



WOMEN'S SAFETY AND SECURITY IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN NAIROBI, KENYA

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS: Mainstreaming Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) policies in the public transport sector in Nairobi County, Kenya. The city government should harmonize fare to different destinations within to city to avoid conflict. To safeguard women's welfare within the urban public transport, severe disciplinary measures should be instituted to conductors who are the main perpetrators of harassment against women.

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1. Preamble

Africa, the fastest urbanizing continent, has an annual urban growth rate of 3.6% (UNDESA, 2015). While rapid urbanization has increased mobility and created a subsequent growth in demand for public transport in cities, this has not been met by the provision of adequate and sustainable public transport infrastructure and services. Even though urbanization has been accompanied by increased private motorization in most of Africa, this trend is limited to high- and middle-income households. A majority of low-income residents and urban poor still have inadequate access to transport services and rely on non-motorized and public transport, which is often informal and characterized by poor service delivery. Inadequate access to transport services limits access to opportunities that are not in the proximity of residential areas, such as education, healthcare, and employment. The urban public transport sector not only faces the challenge of poor service provision, but also of gender inequality. This policy brief suggests mainstreaming of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) policies in the public transport sector in Nairobi County, Kenya.

Research on gendered travel patterns and behaviour around the world shows that in the existing urban transport systems, there are significant differences in the travel patterns of and modes of transport used by women and men, and that these differences are associated with their roles and responsibilities in society (Peters, 2001). Women have inferior access to both private and public means of transport while at the same time assume a higher share of their household's travel burden and making more trips associated with reproductive and care taking responsibilities (Peters, 2013). Women's mobility needs and patterns are rarely integrated into transport infrastructure design and services and female users are often survivors of harassment and assault (Raj et al, 2020).

As cities rapidly expand, meeting the transport needs of their growing populations while paying attention to gender-differentiated mobility patterns is a prerequisite to achieving sustainability, livability and inclusivity. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) address this in SDG 11.2 which sets out an aim to provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport

systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and elderly persons by 2030 (UNSD, 2019). An accessible and sustainable transport system enables easy access to other key services in cities, such as education, healthcare and employment, therefore indirectly linking to SDG 1, No Poverty SDG 3, Good Health and Well-being and SDG 4, Quality Education. Finally, efficient and inclusive transport systems can contribute to achieving SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by ensuring that the unique needs of women and the need to reduce gender inequality in public transport are met. Gender mainstreaming in public transport is therefore a critical issue that require policy implementation and intervention.

2. Methodology

The overarching goal of the survey was to generate representative statistical evidence on women’s safety in public transport in Nairobi. Specifically, the study focused on identifying the general public transport needs of women; obstacles faced by women in accessing and using public transport; interactions between women’s economic activities and public transport use and barriers as well as incidents of gender-based violence –particularly harassment and physical violence and its interface with the use of public transport by women. The information used in this study was collected through a survey method in May, 2021. A total of 2484 women from all the sub-counties in Nairobi participated in the survey. Sixty percent of the respondents were aged between 25 and 44 years.

3. Study Findings

3.1 Women’s Feelings of Un-safeness in Public Transport in Nairobi

In order to establish the safety and security concerns for women using public transport in Nairobi, the respondents were asked to indicate how safe or unsafe they felt when using public transport during specific time periods. Table 1 summarizes the respondents’ feelings of safeness or un-safeness when using public transport during the different time periods in per centages.

Table 1: Women's feelings of safety on public transport in Nairobi (per cent)

Time period	7 pm to 9 pm	9 pm to 7 am	7 am to 7 pm
Very safe	10.1	4.3	55.8
Somewhat safe	39.4	8.2	40.7
Unsafe	36.4	33.1	2.4
Very unsafe	11.3	45.7	0.7
Don't know/refused	2.6	8.8	0
Number of weighted responses= 2400			

According to Table 1, 55.8% of women felt very safe using transport between 7am and 7pm while 36.4% felt unsafe using public transport between 7 pm and 9pm and between 9pm and 7am because of theft and various forms of harassment.

3.2 Women’s Experiences while Using Public Transport in Nairobi

Initially, the respondents were asked to share the forms of harassments they had witnessed while using public transport in Nairobi .Fare charges is a contagious issue affecting commuters in general. *Matatus* are the most popular means of urban transport among the residents of Nairobi. The *matatu* industry is not well regulated when it comes to fares charged to commuters between specific points of origin and destination. This means that the fares charged and demanded by the *matatu* conductor can be recklessly unreasonable, unpredictable and change abruptly leading to disputes. The second most witnessed type of harassment was verbal and other forms of emotional abuse. The report observes that these forms of harassment or abuse were found to be common at night compared to any other time of the day, and that they majorly occur in public service vehicles. Another common form of harassment reportedly witnessed by the respondents while using public transport was sexual harassment. The trend, albeit with lower percentages, of the types of harassments ever experienced by the respondents is reflective of what they had witnessed while using public transport (Figure 1).

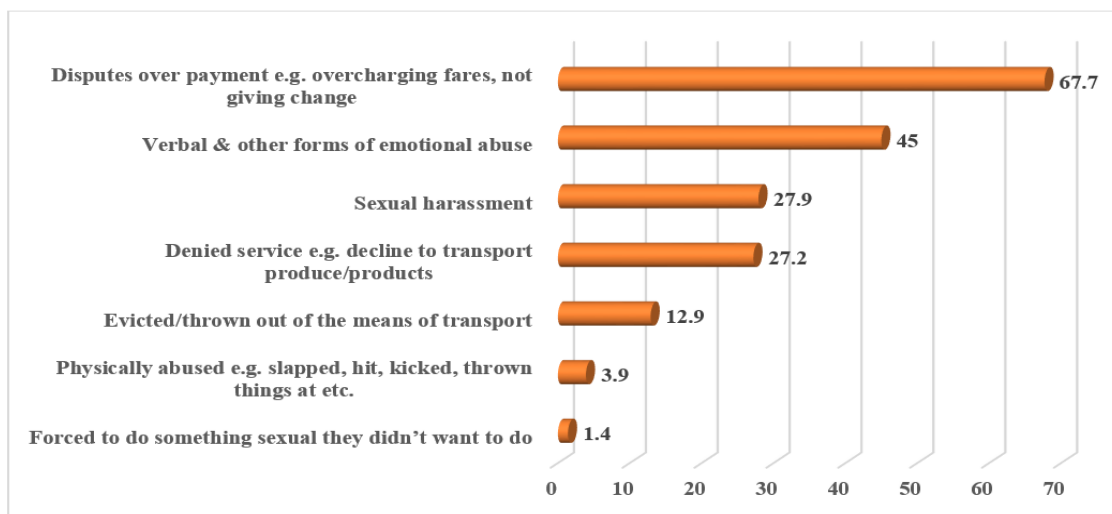


Figure 1:Types of harassments ever experienced (%) by the women using public transport in Nairobi

Evidently, the three top concerns with regard to women’s harassment when using public transport in Nairobi seem to revolve around the disputes over payment of fares (e.g. overcharging and not giving change), verbal & other forms of emotional abuse and sexual harassment. Denial of service and being physical thrown out of transport are additional worse crimes as these deny women from economic empowerment and livelihoods as a majority of low income women use public transport to transport goods for trade. Thus, it is important to address the fare structures and regimes.

3.3 Means of Public Transport where Women Experience Harassment the Most

In an attempt to establish where a majority of the harassment-related incidents took place, the respondents were asked to indicate the means of public transport they were using when the most

recent incidence took place. When disaggregated by the means of transport used, the analysis reveal that a majority (44%) of the cases occurred when the respondents were using the minibus *matatus* popular known in Nairobi as *manyangas* (Table 2).

Table 2: Means of public transport used when harassment took place, Nairobi

Means	Frequency (weighted)	Percent
Matatu [14 seater]	801	38.6
Matatu minibus [14 -59 seater]	912	44.0
Matatu big bus [60 plus seats]	241	11.6
Tuk tuk/three wheeler	14	0.7
Boda boda/motor cycles	38	1.8
Taxi	16	0.8
Train	2	0.1
Other [specify]	36	1.7
Do not know/refused	14	0.6
Number of weighted respondents: 2400		

When participants were asked to identify the persons who were responsible for their most recent harassment experience while using public transport, the *matatu* conductors, also known as *makangas* topped the list with 84.3% of the respondents indicating that they suffered in their hands. This was followed a distant second and third by the stage Marshals at 9.9% and drivers at 9.4% respectively (Figure 2). The finding that the conductors accounted for the highest percentage of those harassing women commuters using public transport may be explained by a number of reasons. For example, they dominate and exercise a lot of power in the space that is public transport. They interact with the commuters for the longest duration during their trips. Additionally, conductors exercise the power to demand for fare, and may, at will, allow a commuter to travel without paying for the trip since no receipts are issued to passengers. This power can be abused and used to intimidate women commuters.

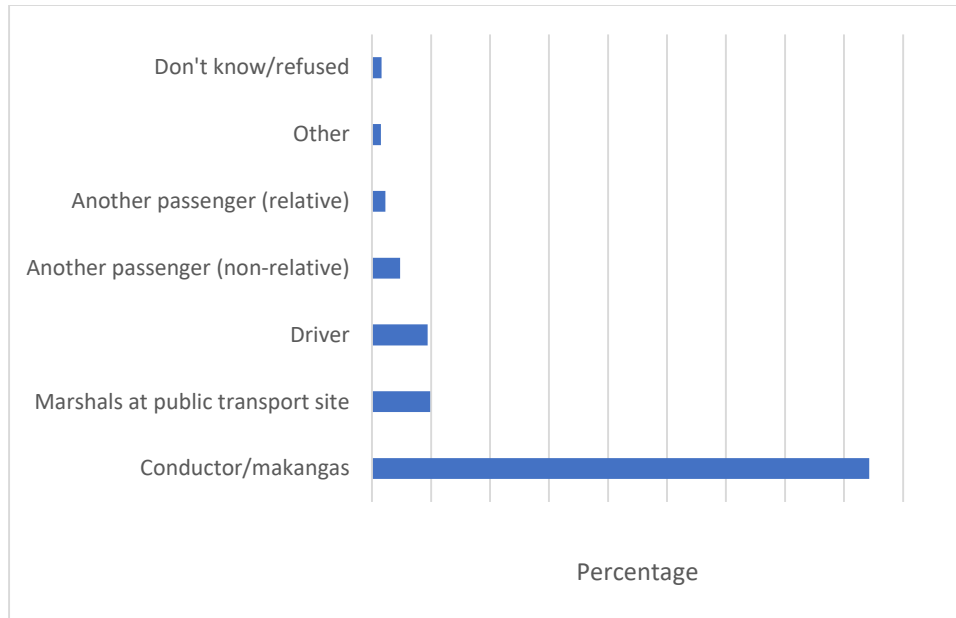


Figure 2. Persons responsible for recent harassment experiences (%) of women using public transport in Nairobi

Analysis show that a majority (69.2%) of the most recent harassment incidences experienced by women commuters using public transport occurred on/in the vehicles. The second most common place where women commuters encountered harassment is at the points at which they board or disembark from public transport vehicles, the termini, at 24.2% while 4.7% of the incidences occur in other locations after the vehicle had stopped (Figure 3). There seems to be a close correlation between these findings and those on the persons responsible for the recent harassment incidences. Some respondents (4.7%) indicated that they recently experienced harassments at other locations after the vehicle had stopped. This presumably means that they were harassed after having disembarked from the public means of transport. It should be remembered that a large portion of Nairobi residents live in the suburbs where the bus stops or termini are located quite some distance away from the residential areas. In essence commuters must walk or take other forms motorized of transport between their residences and the locations at which they are able to catch public transport.

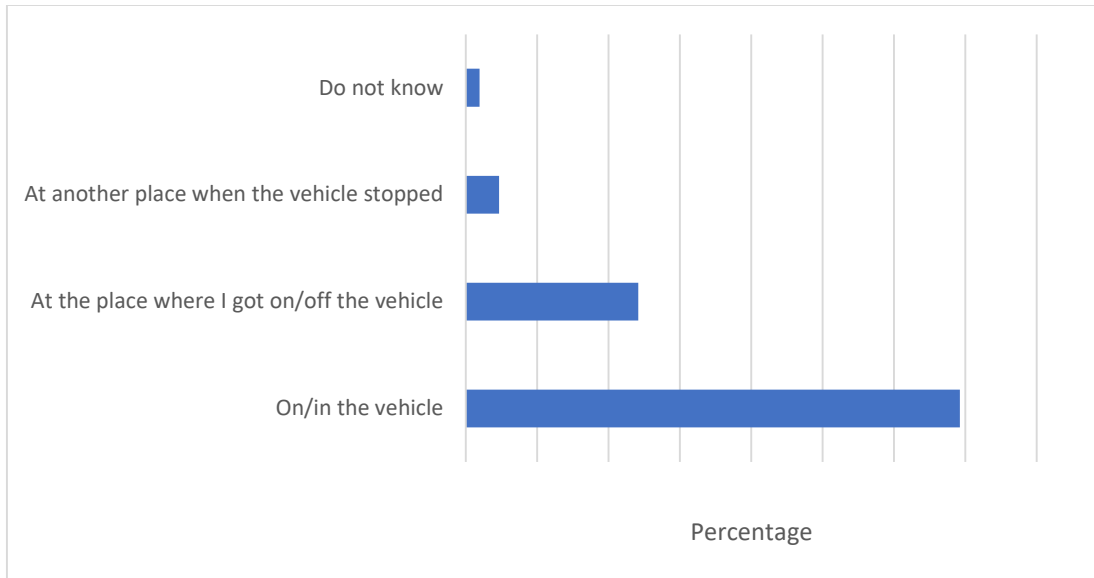


Figure 3: Prominent locations where women commuters using public transport get harassed

Surprisingly only a few women report any form of harassment for fear of victimization, lack of evidence and ignorance. The few who report incidents of harassment indicated that they do not receive timely feedback. In addition, to conforming to the necessary judicial provisions, the surveillance systems may provide supportive evidence to enable the relevant charges to be pressed in courts of law against those responsible for the harassment incidences. This, of course, would require the collaboration of the various stakeholders including the SACCO management, the law enforcers, the victims themselves, the public transport crew, civil society organizations among others. The SACCO management, for example, could be quite key in ensuring discipline among the crew members.

4. Conclusion

Women in Nairobi use public transport for various household needs. In doing so, they use Matatus as the most common means of transport. The most unsafe period of travel is between 7pm and 7 am. The greatest challenge faced by women commuters while using public transport is harassment over fare, verbal and other forms of emotional abuse including sexual harassment. The conductor is most cited person that harass women in the public transport. To ensure the safety of all commuters, particularly that of women, it is important to work with the County Government of Nairobi to mainstream gender within the urban transport sector. Harmonization of fare to different destinations of the city would reduce these incidences. It is also important to empower women commuters in order to be able to prevent harassment and violence in public transport.

5. Recommendations.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- Although the relevant laws against Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) exist in Kenya, there is need to appropriately mainstream gender in the public transport sector in order to protect women commuters against any form of harassment while using public transport.
- The city government should harmonize fare to different destinations within to city to avoid conflict.
- To safeguard women's welfare within the urban public transport severe disciplinary measures should be instituted to conductors who are the main perpetrators of harassment against women