened to them also featured strongly. Girls talked about the challenges of identifying or finding a perpetrator, having little evidence to go to authorities with, and not wanting to go through the 'hassle' of reporting.

**“By the time I’ve gone to find someone they’d be well gone – you’d tell your friends instead.”**

**CHARLOTTE, 25, MANCHESTER**

Similar barriers to reporting were identified by professionals, who highlighted the normalisation of these kinds of experiences and a lack of common language as to what is understood to be harassment. They too raised a lack of awareness about what can be reported to the police, confusion about what constitutes a criminal offence and lack of awareness about the ways in which police can investigate incidents. Superintendent Ricky Twyford of the British Transport Police, highlighted that those considering reporting an incident on London transport might not be aware of the range of different channels police had to investigate, for example using Oyster card tracking or CCTV.

Only 6.6 per cent of those in the Nottingham evaluation of the Misogyny Hate Crime Policy, for example, reported their experience to the police, reflecting commonly high rates of underreporting of both hate crime and sexual assault and harassment, and many respondents were unaware of the policy to have been able to make an informed decision about whether to report. Of those that did not report, 51.9 per cent said they would not be confident to report.<sup>92</sup> Research by Dr Bianca Fileborn<sup>93</sup> reporting to authorities

including the police, counsellors or health care professionals was very rare, usually only happening when something much more serious had happened, for example an incident escalating to sexual assault or violence. Instead, most people told friends and partners or shared their experience on the internet, commonly getting a positive response because they were selective about who they told – with women and LGBTIQ+ people generally seen as responding well to disclosure because they could empathise with the experience.

### A focus on increasing reporting

Many of the professionals we spoke to stressed that formal police reporting could be an excellent tool for intelligence gathering and building a stronger evidence base. This was raised by those involved in tackling harassment on London transport as well as by girls who thought it would demonstrate how extensive the problem was for them. The criminal justice system can be particularly helpful for some who may feel that their experience has been taken seriously if they are able to report, sending a symbolic message that the state recognises that this behaviour is unacceptable, and that harassment is not tolerated in society. Legislation can also play an important role here in clarifying what the law says about acceptable behaviour.

**“If you start reporting little instances you’d see how frequent and common it was; something would be done.”**

**SAM, 22, EDINBURGH**

Recognising all the barriers to reporting set out above, increasing historically low reporting rates and victim/survivor confidence has been central to the approaches taken in both Nottinghamshire and on the London transport

network through Project Guardian and Report It To Stop It. As identified by Sup Ricky Twyford told Plan International UK:

*“We wanted to give the victim base confidence to report – that was our starting point... to give us a richer source of information to target the perpetrators... which would give us the ability to go quite loud on when we got them and what we did with them. That would disempower offenders, and then victims would see A) we take it seriously and B) that we do something about it to empower any repeat or future victims.”*

Knowing that the first person someone discloses harassment to has a strong influence on their overall experience and whether or not they continue down the path of pursuing an investigation and possibly a court procedure, both Project Guardian and Nottinghamshire Police Force focused on training their front-line staff, including call handling staff and wider public-facing staff, such as those working on the London Underground. As Superintendent Ricky Twyford told Plan International UK, the police wanted to create the public perception that people would be responded to with care and empathy if they reported: *“so people felt they wanted to talk to us rather than they felt they had to.”*

Girls we spoke to who wanted more options to report harassing behaviour said that if it was easier to do so, for example through a text service, they might find this more encouraging.

They also thought this could act as a deterrent or encourage women to report if something happened to someone else. None of the girls who Plan International UK spoke to knew that the 61016 number (the British Transport Police’s non-emergency text number) was open to them for reporting harassment, saying this was for when *“people think someone’s got a dodgy bag.”* This view was shared by some professionals who felt that Transport for London’s ‘Every Report Builds a picture’ and

‘Report It To Stop It’ campaigns had a much lower profile in comparison to the earlier work of Project Guardian (see page 83 for more details).

Girls felt there should be advertisements to promote their rights and to share information about mechanisms that may exist to report harassment in public places like on buses. This was particularly the case in places where they would not otherwise know where to go for help, for example on a train with no conductor. While there has been little of this kind of social awareness raising in the UK, posters in Madrid against ‘man spreading’ and in Paris to encourage women to report harassment could be replicated here.

**“Even if not so much came out of it, the fact that you could text someone while it was happening and they could give you support, or tell you what to do, so they’re acknowledging it, that would be good.”**

**MEGHAN, 21, BELFAST**

### The role of the police

Some professionals and girls, however, raised the risk that pursuing a criminal justice response to street harassment may perpetuate social and racial injustice, particularly amongst communities that have had a historically negative relationship with the police. This could lead to BAME women under-reporting, due to a suspicion of the police, or to an over-policing of certain communities that are more visible in certain public spaces – as has been said to be the case with stop and search. A number of girls also referred to what they saw as possible indifference, racism or sexism amongst police officers, demonstrating a lack of faith in the justice system to meet the needs of victims.

**ONLY 6.6%**

**OF THOSE IN THE NOTTINGHAM EVALUATION OF THE MISOGYNY HATE CRIME POLICY REPORTED THEIR EXPERIENCE TO THE POLICE**

Children generally under-report to the police, so an approach that focuses on reporting alone is likely to miss out a wide range of experiences amongst girls. There also remain huge shortfalls in dismantling barriers to reporting hate crime, for example. The Leicester Hate Crime Project found fewer than one in four people had reported their experiences to the police, fewer still had done so with organisations who could offer support, and only one per cent had with a community support organisation, such as an LGBTIQ+, disability or race network.<sup>94</sup> Much of this appears to relate to a victim/survivor's previous negative experiences of liaising with the police, either personally or within their community, which can reinforce a wider lack of trust.

**“If you told a policeman, ‘He harassed me, he said you’re pretty you have beautiful eyes’ or whatever, they wouldn’t see it as legitimate harassment even though it is or can be. I think that’s why people don’t report it.”**

**GEORGIA, 20, MANCHESTER**

**“Legal measures are an option, but the legal system has so systematically failed women. There are laws against dog poo but no laws to protect women.”**

**LINDSAY, 28, EDINBURGH**

The criminal justice system has been set up to respond to individual incidents rather than repeated experiences that become damaging by their cumulative impact, however, and a number of participants were sceptical about the value of pursuing this as a primary response mechanism. Despite their hesitations about formal police reporting, however, most girls agreed that this was

an easy and accessible way of capturing evidence and helping build a picture of the scale of harassment.

**“I would never ever advocate for a stronger police presence anywhere, I don’t think that’s a symbol of a healthy society, but I do think in cities there could be a centre or little check points where you could say ‘I’ve just had an incident, can I report it’... There should be a more cohesive method of reporting. There should be a way of stopping those wee nuisances.”**

**LUCY-ANNE, 19, BELFAST**

### Public guardians/authority figures

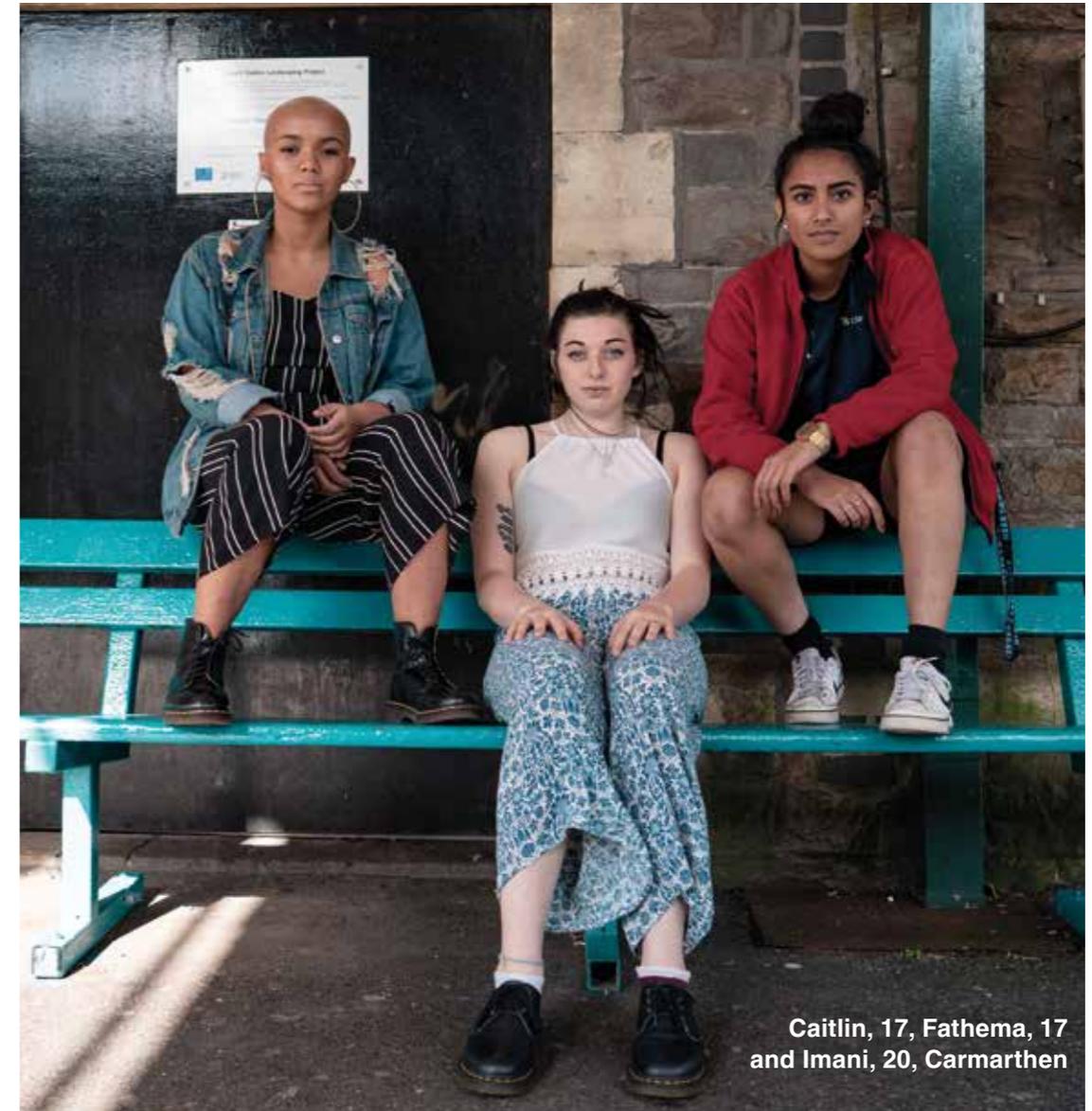
In addition to the police, there were a number of people in positions of social responsibility who, it was proposed, may witness harassment or who girls may want to report to. These included staff in schools or universities or on public transport, or bouncers or security guards. As Superintendent Ricky Twyford told Plan International UK, there are a number of potential *“responsible guardians”* in public spaces who should play a greater role in tackling these behaviours. In Oxford Street in central London, for example, there might be 10 police in the local area on a busy Saturday, but there could be as many as 100 security staff in the vicinity of where any incident is taking place. *“There’s not going to be a police officer stood there, but there will be security – they have to have social responsibility”*, Superintendent Twyford suggested.

Other adults who work with young people could also play a greater role here, for example teachers or youth workers. As one youth worker Plan International UK spoke to suggested:

**“There should be more education for professionals to identify [harassment] and [spot the] earlier signs before it gets worse – school bus drivers as well – they’re responsible for a lot of young people for a lot of their school experience.”**

**CHARLOTTE, 25, MANCHESTER**

The potential to explore these other routes for girls to report harassment and seek support should be explored further in future strategies to combat the problem.



**Caitlin, 17, Fathema, 17 and Imani, 20, Carmarthen**



“My mum wears a full face veil sometimes and has even had people say to her ‘Are you wearing stockings under that?’ Some men said that in front of mum and my younger siblings when I was about 7.”

**MALIKAH, 19, BIRMINGHAM**

## SECTION 5 POLICING STREET HARASSMENT: MISOGYNY AS A HATE CRIME

‘Hate crime’ is a term used to distinguish “forms of violence and microaggressions directed towards people on the basis of their identity, ‘difference’ or perceived vulnerability”.<sup>95</sup> Any crime that is motivated by hostility on the grounds of race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or gender identity can officially be classed as a hate crime. Whilst street harassment is not commonly viewed in this way, there are growing calls for misogyny – a dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against women – to be labelled as a hate crime to encompass a range of gender-based harassment.

Although it has been enthusiastically embraced by some, the usefulness of the categorisation of misogyny as a hate crime remains a live debate, and divided views amongst the professionals Plan International UK spoke to. Those in favour of the concept believe that explicitly naming harassment, discriminatory attitudes and prejudicial targeting of women on account of their gender as misogyny, and therefore as a hate crime, challenges the idea that street harassment is trivial. Involving the police also sends a strong public message that this kind of behaviour is unacceptable, with the aim of encouraging reporting and categorising incidents that women may not otherwise have thought to report to the police. It can also be seen as empowering to the victim/survivor to self-define whether they perceived the incident as a misogynistic hate crime and provides another category and dimension to the way in which women’s experiences are recorded.<sup>96</sup>

This approach tended to centre on whose experiences it may exclude, and whether misogyny can be understood to have the same drivers as other forms of hate-based prejudice. Much harassment is located in the intersections between sexism, homophobia, transphobia, racism and ableism, and people do not always know why they are being harassed – it is thought that describing harassment as misogyny may exclude some of the complexity of these experiences. There were varying perspectives on whether ‘hate’ could be understood to be the driving force in the types of public harassment women experience.

Another major concern raised, particularly for girls and young women, was how inclusive the terminology is. This was reflected in the misogyny hate crime evaluation which reported wide spread support for the policy amongst women, but found the general public did not understand the term and described it as elitist and exclusionary, leading the researchers to recommend the name be changed to gender-based hate crime instead.<sup>97</sup> A further area for consideration is whether moving misogyny into a hate crime policy area would move it out of the violence against women and girls (VAWG) field, which may limit government’s opportunities to work across departments and strategies when tackling street harassment as a form of VAWG. In addition, some of the resistance has focused on police capacity to handle these kinds of complaints, given other demands on their time and resource.<sup>98</sup>

Guidance from the College of Policing encourages police forces to record other forms of targeted hostility, alongside those set out above, as hate crime. A number of police forces have begun monitoring misogyny alongside other strands of hate crime locally. Nottinghamshire have lead the way in this, recording 'misogyny' as a form of hate from April 2016, following a successful campaign led by Nottingham Women's Centre and Nottingham Citizens to raise awareness of types of harassment women faced in public.<sup>99</sup> North Yorkshire Police took similar steps in May 2017, and in the first few months of the policy had eight reported incidents of gender-based misogyny hate crime.<sup>100</sup> Northamptonshire and Avon and Somerset then followed, now recording similar events flagged by 'gender'. In its analysis of the scale of the problem at the outset of the policy, Avon and Somerset estimated that gender may account for as much as 41 per cent of hate crime there.<sup>101</sup>

In the Nottinghamshire evaluation of misogyny as hate crime, a total of 174 women have reported misogyny hate crime (between April 2016 and March 2018),<sup>102</sup> with a wide range of reports from verbal abuse to sexual assault.<sup>103</sup> Reports have come from victims as young as 12 years old and from people of a range of races and ethnicities, with a crossover into other areas of prejudice being clear in what has been reported.<sup>104</sup> Inspector Ruby Burrow of Nottinghamshire Police told Plan International UK that she considered Nottinghamshire's approach to have been positive in empowering the police to take action in situations they may not have been able to previously because they

did not have the reports or did not see it as a priority. She felt that it had encouraged reporting from women and, although they had not seen a huge number of reports, felt comfortable that numbers would increase and that, "the message was getting out there". Police have been able to follow up on incidents, even where these are not criminal offences, by taking action such as tracing people back to their homes and speaking directly to them to communicate that their behaviour is unacceptable, for example.

The evaluation of Nottinghamshire's work in this area confirms both the potential of the policy, as well as some of the challenges in implementation, finding that two years after the inception of the policy misogyny hate crime is highly prevalent but still significantly under-reported.<sup>105</sup>

Those who had not known about the policy but had it explained to them, however, thought it should be rolled out nationally, with 87.1 per cent of overall survey respondents agreeing that the policy change was a good idea for Nottinghamshire. Despite this and other calls for the policy to be adopted nationally from those including the Fawcett Society, civil society alliance Citizens UK and senior faith leaders,<sup>106</sup> the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) recently voted against recording misogyny as a hate crime at a national level at this time.<sup>107</sup>

The Government recently asked the Law Commission to review how sex and gender characteristics are treated within existing hate crime laws and whether new offences are needed.<sup>108</sup>

## SECTION 6 RESISTING STREET HARASSMENT

### IT'S NOT OK

The global movement to call out sexual harassment and declare "It's not OK" is growing. Both internationally and in the UK, there are a number of independent, local, as well as government and police-led, initiatives that can be learned from and built upon to respond to girls' calls for change.

Pivotaly, what can be seen here is that girls and women are the leaders of the change that needs to happen, and that listening to them and learning from them will therefore be the most effective way to enact wider policy, legal and social change.

In this section we look at some of the ways in which harassment has been addressed and tackled across the world, across some of the priority areas that girls identified, some other creative responses.

**A range of responses have developed in local areas to communicate the message that harassment is unacceptable and that it is being taken seriously by authorities. These have included measures to encourage girls to report that it happened and raise public awareness.**

The Bristol Street Harassment Project has produced the #snapshotofharassment report,<sup>109</sup> based on local survey data; made a series of short films documenting women's experiences; and produced a toolkit explaining how to report to the police, including suggestions on ways of responding to a harasser as well as advice for bystanders. This is part of a wider project to make Bristol a Zero Tolerance City, free from

gender-based violence, abuse, harassment and exploitation. Sheffield's **Know the Line campaign**,<sup>110</sup> by Safer Streets South Yorkshire, has also developed a public awareness poster and social media campaign to challenge attitudes and encourage bystanders to call out harassment.

Self-reporting, through **online reporting and digital mapping**, has played a huge role in highlighting the scale and prevalence of street harassment. Websites like the Everyday Sexism project and Hollaback! have provided platforms for girls and women to share their stories, make sense of their experiences, and know that they are not alone by hearing from others who have similar stories. Posting stories in this way can change the way that participants think and feel about what has happened, validating their experiences and helping them to feel part of a larger change movement. Online activist sites like these can act as an empowering informal justice mechanism through which girls and women can share their stories, be heard, be supported in a safe space and shape their own narrative.

The **Free to Be** tool was designed by young women aged 15 to 19 years old, through the **Safe Cities project** in Melbourne, Australia, to enable them to map harassment incidents, amongst other positive and negative experiences, and report this to city decision makers. Other examples of **online mapping** include Raksha across India plus Himmat in Delhi. Globally street safety apps are growing in popularity including HarassMap in Egypt; Ramallah Street Watch Palestine; Safe Streets,

“I was at a fairground and I actually reported [Street Harassment] homophobic comments towards me and my partner to a PCSO [Police Community Support Officer] and they said that, “it wasn’t their job to deal with it” and that “they couldn’t deal with an issue like that.”

**IMANI, 20, CARMARTHEN**



Yemen and Resist Harassment, Lebanon. Mobile phone apps, like **Handsaway** in France,<sup>111</sup> and **Safe & the City** in London,<sup>112</sup> have been designed to allow women to map where harassment has taken place, report incidents and check in with others.

**Reporting mechanisms** such as the **National Street Harassment Hotline**<sup>113</sup> in the USA provide confidential support to those affected. The National Street Harassment Hotline supports those impacted by sexual violence through a phone line and online chat 24/7 in both Spanish and English. An online system has also been designed in the USA to provide survivors with a confidential and secure way to create a **time-stamped record of an assault** on college campuses and report this electronically to their institution, allowing the system to detect repeat perpetrators where reports match.<sup>114</sup>

UN Women’s Global Initiative, **Safe Cities** and **Safe Public Spaces**, launched in 2010, with leading women, UN agencies, and more than 70 global and local partners was the first-ever global programme that developed, implemented, and evaluated tools, policies and approaches on the prevention of and response to sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls across different settings.

It began with founding programmes in Quito, **Ecuador**; Cairo, **Egypt**; New Delhi, **India**; Port Moresby, **Papua New Guinea**; and Kigali, **Rwanda**, and now spans more than 20 cities. For example, the municipality of Quito has amended a local ordinance to strengthen action against sexual harassment in public spaces.

In Cairo, Egypt’s Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Development adopted women’s

safety audits to guide urban planning, and more than 100 youth agents of change (50 per cent young men and 50 per cent young women) have been engaged and are leading transformative activities in schools and other settings in the programme intervention sites to promote respectful gender relationships, gender equality, and safety in public spaces. Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea has taken steps to improve women’s safety in local

markets, including budget allocations which ensure that the needs of women and men are taken into account across different municipal departments.<sup>115</sup>

Egypt and India, amongst others, have used women’s safety audits to inform urban planning. Plan International’s **Safer Cities** (see Appendix 2) has adapted safety audit tools led by girls to advocate to city authorities.

## THE ROLE OF BYSTANDERS

A number of campaigns have encouraged people to be **better bystanders**, including Drinkaware’s **It’s OK to Ask**<sup>116</sup> campaign encouraging people to intervene if they see harassment on a night out. Hollaback!’s online bystander training, organised in North America, focuses on using the ‘Five D’s of bystander intervention’ (direct, distract, delegate, delay, document) in response to all forms of hate-based harassment. #TeamGo’s **Unmute The Commute**<sup>117</sup> prototype badge, developed as part of the BBC 100 Women series, was designed to be worn by people who were willing and trained to safely intervene, lighting up when someone in the nearby vicinity reported, via an app, that they were being harassed. There is a clear crossover here with work being done to challenge other forms of discrimination and harassment, such as Stonewall’s **#NoBystanders** campaign which asks people witnessing homophobia, biphobia and transphobia to pledge to ‘call it out and report it, and if I can, I will stop it’.<sup>118</sup>

A number of positive examples of work to reduce harassment in licensed venues, bars and clubs have been developed. This work has aimed to train staff to know how to intervene when sexual harassment does occur, and to encourage safe reporting mechanisms as well as creating an environment that aims to prevent harassment

from happening in the first place. To increase **young people’s safety on nights out**, Drinkaware trains staff who work in bars and clubs through their **Crew programme**, which has been found to be effective in preventing harmful actions for vulnerable customers who might otherwise experience alcohol-related antisocial behaviour.<sup>119</sup> The **Ask For Angela** initiative, advertised across a number of police force areas, provides a way for customers who feel unsafe to report this to staff members by discreetly asking staff for ‘Angela’. The **Good Night Out** campaign aims to end harassment in venues, bars, clubs and pubs across the world, providing training for people working in the night-time economy.<sup>120</sup> The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, is currently developing a **Women’s Night Safety Charter**, with expected outcomes including guidance for venues, measures including training for staff, posters to discourage harassment and encourage reporting, and a commitment to ensuring women can leave venues safely. The **Hack a Heckle** campaign, run by a collective of young musicians, creatives and activists in Bristol, aims to use the power of music to challenge gender-based harassment by performing at festivals and music events, and reaching out through social media.<sup>121</sup>

## TACKLING HARASSMENT ON TRANSPORT

Some of the most high-profile efforts to **increase women's safety on transport** have taken place in London. **Project Guardian**, a partnership of the London transport network, British Transport Police, Transport for London (TfL), Metropolitan Police and the City of London Police was launched in 2013 to reduce sexual assault and unwanted sexual behaviour on public transport in London. The Project Guardian social media campaign had more views than any other TfL had run, indicating that this issue resonated with people. This work was followed by the **Report It To Stop It** campaign, encouraging people to report instances by texting 'what, where and when' to 61016 or calling 101. These campaigns have proved successful in improving rates of reporting, with the number of sexual offences on London's public transport reported to the police increasing by 50 per cent between 2014/15 and 2016/17. This has more than doubled since 2012/13 (which was the baseline for Project Guardian).<sup>122</sup>

Other ways of attempting to **deter harassers** on public transport include: **anti-harassment badges**,<sup>123</sup> designed by a school girl in Japan and her mother; posters of stick men taking up more space than they need against 'manspreading' in Madrid; an **information campaign** against sexual harassment in Paris, featuring posters of women surrounded by frightening animals such as a bear, a shark and wolves to symbolise men who harass, and a dedicated number to call or text to report and geo-locate the victim to alert security agents to incidents around the clock.<sup>124</sup> Other efforts to make girls and women safer when travelling include **Safe Walks and Safe Rides** at the University of Illinois, a free service provided by Student Patrol and SafeRides vehicles,<sup>125</sup> and **She Rides**, a women-only taxi company in New York.<sup>126</sup>

Plan International's own programme for girls 'Safer Cities' has also had significant success with transport providers in Hanoi, Vietnam and Lima, Peru for example. Pages 94-97 explore this further.

"Me and my friend we were walking through a station and I remember that this man he was walking behind us and I was like, 'Sir are you okay?' Because he was like mumbling... I was like, 'What's wrong?' he started saying, 'You both have lovely arses' And then he was like, 'but that's expected of yours.' It's so rude, it's so disrespectful."

**CAITLIN, 17, CARMARTHEN**



## RESPONSES IN EDUCATION

**Education, particularly higher education, has taken a lead in responding to harassment on campus, working with boys and young men and addressing relationships and sex education through work to improve young people's understanding of consent.**

Tackling harassment and assault on **university campuses** has become a high priority for a number of higher education institutions, following a 2014 survey on lad culture and sexism which found that more than half of women at university experienced sexual harassment of some kind on campus.<sup>127</sup> The **Universities UK taskforce** review in 2016 on violence against women, harassment and hate crime affecting university students recommended making use of evidence-based bystander initiative programmes, facilitating a culture of zero tolerance, and having visible and accessible reporting mechanisms in

place for students, as well as properly trained staff who are sufficiently aware of the support available to students.<sup>128</sup>

Middlesex University's **Hear Me Out** is an anti-sexual violence, harassment and hate crime campaign aimed at tackling myths, misunderstandings and problematic perspectives about sexual violence, harassment and hate crime on campus.<sup>129</sup> Kings College London's **It Stops Here** campaign is designed to help students, staff and visitors raise any concerns they have about sexual harassment and bullying.<sup>130</sup> **University of Wales Trinity Saint David** developed an anonymous reporting form for victims and witnesses.<sup>131</sup> And the **National Union of Students (NUS)** delivers bystander intervention and consent workshops and has a number of good practice models it can disseminate, whilst encouraging institutions to introduce responses specific to their context.

## CREATIVE RESPONSES TO HARASSMENT

**Cards Against Harassment** were designed in Minneapolis, USA as a tool to allow women to give street harassers feedback that their behaviour was unwelcome.<sup>132</sup> Bristol Zero Tolerance, UK designed similar **Call Out Cards**. The **Mary Sue Rejection Hotline** was set up to give an automated response to people persistently asking for a woman's number. On calling or texting the hotline, a message tells the caller that they have made the women "feel unsafe and/or disrespected" and asks that they "learn to take no for an answer and respect women's emotional and physical autonomy."<sup>133</sup> The New York Rejection Line provided a similar service and the Feminist Phone Intervention sent anyone who called or texted it a quote from the feminist theorist bell hooks [sic].<sup>134</sup>

Girls and women have protested against street harassment around the world through **a range of creative actions and protest**. The film 10

**Hours of Walking in NYC as a Woman**,<sup>135</sup> developed in association with Hollaback!, reached 10 million hits on YouTube in less than 24 hours and has now been viewed more than 47 million times. Before this, Maggie Hadleigh-West's famous **War Zone** film,<sup>136</sup> made in 1998, documented her on the streets of New York, San Francisco, Minneapolis, New Orleans, and Chicago confronting the men who whistled or leered at and her and other women.

**International Anti-Street Harassment Week**, which happens annually in April, encourages groups, organisations and institutions in at least 40 countries to organise and raise awareness.<sup>137</sup> Tatyana Fazlalizadeh initiated the **Stop Telling Women to Smile** campaign from the USA,<sup>138</sup> and photographer Eliza Hatch's **Cheer Up Luv** (based in the UK) photography project began as an Instagram account chronicling sexual harassment from girls' first

Malikhah, 19 and Raisa, 17, Birmingham



person accounts alongside portraits, taken in the place they were sexually harassed or catcalled.<sup>139</sup> Before this, the **But What Was She Wearing?** Tumblr documented what women were really wearing when they were catcalled to demonstrate how everyday the experience was.<sup>140</sup>

**Singer** Coco Mamba whose video for ‘**Tell Me Bout It**’ follows her and her female crew around Brooklyn directly confronting men who harass,<sup>141</sup> and **Hijas de Violencia** (the Daughters of Violence) fight street harassment with confetti guns and punk music in Mexico City.<sup>142</sup>

**Might Never Happen**, by Doll’s Eye Theatre, is a theatre education workshop inspired by the research of Dr Fiona Vera-Gray and created in partnership with violence prevention organisations Purple Drum and the Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre.<sup>143</sup> It is

## ONLINE RESPONSES

Online debate has been inspired through the use of **hashtags** including #ShoutingBack, created by the Everyday Sexism project (2013), #youoksis, encouraging bystander intervention, created by Feminista Jones (2014), #FirstHarassed, asking people to share their stories of when they remember first being harassed (2015), #ShareYourTruth by

designed to raise the issue of public sexual harassment safely, whilst promoting discussion and awareness, and can be delivered over a double period in schools and other youth settings, and is accompanied by a detailed resource pack with follow-on lesson plans and suggested exercises.

In **Stampede**, a theatre piece in Calgary, Canada, visitors entered a dimly lit trailer while an audio track played harassing, sexual comments.<sup>144</sup> **Think Before You Holla**, a devised piece in New York, was generated from true stories via interviews and social media.<sup>145</sup> The **Window Sex Project** tackles the everyday practice in which women are ‘window shopped’ through unsolicited verbal harassment,<sup>146</sup> and **Cat Call Counter Attack**, a roaming dance performance in London, presented women’s experiences of street harassment.<sup>147</sup>

Hollaback! encouraging LGBTIQ+ people to share their experiences for USA Pride month (2017), #balancetonporc ‘Expose the Pig’ to report sexual harassment in the workplace in France (2017) and, most significantly, #MeToo, the global movement of women sharing their stories of sexual harassment and assault (2017).

## CONCLUSION

Street harassment is an almost universal experience for girls around the UK, to the point that some even consider this to be a normal part of growing up. These experiences are widely trivialised, creating a culture of acceptance and normalisation. Girls can start to experience these behaviours as early as primary school and they become increasingly frequent as girls enter their teenage years. Such incidents should not be viewed as individual acts, but also understood for the cumulative negative effect they have on girls.

Girls have described being shocked, in fear, intimidated and dehumanised. They are changing what they wear and where they go to try and prevent harassment, spending considerable time and effort in attempting to stop it from happening. Whole areas of the places where they live can become virtual no-go zones in their efforts to avoid harassment. They can name long lists of things they have been told to do to ‘stay safe’, yet the same effort does not seem to be directed towards telling those perpetrating the harassment that their behaviour must stop.

Girls have a right to move and travel freely, express themselves and participate in activities and education without worrying about potential harassment. Girls have told us that they find the current situation unacceptable, and they want to change it. They need to know that society supports them. Girls need to hear a strong message that they are supported to speak out and that they will be listened to.

Given the pervasive nature of harassment and the culture that enables it to continue, we all have a part to play in tackling this problem and eradicating the seeming public acceptability of street harassment must

be a first step. From conversations with girls it became clear that even the smallest intervention, a quick check-in for example, an acknowledgement that as a girl you have a right to be in that space and feel safe and, put very simply, to not be harassed, changed the experience. The role of the bystander and the wider community should not be underestimated as a tool for change in delivering this.

Street harassment takes place in, and is a symptom of, the wider context of gender and social discrimination. These underlying inequalities must be tackled in order to challenge the perceived acceptability of intruding on girls’ space in public, commenting on their appearance and feeling entitled to their bodies – including for young women who are also BAME or LGBTIQ+.

There are some exciting projects and innovations that have developed in response to girls’ and women’s experiences of harassment, a number of which we reference in this report. Because little is currently known about girls’ experiences or men’s motivations for harassing, however, more evidence is needed to demonstrate the extent of the problem and help find solutions. This includes understanding the role boys and men can play and how we can all be more supportive bystanders. Data must be used to uncover the extensive way in which harassment permeates girls’ lives and the spaces in which they experience it.

We have made a number of recommendations to support these changes, and encourage everyone reading this to consider how they can be part of the solution as well.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

At the heart of this report are girls' voices and their calls for change. What emerges first and foremost is that girls would like their experience of street harassment and the negative impact it has on them to be recognised and taken seriously. Street harassment is part of a wider culture of gender inequality and cannot be tackled through one mechanism or one single approach, but by combining community, education, professional responses, policing and policy change to tackle the problem.

## THE PUBLIC

# 1

### JOIN US TO SAY – IT'S NOT OK

Girls have a right to move safely around public spaces. We call on police forces, transport bodies, local authorities and corporations who can have an impact on the spaces and businesses girls use day-to-day to run public messaging campaigns. We encourage these bodies to run campaigns so that from a young age, girls hear a clear message that says they should not have to tolerate street harassment.

Such campaigns need to

- spread awareness,
- encourage public intolerance of harassment,
- ensure that girls and women know where they can go if they experience harassment and
- show that people who report harassment will be taken seriously.

We welcome the initiatives across the UK which are already running this message. Plan International UK will initiate its own campaign to amplify this message.



# 2

### BYSTANDERS – CALL IT OUT!

Bystanders can be any member of the community that witness an incident. Ordinary people taking even the smallest action can be a catalyst for change. A quick check-in for example, or an acknowledgement that a girl has a right to be in a space, feel safe and not be harassed, can reduce the negative impact of a girl's experience of harassment. Bystander training is needed to show community members how to support girls who experience harassment and how to **safely** intervene if witnessing harassment. Such training can be offered by unions, local authorities, community groups, business leaders and more.



## EDUCATION AND YOUTH SERVICES

# 3

### BOYS CAN GENERATE CHANGE

International evidence shows that involving boys and young men is key to challenging and ending all forms of violence against women and girls. Boys and young men can have a central role in generating change. They need to be supported to change their attitudes, develop knowledge and increase awareness of the impact of harassment, and they need support to challenge their peers and be able to respond positively when girls disclose experiences to them. Such work requires dedicated time and capacity in **both** education and youth settings, and must be delivered by trained and informed experts that work from principles of gender equality.



# 4

### GIVE YOUNG PEOPLE RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION

Young people need comprehensive relationships and sex education. Specifically, boys need education on gender roles and masculinity that addresses respect, consent, and the nature of gender-based violence in both intimate relationships and interactions with strangers. Space and time should be given to help young people understand the impact of sexual harassment in public places.

We welcome the commitment of the UK government and the devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to improve Relationships and Sex Education. Given the government is currently consulting on the future shape of Relationships and Sex Education in England, this is an ideal time to get the content of such lessons right and meet the needs of young people who are asking educators and policy makers for change.



## POLICE, POLICY AND GOVERNMENT

5

### STREET HARASSMENT IS GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Government – national, devolved and local – must explicitly recognise street harassment as a form of gender-based violence and commit to tackling it through budgets and strategies, as well as through its obligations under national and international law. To be effective, this approach must go beyond the ‘usual suspects’ of policy making; it should be considered in strategies for public transport, town planning, the night-time economy, for example. These strategies must recognise that harassment is disproportionately directed towards girls and is experienced in different ways by LGBTIQ+ and BAME girls. The UK’s obligations under Article 5 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and Article 40 of the Istanbul Convention clearly requires government to take steps to tackle harassment. At the local level, the public sector Equality Duty within the Equality Act (2010) should be used as an instrument to make decisions around planning, licensing, schools and other factors that impact on the local environment in order to proactively tackle harassment and make spaces safer for girls.



6

### BUILD A PICTURE OF WHAT’S HAPPENING

Police and Crime commissioners should take a lead in national data collection to measure not only the scale and nature of sexual harassment, including public harassment, but also the impact. This should include specific data on girls’ experiences and be able to reflect their intersectional experiences of harassment by different identity characteristics. Existing data that could shed further light on girls’ experiences, including hate crime data, should be broken down by gender and age. This will help to build a picture of the true scale and nature of girls’ and women’s harassment in public.



7

### LISTEN TO GIRLS

They are the experts on their own experiences and what changes they want to see. Those developing policy and solutions to street harassment must involve girls and young women from a diverse range of backgrounds. Plan International’s Safer Cities programme runs safety audits led by girls across their cities and supports them to feedback to local authorities. We want to see this model rolled out across the UK. This engagement with girls shouldn’t be limited to violence against women professionals; we want to see town planners, night-time economy businesses, transport planners and the police listening to girls, as well as local and national governments.



8

### GIRLS NEED THE RIGHT TO REPORT AND SUPPORT

Girls need to know what their rights are and where they can go for help if they are harassed. Police forces, in partnership with businesses, community groups and public bodies, should make clear, accessible information available about what behaviours would be considered a police matter or constitute a criminal offence, alongside information about what to do if someone wants to report an incident. We welcome the existing initiatives to improve reporting and would like to see support for police forces to share learning and impact measurement, innovative methods for police forces to share learning and impact measurement as well as support to build and develop innovative methods that make it easy to report.

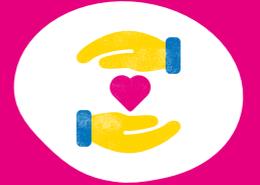


## LOCAL SERVICES

9

### MAKE YOUR SPACE A SAFE SPACE

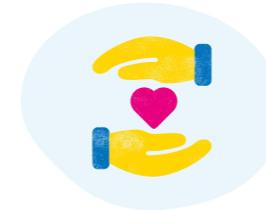
Training or guidance should be developed for adults with responsibility for public places, such as bus drivers, shop security staff and university staff. Such professionals could take on the role of ‘public safety guardians’ and play a greater part in responding to harassment when they see it, and be trusted adults who girls know they can report to.



# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1: GIRLS' PRIORITIES FOR CHANGE

At the end of each focus group, girls were asked for one priority they would like to see changed. Below is the full list, in their own words, of the priorities for change they identified, alongside examples they were aware of that they referenced as good ideas throughout the sessions. These have been grouped into themes.



### SAFETY AND SPACE

“Address the culture of girls having to reroute their lives or change what they do.”

“That all the girls felt as safe as the boy walking around or going anywhere.”



### RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION

“Education on consent and key elements of what [a] healthy relationship should be.”

“Consent and relationships first, then they could always say sex is better when you’re in those situations.”

“More continuous sex education, consent, healthy relationships – how not to be a prick!”

“Looking at stereotypes in a bit more in depth, for women and men.”

“Workshops about things like, awareness of different things, like this about street harassment, stuff that’s not really spoke about because people are embarrassed, or it’s not seen as [as] big of an issue as it really is.”

“Educating young people about what is violation, what is harassment, but also showing them how people feel like [when they’re harassed] – give them the opportunity to speak up in an easy way and educate them also in the sense that if they feel violated then it’s legitimate if you feel harassed.”

“I think awareness, I don’t think you can get enough awareness. Because people do miss the topics, people forget, don’t listen.”



## MEN AND BOYS

“Having boys being more aware to not do those kinds of things.”

“Educating from a young age, more intervention is needed.”

“Boys and men not getting a free pass because they’re boys and men and not being held accountable for their actions.”

“To make people more responsible for their actions and to intervene at an early age so people know their boundaries and how to be respectful.”

“I just think, shut their mouth. Compliments can be said when the time is right.”

“That boys acknowledge that when you say no you mean no, it’s not up for question or debate.”



## PUBLIC AWARENESS RAISING

“Telling people what their rights are and how to act on things that they see are wrong towards them or someone else.”

“Education and making people more aware; just more awareness everywhere to make people stop.”

“I think people need to know what’s not acceptable because I think women take a lot because that’s what women do; [they need to] learn from an early age that no one can call us those names.”

“People who are victims shouldn’t be scared or have reservations thinking that it’s not going to be taken seriously.”



## BYSTANDERS AND RESPONDING TO HARASSMENT

“Having someone reacting and taking action.”

“Better ally behaviour, it feels great!”

“If people had more awareness about what they should do, then maybe people would get more involved in trying to keep that person safe.”



## PROFESSIONALS

“More education for professionals to identify [harassment] and earlier signs before it could get worse or persistent – bus drivers as well, school bus drivers – they’re responsible for a lot of young people for a lot of their school experience.”

\*The quotes provided here from girls and young women are not identified to ensure anonymity

## APPENDIX 2:

### Plan International’s work around the world: Safer Cities for Girls

The Safer Cities for Girls programme is a joint programme developed in partnership between Plan International, UN-HABITAT, and Women in Cities International. The programme **goal** is to build **safe, accountable, and inclusive** cities *with and for* adolescent girls (aged 13-18). The aims of the programme include:

- Girls’ increased safety and access to public spaces
- Girls’ increased active and meaningful participation in urban development and governance
- Girls’ increased ability to move around cities safely and autonomously

Safer Cities for Girls is a long-term programme that works to transform the harmful gender roles embedded in society. It works to tackle unequal power relations and challenge harmful social expectations and gender stereotypes that perpetuate the insecurity and exclusion of girls in cities. The programme works across three levels of change:

1. with governments and institutions to influence local and national decision makers and those in charge of policy to make laws and city services more receptive to and inclusive of girls’ safety;
2. with families and communities to grow a supportive social environment that promotes girls’ safety and inclusion in cities; and
3. with girls and boys themselves to engage them to be active citizens and agents of change by building their capacity and creating opportunities for meaningful participation.

The **Being Safe in the City** training module is part of Plan International’s **Champions of Change** global curriculum for girls’ empowerment and supporting boys to end gender-based violence and promote gender equality.

## STAND with Girls: From Global to Grassroots. Leeds, Cardiff, Edinburgh and Oxford, UK

The **STAND with Girls** programme is all about making sure girls lead and have their rights where they live. We want girls to be at the heart of their community, have an equal voice in local matters and to be part of decision making processes that affect them. We know that this is the only way that we can end the discrimination, violence and barriers they face.

In September 2016 we published our State of Girls' Rights in the UK research report, which clearly shows that girls in the UK are consistently being denied their rights. The report demonstrates that girls are suffering harassment in school, are unsafe online and scared on the streets. That stereotypes, discrimination and harassment against them have held many girls back from participating as citizens. Importantly, the report also reveals that where you live and grow up will significantly influence your life chances, indicating a clear and urgent need to work closely with girls and organisations that support them at a local level.

Funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the purpose of the programme is *for girls to lead change locally and have improved participation in decision making.*

This programme has four over-arching outcomes:

1. Girls and young women have increased awareness of their rights and are equipped with skills to advocate for their needs
2. Girls are equipped with robust and persuasive evidence to support their calls for change
3. Communities have improved awareness of issues affecting girls and increased willingness to act on girls' recommendations
4. Local services and policies are made more responsive to girls' needs.

This two-year project empowers vulnerable and disadvantaged girls across the UK to know their rights. They gain knowledge, confidence and the skills needed to voice their opinions and help influence real change in their communities. The aim of the project is to end violence against girls by working with schools, youth groups, local authorities and city planners to ensure girls can grow up happy, healthy and in charge of their own future.

The STAND with Girls workshops allow girls and young women to explore topics around body image, street harassment, gender-based violence and gender awareness.

## Safer Cities for Girls in Kampala, Uganda

Around 3.15 million people live in Kampala, Uganda and their average age is 24. The programme is being implemented in 33 communities, where only 14 per cent of girls said they always feel safe in public spaces. Programme partners include local NGOs and the Kampala Capital City Authority.

The project has engaged 720 adolescent girls and 78 adolescent boys and established 39 safety clubs. It runs safety walks with young people identifying unsafe spaces in their neighbourhoods and has held 19 community meetings discussing the safety walks' findings, and demanding better services.

To influence their families 2,225 people took part in intergenerational dialogues to better understand girls' concerns. Local committees were set up to, for example, monitor neighbourhood lighting.

The project has had a huge impact, influencing government and policy makers.

- 35 adolescent girls and 5 boys held meetings with Kampala Capital City Division Council raising safety issues.
- 884 girls and 124 boys took part in parish/ward level meetings planning how to present issues to the authorities and advocate for policy change.
- Over 100 male bike riders and 36 drivers have learned about girls' safety and gender-based violence.
- 8 safety clubs with 200 members have been set up by male transportation staff to rally their peers to stand up for girls' safety.

## Safer Cities for Girls in Hanoi, Vietnam

Around 7.6 million people live in Hanoi, 24 per cent of them under 16. The programme is being implemented in two communes in Dong Anh District, where 23 per cent of girls say they never or seldom feel safe when using transportation services. Programme partners are the Dong Anh Women's Union; TRAMOC, a government agency overseeing public transport, and the Gender Bureau, a national government agency.

The programme has involved 90 adolescent girls and 90 adolescent boys in six clubs as well as reaching 151 teachers help to learn about gender-based violence.

A particularly fascinating approach has been the use of Minecraft by girls to redesign their neighbourhoods, presenting their ideas to local government leaders. As a result, three unsafe underpasses have been renovated and made safer. The project also used safety walks where 70 girls identified what makes them feel safe or unsafe.

Community activities have involved awareness-raising events and work to make public spaces safer. For example, in Dong Anh District, more lights were installed on badly lit roads, and girls and boys are lobbying for more police officers on dangerous routes.

The programme uses other innovative techniques like radio programmes on girls' safety nationally increasing both government and public interest. The programme produced comic books on girls' safety and 40,000 have been distributed to girls travelling by bus, and to schools.

The girls' lobbying has reached city government agencies including transport and led to security cameras being installed on buses in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh. TRAMOC and Plan International are developing a Code of Conduct for drivers, conductors and passengers and a reporting mechanism.

They also trained local authority stakeholders and transport staff on girls' safety and gender-based violence.

## Safer Cities for Girls in Lima, Peru

Around 9.75 million people live in Lima, which in 2017 was ranked as the world's fifth most dangerous megacity for women. The programme is being implemented in 20 communities in Carabayllo District, where 98 per cent of girls report experiencing sexual harassment on public transport. Programme partners include public, private and civil society organisations and institutions at local, regional and national levels.

So far, 16 Champions of Change clubs have been set up with 120 adolescent girls and 120 adolescent boys. A small group of boys performed a drama about sexual harassment on public transport to transport staff and parents. Plan International is working with community leaders and partners including Civil Security Councils and parents' associations, to provide training on girls' safety, and how to advocate for change. The tools they are using include community score cards to assess city services and public spaces for girls and a major TV launch and YouTube film.

A meeting between Plan and 46 local authorities resulted in five offices in Carabayllo committing to work with Plan. Girls contributed to a meeting on the Local Plan International against gender-based violence in Carabayllo Municipality. Government stakeholders will receive training on how to build a safer city for girls plus 'mototaxi' drivers and bus companies will also receive training on girls' safety and gender-based violence.

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