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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Plan International has extensive experiencing working with girls and young women in cities, including through our Safer Cities programme. This research sought to understand more about the experiences of girls and young women. *Free to Be* is a crowd-mapping website that enables young women to identify and share the location of public spaces that make them feel uneasy and scared or happy and safe. It was designed in collaboration with Crowdspot, Monash University XYX Lab and young women within the city. As well as Sydney, Free to Be has been implemented in Delhi, Kampala, Lima, Madrid and Melbourne.

The Free to Be tool comprised an interactive map of the city and a survey which allowed girls and young women to drop 'pins' on the map – good or bad - and answer questions about their experiences there, as well as leave comments. It was implemented in Sydney in April-May 2018. A group of young women in Sydney were involved in the design and promotion of the tool, as well as having an opportunity to reflect on the findings to support analysis.

In total, 2,083 pins were dropped on spots of the Sydney map, of which 25% denoted good experiences (516) and 75% bad (1,567).

Good places were characterised by being busy, often with working people. This was closely followed by the place having a good 'community environment' or being well known to the participant.

The threat of sexual harassment with and without physical contact was the main issue identified in connection with bad pins. Over two-thirds of the comments on bad pins included sexual harassment of some kind and 63% of all the pins identified gender-based discrimination as a factor. Discrimination based on ethnicity was identified in 10% of the pins (the highest of all the cities), usually alongside gender discrimination, highlighting the intersectional nature of discrimination and harassment in Sydney.

On the street was the most likely location for bad pins, often alongside *to/from work or school* and *public transport*. Strong negative clusters tended to form around train stations and bus interchanges. These data demonstrate the compromised freedom for young women and girls moving around their city.

Harassment directed at young women and girls, and especially those of the LGBTIQ+ community, is apparently exacerbated by the lockout laws in Sydney, and the lack of public transport available at corresponding hours. This indicates the complexity of access to, and safety in, the city - an intervention brought in to protect one part of the community increased the pressure on others.

Women and girls change their behaviour in response to these challenges: nearly half of those recording bad pins (47%) avoided the area if they were alone and 12% simply never went back to the location. When asked how they responded to bad incidents, 20 participants reported that they stopped studying or quit their job because of their experiences. For more than a third of all the pins (36%), young women were resigned to the fact that such incidents are so frequent that they are used to it. Consequently, they take their own precautions such as walking fast through such areas with their phones at the ready. Reporting of events to the authorities was low at 9%, and in more than two-thirds of these cases (69%), the authorities apparently did nothing.

Based on these findings, young women in Sydney made the following recommendations:
1) **Behaviour change:**
   - Changing the blame culture: listen to and act upon the stories of women and girls
   - Challenging toxic masculinity
   - Allies and bystanders: empowering them to call out harassment and intervene safely
2) **Girls' participation in decision-making:** listen to and work with girls and young women, respect their experiences and recommendations, and involve them in co-designing their cities.
3) **Enforcement and accountability:**
   - Strengthening reporting mechanisms
   - Improving the responsiveness of security services and the police
   - Clarification of laws and enforcement regarding street harassment

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introducing Free to Be

Plan International has extensive experience of working with girls and young women in cities, including through our Safer Cities programme.[1]

Prior research has shown that cities around the world are unfit for girls: cities tend to be designed by older people, often men, who do not understand, take interest in or experience the realities of girls moving around cities.[2] Physical environments contribute to how safe or unsafe girls and young women feel, and that this fear and experience of harassment or other negative experience can contribute to girls' confidence, ability to carry out daily activities, and ability to participate. Plan International puts the voices of young women and girls at the centre of its strategy, and through this research sought to better understand their experiences and enable them to participate in decision-making and policy development processes.

The aim of this research was therefore to collect comparable data to tell a story about how young women and girls experience their cities and their feelings of safety or risk in relation to their physical environment. The research examined how harassment and violence against girls can act as both a product of unhealthy gender norms and a cause, creating and maintaining acceptability and normalisation of violence and harassment in public spaces. The goal was to develop data which listened directly to the experiences of girls and young women in a number of cities where Plan International works, to inform discussions with key decision makers, such as city councils and transport providers, so that the city can be made safer for girls and young women.

Free to Be is a crowd-mapping website that enables young women to identify and share the location of public spaces that make them feel uneasy and scared or happy and safe. It was designed in collaboration with Crowdspot, Monash University XYX Lab and young women within the city. In addition to Sydney, Free to Be has implemented in the following cities: Delhi, Kampala, Lima, Madrid and Melbourne.[3]

Anonymity is the great advantage of crowd-mapping for the target participants. Free to Be allows those young women and girls who have experienced or fear sexual harassment to disclose the location and context of their experience "in their own words, without the restrictions on a narrative form associated with the traditional justice system."[4] As the #metoo movement has highlighted, women may be reluctant to detail harassment because their concerns are frequently dismissed, but also because there can be negative consequences for them. The anonymity of Free to Be means this reluctance can be overcome and multiple stories that indicate the type and prevalence of harassment can be collected and studied.

The research was a collaboration between Plan International Headquarters, Plan International Australia, Monash University XYX Lab and Crowdspot digital consultancy. Further details about each can be found on page 20. This report provides an analysis of the data generated in Sydney.

1.2 Sydney city context

Sydney is the state capital of New South Wales. Situated on the east coast, it is the most populous city in Australia. It is home to a recorded 4.8 million people in 2016,[5] spread over 12,367 square kilometres

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[1] For more information about our Safer Cities programme, visit https://plan-international.org/ending-violence/safer-cities-girls
[2] Beebeejaun, Y (2016) Gender, urban space, and the right to everyday life, http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07352166.2016.1255526
[3] Reports for other cities are available here: https://plan-international.org/publications/free-to-be. A cross-city summary of findings is including in https://plan-international.org/unsafeinthecity. Note that the Melbourne pilot project was completed in 2016 and was not part of the latest data collection and analysis process.
[4] Bianca Fileborn, "Special report," *Griffith Report Law and Violence* 2, no. 1 (2014): 45.
[5] "3235.0 - Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, 2016," Australian Bureau of Statistics, Publication 28 August 2017, http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/mf/3235.0.

generating a population density of 415 people per square kilometre, although the density is much higher in inner-city areas.[6]

In June 2018, the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research reported that the majority of New South Wales criminal incidents for major offences had decreased in the twelve months to March 2018. However, sexual assault and indecent assault/indecency/other sexual offences had increased.[7]

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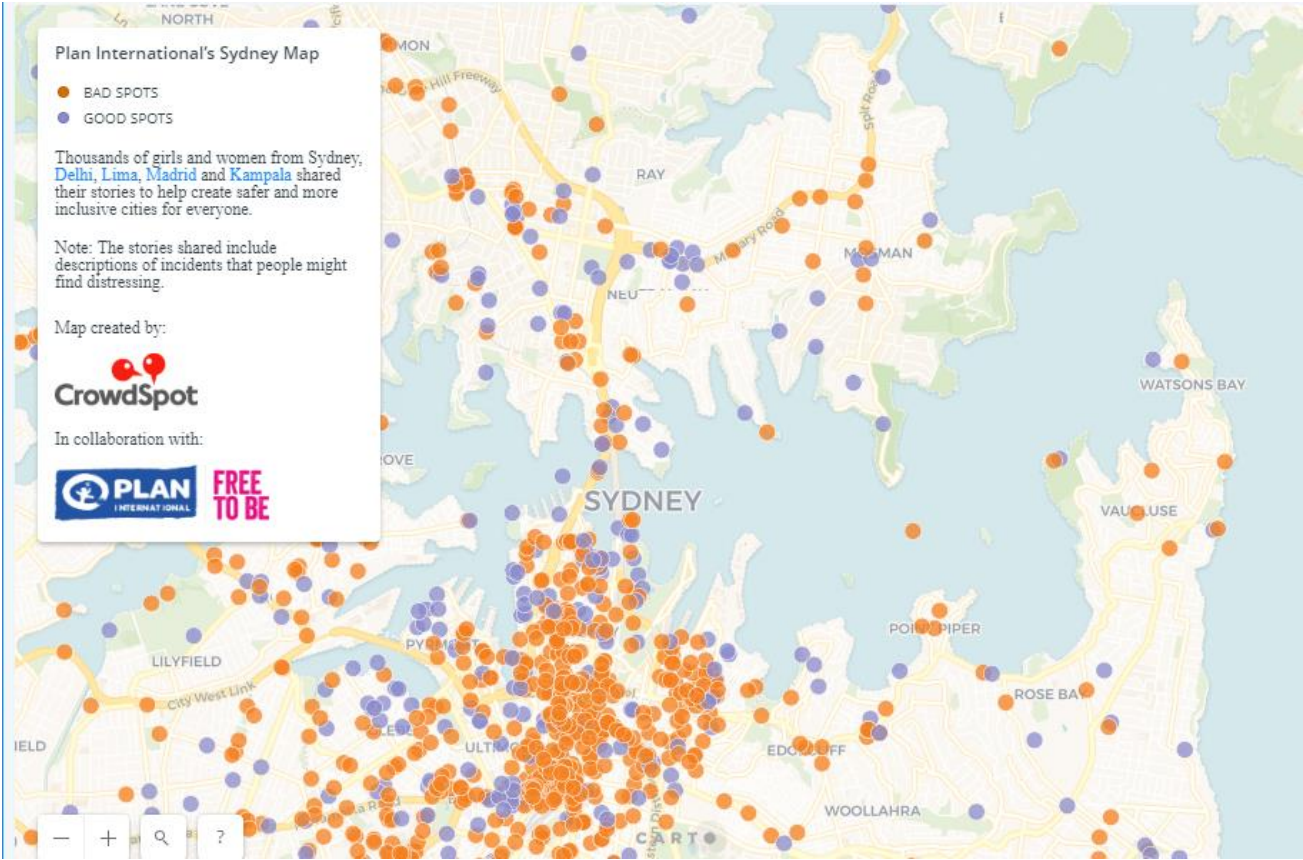
[6] "Greater Sydney," City of Sydney, Updated 26 April 2018, http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/learn/research-and-statistics/the-city-at-a-glance/greater-sydney.
[7] Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (2018). NSW Recorded Crime Statistics quarterly update- March 2018 [online]. Available from http://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/Documents/RCS-Quarterly/NSW_Recorded_Crime_March_2018.pdf.

2. METHODOLOGY

The Free to Be project was conceptualised and piloted in Melbourne in 2016 developed by Plan International in collaboration with Crowdspot and Monash University XYX Lab. The pilot was highly successful, with more than ten thousand people visiting the website and over a thousand dropping a pin. The data was used to discuss and advocate with key decision-makers at the city level. The Free to Be online map-based social survey tool was further developed before being rolled out in five other global cities in 2018.

2.1 Design

Free to Be comprises an interactive map of the city and a survey which allowed girls and women to drop 'pins' on the map – good or bad – on places they love, avoid, feel safe in and think can be improved, and answer a small number of questions about their experiences there, as well as leave comments.

In March 2018, workshops were held with young women from Plan International's activist programme in the five participating cities to feedback on the refining of the tool, interface and ability to engage with young women. Consultation included adaptions for appropriate language and options for the Sydney context.

2.2 Sample

Sampling estimates were made for each city based on the population size and levels of mobile phone usage. In Sydney, the target was set at 2,000. Crowdmapping is a means for gathering impressions and stories from a wide range of people, but is not a probability sample. This means that percentages included in this report are indicative, not representative. However, when many stories are gathered, common themes can be discerned. In addition, the early analysis identified trends in the data and further data did not change those trends, suggesting more data would not significantly shift the overall patterns.

Free to Be Sydney recorded 2,083 valid pins which could be included in analysis. The final sample for analysis only included women and girls and those who identified as trans, non-binary and other gender, up and including the age of 30. The following were therefore excluded from the analysis:

- Men (163 pins)
- Women aged 31 years or over (677 pins)
- Posts which were identified as offensive or false[8] (675 pins)

The number of pins does not indicate the number of people who engaged with Free to Be, as participants were able to place as many pins as they chose.

Some of the placed pins simply denote good or bad locations without any additional information, but 71% added comments giving details of the reasons for the pin, indicating that the young women and girls participating readily took up the option of sharing their stories. There was a higher rate of comments for the bad pins than the good (75% and 59% respectively). Participants were also able to 'support' an existing pin, and 798 such supports were recorded in Sydney.

2.3 Recruitment of research participants

The Free to Be online map-based social survey tool (referred in future as 'the map') was open from 17 April 2018 and closed 31 May 2018. Recruitment was ongoing throughout this time. It was promoted through both social and traditional media channels. This included more than 300 news and opinion

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[8] Pins identified as 'false' or troll pins, including those that were nonsensical, homophobic, racist, or where there were sexist remarks (typically negative and from males)

pieces across a combination of television, radio, print and online media, featuring the Free to Be tool as part of a broader news story about street harassment in Sydney. Social media promotion included Facebook and Twitter posts by Plan International Australia, as well as Instagram and other social media posts by ambassadors and youth activists.

2.4 Analysis

Following data collection, analysis was conducted on the location of pins, the responses to survey questions and the free text comments. Analysis of the data by Monash University XYX Lab considered:

- the stated demographic information of those who placed pins
- presence of hotspots (clusters of good or bad pins)
- a detailed breakdown of the kind of incidents and conditions that made for a good or bad location as provided by the comments

Comments were coded by the research team, to allow emerging trends and patterns to be assessed quantitatively as well as qualitatively. Some coding categories were common from city to city (such as sexual harassment), other categories arose from the data for the specific city. For example, the frequency of comments around public masturbation in Madrid led to that becoming a coding category, and this was also noted in Sydney. Some comments were labelled with more than one code. For example, a comment might include notes about the physical conditions of the place as well as details about a particular incident that occurred. Nuances on coding trends have been highlighted throughout the report. Some pins recorded historic events or incidents and some described the ongoing 'feel' of a place. Comments included in the report identify (as far as possible) the age of the participant, the location of the pin, and the time of day referred to in their response (morning, afternoon, evening, late night, anytime).

2% of comments were second-hand reports, places or incidents which were not directly known or experienced by the person placing the pin. Such reports represent an area's reputation, which strongly affects whether young women and girls will venture into an area. Second hand reports were therefore considered relevant information, analysed and included in the final count.

To enhance analysis and action planning, a reflection workshop was held with young women (aged 16-24) in Sydney to discuss the emerging results. Reflections from these young women have been included in this report where relevant, but clearly labelled as distinct from the research findings.

2.5 Limitations

The anonymity of Free to Be means that there is no way to tell that the participant is who they say they are, and troll activity is possible. Where posts were identified as offensive or false, they were made invisible on the site and removed from the dataset prior to analysis.

3. FINDINGS

This section contains details of the findings from the Sydney map. It outlines key characteristics of the pins, before going into details of places identified in the city and what makes them good or bad.

3.1   Characteristics of the pins

In total, 2,083 pins were dropped on spots of the Sydney map, of which 25% denoted good experiences (516) and 75% bad (1567). Key characteristics include:

- **Time of day:** Good spots in Sydney were generally good no matter what time of day. The bad spots were spread more evenly with a spike late at night. Night-time was the most common time for bad spots (51%), although just under 20% of spots were bad at any time (19%). See Figure 1.
- **Age range of participants:** Nearly three-quarters of the young women who participated in the Free to Be online social survey tool in Sydney were in their twenties (71%). See Table 1.
- **Occupation of participants:** Overall, nearly half of the Free to Be participants were students (42%), and the majority (54%) were working. Given the age cohort of those thirty and under, the proportion of students is not surprising. Participants were able to select more than one option (such as student and in work). See Figure 2.

Figure 1: Time of day of good and bad pins
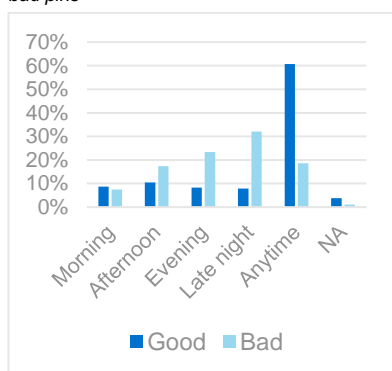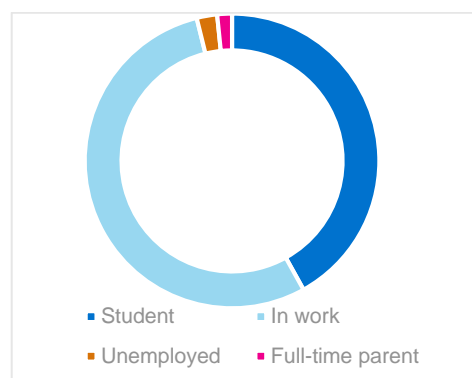*Expressed as percentage of total good pins or bad pins*

Table 1: Pins by age of participants, number and percentage

	No.	%
<16	77	4%
16 to 20	518	25%
21 to 25	904	43%
26 to 30	584	28%

Figure 2: Occupation of participants, as percentage of total pins

3.1.1 Pin location

Free to Be asked participants to identify the precise location of incidents or experiences. Some participants selected more than one location type (for example, walking to and from a public transport hub a participant might select both *on the street* and *public transport*). See Table 2 for a list of location types.

Table 2: Number of pins per location, and as percentage of total good pins and total bad pins.
Note some comments contained more than one location.

Location of incidents	Good pins (516)		Bad pins (1567)	
	Number	% of all good pins	Number	% of all bad pins
On the street	229	44%	939	60%
In a park	171	33%	294	19%
Going to or from work	129	25%	306	20%
Public transport	124	24%	314	20%
Out socially	132	26%	246	16%
At the shops	126	24%	162	10%
Going to or from school	70	14%	126	8%
At a public event	58	11%	55	4%

On the street was identified as the most common place for both the bad pins and the good ones (60% and 44% respectively). *In the park* closely followed with 33% of all good pins and 19% of all the bad, though given the higher number of bad pins, this was still a significant number of all the pins recorded for this location (265 out of a total of 465 tags).

Over a half (53%) of *public transport* bad pins were placed in conjunction with *on the street* bad pins, demonstrating that moving around the city was a major issue for young women and girls in Sydney. This affected access to education and work, 50% of all the *going to and from work or school* bad pins also tagged *on the street*. The compromised ability to move freely around the city without some form of harassment or fear of harassment constricts the ability of young women to access the city.

3.2   Good Locations

This section includes an analysis of the good pins, 516 (about one quarter). Not all good pins had comments added to them, and where pins had comments, some were not explicit about what made the place feel safe or why it felt good. In total, 256 comments were clear enough for analysis and are discussed in this section.

Table 3: Good pins by location, coded from comments

Incident type or description	No. of comments	% of comments
Busy/ other people present	90	35%
Community environment/ intervention	82	32%
Adequate lighting	52	20%
Infrastructure	48	19%
Presence of security/ police	40	16%
Public transportation	24	9%
Daytime	16	6%

The most common reason for feeling safe was that the place seemed to be busy, often linked to the presence of working people, 35%. This was closely followed by the place having a good 'community environment' (32% of the comments could be described in this way). For many of the girls and young women who responded, their local neighbourhood was well known - where they were known and where they trusted other people would look out for them intervening if necessary to help them. This made for a good community environment.

Around 6% of comments noted that the place felt safer in the daytime, with some unsure if it would be the same at night. In the reflection workshop, young women confirmed that they "correlate darkness with bad stuff happening."

"Yelled at by man (from his car) when jogging. Made me feel unsafe. I only go in the daytime now."
(Age 27, Afternoon, Illawarra Road, Marrickville)

3.2.1 Where are the good locations in Sydney?

The Free to Be Sydney map indicated a number of places where, despite the emphasis on bad pins on the map, the good pins outnumbered the bad. Three of these are listed below. The places range from a busy tourist area typically staffed with positive, supportive people to a quiet, women and children only space. It's interesting that security features as an important aspect in one of the spots, as this was noted in 16% of the good comments in total.

Circular Quay & Royal Botanic Gardens

● The northern edge of the Sydney CBD; a popular area for tourism, and consists of walkways, pedestrian malls, parks and restaurants.
● Also a transport hub for ferries, buses and trains.
● The focal point for community celebrations due to its location between the Sydney Opera House and Harbour Bridge.
● Good pins were predominantly located along the water's edge, with its surrounding showing an equal distribution of good and bad pins.
● The majority of commented pins noted the kind & helpful nature of the ferry staff attributed to their feeling of safety,
● Comments also noted adequate lighting, heavy foot traffic and family-orientated feeling.
● The ferry docks had the highest number of support pins: 34 support clicks.

● BAD SPOTS
● GOOD SPOTS
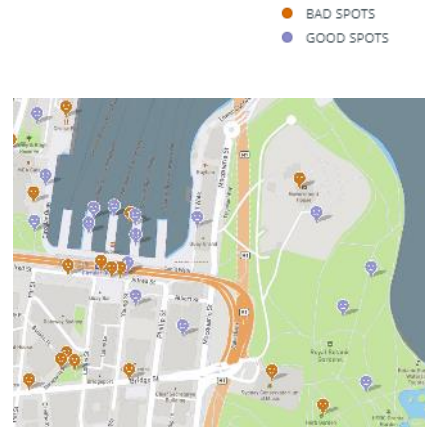
McIver Baths, Coogee

● A saltwater pool for women and children only
● Comments call it the safest and best place to be a woman in Sydney

UNSW Campus

● Large open campus
● Comments note that there is visible security that contributes to the feelings of safety

3.3   Bad Locations

Across Sydney, three-quarters of all the pins placed by participants were designated 'bad', and 79% of all comments gave stories about these bad pins.

3.3.1 What makes a place bad?

1,175 comments were attached to the bad pins, but a small number were not explicit about what made the place feel unsafe or why it felt bad. In total, 1,170 comments were clear enough for analysis and are discussed in this section.

Table 3: Bad pins by incident type, as coded from comments (total 1170)
Note some comments contained more than one incident.

Incident type or description	Number noted	% of comments
All sexual harassment cases	**836**	**72%**
Sexual harassment - no physical contact only	663	57%
Sexual harassment - physical contact only	93	8%
Sexual harassment - both	80	7%
Unpredictable people/ loitering	**203**	**17%**
Drug and alcohol affected	**152**	**13%**
Public Transportation	**132**	**11%**
Dark/ lack of lighting	**120**	**10%**
Infrastructure	**63**	**5%**
Lack of security/ police	**63**	**5%**
Physical and verbal assault (non-sexual)	**52**	**4%**
Group of offenders/ attackers	**50**	**4%**
Second-hand accounts	**28**	**2%**
Public masturbation	**20**	**2%**
Theft/ robbery	**18**	**2%**
Flashing	**17**	**1%**
Kidnapping	**4**	**0.3%**
Murder/ death	**3**	**0.3%**

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment dominated the comments on bad pins (72%), and gender-based discrimination (63%, Table 4) was identified as the most common form of discrimination affecting the incidents. This discrepancy is in part due to difference in the question methodology,[9] but it may be that gender-based discrimination is so prevalent and normalised that the girls and young women participating in Free to Be Sydney did not think it significant enough to record.

For the purposes of this analysis, sexual harassment was coded to identify whether or not it involved physical contact (see Box 1). Where the type of harassment was unclear, the comment was coded with both.

Box 1: Coding for sexual harassment

Sexual harassment not involving physical contact ranges from unwanted so-called 'compliments', catcalling, intense staring/leering, inappropriate photography, flashing and propositioning to being verbally threatened with rape, stalked, chased and blocked.

Sexual harassment involving physical contact ranges from a 'pat on the bottom' through to groping. Incidents of rape were not commonly reported by the participants, and so these have been included under sexual harassment with physical contact. Any incident involving physical contact is technically sexual assault, but many women are inured to some forms of physical sexual contact and would not categorise them as assault (for instance, a pat on the bottom).

This division between touch and no touch is to some extent arbitrary and not necessarily indicative of the level of fear it might induce: being chased may be more disturbing than a pat on the rear.

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[9] The figure for 'sexual harassment' is calculated by coding the 1,170 comments on pins; the figure for 'gender-based discrimination' came from the results of the question which asked participants to respond to a predefined list, so is calculated from all 1,567 bad pins.

Altogether nearly three-quarters (72%) of the filtered comments noted sexual harassment of some kind. 7% of all the comments indicated both physical contact and non-physical contact sexual harassment; 57% were for non-physical only and 8% for physical only.

Non-physical sexual harassment was most commonly reported in 60% of the comments. While no physical contact may seem less invasive than harassment involving contact, this form of harassment contributes in a major way to perceptions of safety because they can carry the potential for escalation. Public masturbation, sometimes in combination with flashing, arose as an issue in Sydney, especially in parks: 30 comments involved flashing and/or public masturbation.

> **"Horrible bus stop for late nights, will now only catch buses to Manly if coming home from the city. Have been groped here, and stalked home."**
> *(Age 27, Roger Street, Late night)*

> **"I have just left Sydney after 5 years living and studying here. Both love and hate for the city, as a female, especially an Asian female with curves. I never felt safe in this city. I get sexual harassment (catcalling, swears, pervert stares) almost everywhere I go in Sydney. No matter how much I cover myself with hideous clothes, this never stop."**
> *(Age 28, Shopping Centre, Afternoon)*

> **"Not my experience, but a woman was followed home by a male in a car at this spot. She ran to service station for aid and luckily was ok. Was an attempted abduction."**
> *(Age 20, Willoughby Lane, Evening)*

Sexual harassment involving physical contact (sexual assault) was reported in 14% of the comments, and was often extreme and shocking in nature. Such incidents considerably contributed to a place being deemed frightening (rather than just inducing unease and wariness).

> **"I was raped at 3am on a Tuesday morning. There was people who could see what was happening, who did nothing."**
> *(Age 27, Eastern Beaches Coastal Walk, Late night)*

> **"I was raped in the [pub]. Security were unaware and there was minimal footage available. Unisex bathrooms made it easier for the rapist to do what he did."**
> *(Age 22, Grosvenor Walk, Late night)*

> **"I was grabbed by a man and forced to the ground, my underwear pulled down then digitally penetrated until I could struggle free and run."**
> *(Age 19, Central Station/Eddy Avenue, Evening)*

> **"A man approached me from behind, grabbed around my waist with both arms and tried to pull me back in his direction. He only let go when I screamed across the road to strangers."**
> *(Age 18, Campbell Street, Late night)*

> **"2.00-3.00am in morning. Waiting with girlfriends outside Town Hall (George St) for nightride bus after a night of drinking. A group of drunk, young guys walked past and one blatantly grabbed and squeezed my ass. I screamed at him (fueled by liquid courage), but he and his friends walked away laughing. It was disgusting."**
> *(Age 28, George Street, Late night)*

There was a high incidence of sexual harassment reported on public transport and around transport hubs. Commuting to and from education or employment whilst experiencing predatory and unpleasant behaviour greatly increases stress for young women and girls.

"A man on the train, started harassing me on how I looked, asking where I lived where I was going. Told me was heading into the city. Only to follow me off the platform pressing his body against me, chasing me down the station and into the shops. Had to hide in the bathroom for a while, as he was still outside waiting for me."
(Age 21, Parramatta, Afternoon)

"One of the most dangerous train stations in NSW. I have been approached here by many desperate looking men and they do not react well at being turned down. I'm only 18 I should not have to put up with it."
(Age 18, Lindfield Station, North Shore, Anytime)

"My friend was stalked for a month by some guy who said he'd been watching her walk to uni and back. He followed her onto the train, he asked lots of invasive questions, when she ignored him or did not answer, he sat uncomfortably close to her and stared at her for her for train ride. She lost him – but then saw him doing this again to other girls."
(Age 21, Macquarie Park, Afternoon)

"I was on the train coming home from school - early afternoon - and me and my friends noticed an old man staring at us. Turns out he was jacking off into a tissue and my friend saw his penis and had seen him doing same thing before - we hit the emergency button and the station guy was helpful but he just got off the train and police didn't get him."
(Age 17, Werona Avenue, Afternoon)

Other factors contributing to bad locations

Sexual harassment was not the only factor reported by participants as contributing to the experiences and perceptions of unsafe locations. The presence of 'unpredictable people' was included in 17% of the comments on bad pins: those whose behaviour might suddenly become threatening such as loiterers, the homeless, and people under the influence of drugs or alcohol (noted in 13% of comments on bad pins). A separate question in the full survey allowed participants to select if someone was 'under the influence' and if this contributed to the incident: nearly one-quarter (24%) of all the bad pins (not just the comments) indicated the presence of alcohol or drugs as a problem affecting the location.

"Congregations of people meet here to smoke, socialise and rev their cars. I wouldn't get out of my car in this car park."
(Age 25, Store, Late night)

"Lots of drugged criminal types loiter in this area propositioning girls and making racist comments. Best to avoid."
(Age 24, Wentworth Street, Anytime)

"Was walking and a loitering man in a hoodie was eyeing me up. He started feeling in his pockets whilst holding eye contact, and followed after me when I passed. I thought he was going to stab me, as a gut instinct, so I ran home."
(Age 18, Marion Street, Evening)

"Lots of leering, cat calling and staring from men and teenage boys. One man used to repeatedly 'serenade' me with songs about the sexual things he planned to do to me. I did not know him. There were also young guys dealing drugs near the station and I once saw them get into a knife fight."
(Age 27, Boys Avenue, Anytime)

"It seems to be where a lot of seedy people hang out - seen a few affected by drugs - and just 'creep': walk a bit too close, say or ask things a bit too aggressively.. a man with his hand down his pants... just not a nice area even though there is a [fast food chain] and school uniform shop near by."
(Age 26, President Avenue, Anytime)

Theft or risk of theft was noted in just 2% of the comments on bad pins. However, 5% of comments considered that there was a lack of security and/or police enforcement which strongly affected the feeling of safety in parts of the city.

> **"Thieving is rampant here and the police do nothing about it."**
> *(Age 21, Commercial Enterprise, Afternoon)*

> **"My friend was mugged here walking on the street outside of our school. It was not particularly quiet and was only at 9:00pm. It was 2 minutes after I had been picked up. I don't feel safe alone there anymore and she has mentioned she no longer feels safe."**
> *(Age 26, Cross City Tunnel, Late night)*

> **"Multiple break ins, does not feel safe for a single woman walking around at night."**
> *(Age 24, Botany, Late night)*

> **"I was surrounded by a group of teenage boys on the escalator. I realised something was wrong when the boy in front turned around to smirk at me and decided to duck under his arm and run. When I got on the train, I found that they had torn off one of the zipper tags on my backpack. Guess I avoided robbery."**
> *(Age 22, Afternoon)*

In addition to incidents, the physical state of a location had an effect on the perceptions of safety. 11% of comments on bad pins noted public transport venues, such as train stations and bus stops, or on trains, light rail and buses as negative sites. 10% of comments noted a lack of lighting was a problem for some locations and often included a plea to add more light.

> **"Walk this route to the train station. I often get cat called whilst walking to the train. It's also very poorly lit at night."** *(Age 27, Martin Place, Late night)*

In Sydney, the effect of the lockout laws for the central city entertainment area was mentioned. Lockout laws prohibit people entering bars and other venues after 1.30am in several areas of Sydney's CBD. They also require these venues to stop serving alcohol after 3am. These were introduced to the City of Sydney in February 2014 with the objective to reduce alcohol-fuelled violence.[10] These are highly controversial, and opinion is very much divided among Sydney stakeholders.[11] In the reflection workshops, young women highlighted that trains stop running at midnight, then when the bars close there are huge crowds pouring onto the streets, fuelling violence and aggression as they wait around for buses and taxis. The young women highlighted that the disconnect between lockout laws and transport schedules as part of the problem. Comments highlighted an increased level of gender-based and LGBTIQ+ discrimination at these times.

> **"Avoid on Friday and Saturday late nights, there's plenty of drunks from Pyrmont Bridge hotel and ones walking towards the [Casino Nightclub] because the [Casino] has no lockout law. If you're by yourself high chance of getting approached."**
> *(Age 19, Murray St, Darling Harbour, Late night)*

> **"Came here to watch a DJ, when I was on the dancefloor a stranger groped me and proceeded to take his genitals out and flash me. I was shocked so walked out of the building past lockouts. Security would not let me in to identify the man as it was past lockouts, but also didn't seem bothered by the incident."**
> *(Age 23, Wentworth Avenue, Late night)*

> **"Regular catcalling anytime walking along King Street, seems to be an increase in rowdy assholes since lockouts were implemented."**
> *(Age 20, King Street, Anytime)*

While these lockout laws were introduced to protect one part of the community, they have unintentionally increased pressure on others. This reveals how complex the maintenance of safety in the city is, but also how important it is to obtain a wide range of perspectives and feedback in evaluations of any interventions or proposed interventions.

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[10] NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, "Recorded Crime Statistics: Quarterly Update," *Statistical Areas and Local Government Areas,* last modified March 2018. http://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/Documents/RCS-Quarterly/NSW_Recorded_Crime_March_2018.pdf
[11] McNab, H. (2018) 'Four years from the lockout laws, what's the state of Sydney night-life?' The Daily Telegraph [online]. Available at https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/central-sydney/four-years-from-the-lockout-laws-whats-the-state-of-sydney-nightlife/news-story/be7a9b27cbca689b4e0d5b92518a8157.

Discrimination

There was a specific question in the survey tool which allowed participants to identify if discrimination was a factor in allocating a bad pin. The survey enabled participants to select one or multiple types of discrimination which they perceived as being a factor. 63% of those responding to this question identified gender-based discrimination as a factor (see Table 4).

Discrimination based on ethnicity was identified in 10% of responses. Moreover, most (four out of five) cases where discrimination based on ethnicity was identified, gender discrimination was also selected. This indicates that the risk of a bad incidents was higher for young women and girls of a minority ethnic backgrounds in Sydney.

"A group of teenage boys followed me on bikes and scooters. They took turns riding past me and hitting me. They would make comments on my race and sexist comments."
(Age 21, Spencer Road, Evening)

"Use of offensive language and racist slurs by a group of youngish boys and an old man. Got yelled at + display of threatening and aggressive behaviour."
(Age 30, Glebe Point Road, Evening)

"2 years ago an old man yelled racist remarks at me at [supermarket] just because I happen to be standing in his way. It still makes me feel uncomfortable until today."
(Age 24, Shopping Centre, Evening)

Table 4: Bad pins labelled with discriminatory factors (1,567)

Discrimination	Number	% of pins
Gender	989	63%
None	*320*	*20%*
Ethnicity	154	10%
LGBTIQ+	76	5%
Other	73	5%
Religion	67	4%
Disability	24	2%

5% of all the pins identified discrimination against the LGBTIQ+ community. The impact of the lockout laws (discussed below) appears to have intensified this form of discrimination for those out in the city late at night.

"I have lived in Newtown for years and used to almost always feel safe. The influx of drunk abusive males since the lockout laws has been insane. No longer feel safe as a gay female, have been harassed on many occasions at night."
(Age 23, King Street, Late night)

"There's always groups of creepy drunk guys that loiter around there and make me feel very uncomfortable in the evenings/night. Lots of cat-calling and guys occasionally follow me to places that I am going (bus stop/bar/club). This especially happens when I'm with my girlfriend (I'm gay)."
(Age 21, Wynard Station George Street, Late night)

"Have noticed a significant increase in sexual harassment (especially targeted at queer women) on King St since the lockout laws." *(Age 25, Brown Street, Evening)*

"There is an aggressive man that lives here. My housemates (lesbian couple) were walking home late at night and he pulled in his drive with his toddler. Catcalled them and then when they told him to piss off he got aggressive and shouted horrible things at them."
(Age 19, Albion Lane, Late night)

"A group of men approached my girlfriend and I as we were kissing on the footpath and surprised us by shouting loudly in our faces. They said they wanted some of that. Newtown is usually a safe place for LGBTIQ women, however with the influx of cis heterosexual men due to the lock out laws, there has been an increase of physical and verbal abuse." *(Age 27, King Street, Evening)*

"The gendered and homophobic discrimination in Newtown since the lockout laws is ridiculous. It doesn't feel safe to walk home anymore."
(Age 29, King Street, Late night)

3.3.2 Who are the main perpetrators?

Offenders across all cities were predominantly men. 4% of comments noted the threat of groups of men or gangs. Groups of men or youths are particularly intimidating for young women on their own.

> **"Walking back to the station after a night out with my bestie (female) and a group of men walking behind us started talking about 'gangbanging'."**
> *(Age 19, York Street, Late night)*

> **"Felt intimidated by a group of intoxicated men. Shouting 'come here' and 'where are you going'."**
> *(Age 26, Windsor Road, Evening)*

> **"There is a gang who congregate here […] they harass women and young teens including school girls asking for money, food and sex some of them are poker players they have parties with strippers my friends went once and we got hit on by all of them."**
> *(Age 21, Edgeworth David Avenue, Evening)*

> **"There are groups of guys parked here at night who are extremely aggressive. If you even pull into the park they threaten you and try to block your exit with their cars."**
> *(Age 33, Acron Road, Evening)*

Some comments talked about how groups of men in moving vehicles harass young women and girls standing on the side of the road, effectively verbal and gestural 'hit and runs'. The suddenness of such attacks and that they seem to come from nowhere (and disappear as quickly) can be deeply unsettling.

A compounding problem is the indifference of bystanders noted in a number of the comments. In the good spots, the participants trusted that locals would come to their aid. The opposite is true of the bad spots where those nearby either brush off the incident or do not offer assistance.

> **"Was grocery shopping at [a supermarket] and was approaching the dairy section when I had racist remarks directed at me while other customers around either laughed or just started to watch. It was such an uncomfortable feeling but no one stood up for me. I felt threatened and that things would only be worse if I stood up for myself so I just ignored them."**
> *(Age 21, Shopping Centre, Afternoon)*

> **"A man around 60 began walking alongside as I was going to the bus stop. He asked me lots of questions about where I was going (work) and if he could come with me. Began pleading when I said no. I asked him multiple times to leave me alone, even at the bus stop where 8 other people were waiting for the bus, noone helped. Eventually he left."**
> *(Age 19, Victoria Avenue, Morning)*

> **"At [fast food chain] late of night (12am) the place was relatively full at the time. I was 18 in line and some random guy came up and grabbed my ass in front of everybody and ran away, then came back and ordered. It was humiliating, everyone saw nobody really did anything but brushed it off."**
> *(Age 20, Marcus Clark TAFE)*

> **"Two older men sitting outside of a cafe yelled at my sister and I that we looked beautiful, as we turned around they called us 'ffing tarty sluts'. It was 9:30am and we were walking to uni. No one in the street supported us. Many men yell things like this at women on Glebe Point Road."**
> *(Age 29, Glebe Point Road, Morning)*

> **"Groped in the elevator going up into The car park. It was full at the time, no one said it did anything."**
> *(Age 25, Shopping Centre, Morning)*

> **"Was harassed by a stranger on a train, who would not take no for an answer and would not get out of my personal space. Was in a quiet carriage so heard by many, but no one helped."**
> *(Age 23, Epping Station, Afternoon)*

> **"Was chased down the street by 2 young men on push bikes, being cat called and harassed as I walked home with hands full of shopping bags. Stopped outside a cafe, male worker saw me being harassed and did nothing."**
> *(Age 29, Regent Street, Afternoon)*

3.3.3 How do girls and young women respond?

Free to Be asked participants 'what happened next…' when they posted a bad pin, to assess how they responded to incidents or changed their behaviour.

Nearly half (47%) of those responding to this question indicated that they avoid the area if they are alone, and 12% reported that they simply never went back to the location. While not statistically significant, 20 of the participants who answered this question stopped studying or quit their job because of their

Table 5: Selected responses to what young women do in response to bad incidents, as percentage of total bad pins (1566)

Response	No.	% of bad pins
Avoid coming here alone	741	47%
Happens so often that I'm just used to it	570	36%
Never went back there	188	12%
Stopped going to school, university or work	20	1%

experiences. A third of these 20 incidents were apparently reported to the authorities, but no further action was taken in all but one of them. These figures highlight the wariness young women and girls might have towards reporting incidents which, while serious enough to radically change their behaviour and prevent their participation, are not taken seriously by those who have the power to prevent reoccurrence or reassure safety concerns.

Participants were also able to provide comments for this question, which provide detail on such behaviour change and coping strategies.

"I jog during daylight hours now."
(Age 32, Edgeworth David Avenue, Evening)

"I ended up moving as I felt unsafe."
(Age 21, Shellcove Road, Afternoon)

"I now use a different route to the station, park my car elsewhere."
(Age 25, Swete Street, Morning)

"I don't run there in the late afternoon anymore."
(Age 17, Saint Lawrence Street, Evening)

"I quit my job because I was terrified."
(Age 24, Pub, Anytime)

"I only go during daylight."
(Age 25, Wolseley Road, Late night)

"Always full of groups of teenagers screaming at each other. Worse on Friday night and weekends. Have seen police officers monitoring but not often enough. Whenever I'm here at night, I always ask my parents to come and pick me up. I do not feel safe here at night, ever."
(Age 24, Saint David Avenue, Anytime)

For more than a third of all the pins (36%), young women were resigned to the fact that such incidents are so frequent that they are used to it. Consequently, they take their own precautions such as walking fast through such areas with their phones at the ready.

"I avoid standing up to pedal my bike across intersections and even up hills. I think twice before wearing lipstick while riding as I don't want to attract unwanted attention."
(Age 26, Coward Street, Morning)

"I walk here often: very dirty and scary place, especially at night. I don't like being here alone as a woman, I get looks by men here all the time."
(Age 21, Supermarket, Anytime)

"I always check behind my back and scan the trees and bushes and walk fast to the main road where light is."
(Age 25, Bryant Street, Late night)

Girls and young women were more than three times more likely to tell a family member or a friend about an incident (30%) than report it to the authorities (9%) (see Table 6). In more than two-thirds of the cases reported to authorities (69%), the authorities did nothing.

Some comments indicated that the young women and girls hesitated to report because of the repetitive nature of the harassment, they were just 'used to it' and therefore didn't report it. The levels of inaction by authorities is likely to contribute to this. Some were also concerned about consequences for themselves, or they believed that authorities would actually blame girls or young women. One participant described a police officer directly harassing a young woman, with an overlay of victim blaming.

Response	No.	% of bad pins
Told my friend or my family	471	30%
Reported it but authorities did nothing	98	6%
Reported it and authorities did something	44	3%

"The same man on multiple occasions has followed me through train carriages and around Central Station harassing me for my number. This man (over 50) made me (aged 17) feel so uncomfortable and unsafe that I now don't attend university lectures that align with the times I found him there. Didn't believe I could report it due to lack of evidence and was afraid I would be told that "he is just being friendly" or some other BS excuse."
(Age 17, Central Station, Evening)

"A pervert was jerking off to me and following me, reported to the crime stoppers two days after cuz I couldn't react on the spot. I think I got blamed more for reporting it late by the male police on the other side of the phone, than feeling sorry this incident actually happened."
(Age 25, May Lane, Afternoon)

"Reported to management but they did nothing."
(Age 25, King Street, Evening)

In the reflection workshop, young women discussed the possibility that this low level of reporting was caused by fear of stigma or backlash.

"The causes of that was that socially people think that if they did speak out they would have a loss of friends or community which means that can stop them from socializing, they might drop out from studies, and emotionally they could have mental health issues or have comments about their feelings often made to them." *(Reflection workshop)*

3.3.4 Where are the most prominent bad locations?

Few places had only good or only bad pins. In general, places were mixed. Participants were also able to 'support' a previous spot (there were nearly 700 of these across Sydney). Three of the spots with concentrations of bad pins are listed below. These sites are all busy, central commercial areas, with high foot traffic and congestion leading to high levels of sexual harassment reported by participants.

● BAD SPOTS
● GOOD SPOTS

Central Station & Belmore Park (adjacent)
● Located at the southern end of the CBD, largest and busiest railway station in New South Wales.
● Central Station occupies a large city block separating Haymarket, Surry Hills, and the CBD.
● Close proximity to commercial stores and restaurants, hotels, a university, a public library, a theatre, a gallery, several parks and a market.
● Reports include both non-physical sexual harassment (staring, verbal harassment, stalking, public indecency) and physical sexual harassment (groping, rape).
● High number of homeless and/or drug and alcohol affected people.
● Lack of lighting, security and police presence or intervention.
● Almost all pins in the station itself were supported by others, and the pins for the surrounding area had a similar level of support.
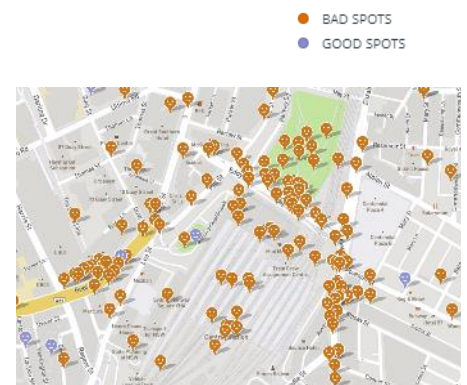
Newtown Station & King Street

- Located on the Main Suburban line, 4K south-west of the Sydney CBD. Entrance adjacent to a small public plaza located just off King Street.
- King Street is the main street of Newtown and centre of commercial and entertainment activity.
- Reports include physical sexual harassment, non-physical sexual harassment, groups of men, people under the influence of drugs / alcohol, and LGBTQIA-related harassment - all occurring at any time of day.
- Out of the 63 pins along King Street, 25 support negative pins with the most supported pin was "Often get commented on or yelled after by straight blokes when I'm holding hands with my wife. Newtown doesn't feel safe for lesbians since lock out laws were introduced."
- Like other areas there were some good pins and these were also supported.
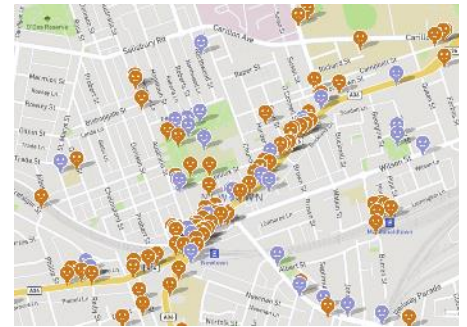
Town Hall Station & Hyde Park Area

- Heritage-listed underground commuter rail station located in the centre of the Sydney CBD and under the Sydney Town Hall.
- Hyde Park is on the eastern side of the city centre, surrounded by commercial stores, restaurants, bars, hotels, museums and theatres.
- Heavy foot traffic and road congestion.
- The majority of reports include physical sexual harassment including groping and pinching alongside non-physical sexual harassment of lewd comments, stalking and unsolicited photographs.
- Other comments on robberies, groups of offenders and physical assault.
- Night time was particularly noted as feeling unsafe in comments, but bad pins recorded all times of the day.
- More than half of pins in this hotspot were supported, with the majority of them specifically in the Town Hall area.
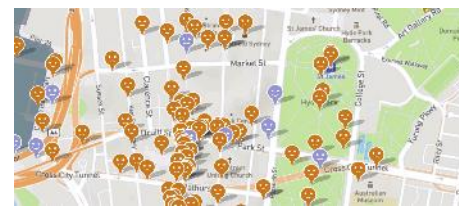
4. CONCLUSIONS

The critical message derived from the Sydney Free to Be is that the majority of the young women and girls who participated experienced many forms of sexual harassment, mostly non-physical but also including some severe forms of physical assault. This was spread across the city, concentrated in public transport hubs, and consequently affected the ability of young women and girls to move around the city and access education and employment. In some instances the young women and girls stopped their study, quit work or moved house as a result of their experiences. The data suggests that harassment is endemic, and embedded in the very fabric of the city. For Sydney to be accessible to all who live there, this needs to be urgently addressed.

> **"Judging by all of the nearby comments here regarding abuse, assault and having innocence and life taken and turned into vulnerability and fear. This NEEDS to be investigated and police need to take action. I will NOT go here alone, or with women only, and will spread the word. Society should NOT be this way. Something needs to be done."** *(Age 24, Central Station, Anytime)*

In the reflection workshop, young women discussed how such behaviour is normalised and blamed on young women and girls themselves – as they are told to control where they go or what they wear - rather than on those who perpetrate the harassment.

As a result of this, and of reports of harassment not being taken seriously, girls and young women restrict their movement. They avoid certain parts of the city if they are on their own, or simply never go back to a locale. At least one-third of the participants noted that they were used to harassment because it happens so frequently.

> **"When they are talking about causes, 'well, the girl was wearing this, or the girl posted on social media saying she wanted a shag', no, these are not the causes. The causes are the education and upbringing that these aggressors have received. Which is, like everything, wrongly focused. And when they are running this sort of campaign, they focus where they shouldn't, which is on the victim."** *(Reflection workshop)*

> **"Overall consequences are that people are assaulted, women's nights out are usually full of sexual harassment, and that we often sacrifice fun to be safe."** *(Reflection workshop)*

> **"Women themselves change their behaviours - that's a consequence - so they go out less and they protect themselves."** *(Reflection workshop)*

4.1 Recommendations

The young women and girls of Sydney are fully aware of the risks and threats to their person as they move around the city. They also have suggestions for how the 'bad spots' might be mitigated. Some suggestions are simple and would be effective in easing their ability to engage with the city they live in. Improved lighting and the presence of visible security and police enforcement and response were frequently mentioned, although it is important that these simple responses are coupled with deeper and more sustained changes that can shift the physical and social context for girls and young women. Based on these findings, young women in Sydney made the following recommendations:

Behaviour change:
- **Changing the blame culture:** members of society – including government, police, media, schools, communities, family members and individuals – together with those in power, must listen to the stories of women and girls to understand the scale of these problems and act upon them. There must be a shift in how incidents of street harassment are discussed, particularly by government, police and the media, with blame placed firmly on perpetrators rather than those who have been harassed or abused.
- **Challenging toxic masculinity:** government, city and transport authorities and civil society organisations should initiate behaviour change campaigns that call out toxic masculinity, tackle social norms and address the root causes of gender-based street harassment. More

specifically men and boys need to recognise that their behaviour is intolerable and change it by learning to respect girls and women as their equals. Boys and men must understand that harassment is not part of a "normal" life for girls and young women. It is not harmless fun, it is frightening, disempowering and completely unacceptable.

- **Allies and bystanders:** government, city and transport authorities and civil society organisations should also initiate behaviour change campaigns that focus on encouraging and empowering bystanders who witness harassment, whether individually or collectively, to call it out and intervene safely (direct, distract, delay, delegate and document). We need all members of society to recognise and raise awareness of the fact that it is everyone's responsibility to condemn harassment and violence against girls and women. In particular we need men and boys to stand up against the culture of verbal and physical abuse, and to not stand by when they witness such abuse – particularly when in groups.

Girls' participation in decision-making:

Those in authority and positions of power, at all levels, must listen to and work with girls and young women, respect their experiences and recommendations, and involve them in co-designing their cities, including infrastructure, the provision of services (particularly public transport) and the policies that govern their cities. This can include formal consultations, girls' walks (e.g. gender-sensitive safety audits, or a "walk in our shoes" experience run by young women for key city stakeholders and authorities), and gender audits of policies and processes.

Enforcement and accountability:

- **Strengthening reporting mechanisms:** In order to continue to make the issue visible, police, transport providers and other city authorities should implement public campaigns to encourage reporting. These should be complemented by improved systems for reporting, such as specific harassment hotlines or comprehensive training of all responding officers.

- **Improving the responsiveness of security services and the police:** Police and security officers should receive comprehensive training on dealing with incidents and reports of harassment and assault against women and girls. The objective must be to ensure that all responses to reporting are supportive – the key message should always be "we believe you, we support you." Additionally, training should include an assessment and identification of ways to address systemic, institutionalised sexism, as well as language used around sexist and sexual assault (particularly focusing on ending victim blaming).

- **Clarification of laws and enforcement regarding street harassment:** State and territory governments should provide clear and comprehensive guidance to police and the community about current laws that protect women and girls from these incidences, which in turn leads to a supportive and positive response to reported incidents. Jurisdictions could consider filling in the gaps, particularly related to types of harassment not covered in current legislation. In order to ensure that legislation does not lead to the over-policing of already vulnerable groups, police and judges should receive comprehensive gender and diversity training and be subject to ongoing evaluations to ensure laws are properly enforced.

"Women feel as if they are lesser, they begin to question the validity of their experience, they feel like the harassment is their fault and It's this entrenched feeling inside them, what the female has experienced, and this then feeds into an extra consequence of mental health and stopping them from doing things like they want to do like going out so it's a whole cyclic effect which begins and starts with the culture of gender-based street harassment, toxic masculinity and lack of education on that." *(Reflection workshop)*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

About Monash University XYX Lab

XYX – Gender and Place research lab is a team of experienced design researchers led by Dr Nicole Kalms exploring gender-sensitive design practices and theory. The work operates at the intersection of gender, identity, urban space and advocacy. Through the research, they bring together planners, policy makers, local government and stakeholders to make tangible the experiences of underrepresented communities in urban space and planning. The XYX Lab analysed the data from the first iteration of Free to Be and this experience laid the groundwork for this current project.

About Plan International

We strive to advance children's rights and equality for girls all over the world. We recognise the power and potential of every single child. But this is often suppressed by poverty, violence, exclusion and discrimination. And it's girls who are most affected. As an independent development and humanitarian organisation, we work alongside children, young people, our supporters and partners to tackle the root causes of the challenges facing girls and all vulnerable children. We support children's rights from birth until they reach adulthood, and enable children to prepare for and respond to crises and adversity. We drive changes in practice and policy at local, national and global levels using our reach, experience and knowledge. For over 80 years we have been building powerful partnerships for children, and we are active in over 75 countries.

About the Safer Cities Programme

Girls are increasingly moving to cities for work, education and opportunities. It is estimated that by 2030, approximately 700 million girls will live in urban areas. This shift can increase their chances of marrying later and having fewer and healthier children but it also presents risks and challenges. Cities can be some of the most dangerous places for girls to live. Plan International works in cities around the globe to make cities safer for everyone, particularly young women and girls. Delhi in India, Lima in Peru and Uganda's capital Kampala are all part of Plan International's Safer Cities program which works with communities to transform neighbourhoods into safe places where girls are respected and can go to school or work without fear of violence.

About Crowdspot

Crowdspot is an award-winning, Melbourne-based digital consultancy specialising in map-based community engagement and data collection. Their mission is to help create quality spaces in a social, inclusive and engaging process. They do this by connecting decision makers with targeted community groups through the use of online map-based social survey tool.

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