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# Women's Experiences of Harassment in Taxis: A Case Study of Tripoli, Lebanon



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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

- ISF** ..... Internal Security Forces
- LGBTIQ+** ..... Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and other non-binary identities
- NGO** ..... Non-governmental organization
- UN Women** ..... United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

# Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) has described men's violence against women as a "global public health crisis of pandemic proportions." A study found that as of 2018, one in three women globally are subjected to physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence from a non-partner in their lifetime, a figure which has not improved in recent decades.<sup>1</sup> One form of violence against women that remains under researched is sexual harassment in public spaces. Although globally women have reported being harassed or assaulted in various public locations and at different times of day, public transit and transport hubs are common locations where these abuses occur. To date, there are no global prevalence data on women's experiences of sexual harassment in public transit. However, a Thomson Reuters Foundation survey of 1,000 women in Cairo, London, Mexico City, New York and Tokyo found that 52 per cent of respondents overall cited safety as their main worry when using public transit.<sup>2</sup> Other studies of specific cities have found that in London,<sup>3</sup> Mexico City<sup>4</sup> and San Francisco,<sup>5</sup> between half and two thirds of women reported having been harassed while using public transit.

The risk of being harassed or assaulted in public not only threatens women's safety but also restricts women's mobility, inhibits them from going about their daily tasks, including school and work, and degrades their mental health. According to one study, an estimated 57 per cent of women in Lebanon have been sexually harassed in public spaces at least once, yet only 31 per cent of men admit to having committed any form of sexual harassment.<sup>6</sup> The main reason provided by male harassers for committing acts of sexual harassment is for excitement or fun.<sup>7</sup> However, there have been no publicly available studies to date that provide information on the extent to which harassment occurs in public transit in Lebanon and how this problem could be addressed. This report looks at harassment specifically in taxis, a main type of transportation used by the public in Tripoli, Lebanon's second largest city. It is a case study meant to further understanding and awareness of harassment in transit as an issue affecting economic and public life in Lebanon.

## What constitutes sexual harassment?

**Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.**<sup>8</sup> Sexual harassment is a broad term, including many types of unwelcome verbal and physical sexual attention, whereas sexual assault refers to sexual contact or behaviour, often physical, that occurs without the consent of the victim.<sup>9</sup> In the context of public transit, this means any unwanted touching perpetrated on purpose (as opposed to accidentally bumping into someone or sitting close together). Harassment might later lead to sexual assault—for example, something like an inappropriate sexual remark that does not get addressed outright can pave the way towards an aggressive, forced encounter.

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1 WHO (World Health Organization), *Violence Against Women Prevalence Estimates, 2018* (2021). Available at <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240022256>.

2 Belinda Goldsmith, "Safety and time are women's biggest concerns about transport – global poll", Thomson Reuters Foundation, 14 November 2018. Available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-transport-women-poll/exclusive-safety-and-time-are-womens-biggest-concerns-about-transport-global-poll-idUSKCN1NKO4K>.

3 Sarah Prescott-Smith, "Most women have been sexually harassed on London public transport", YouGov, 22 January 2020. Available at <https://yougov.co.uk/topics/legal/articles-reports/2020/01/22/most-women-have-been-sexually-harassed-london-publ>.

4 Crina Boros, "Latin American cities have most dangerous transport for women, NYC best", Thomson Reuters Foundation, 28 October 2014. Available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/women-poll/exclusive-poll-latin-american-cities-have-most-dangerous-transport-for-women-nyc-best-idUKL6NoS32MQ20141029?edition-redirect=uk>.

5 Asha Weinstein Agrawal and Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, "Sexual crime and harassment on public transportation: A study", METRO, 14 May 2020. Available at <https://www.metro-magazine.com/10111994/sexual-crime-and-harassment-on-public-transportation-a-study>.

6 UN Women and Promundo-US, *Understanding Masculinities: Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) – Middle East and North Africa: Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, and Palestine* (2017). Available at <https://imagesmena.org/en/>.

7 Ibid.

8 See <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/whatish.pdf>.

9 RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network), "Sexual harassment". Available at <https://www.rainn.org/articles/sexual-harassment>.

## Public transit in Lebanon and in Tripoli

Despite few efforts to develop one, Lebanon has no formalized public transit system such as state-sanctioned trains, metros or ferries.<sup>10</sup> However, there are public buses and vans that operate on particular routes across cities and areas. All taxis and buses must be formally licensed by the Ministry of Public Works and Transport and can be recognized by their red number plate. There are three types of taxis: private taxis, ‘services’ and ride-sharing apps such as Uber, Careem or Bolt. Ride-sharing apps function in the same way as in any city; however, as of September 2021, these were not yet available in Tripoli. Some taxis remain unlicensed by the Ministry of Public Works and Transport and have white number plates, as the price of a Ministry-licensed red one is considered expensive. A ‘service’ is a shared taxi that picks up additional passengers headed in the same direction along the way and is typically far cheaper than a private taxi. Further, there are a variety of registered private companies that operate various bus and taxi services.

While this is the case in almost all of Lebanon, the system in Tripoli is slightly different. There are two types of taxis in Tripoli: taxis that operate from a garage and taxis that operate on routes. Many taxis operate out of Tripoli’s 14 official garages, each of which can accommodate 20–50 taxi cars.<sup>11</sup> Some of these taxis have white plates, meaning they are not registered with the Ministry of Public Works and Transport but rather operate in coordination with the Land Transport Unions and Syndicates while other garage taxis are registered taxis with red plates. Taxis operating from garages are regulated by the garage’s management and are easy to track. In addition, there are taxis that operate within the city either as ‘services’ or for private hire. These are registered with the Ministry of Public Works and Transport but operate independently. Therefore, non-garage taxis are harder to monitor and lack the same level of accountability that is theoretically possible for taxis operating out of garages.

## Lebanon’s Sexual Harassment Law of 2020

In December 2020, Lebanon issued Law No. 205 penalizing sexual harassment in private and public places, including in transit, and in the workplace. It imposes penalties of one month to four years of imprisonment and/or fines ranging from 3 to 50 times the minimum wage. Penalties are increased depending on a number of factors: the setting in which the harassment occurs (e.g. state institutions, universities, public transportation); the nature of the relationship and the power dynamic between the harasser and the victim (e.g. abuse of one’s position of power in the workplace; relation of dependency; economic or moral authority over the victim; use of extreme physical, moral or financial pressure); the victim (e.g. a minor, a person with special needs, a person not able to defend him/herself due to physical or psychological limitations); and the number of perpetrators. In the event of reoccurrence, the above-mentioned thresholds are doubled.

Law No. 205 comes after six draft laws had been submitted by civil society activists, gender advocates and governmental agencies since 2012. The law creates a special fund at the Ministry of Social Affairs to offer support and rehabilitation to victims of sexual harassment.<sup>12</sup> While an important step forward, there are a number of shortcomings in the law, namely that it is independent from both the Labour Law and the Penal Code, lacks any clear mechanism for implementation and does not include migrants, refugees or LGBTIQ+ people.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> It is worth noting that in March 2018, the World Bank approved a US\$295 million package to revitalize Lebanon’s public transportation sector, a project that is desperately needed with the ongoing economic crisis having driven up the cost of fuel. However, as of September 2021, the World Bank reported that it would be unable to complete the project.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Mosawat, June 2021.

<sup>12</sup> This law was the result of joint efforts by civil society and between members of parliament, the Mashreq Gender Facility, the National Commission for Lebanese Women, the Center for Inclusive Business and Leadership for Women at the American University of Beirut (AUB) and advisors to the Ministry of Justice.

<sup>13</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Lebanon: Sexual Harassment Law Missing Key Protections”, 5 March 2021. Available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/05/lebanon-sexual-harassment-law-missing-key-protections>.



### *Case study objectives and research questions*

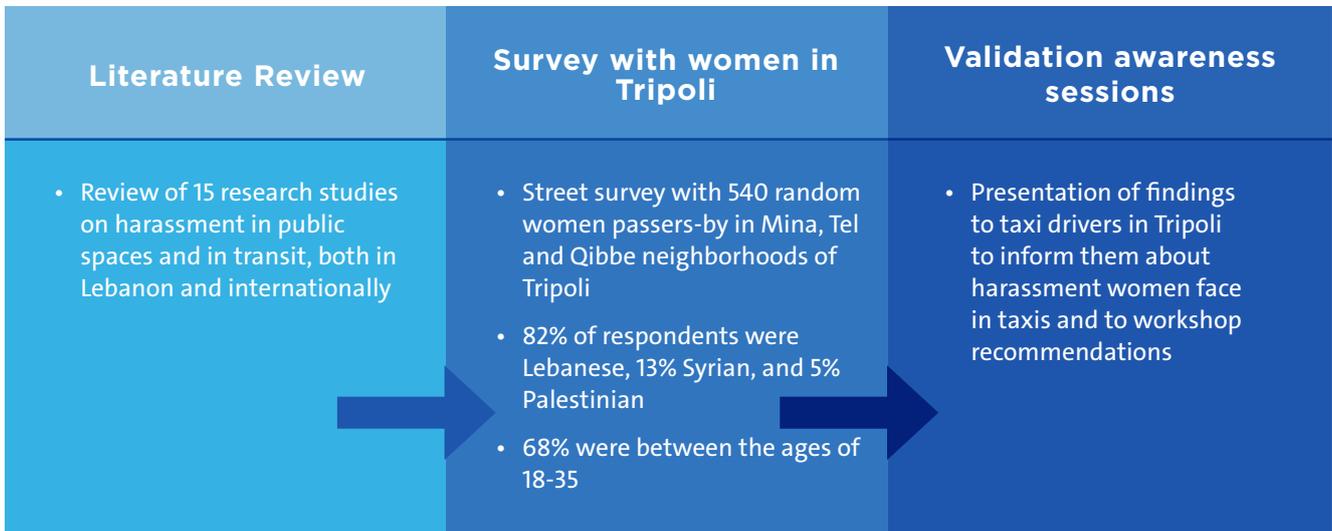
Given the high global prevalence of men harassing women in public transit, this study contributes to the body of evidence around the extent to which men harass women in public transit in order to inform practical solutions. This case study was initiated by members of the Tripoli-based feminist organization Mosawat, which felt that taxi harassment is a significant barrier to women's access to education and jobs. It was completed as part of UN Women's Men and Women for Gender Equality project (Phase II), funded by the Government of Sweden, and implemented in collaboration with the feminist NGO KAFA. It adds to the body of evidence around sexual harassment in public spaces, particularly for women in transit. Through UN Women's partnership with Mosawat, this research will directly educate Tripoli-based taxi drivers about the harassment that women face while using their services. In addition, this research is structured to inform policies, programmes and advocacy efforts for organizations, individuals and government bodies that seek to address issues of safety, security and sexual harassment for women in public spaces in Lebanon.

This study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. How prevalent are different forms of harassment that women face while taking taxis in Tripoli, Lebanon?
  - a. What are the specifics of the harassment? (e.g., who is the harasser, how often does it happen, when does it happen, etc.)
2. Are women in Tripoli aware of the newly passed legislation that penalizes sexual harassment?
  - a. In what ways do Tripoli-based women believe sexual harassment should be addressed?
3. To what extent does the fear of being harassed prevent women from going somewhere they need to go?
4. How do factors such as age and nationality impact women's experiences of harassment?

# Methodology

This study used a mixed-methods approach, summarized as follows:



## Survey of women in Tripoli

The survey consisted of 12 questions covering (1) respondents' demographic profile; (2) their personal experience with harassment in taxis; (3) the specifics of the incident(s) and the respondent's response; and (4) respondents' awareness of sexual harassment legislation. Data were collected by 19 volunteer enumerators from Mosawat. The enumerators participated in an intensive online training that focused on research ethics, feminist data-collection methods and the process of collecting data from survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, as well as a review of the questionnaire itself. The survey was first piloted with the support of UN Women and KAFA and was then rolled out in three target areas in Tripoli over a period of two weeks. The enumerators were divided into three groups and went to universities, taxi garages and residential neighbourhoods within the areas and randomly sampled women who were passing by in the street. After two weeks, 656 women had been approached, of whom 540 agreed to participate and 116 did not agree to participate. Data were compiled and cleaned with the support of KAFA. Survey participants by nationality and age category are depicted in the following table:

Age	Nationality				Grand Total
	Lebanese	Palestinian	Syrian	Other	
18-25	173	15	19	0	207
26-35	126	9	24	0	159
36-45	83	2	20	0	105
46-60	49	2	5	2	58
Over 60	11	0	0	0	11
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>540</b>

## Limitations

Because research clearly points to the fact that women and people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) are far more likely to be harassed than men, all of the participants were women. No people with diverse SOGIESC were identified as part of this study.

# Findings

## How common was harassment for women using public transit? (n=540)

1. **Men harassing women while they were riding in taxis was highly common.** More than two thirds (68 per cent) of respondents had experienced or witnessed some form of sexual harassment while using taxis.
2. **Women had often been harassed more than once.** Of the 367 women who had experienced or witnessed harassment while using taxis, 60 per cent had been harassed using a taxi more than once in recent months.
3. **Almost half (46 per cent) of the women surveyed said that the fear of being harassed had prevented them from going somewhere they needed to go at some point in time.** There was no difference across nationalities or age groups in this finding.

## What kind of harassment was happening to women who rode in taxis? (n=367)

1. **The most common form of harassment that respondents had experienced or witnessed was unwanted looks and/or gestures that are of a sexual and/or intimate nature.** Three out of five (58 per cent) respondents had experienced or witnessed this form of harassment. Nearly half (42 per cent) of respondents had been harassed or had witnessed harassment in the form of unwanted questions or words of a sexual and/or intimate nature (42 per cent), and one in five (22 per cent) had been harassed or had witnessed harassment by being forced to witness unwanted acts and behaviours of a sexual nature.
2. **Some respondents had been exposed to pornographic materials while riding in taxis.** Two per cent of respondents (nine individuals) had been unwantedly exposed to pornographic materials while they rode in taxis.

## Who are the women who were harassed? (n=367)

1. **Women of all ages, including older women, reported being harassed or having witnessed harassment.** Women below 35 (72%) reported higher rates of harassment than women above 35 (59%). However, it is worth noting that of the 11 older women (women above 60) who participated in the study, 7 had been harassed.

**Figure 1:**

Share of respondent Women who had been harassed or had witnessed harassment in taxis, by age (n=540)



2. **Women of all nationalities experienced high levels of harassment.** However, Palestinians (75 per cent) and Syrians (78 per cent) were slightly more likely to report having been harassed than Lebanese (66 per cent).

**Figure 2:**

Share of respondent women who experienced or witnessed at least one form of harassment in taxis, by nationality (n=540)



### Who were the perpetrators? (n=367)

1. **Taxi drivers are the main perpetrators of harassment as opposed to other passengers.** For women who had experienced or witnessed harassment, the harasser was the taxi driver himself in the majority (71 per cent) of instances. A quarter (25 per cent) of women also reported having been harassed or having witnessed harassment by another passenger. Seven respondents reported being harassed by individuals in formal uniforms riding as passengers in taxis.

### When did the harassment happen? (n=367)

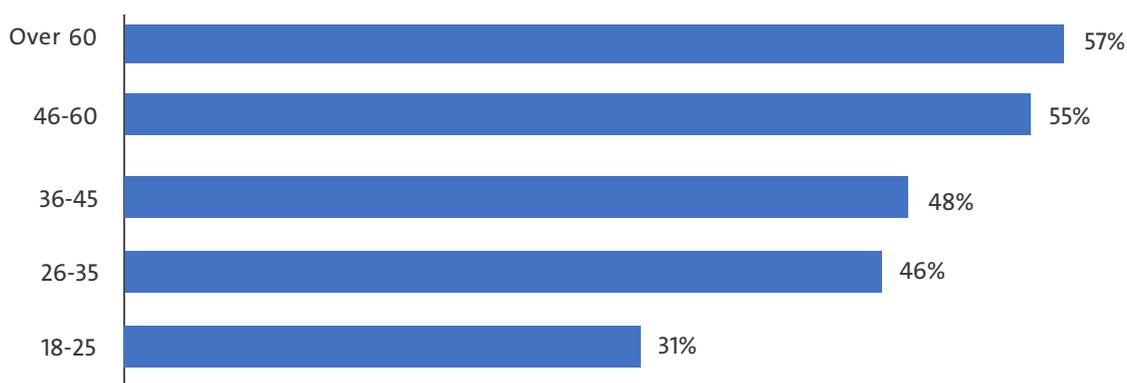
1. **Women had experienced or witnessed harassment at all times of the day. In fact, most women reported being harassed or witnessing harassment in the daytime.** Most commonly, respondents said that they had been harassed or had witnessed harassment around noon or in the afternoon (58 per cent) or in the morning (30 per cent) and less frequently at night (12 per cent). This could be since many women do not travel at night.
2. **While most of the time (72 per cent) women were alone when they were harassed, some reported having been harassed or having witnessed harassment in the company of others.** When the victims were with others, typically it was with other women (22 per cent), compared with only 2 per cent who were harassed in the presence of other men. Deplorably, 4 per cent of women had been harassed when they were with their children.

### How did women respond when taxi drivers and passengers harassed them in the taxi? (n=367)

1. **When taxi drivers and other passengers harassed them, fewer than half of the women responded in any way.** Only 41 per cent of women who had been harassed said that they reacted or responded to the harassment. Most survey participants (42 per cent) reported reacting verbally to harassment by swearing, scolding and shouting at the harasser.

**Figure 3:**

Share of respondent Women who reacted when harassed, by age (n=150)



2. **The older a respondent was, the more likely she was to respond to the harassment.**
3. **Women commonly had to leave the car in the middle of their ride to escape the harassment.** In one third of cases, the woman who was harassed reacted by getting out of the car, meaning that she then needed to find a new taxi. In three cases when women asked to leave the car, the harasser did not let the woman go. In five cases, the driver kicked the woman out of the car for reacting to the harassment.

### *What happened when women responded to the harassment? (n=150)*

1. **One third of the time, the harassment continued, nothing happened, the harasser ridiculed or insulted the woman, or she was blamed.** Of the 118 women who shared details on their experiences being harassed, 31 per cent said that their responses resulted in negative reactions and behaviours from the perpetrators. At least one third of respondents said that nothing happened after she reacted to being harassed. In the remaining cases, the harasser insulted and ridiculed her, continued harassing her, defended his actions and ignored her, among graver responses.
2. **Reacting to harassment resulted in danger to women's physical and mental health in some cases.** Of the 49 women who reported that they had gotten out of the taxi in response to the harassment, many reported leaving the car while it was still moving, showing the severity of the harassment and the extent that these women put themselves at risk for it to stop. In one case, a driver assaulted a woman by pointing a gun at her when she asked to leave the car. Another woman said that when she screamed for help, the taxi driver put loud music on so that people would not hear her scream. In three cases, the driver would not let the woman get out of the taxi. Four harassers shouted back at the women and/or verbally abused them when they reacted to the harassment; and in five cases, the driver kicked the woman he had just harassed out of the car. Three harassers justified their actions to the women, attempting to explain how their actions were not harassment.
3. **Women did not commonly seek help or report the incident after they were harassed.** Only 21 women reported turning to other people or the authorities for help. Among them, 10 reported yelling to attract the attention of people and asking them to intervene to stop the harasser. As only four women turned to the Internal Security Forces (ISF) for help, the data show clear evidence that women do not report harassment incidents to the ISF. This was more significant when it comes to non-Lebanese women as only one Syrian woman reported calling the ISF when the harassment occurred yet did not go through the process of filing a complaint nor physically going to the police station.

### *How did the harassers respond when women reacted to being harassed? (n=150)*

1. **Taxi drivers and passengers who harassed women in taxis did not apologize for the violation or recognize any wrongdoing in their actions.** Only in nine instances (2 per cent of all harassment incidents) did the harasser apologize to the woman he had violated, or action was taken to support the woman. Of these nine cases, in three the harasser apologized; in another three cases, someone intervened and helped her; and the remaining three were cases where a passenger had harassed someone and the driver kicked him out. In the best cases, the harasser stopped, but often the harasser continued or escalated the harassment.

### *Why did most women not respond to being harassed? (n=214)*

1. **Most women did not respond because they wanted to get the ride over with without angering the harasser and possibly putting themselves or those with them in danger.** Two thirds (63 per cent) of women who did not react to being harassed did not react because they were afraid for themselves or others. For example, four of the women who had children with them in the car when the taxi driver or a passenger harassed them said that they did not react because they were afraid for their children's safety. An additional 27 per cent said that they simply chose to ignore the harassment, many noting how "it just wasn't worth it". Of the women who expressed being afraid, many (13 women) noted they were afraid that reacting would cause a "scandal" in their communities. A few noted how they wanted to avoid embarrassment, humiliation, and shame. Another nine women also believed that it was inappropriate and shameful for women to respond at all. Palestinian and Syrian women reported being afraid to react because they were

not Lebanese and did not trust the security forces to respond due to their nationality. Three of the women who said they did not react because of this reason were Syrian, and one was Palestinian.

### *How did surveyed women think sexual harassment in public transportation should be addressed?*

*(n=540)*

1. **When respondents were asked about how sexual harassment in taxis should be addressed, most suggestions were related to raising awareness about sexual harassment targeting the harassers.** This was the main demand resulting from this survey. Respondents also demanded the adoption of stricter laws to protect them, noting that the police should do a better job of enforcing the law and punishing harassers.
2. **However, many women believed that harassment could be stopped by women changing their mobility patterns, behaviours and ways of dress, pointing to deeply rooted beliefs that harassment is the fault of the victim.** Respondents said that women should dress decently, should not ride in taxis alone or at night, and should not talk, laugh, smile or sit next to a man. Many also believed that women should avoid public transport entirely or should avoid crowded taxis, unknown drivers and strangers. While these may be practical solutions for women to avoid situations in which they may be harassed, the burden of stopping harassment is placed on the victims rather than on the perpetrators.
3. **Other suggestions were related to creating safer systems.** The fourth most common suggestion was that women use only legalized and licensed taxi services with monitoring systems that create accountability for the harasser. Many women also suggested creating women-only taxis and garages.

### *How aware were surveyed women of the 2020 Law No. 205 that penalizes sexual harassment, and what do they think of it? (n=540)*

1. **Few women were aware of the 2020 law penalizing sexual harassment.** Of all 540 respondents, only 16 per cent had heard of the newly passed law that penalizes sexual harassment. Palestinians (19 per cent) and Lebanese (16 per cent) were about twice as likely to have been informed about the law than Syrians (9 per cent).
2. **Of those who had heard of the law, half the respondents (52 per cent) believed that it is a good law.** An additional 33 per cent had concerns regarding its implementation. The remainder felt that the law should be amended, that it is not enough, and that the penalties are not severe enough.

## 4. Conclusions

In keeping with global findings and previous research in Lebanon, this study found that **harassment in public transit was highly prevalent and that the fear of being harassed prevents women from using it.** Most women had received unwanted looks and gestures, been asked inappropriate questions or been forced to witness unwanted acts, while some had even been exposed to pornography. The fear of harassment not only prevented women from travelling but also was damaging to their mental health, causing anger, humiliation, shame, frustration and anxiety, and sometimes harassment escalated into assault.

**Women of all ages and nationalities had been harassed: Lebanese, Palestinian and Syrian women had all been harassed while travelling by taxi—and most more than once in the preceding three months.** While the women were alone in most instances, some had also been harassed in the company of other women and even when they were with their children. For many, this harassment had escalated into situations that put them and those they were travelling with in danger, including in one such case when the harasser pulled a gun on one woman after she protested. Previous research shows that men harass women because they think it is “fun”; these findings reinforce how problematic and deeply disturbing that conception is.

**In most harassment incidents, the taxi driver himself was the harasser.** In less than 2 per cent of the cases did the harasser apologize for his actions or see any wrongdoing. This means that taxi drivers were either willfully or genuinely unaware that their actions are wrong. This suggests a need to educate taxi drivers on what constitutes harassment, make them aware of the gravity of this problem and ensure that accountability is created for those who choose to harass their passengers.

**Most women did not respond when they were harassed, instead choosing to ignore it—often out of fear of how the harasser might respond.** They did not want further humiliation or shame and felt it was best just to get the ride over with. Some also gave gendered cultural reasons for not responding, believing it was not appropriate or feeling afraid of being shamed in their communities. Palestinian and Syrian women did not react because they thought that their nationalities put them at greater risk of escalation.

**Women who did react mostly reported that the harassment stopped, but in many cases, either the harassment continued, nothing happened, or the woman was ridiculed or blamed.** When women did react, many reported being put in danger; in some cases, it escalated to the woman being kicked out of the car, sometimes while it was still moving. When women reacted, they put themselves at risk of further violence, and most did not report the violation.

**Respondents believed that sexual harassment should be addressed first and foremost by educating taxi drivers about sexual harassment and demanding they stop doing it.** Creating a system by which drivers are reported for harassment and ensuring that the security forces respond to such incidents were other important suggestions on this subject, although it is likely that Palestinian and Syrian women will continue feeling reluctant to report to security forces. However, **a large contingent of the interviewed women gave reasons that placed the responsibility for stopping harassment on the women, saying that they should dress decently, should not ride in taxis alone or at night and should not smile, talk, laugh or sit next to a man.** While these answers were perhaps provided as practical solutions, they speak to how deeply rooted victim-blaming attitudes are in this area.

**Respondents were largely unaware of the 2020 sexual harassment law. Those who knew about it felt that it is a good step, but some also had concerns around its implementation and the severity of the penalties.** They hoped that additional work would be done to ensure that this law effectively addresses harassment, as sexual harassment in transit prevents women from accessing public spaces, going to school and having jobs, among many other social and economic endeavours.

# Recommendations

The following recommendations are meant to inform policies, programmes and advocacy efforts for organizations, individuals and government bodies that seek to address issues of safety, security and sexual harassment for women in public spaces in Lebanon.

## ***Advocacy and awareness-raising, legal services and security and justice sector capacity-building***

### ***A. Raise awareness on sexual harassment in public transit***

- 1. Target taxi drivers with persuasive multimedia and contextually appropriate materials about preventing sexual harassment. Materials should include:**
  - Specific and contextualized materials on what constitutes sexual harassment
  - Direct examples from women on harassment that happened to them
  - Information on Law No. 205
  - How to respond if another person in the car is harassing someone
- 2. Raise the awareness among women on how to prevent and respond to sexual harassment. Materials should cover:**
  - The message that a woman's behaviour is not to blame for harassment
  - Information on Law No. 205
  - Ways to report incidents of harassment, such as via [harasstracker](http://harasstracker.org/)<sup>14</sup> and the Instagram page [pervsoflebanon](https://www.instagram.com/pervsoflebanon/)<sup>15</sup>
  - Tips on how to hold perpetrators accountable, such as observing the car colour, driver's name and number plate
  - Tips on how to respond as a bystander
  - Reporting mechanisms available per type of taxi and geographic area
  - Mental health resources
- 3. Raise awareness among the public around:**
  - The message that a woman's behaviour is not to blame for harassment
  - Specific and contextualized materials on what constitutes sexual harassment
  - Tips on how to respond as a bystander and support loved ones who have been harassed
  - Reporting mechanisms available per type of taxi and geographic area

### ***B. Improve services available to harassment survivors***

1. Work with feminist organizations to improve or develop reporting mechanisms, particularly in the context of Law No. 205
2. Provide mental health services and resources for survivors
3. Provide legal assistance and counselling for women who wish to prosecute their harassers

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<sup>14</sup> See <http://harasstracker.org/>.

<sup>15</sup> See <https://www.instagram.com/pervsoflebanon/>.

### **C. Strengthen capacity-building on the response to harassment**

1. Support the development of a referral network in Tripoli for responding to sexual harassment, including a core group of resources
2. Build the capacity of the Tripoli Bar Association to represent women who have been harassed
3. Raise awareness with the municipality around sexual harassment in taxis

### **D. Conduct additional, locally led research on harassment in public spaces**

1. Implement further nationwide research on harassment in public spaces and taxis with the support of local leadership
2. Study harassment in other public spaces, such as markets, streets, neighbourhoods, parks, shops, universities and other state institutions

### **E. Work with transportation providers to improve the response to sexual harassment**

1. Create an accountability mechanism for formal taxis (possibly in the form of an anonymous app) through which women can report harassment incidents directly to the transport providers. Such a system should ensure that there are sufficient enforcement measures and repercussions, such as suspension from work. Using the argument that taxi drivers would be participating in creating safer communities and improving their reputations, the authorities should work with taxi companies to develop codes of conduct to be displayed in parking garages and in taxi drivers' cars that assure zero tolerance for sexual harassment.
2. Encourage transportation providers to provide sexual harassment awareness materials to drivers, including information about how Law No. 205 means that they are at risk of going to jail, as well as details about where they can go for more support and information on this topic.
3. Encourage apps like Uber and Bolt that have built-in reporting mechanisms to become available all over Lebanon.
4. Hire more female drivers by reducing barriers, prioritizing them in recruitment and conducting outreach.

## **Policy recommendations**

### **A. Reform and strengthen Law No. 205**

1. Continue lobbying the government ministries tasked with implementing Law No. 205 to ensure that harassment in taxis and other public spaces is included and to support any mechanisms that lead to greater accountability for harassers, operational improvements such as reporting mechanisms and bureaucratic processes, funding for harassment survivors, and implementation mechanisms.
2. Organize dialogue on gaps in the law and how to strengthen it.
3. Monitor the extent to which the law has been used to prosecute sexual harassment in public spaces.

### **B. Provide inputs to the development of a national strategy for transportation if and when it is developed**

1. Review this strategy for gender concerns and to ensure women's protection from harassment.

**Grounded in the vision of equality enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, UN Women works for the elimination of discrimination against women and girls; the empowerment of women; and the achievement of equality between women and men as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian action and peace and security.**

Placing women's rights at the center of all its efforts, UN Women leads and coordinate United Nations System efforts to ensure that commitments on gender equality and gender mainstreaming translate into action throughout the world. It provides strong and coherent leadership in support of Member States' priorities and efforts, building effective partnerships with civil society and other relevant actors. UN Women Lebanon works on issues of women's political participation, women's peace, and security, women's economic empowerment, and changing social norms around gender and masculinities.



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