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Sexual harassment of passengers and workers on public transport

Sexual harassment on public transport

RMT conducted a survey of women members working in public transport (rail, tube, metro, bus and passenger ferry) between 18th and 22nd November 2021 about their experiences and views about the prevalence of sexual harassment against passengers and workers on public transport.

Sexual harassment is a form of violence, which can be directed against all genders, but is more often directed against women and girls. The term 'sexual harassment' can encompass a broad range of unwanted behaviours, actions or gestures which could be verbal, non-verbal, or physical.

Examples of forms sexual harassment can take on public transport include: sexual assault, rape, cat-calling, exposing/flashing, cyber-flashing, pressing, touching, staring, up-skirting, being followed.

Survey findings:

- 70% of women public transport workers were aware of passengers being sexually harassed on public transport in the last five years, with 50% saying they were aware of multiple instances.
- 45% of women public transport workers had prevented passengers being sexually harassed in the last five years
- 60% of women public transport workers had been sexually harassed by a member of the public in the last five years
- Two-thirds of women workers who had been sexually harassed by a member of the public did not report the incident, with 70% of those saying it was because they did not think their report would be taken seriously
- 72% of women public transport workers believe that sexual harassment on public transport is becoming a bigger problem

Just a few of the comments provided by women public transport workers include:

"I, a member of staff, have been sexually harassed and assaulted and I am not the only one I know of. There has been very very little support for me, and I am still dealing with the trauma from this four years on."

"Verbal abuse of a sexual nature is tolerated and not taken seriously"

"I believe that a staff presence helps people feel more comfortable and can provide a deterrent to this kind of behaviour"

"As women we live with sexual harassment as part of our day-to-day life, however this doesn't make it an acceptable behaviour. We should have more protection in place"