

Mind The (Commuting) Gap and The City

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Tokyo in 1994 was already a city with one of the lowest crime rates. With only 60 crimes per 100,000 population, it has earned a reputation of one of the safest cities. Unfortunately, not everyone is not experiencing the same sense of safety, at least 70% of women commuting has experience harassment. A women's group in Osaka, Japan's second-largest city, says three-quarters of women in their 20s and 30s who responded to a questionnaire reported encountering a gropper— or *chikan* in Japanese, at least once.¹

There are reasons why it's quite prevalent in Japan. First, a relaxed attitude toward gropers. Both society and institutions consider the harassment as a low-level misdemeanour. Some incident mention surrounding passenger was aware of harassment happening, however they choose not to be involved. In other situation, reporting it to the police would not bear any fruit. Police reporting while sometimes complicated-- took hours and has no female police officers present while reporting, was also not being considered serious. In one case, the victim was told to reconsider pressing charges because the perpetrator was still a minor with, perhaps a bright future ahead.² This unfriendly system, can only deter reports, hence there are only 10% of victim that reports.³

Furthermore, institutionalized misogyny allowed for self-confessed gropper to published a book. The book titled Gropers Diary sold out its 40,000 first print and it was on its way to published second print, before women group put pressure on publisher to cancel. The glorified sex offender however was free to roam the streets of Tokyo.⁴

Other reasons were because groping is still considered minor harassment. This is inaccurate then as it is now. Groping does not only include over the clothe touching, but also finger trusting in the nether region.⁵ And the victim does not only comprise of women 20 to 30 years old, but also 13 years old.⁶ What was considered as only as harassment should be considered sexual assault.

However, 1994 Japan was putting effort to curb groping. The issue, which has only been shrugged off as another distasteful nuisance, was then started to recognize both the extent and the human cost of this so called low-level sexual crime. The city implemented policies to help battle these gropers: mobilizing more than 70 officers in the most groping incident take place; assigning a permanent counselling corners--staffed by female officers in two of the biggest station, Tokyo Central and Shinjuku.⁷

Today, crime rate in Japan is even lower compared than 20 years ago.⁸ Japan gun related crime has only 3 death compared in US 15,612 death.⁹ Unfortunately even with all the effort Tokyo invested in, Tokyo women still experience a similar situation, if not worse.

More technology is being used to battle harassment from using CCTV, Apps that makes loud noise that scare off harasser, having all camera phones making an audible shutter sound, to an apps that inform a *chikan*—aptly named *chikanradar*.¹⁰

Unfortunately, a survey conducted by WeToo Japan in 2019 still found that 70% of women and 30% of men said they have experienced public harassment. At least 48% of women and 9% of men reported being touched, whereas 42% of women and 12% of men said strangers had pressed their bodies against them suggestively. And around 20% of female respondents reported strangers exposing themselves.¹¹

Non-sexual physical violence was also a following concern. Not less than 19% of women said that they had been hit by someone, with a slightly lower 16% of men also having experienced assault.

Groping is so prevalent in Japan, the word *chikan* has since become a global verbatim. But to say that this a problem that only happened in Japan cannot be further from the truth. In 2007, an online questionnaire found that 63% of New York public transit users had been sexually harassed on the subway or at a subway station. In 2014, around 20% of Los Angeles public transit users said they felt unsafe in the past month due to unwanted sexual attention on the Metro. And in 2016, 21% of Washington, D.C., public transit users were victims of sexual harassment.¹²

In Cairo and Alexandria, Egypt, as high as 99.3% of women surveyed reported having experienced sexual harassment, most commonly in the form of touching or groping.¹³ Korea Transport Institute published about 26% of the women said they experienced sexual harassment on buses and 21% on the subway, compared to 2.3% and 2.4% of men respectively¹⁴. ITDP Brazil's study Women and Children's Access to the City, conducted focus group discussions with low-income and black women in the outskirts of Recife's Metropolitan Area and found that harassment was perceived an inevitable occurrence in women's daily life.¹⁵

Sexual harassment in public transportation is not solely an issue that a single culture has to deal with. Neither an exclusively developing or developed country issue. And what is probably surprising: it is not problem that only women faced, but also men.

The Gap and the Map

In 2012, Jyoti, a 23-year-old medical students, and her male companion were raped and tortured on a moving bus. She survived for 11 days and managed to name the perpetrator before succumbing to her injuries. The incident sparks public outcry in India and all over the world. According to Eve Ensler —an activist who worked on sexual violence for 15 years in India, the incident broke through the consciousness and was on the front page, articles every day, public discourse, student college discussion. India was taking action in fast tracking the laws, sexual education, and bases of patriarchy and masculinity and how it all can lead to sexual violence.¹⁶

(Map insert here)

AndTheCity tried to analyse the condition of New Delhi harassment map based upon reports compiled by Safecity. The data then converted into a heat map that can translate where harassment and violence happened. Included within this numbers are verbal, non-verbal, physical, and others. Samples were taken from three places within New Delhi where the incident occurred: Central Delhi, Munirka, and Dwarka. Munirka to Dwarka was where the supposed route Jyoti took to commute home. By analysing the map, the public can pin point where to improve.

Dwarka is a residential area located in the western most New Delhi. The area is assigned as a diplomatic enclave and being developed as smart sub-city under Delhi Development Authority. In the map area indicate KM Chow has the highest harassment report. Munirka is an urban village located in South-West Delhi. The area is closed to Jawaharlal Nehru University and Indian Institute of Technology Delhi campuses. Close to Munirka there's also high number of harassments in Hauz Khas, which is a popular area for backpackers.

However, the incidents in both places are not as occurring as much as Paharganj. The area was a backpacker hub since in the 70's, due to its popular cheap lodgings and restaurant. Unfortunately, the area also had a bad reputation in relating to women safety. Not only that there is a high number of sexual assaults, there is also history of sexual trafficking with minors from neighbouring country. Hotels and lodgings are known to engage in sex trade, and other illicit activities resulting in the death

of tourist. The local tourism body encourage local and international backpacker to stay instead in Hauz Khas.

India is one of the few countries that easily provide accessible map to harassment and violence. The map should not be seen only as how the city mentioned has a level of misogyny, but also should be seen as a high level of awareness to what is considered as harassment and assault and eagerness to address the problem. Having a map of harassment is a better progress than not.

That was one of the extreme realities in the world where public transportation failed to provide a safe space. But safety alone is not the problem, there are further subsequent difficulties faced by women. An analysis from Office of National Statistic shows that women in UK are more likely than men to leave their job because of a longer commute. Women tends to be the main providers of childcare and unpaid work, while men are more likely to tolerate longer journey in return for higher pay.¹⁷ The analysis, however, did not mention safety as one of the reasoning. Even though there are reports that indicate women in UK experience similar problem in Japan albeit within a smaller number.

However, according to Sarah Kaufman, of New York University's Rudin Center for Transportation, Women in New York spent hundreds of dollars each year on ride-sharing apps and taxi services, both for convenience—when carrying a stroller up and down subway steps, and for personal safety.¹⁸ In other research women modified their behaviour in ways such as avoiding a particular train line or dressed differently. These modifications result an additional median cost of \$600 compared to \$0 for men.¹⁹ Women in low-income industries, often juggle work in remote places with shifts in the early morning or late evening. If they don't have a vehicle, they're reliant on public transportation, which brings a whole new set of potential encounters with harassment, catcalling or worse. Women in these situations may avoid a job altogether for fear of a potentially dangerous commute.

Access to work is not the only aspect hindered by fear for safety. In Rwanda, a study showed that 55% of women were concerned about their safety when going to educational institutions after dark. In India, girls 15-19 years old try to ensure their own safety by avoiding certain places, staying indoors after dark, dressing carefully, and carrying defensive weapons such as pepper spray and safety pins.²⁰

Limited access to education due to commuting safety also happened in US. A limited school transportation was linked to decreased school choice. Schools that are considered good are more likely located in a higher income area, therefore children with a lower income, minority, single parents, or parents with less education will most likely not have access to such school. Low-income students generally have farther to go and less capacity to get there.²¹

Not having a safe means to commute reduces the freedom of movement for women and girls. Furthermore, not only it's detrimental to pay gap, but also access to job opportunities, education, and healthcare services.

The City

Emily May the founder of Hollaback! believes public transport will be the next frontier of the #MeToo movement.²² Can the city help address the problem?

There are visible--and sometimes designed solutions, that can be employed. One of which is separate trains. Cities the likes of Jakarta and Tokyo offers women only train. Jakarta had a separate train in 2012, which was removed in only 7 months because it was largely empty. In 2019 the separate train was resurrected after a survey 58% respondent claim a dedicated car was a necessity.²³ In Tokyo 82% women favoured the introduction of separate train, even though much less

prefer to use it. Leipzig, Germany also introduces separate train which was received with mixed reception, some welcome while others consider it backward.

But separate train doesn't indicate an effective measure to stop harassment. One of the reasoning was, having a separate train will help accuse the victims in the mixed train of putting themselves at risk.²⁴ While it is considered as backwards and a form of discrimination, many see it as a means of survival.

SNCF—France state-owned railway company, offer other design-based solution: better lighting, clear line of sight, eliminating nooks, corners, and isolated area that may facilitate assault, lively waiting areas in which they feel comfortable, friendly drivers and public transport staff to promote trust. Along with a greater presence of transit and local police, visible video cameras to document and deter assaults, and training for transit operators on the best ways to de-escalate confrontations.

Another success example in Mexico is Hazme el Paro. The project included a marketing campaign that defined actions for bystanders to follow so as to become interveners in a non-confrontational manner as well as a community and sector training (bus drivers, policemen) and IT components, such as, installing Wi-Fi in buses and making a mobile application available for reporting different kinds of sexual harassment. The project resulted in changing behaviour of the public as reflected in their higher willingness to act against instances of harassment, mainly by men. The perception of risk increased by 15% in the treatment group, which can be interpreted as a proxy for increase in awareness of the security situation.

Design wise creating a safe space and the perception of space is a way to encourage safety itself. However, separation is not the best gesture to form an equal society. Separate train is a form of escapism, trying to patch the current problem with temporary solution while ignoring a bigger problem: Sexism.

A recommendation from US Department of Transportation is a better communication with women. Local transit agencies are encouraged to consult with the public on planned services to help determine locally preferred options and to prepare for changes to services and routes within the community, and to consult with women's group and civic advocate on their behalf. It's difficult to recognise a problem if you aren't the one who experiences the problem. Furthermore, the local transit agencies are encouraged to include innovative use of information and communication technologies to report cases of harassment.

Perhaps what is missing from Tokyo is woman involvement in decision making. This difficulty is addressed by European Transport Worker Federation as they aim to increase women in transport. However, this effort was also faced with its own problems. According to the 2017 survey by the European Transport Workers' Federation 63% of respondents had faced violence: 49% from customers, 22% from colleagues and 17% from the management. Among the women who reported an incident, 80% did not believe that their complaint had negative consequences for the perpetrator, or made the workplace safer. This is a serious concern for women who seek to develop careers in the transport sector.

US Department of Transportation see similar problems and after surveying they received input to provide greater presence of transit and local police, video cameras to document and deter assaults, and training for transit operators on the best ways to de-escalate confrontations. When these efforts were implemented in Los Angeles METRO bus system, it resulted in a 39% decrease in total crime and a 60% decrease in operator assaults between 2017 and 2018.²⁵

Japan economy has only prioritize empowering women in the past decade.²⁶ Unfortunately this is reflected in their effort to involve women as lawmaker in Japan. Only 46 of 465 lower house

lawmakers are women—a shy from 10%, compared to 25% global average and 20% average in Asia.²⁷ Japan Ranked just below Democratic Republic of Congo.

If women and girls are safe on public transport, it improves their access to educational and economic opportunities. For people with a disability, accessible transport is essential to securing employment and covering their own costs of living. And improvements in accessibility can benefit many other urban residents, notably the elderly.²⁸

Last but not least, men and women have a role to play in addressing the root causes of gender inequality, discrimination and violence, namely by promoting a culture of respect and equality for everyone in all contexts: at home, in schools, at work and in public spaces. Aside to that, a good credible data, can reliably help to inform policies and programmes, as well as assess any progress. In the end, design can only do so much. promoting the full participation and leadership of women, children, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups on issues that affect their lives is a necessity.

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