Achieving justice in response to street and public sexual harassment: developing victim-centred perspectives

Policy Report and Recommendations

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This research took place on the stolen lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nations. Sovereignty was never ceded. I acknowledge my position as a White settler who continues to benefit and live off stolen land. Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.

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Executive summary

Street harassment is one of the most pervasive forms of gender-based violence, and can also occur as racist, transphobic, homophobic and ableist violence. Yet, to date, street harassment remains poorly responded to in the Australian context, although some jurisdictions internationally have begun to implement criminal legal and other responses. However, we know little about how those who have experienced street harassment would like this issue to be responded to.

As such, this project sought to examine the justice needs and preferred justice responses of people who have lived experience of street and public harassment. This report presents key findings from the 3-year project led by Dr Bianca Fileborn, *Achieving Justice in Response to Street and Public Harassment: Developing Victim-Centred Perspectives,* funded by the Australian Research Council (DE190100404).

Project aims

This project aimed to inform the development of justice responses to street harassment by building an evidence base on street harassment victims' justice needs.

The project aimed to:

- Develop detailed and nuanced insights into lived experiences and impacts of street harassment within an Australian context.
- Generate victim-centred theoretical and conceptual understandings of justice related to street harassment.
- Build an evidence-base to inform the development of effective prevention efforts and justice responses (both formal and informal) to street harassment within Australia and internationally.

The research was driven by the following questions:

1. What are participants' lived experiences and understandings of street harassment?
2. How do victims and key stakeholders conceptualise justice in relation to street harassment?
3. What are street harassment victims' justice interests, from the perspective of victims and key stakeholders?
4. How can justice be achieved in response to street harassment?

Project methods

This project involved four key phases:

1. Mapping of current policy and activist responses to street harassment across the US, UK and Australia (not discussed further in this report).
2. One-on-one interviews and Google mapping exercise with 47 individuals with lived experiences of street harassment from Victoria and New South Wales.
3. Interviews with 18 key stakeholders from 13 organisations.
4. Online survey with 228 Melbournians on their perceptions of street harassment (led by Emily Cullen-Ross).

Key findings

Phase 2 - Interviews with people who have experienced street harassment

- Participants' experiences of street harassment spanned the full continuum of sexual and gender-based violence, with verbal comments, staring/leering and car-related harassment the most commonly discussed. Participants also commonly discussed racist, homophobic and transphobic harassment.

- Harassment occurred across a wide range of settings, but was most commonly discussed in relation to educational settings (particularly high schools), public transport, on the street (especially in CBDs), leisure and entertainment settings such as licensed venues, and at work (particularly hospitality and retail settings).

- Participants identified a wide range of negative impacts from experiencing harassment. This commonly included:
    - Emotional and affective impacts, such as feeling angry or fearful;
    - Undertaking safety work or precautionary strategies, such as changing how they dress or avoiding certain areas;
    - An altered sense-of-self, such as reduced self-esteem and self-confidence;
    - Participants also discussed strategies they used to resist street harassment, including refusing to change their behaviour because of it.

- Reporting to authorities such as police or security guards was rare. For participants who had reported, their experience was generally a negative one, though a small minority of participants discussed positive experiences of reporting.

- Bystander intervention was rarely experienced by participants. However, most participants valued bystander intervention and wanted bystanders to intervene.

- Participants overwhelmingly preferred and advocated for community-led justice responses to street harassment outside of the formal legal system. It is important to acknowledge however, that some participants did want a criminal legal response to street harassment. Commonly raised responses included:
    - The need for education and training;
    - Perpetrator accountability;
    - Bystander intervention;
    - Reporting mechanisms.

- For participants who supported a criminal legal response (such as on-the-spot fines or the introduction of criminal legislation), common reasons for this support included:
    - That such responses could be used to hold perpetrators to account for their actions, or could provide a deterrent effect;
    - That a criminal legal response symbolically communicated the harm of street harassment.

- For participants who did not support a criminal legal response, common concerns raised included:

- Not feasible to implement or enforce;
- Does not address the root causes of street harassment;
- Likely to contribute towards the over-policing of marginalised groups;
- Belief that the police would not respond well to street harassment.

Phase 3 - Key stakeholder interviews

- Key stakeholders generally held a sophisticated understanding of what street harassment is, and its underlying causes.
- Key stakeholder participants varied greatly in terms of the extent to which they address street harassment in their current role.
- Key stakeholders identified a range of challenges and barriers to responding to street harassment, including:
  - Street harassment as normalised and trivialised as an issue;
  - Insufficient funding and resources to implement responses to street harassment;
  - The lack of available data and lack of clarity around 'what counts' as street harassment;
  - A lack of political will and momentum around the issue;
  - Challenges in identifying individual perpetrators due to the fleeting nature of much harassment.

- Stakeholders' perspectives on justice and justice responses to street harassment largely reflected those of participants in Phase 2. Stakeholders also raised similar concerns regarding the criminal regulation of street harassment.

- Stakeholders were asked to reflect on their top priorities moving forward:
  - Establishing clear mechanisms for data collection and reporting;
  - Advocacy and awareness raising to establish street harassment as a 'problem' requiring redress;
  - Development of policy and strategy documents to guide the implementation of responses;
  - Public education campaigns.

Phase 4 – Community attitudes

Survey findings suggest that most participants believed that street harassment is a problem. In responding to realistic yet fictional vignettes depicting scenarios of harassment, participants typically identified these incidents as harassment, as unwanted, as not complimentary, as breaching social norms, as harmful, and that the person targeted for harassment was not responsible for what happened.

However, in qualitative text responses, a minority of participants expressed beliefs that minimised and normalised harassment, reproduced beliefs about men's entitlement to women in public, and reproduced myths and misconceptions about gender-based violence. Men and older respondents were also more likely to endorse problematic understandings of street harassment.

Recommendations

Recommendations are made across four high-level themes.

Prevention and transformation

1. Responses to street harassment should prioritise prevention and transformation of underlying power structures, drawing on an intersectional lens.

2. Prevention efforts must address street harassment at the individual, community, and structural levels.

3. Street harassment should be explicitly addressed and incorporated into existing policy frameworks for preventing gender-based violence, racism, transphobia, homophobia and similar.

4. Efforts to dismantle structural oppression and discrimination should be continued and, in many cases, bolstered. This research points to the need to continue to address structural inequalities relating to the intersections of gender (including misogyny, sexism, and transphobia), diverse sexuality, and race. However, it is likely that many other forms of structural inequality require attention.

5. All policy and practice-based responses to street harassment must be responsive to the fact that there are cultural differences regarding what constitutes harassment.

6. All policy and practice-based responses to street harassment should be co-designed with people who have experienced street harassment, and in close consultation with diverse communities.

Data collection and reporting mechanisms

1. Questions on street harassment should be incorporated into existing local, state, and national surveys on victimisation and safety. This will help to build a robust body of knowledge on the prevalence, frequency, and impacts of harassment, demographic details of victims and perpetrators, and to identify locations where harassment is particularly prevalent. This should include:

    a. Targeted surveys addressing the experiences of marginalised and 'hard-to-reach' groups, including but not limited to LGBTQ+ people, people of colour, religious groups, First Nations people, disabled people, and sex workers are required to fill significant gaps in knowledge.

    b. Targeted research on the attitudes and behaviours of harassers is needed to fill significant gaps in knowledge, and to inform prevention initiatives and efforts to hold harassers to account.

    c. All research undertaken on street harassment should be informed by an intersectional lens.

2. Develop multiple avenues for reporting and/or documenting experiences of street harassment. This may include:

a. Text/phone and online reporting, including location-specific options such as for incidents occurring on public transport or in licensed venues.

b. Crowdmapping or crowdsourcing reporting, similar to the approaches used by Plan International, She's a Crowd, and the XYX Lab (Monash University).

c. Clarification of avenues for reporting formally to police, where this is desired.

d. Reporting options should include both formal and informal avenues, and anonymous and identifiable options.

3. All reporting and data-collection mechanisms should be co-designed with people who have lived experience of street harassment.

4. The use of data and potential outcomes of reporting should be clearly communicated to individuals making a report. Information on appropriate support services should be provided.

5. A consistent definition of street harassment should be implemented across different forms of data collection and/or reporting to ensure data sets are comparable. However, it is important to note that 'what counts' as street harassment is context-dependent, and as such any definition is by nature an artificial one that will inevitably exclude some experiences.

Training and education

1. Street harassment should be incorporated into respectful relationships and consent education curriculum and delivered nationally. This should include addressing the nature, prevalence and harms of street harassment, the role of power and power imbalances (particularly those relating to gender, sexuality, and race – that is, drawing on an intersectional lens), and bystander intervention.

2. Educational responses to street harassment should be co-designed with people who have experienced diverse forms of street harassment.

3. Training on street harassment, bystander intervention and responding to disclosures should be introduced for staff and authority figures in settings that are 'high risk' for public harassment, and/or for groups who are likely to receive disclosures or reports of harassment.

4. Bystander intervention training: given the extent to which participants valued bystander intervention as a potential justice mechanism, there is a need to provide widespread opportunity for members of the community to be trained in responding safely and effectively as a bystander. In many cases, bystander training could be incorporated into the other educational interventions outlined here.

5. Public awareness raising and education: there is a need for educational campaigns conveying the nature, extent, and impacts of street harassment, challenging popular misconceptions such as that street harassment is trivial or complimentary, and arming people with the skills to respond appropriately to disclosure. Such campaigns should also address bystander intervention. Participants frequently referred to the Respect Victoria 'Call It Out' campaign as an example of the type of initiative they would like to see implemented.

    a. Public awareness raising and education should also be explicitly targeted towards adults in mid-to-later life, as emerging evidence from this project suggests some members of these age groups may be more likely to condone street harassment.

6. Educational interventions for perpetrators: participants in Phase 2 strongly advocated for educational interventions targeting harassers, for example engaging harassers in educational initiatives on the impacts of street harassment, gendered power and so forth. Discussions with stakeholders in the men's behaviour change sector in Phase 3 of the project suggested that such programs would currently not be feasible in relation to street harassment. Nonetheless, given the centrality of this response to those who had experienced harassment, we recommend that avenues for developing and implementing educational initiatives for harassers be explored.

Legislative reform and clarification

1. The introduction of civil legislation, like that implemented in Washington, D.C. This approach captures the symbolic importance of legislation expressed by participants (i.e., it 'sends a message' that street harassment is harmful and not tolerated), while avoiding the potential pitfalls of criminal regulation. Civil legislation can additionally create an onus for the state to implement other responses identified in this report, such as the collection of data, implementation of policy, and implementation of training. Civil legislation would also establish a consistent definition of street harassment, assisting with data collection efforts.

2. Clarification of the criminal status of street harassment: many participants expressed confusion as to what forms of harassment are currently addressed under criminal law, and therefore what they could reasonably report to police. There is a need for police to clarify the legal status of street harassment, and to communicate appropriate avenues for reporting where this is desired.

Introduction

Street harassment is one of the most pervasive forms of sexual and gender-based violence. Australian research suggests that close to 90% of young women have experienced street harassment *at least* once in their lives, though it is a pervasive and mundane encounter for many (Johnson & Bennett, 2015). International research shows that street harassment is also a common occurrence for people of colour, disabled people, and LGBTQ+ communities (Stop Street Harassment, 2014). Despite the sheer prevalence of street harassment, it remains largely trivialised and ignored as a form of harm, particularly within the Australian context (Fileborn & O'Neill, 2021).

This report presents key findings from the 3-year project led by Dr Bianca Fileborn, *Achieving Justice in Response to Street and Public Harassment: Developing Victim-Centred Perspectives,* funded by the Australian Research Council (DE190100404). This research is the first project internationally to examine victim-centred justice in relation to street harassment, building upon a pilot project undertaken by Dr Fileborn in 2015. Findings from this research have informed the development of a series of policy and practice recommendations aimed at addressing street harassment, that are outlined in this report.

Before presenting key findings and recommendations, we provide an overview of key literature on street harassment, and the project aims and research design.

What is street harassment?

Street harassment is a diffuse category of behaviour. Most commonly, street harassment refers to gender-based and sexist harassment perpetrated by male strangers against women in public or semi-public spaces. Typical examples of street harassment include catcalling, wolf-whistling, staring/leering, following someone, unwanted and repeated requests for someone's phone number or a date, sexualised comments, horn honking and so forth (see Fileborn & O'Neill, 2021; Logan, 2015). Some definitions also include behaviours that would meet legal definitions of sexual harm, including flashing, public masturbation, sexual assault, and rape, and participants in this project discussed experiences reflecting this full continuum of harassment and violence.

An intersectional lens was utilised in understanding what street harassment is (Crenshaw, 1991; Fileborn & O'Neill, 2021). In addition to constituting a form of sexual and gender-based violence, this project addressed harassment that occurs on the basis of diverse gender and sexuality, racism, disability and so forth. This includes, for example, verbal comments that are racist or homophobic. An intersectional approach also recognises that people from diverse communities can experience heightened rates of harassment, encounter unique forms of harassment, and are targeted for forms of harassment that are, for example, sexualised *and* racist.

What ‘counts’ as street harassment can be highly context-dependent and subjective (Esacove, 1998; Fairchild, 2010; Vera-Gray, 2016). For example, behaviours such as approaching someone for their phone number could be welcome and acceptable in some contexts and depending on how this behaviour is enacted. Likewise, staring or looking at someone in public space is a commonplace and normative behaviour in many respects, while other forms of harassment can be ambiguous or superficially ‘friendly’ (e.g., non-sexualised greetings, or commands to ‘smile’ – see Bailey, 2016, 2017; Vera-Gray & Fileborn, 2018). Previous research by Fairchild (2010) found that contextual factors such as the time of day, whether a person is alone or with others, and the perceived attractiveness of the initiator could all influence whether something was interpreted as harassment. Many forms of harassment are normalised and/or trivialised, and as such may be difficult to label or articulate as harmful.

These definitional and typological issues present unique challenges when it comes to responding to street harassment. Street harassment encapsulates a broad range of behaviours, some of which are perfectly acceptable in certain contexts, and others which already meet a legal threshold of criminal harm. The subjective and context-dependent nature of street harassment makes it challenging to develop definitive typologies of behaviour to be addressed through policy and practice. For these reasons, it may be more productive to focus on the function and impacts of harassment, rather than the precise forms the behaviour takes (Fileborn & Vera-Gray, 2017; Vera-Gray & Fileborn, 2018).

Prevalence and impacts

As noted in the Introduction, street harassment is a highly prevalent occurrence. Internationally, research consistently demonstrates that young women face extremely high rates of harassment, with these experiences often beginning in late primary school and early high school (Fileborn & Hardley, under review; Our Streets Now, 2020; Plan International UK, 2018; Vera-Gray, 2016).

Australian research bears similar findings, with Johnson and Bennett’s (2015) research showing that 87% of young women surveyed had experienced street harassment at least once. Over a third of participants in Johnson and Bennett’s work had experienced street harassment by the time they were 15. 83% of women aged 18-24 had experienced street harassment in the 12 months prior to the survey, while 21% of those aged 65 years or older had encountered harassment in the past 12 months. Recent research by Plan International similarly shows that harassment is frequently experienced by young women and gender-diverse people in Melbourne and Sydney (Plan International, 2018).

While there is less Australian research on the experiences of diverse communities, including LGBTQ+ people and people of colour, research from Stop Street Harassment (2014) in the United States demonstrates that these communities face disproportionately high rates of street harassment. A qualitative Australian study with transgender women of colour found that participants experiences “ubiquitous” sexual violence and harassment in public spaces, including verbal abuse relating to their

gender expression, racist abuse, and 'outing' (Ussher et al, 2020). These same bodies of research indicate that men are overwhelmingly, though not exclusively, the perpetrators of this harassment.

Although street harassment is frequently minimised and trivialised as a harm, the impacts of these behaviours are now extensively documented (Bastomski & Smith, 2017; Betts et al., 2019; Lenton et al, 1999; Vera-Gray, 2018). These impacts include, but are by no means limited to:

- Emotional and affective impacts, such as feeling angry, upset, afraid, and contributing towards the development of anxiety, depression, and PTSD.

- Physical and physiological impacts, including physical injuries, nausea, adrenaline rush, shaking and so forth.

- Changing behaviour in public space to avoid harassment, or due to fear caused by past experiences. For example, this may include victims changing how they dress, not catching public transport, avoiding certain locations, not showing affection towards a partner in public, and being hypervigilant (particularly around unknown men). Research consistently demonstrates that street harassment significantly curtails people's freedom and ability to participate in public life (Vera-Gray, 2018).

While individual incidents of harassment may seem minor, they can have a cumulative impact over time (Fileborn & Vera-Gray, 2017). Canadian research demonstrates that the impacts of harassment can occur in the immediate aftermath of an incident, but also persist over the short, medium, and longer term (Lenton et al, 1999). The cumulative nature of street harassment presents a further challenge in responding to this phenomenon in the context of systems and institutions that are designed to respond to discrete incidents and individual perpetrators (Fileborn & Vera-Gray, 2017).

Collectively, research to date demonstrates that street harassment is pervasive and harmful. Yet, as outlined later in this report, it is challenging to respond to through conventional criminal legal responses and is by and large under-recognised and trivialised as a form of harm.

Victim-centred justice

Finally, this project was informed by the concept of victim-centred justice. Put simply, victim-centred justice suggests that we should use victim-survivors justice needs or interests as the starting point for developing justice responses. This area of research was developed out of recognition that the criminal legal system continues to act as a site of harm and injustice for the vast majority of victim-survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (Clark, 2015; Herman, 2005). Despite decades of reform, survivors remain reluctant to report, there are high levels of attrition for cases that are reported

to the police, and survivors continue to find the criminal legal process retraumatising (Clark, 2015; Daly, 2014; Herman, 2005).

Victim-centred justice identifies what survivors' justice needs are and argues that we should develop justice mechanisms that are responsive to these needs. The criminal legal system may address *some* survivors' justice needs some of the time, but in other cases alternative and informal justice responses may be more appropriate. Common justice needs or interests identified in research to date include (Clark, 2010; 2015; Daly, 2014; McGlynn, 2011):

- Voice: being able to express experiences in a way that is meaningful, and where what the victim-survivor says is *heard* by others.
- Belief and validation: that the survivor's account is believed, taken seriously, and supported by others.
- Participation and input into key points of decision making.
- Vindication, accountability, and consequences: that the offender's (or person who caused harm) actions are recognised as wrong, and they are held to account for their behaviour. While criminal punishment can be important to some survivors, for others actions such as acknowledgment of harm and a genuine apology can be more meaningful.
- Community protection: many survivors report or disclose the actions of their perpetrator in order to prevent them from offending against others.

Survivors' needs are diverse, and there is unlikely to be any one justice response that meets the needs of all survivors at all times. Rather, there is a need to implement diverse justice responses to reflect and meet these diverse justice needs (Clark, 2015; Daly, 2014; McGlynn, 2011).

However, to date research on justice interests or needs has focused on survivors of sexual assault and rape. While some forms of street harassment do constitute sexual violence, it is unclear whether street harassment victims share the same justice interests as sexual assault victim-survivors, and, if they do, what types of justice responses they require for those interests to be met (Fileborn, 2017). Likewise, as noted earlier, this project was concerned with diverse forms of street harassment, and it is again unclear whether victims of these iterations of harassment share similar justice interests to sexual assault victim-survivors.

Project background and rationale

Over the past decade, there has been a groundswell of activism, policy, and legislative change in relation to street harassment across the globe. The renewed interest in this

issue has predominantly been driven by activist groups and NGOs such as *Hollaback!* (now *Right to Be*), the *Everyday Sexism Project,* and *Plan International*.

Countries including France, Belgium and Portugal have introduced legislation addressing specific forms of public harassment such as catcalling, typically through on-the-spot fines. In the UK, campaigns are currently underway pushing for the criminal regulation of street harassment. Washington, D.C. adopted a different approach, introducing civil legislation in 2018 that creates an onus for government to introduce bystander training, data collection, and other measures aimed at preventing street harassment.

Within the Australian context, street harassment remains largely ignored as an issue in policy and practice, although there is also growing attention driven by local activist groups. Some forms of harassment are covered through sexual offences and public order legislation. However, overall street harassment is under-reported and generally not addressed through these legal avenues, as discussed later in this report.

While it is promising to see increased attention towards policy responses addressing the issue, we currently know very little about how individuals who have experienced street harassment would like it to be addressed. That is, what do victims need to happen to ensure that justice has been achieved in response to their experiences? This is an important question to answer, given that the criminal legal system has been a site of injustice and re-traumatisation in relation to other forms of gender-based violence, as discussed in the previous section.

Moreover, emerging evidence suggests that street harassment is very difficult to respond to using traditional criminal legal avenues (Fileborn, 2017; Fileborn & Vera-Gray, 2017). For example, street harassment is often fleeting, so it is difficult for victims to identify perpetrators. There is often little tangible evidence of harassment to present to police, while findings from the pilot study indicated that victims felt harassment was too 'trivial' to report or that they would not be taken seriously by police (Fileborn & Vera-Gray, 2017).

Therefore, there is a need to think differently and innovatively in developing justice responses to street harassment. The current lack of response to street harassment in Australia presents an opportunity to use the justice needs of people who have experienced street harassment as the starting point for developing policy and practice responses.

As such, this project aimed to inform the development of justice responses to street harassment by building an evidence base on street harassment victims' justice needs.

The project aimed to:

- Develop detailed and nuanced insights into lived experiences and impacts of street harassment within an Australian context.

- Generate victim-centred theoretical and conceptual understandings of justice related to street harassment.
- Build an evidence-base to inform the development of effective prevention efforts and justice responses (both formal and informal) to street harassment within Australia and internationally.

The research was driven by the following questions:

1. What are participants' lived experiences and understandings of street harassment?
2. How do victims and key stakeholders conceptualise justice in relation to street harassment?
3. What are street harassment victims' justice interests, from the perspective of victims and key stakeholders?
4. How can justice be achieved in response to street harassment?

The following section outlines the research design and methods implemented to answer these research questions.

Research methods

This project utilised a mixed-methods design that unfolded across three phases: Phase 1 – mapping policy and activism; Phase 2 – interviews with victim/survivors of public harassment; and Phase 3 – interviews with key stakeholders. The research was informed by feminist research methodology and aimed to centre and uphold the voices and lived experiences of participants. Ethics approval was provided by the University of Melbourne Office of Research Ethics and Integrity prior to commencing fieldwork (ID: 2056150.1).

Phase 1 – Mapping policy and activism

Phase 1 of the project involved 'mapping' current activism and formal and informal justice responses to street harassment across the US, UK, and Australia. These locations were selected on the basis that they were all English-speaking countries with hubs of contemporary street harassment activism, and locations where justice responses to street harassment have been introduced to varying degrees.

Policy documents and legislation were identified through Google searches, searches on relevant government and stakeholder websites, and through information provided by activist groups (who often comprehensively documented these materials, particularly in the US). Activist groups were located via location-specific Google searches, searching for key terms of social media platforms, and through Dr Fileborn's extensive knowledge of activism on this topic. In 2019, Dr Fileborn also met with key stakeholders in the UK and US to inform the location of relevant policy and activist responses. While this approach captured an extensive range of current responses, it is not completely comprehensive. For example, 'street harassment' is not used

consistently in reference to the experiences of interest to this project, while other responses might not be locatable via online sources.

Analysis of this data aimed to:

- Document the types of responses that have been introduced, and the logics underpinning them.
- Examine how street harassment is represented and constructed as an issue across these sources.
- Provide a point of comparison with the justice responses participants in Phase 2 suggested – to what extent do the responses currently in place align with the needs of survivors?

Findings from Phase 1 are not covered further in this report. An overview of key findings from this phase of the research can be found in the Fileborn (2021) publication listed at the end of the report. Within the Australian context there was very limited evidence that street harassment is currently formally addressed in policy or practice, although there is growing work from activist and grassroots organisations.

Phase 2 – Interviews with victim/survivors of public harassment

Phase 2 of the project involved semi-structured interviews with 47 participants who had experienced street harassment in Victoria and New South Wales (see Table 1 for an overview of participants). Participants were recruited through paid and unpaid social media advertisements, distribution through key organisations (e.g., sexual assault services, LGBTQ+ organisations), and word of mouth.

To be eligible, participants were required to be age 18 and over, to have self-defined experiences of street harassment, and to live in VIC or NSW. Street harassment was defined broadly in this study using an intersectional lens, and thus sought to include harassment based on factors such as race, sexuality, and disability in addition to sexual and gender-based harassment.

As this phase of the project was conducted during the Victorian COVID19 lockdowns, all interviews except for one were conducted via Zoom or phone. Interviews took on average between 1-2 hours to complete and were audio-recorded with participants' consent. The interviews were transcribed by an external professional service. Participants were reimbursed with a $100 gift card in recognition of their time and expertise.

Prior to participating in the interview, participants were invited to complete a Google mapping exercise documenting their experiences of street harassment across their lives. This was an open-ended exercise, and it was up to participants to decide what they would share and how much detail was provided. The Google maps were then used as a starting point for discussion during the interviews, with participants invited to 'talk me [Bianca] through their map'.

Table 1. Overview of phase 2 interview participants

Gender	**Sexuality**
Cisgender woman n=32	Heterosexual n=24
Cisgender man n=5	Queer n=6
Non-binary n=3	Bisexual n=10
Transmasculine/ transgender man n=2	Lesbian n=1
Transgender woman n=2	Homosexual/gay n=4
Agender n=2	Pansexual/demi-sexual n=2
Androgynous n=1	
Age*	**Cultural background****
18-25 n=17	White n=35
26-30 n=15	Asian n=3
31-35 n=6	African/White n=1
36-40 n=5	Indian/Indian-Australia n=2
41+ n=3	Filipino n=2
	South America n=1
	Hispanic n=1
	Egyptian/New Zealand n=1
	White/Indigenous n=1

*One participant did not provide their age

**The terminology used here reflects that used by participants

Participants were additionally asked to reflect on:

- Their experiences of street harassment, including the types of harassment encountered, who the perpetrators were, common locations of harassment, the impacts of these experiences, changes in harassment encountered across their lives and so forth.
- Experiences of bystander intervention.
- Reporting and disclosure practices.
- How they understand the concept of 'justice', and what would need to happen to ensure that justice had been achieved in response to street harassment.
- Their preferred justice responses to street harassment.

Participants were provided with the opportunity to review their interview transcript. Interview data was analysed following Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach to thematic analysis.

Phase 3 – Interviews with key stakeholders

The final phase of the project involved interviews with key stakeholders who either have, or could have, a role to play in informing and/or implementing responses to street harassment. Interviews were conducted with 18 participants from 13 organisations, from sectors spanning local and state government, community-based violence prevention groups, and activist and advocacy groups. While police and education departments were invited to participate in the project, unfortunately no participants were recruited from these groups.

Participants were recruited via direct email invitation. Interviews were conducted over Zoom and took approximately 1 hour to complete. Participants from not-for-profit organisations were reimbursed with a $100 donation. The interviews were semi-structured and addressed the following areas:

- Participants' understandings of the nature and extent of street harassment.
- The extent to which street harassment is currently addressed within the participants' role or organisation, and more broadly.
- Understandings of justice.
- How they think justice could be achieved in response to street harassment
- Participants' perspectives on the feasibility of responses raised by Phase 2 participants.

Participants were provided with the opportunity to review their interview transcript. Interview data was analysed following Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach to thematic analysis.

Phase 4 – An intersectional analysis of street harassment: community attitudes

The final phase of the project involved an online, mixed-methods survey to capture and engage with public perceptions of street harassment. Respondents were recruited

via a series of general and targeted social media advertisements. The inclusion criteria for this survey were that prospective participants lived in Melbourne and were 18 years of age or older. In all, 228 participants were recruited. An overview of participant's demographic data is detailed in the table below.

Table 2: Overview of survey participants

Variable (N=288)	*Number and Percentage Responses*
Gender Identity	
Male	65 (23%)
Female	137 (48%)
Non-Binary	12 (4%)
Gender Diverse (Transgender Woman, Non-Binary Demi-gendered Ambonec, Gender Fluid, Gender Queer, Non-Binary Abrogender, Gender identity differs from identity assigned at birth)	10 (3%)
Sexual Orientation	
Lesbian/Gay	23 (8%)
Bisexual	41 (14%)
Heterosexual	127 (44%)
Queer	12 (4%)
Sexually Diverse (Pansexual, Asexual, Unsure, Variosexual, Cross-oriented, Multi-sexual, Demisexual)	20 (7%)
Ethnicity or Cultural Background	
Australian (non-Indigenous)	152 (53%)
Asian	28 (10%)
Middle Eastern, African, American, Aboriginal/Indigenous person, European, New Zealander	13 (5%)
Highest Educational Attainment	
Secondary School Certificate	28 (10%)
Tertiary Qualification	110 (38%)
Postgraduate Qualification	88 (30%)

Employment Status	
Unemployed	37 (13%)
Casual	44 (15%)
Part-time	50 (17%)
Full-time	91 (32%)
Full-time carer	4 (1%)
Age	
Mean	35.14
Standard Deviation	12.79
Range	18-73

In the online survey, participants were presented with a series of 5 vignettes which detailed fictional intersectional experiences of street harassment generated in accordance with reported incidents of street harassment as described on activist platforms such as *Catcalls of New York*, *Cute Catcalls* and *Right to Be*. Participants were directed to respond to a series of Likert scale questions regarding the degree to which they perceived the interactions as harassment, harmful to the target, wanted by the target, whether the target was responsible for the interaction and whether the interaction breached social norms. Respondents were then invited to share the reasoning behind their answers to the Likert scale questions in an open response format. The data generated through this survey was then analysed utilising *IBM SPSS Statistics* and content analysis to gain a better understanding of:

- The range of ways community members perceive street harassment.
- Whether community members understood street harassment as harmful.

Key findings

This section of the report provides a snapshot of key findings. Some of the quotes from participants contain graphic detail of incidents of harassment and violence.

Phase 2 – Interviews with victim/survivors of public harassment

Overview of participant experiences

Participants in this project discussed a broad range of experiences, spanning the full continuum of sexual and other violence. Sexual and non-sexual verbal comments, staring/leering, and car-related harassment (such as horn-honking) were by far the most common experiences raised by participants. Some examples include:

This patch of road every time I left the house I would get like honked at or yelled at from cars and it didn't matter if I was running for the tram to go to university in the morning or if I was like going to the 7/11 to buy orange juice or something or just like – I don't know there was something about that road just constant harassment. (Jen[1], cis woman, heterosexual)

We were sitting up at the bar and noticing an older man had sort of moved around his chair so that he could look at me and just kind of noticing that every time I looked over at him he was staring at me and then would quickly sort of look away. (Amy, cis woman, heterosexual)

Other incidents raised reflected Vera-Gray's (2016) concept of 'men's intrusions' – these were more ambiguous forms of harassment where it was challenging to articulate the precise harm. Often, these actions were identified as harassment after being repeatedly encountered, or based on intuition or 'gut feeling' that the behaviour was not well intentioned:

Random people, sometimes someone would come up and sit really close to me, like oh what are you doing, it's like mind your own business, like what do you mean. Or same thing people sometimes coming up and asking for my number, like I saw you from over there, you're so pretty, I was wondering if I could grab your number, you're like no, I don't want to give you my number. There it was never anything like threatening, rather just a little bit annoying. (Kara, cis woman, heterosexual)

As this participant went on to explain, this encounter made her "think…if I was a male, I would be very unlikely to be disturbed while I'm sitting on the grass earing my lunch".

Participants also described experiences that would likely meet criminal legal thresholds of sexual harm, including flashing/public masturbation, sexual assault, and rape. While these were less likely to have been experienced repeatedly (at least based on the information participants shared during the interviews), these more stereotypically 'serious' forms of sexual violence were nonetheless common across participants' experiences:

I was on public transport and a person, this man sat next to me and I remember thinking at the time I'm not sure why you're sitting next to me because there's plenty of room like for him to sit somewhere else. And it was a 2 seat, this man was somewhat large, and he sort of sat next to me and he kept on sort of adjusting like as if he wasn't comfortable in his seat, and I was looking out the side of the window and then eventually, I don't know what made me turn towards him and he was actually rubbing his genitalia on my thigh. (Reilly, cis woman, heterosexual)

I was about 15 and a friend of, a female friend, and I were in [name redacted] getting some food from just a food court and a young man walked up behind my

[1] All participants are referred to by a pseudonym.

friend and stuck his hand, like he sort of grabbed her around the bum and vagina area. (Parker, non-binary, queer)

I was walking behind my partner and this guy on the motorbike slowed down, but we just didn't think anything of it, and he put his hand under my dress and groped me, and then sped off, and I was just started crying. (Bridget, cis woman, heterosexual)

Similarly, participants recalled incidents involving physical contact or physical violence, though these were again less common:

And when we went up to pay the bill one of them came up to the counter and was being really derogatory and mean, and we sort of, I don't know, a bit of conversation back and forward, and we exited the restaurant and we sort of got to the corner in, whatever street we were on, and sort of noticed that a group of them, probably about 5 people, had followed us out and basically were coming for us, so we ran and we ran across the road and ran into the Coles supermarket. And they pursued us and attacked us. (Elliot, trans man, bisexual)

One transgender participant discussed an experience of being physically assaulted, verbally harassed and misgendered by a police officer:

And I was very badly injured by one of the police officers, whilst he was assaulting me he was saying misogynistic things in my ear, calling my cunt, slut, so real female misogynistic things to say. (Parker, non-binary, queer)

As noted earlier, this project adopted an intersectional lens, and this was reflected in the types of experiences discussed. Most commonly, participants described forms of harassment that were homophobic, transphobic, or racist:

It would've been you fucking lesbians, you know – same old stuff you know, you lesbians. And just it's just the hatred that I've experienced. And just you know the fact that you just can't walk down the street with someone you care for and show affection. (Ingrid, cis woman, lesbian)

So, I mean the most often the one I get most often is like "faggots" screamed out a window. (Chris, cis man, homosexual/queer)

I was going to the beach with my friends – girlfriends, and I was sitting next to this kid who then he goes "ching chong ching chong" and I was like "are you alright there". (Helen, cis woman, heterosexual)

He was having a cigarette outside, and I didn't see him approach me but he literally threw the cigarette butt on me and told me Asian boys don't have a choice here

> *… so I guess it's just one of those horrible racist attacks within our gay community. (Grant, cis man, homosexual)*

It is also important to consider what was left unsaid by participants. While all materials provided to participants stressed that the project was interested in a broad range of harassment, including that based on race, sexuality and so forth, many participants nonetheless believed that the project was only examining sexist and gender-based harassment. Participants frequently made comments during the interviews that they "weren't sure" if a particular experience would be of relevance to the project (especially incidents that they deemed to be 'too minor'), and there was confusion over what 'counts' as public/street harassment (see Fileborn, 2021). Some participants felt they were limited to experiences that had occurred literally on the street, and excluded incidents that took place on public transport, licensed venues, and other public or semi-public locations. The sheer pervasiveness of harassment also meant that participants had to be selective about which experiences they shared during the interviews, or they had forgotten the details of specific incidents. As such, the experiences outlined here must be viewed as a partial and incomplete representation of the actual extent and nature of harassment across participants' lives.

Locations and contexts of harassment

Participants discussed harassment occurring across a wide range of public and semi-public spaces. There were, however, some notable patterns regarding recurrent locations or 'hot-spots' of harassment across participants' accounts. There is an opportunity to undertake targeted interventions across these settings.

Educational settings

Many participants began experiencing street harassment in late primary school and early high school (Fileborn & Hardley, under review). Often, participants discussed being targeted for harassment while they were in their school uniform, and therefore identifiably children or adolescents. This included harassment that occurred on school grounds (from both peers and men from outside of the school community), and when travelling or walking to and from school.

> *I'd always be in my uniform still because again just too lazy to change. And it was once a week or once a fortnight for like my whole high school years, and I'd always be yelled at, honked at, people would say disgusting things out of their car windows, people would slow down as they went past me along [road redacted] which is like a main road. Like a couple of people even imitated oral sex out the window at me. And I'm always in my school uniform. (Tenesha, cis woman, bisexual)*

Many participants observed that they were often too young to interpret these experiences as harassment or did not fully understand the sexualised nature of these incidents. This created an additional barrier to disclosure and responding to harassment. Unfortunately, participants who disclosed their experiences to school staff overwhelmingly reported receiving unhelpful and/or victim-blaming responses.

Public transport

Public transport was a highly prevalent site of harassment for participants in this project, reflecting the findings of international research on harassment in the public transport context (Gekoski et al, 2016). For example:

> *I live out of the city and I go in on the train every day, pretty much. Again, generally just unwanted attention more than like actual sort of, I don't know harassment as such… like I've moved carriages quite a few times to get away from somebody who's making me feel uncomfortable or whatever. (Kara, cis woman, heterosexual)*

> *So that was when I was on the way to work, yeah and I was standing up and I think it was quite packed and then like a guy came up behind me. And like kind of, he was like, and I think that's why I find it like, I didn't report it and I found it kind of hard to explain too, was because he like rubbed up against me but it wasn't in a way that I could say that's what you're definitely doing that. (Nora, cis woman, heterosexual)*

Perpetrators were able to take advantage of environmental and contextual elements of public transport to facilitate their actions. For example, the crowded nature of public transport meant that perpetrators could excuse their actions as 'accidental' (e.g., touching someone on a crowded train), as Nora's comments above illustrate.

On the street

Unsurprisingly, many participants discussed harassment occurring generally 'on the street', such as when they were walking on the footpath. While participants recounted experiences 'on the street' occurring in the suburbs and in rural and regional locations, major cities and CBD's were most commonly identified as the location of public harassment:

> *One time I was walking along the street, this is in [city redacted], with my girlfriend and we were getting followed by these 2 guys and they were saying stuff, I can't remember what they were saying, but they were being threatening. (Parker, non-binary, queer)*

> *When I went walking down the street to the shops my friends would regularly have people usually men often tradies like wolf whistling and sexually harassing 13-year-old girls, so that's fun. (Alex, non-binary, queer)*

Leisure and entertainment settings

Entertainment setting, such as licensed venues and public events (e.g., Mardi Gras), were also common sites of harassment. In line with previous research on these settings (Fileborn, 2016), participants discussed how the social and cultural features

of entertainment settings could often facilitate and normalise the occurrence of harassment.

> *Usually, it would be in a night club bar kind of situation, like when there's alcohol involved. At night with alcohol or late at night out on the street somewhere. And usually, it would take the form of trying to pick me up, or just being drunk and gross men you know. (Parker, non-binary, queer)*

> *Usually, it would be in a night club bar kind of situation, like when there's alcohol involved. At night with alcohol or late at night out on the street somewhere. And usually, it would take the form of trying to pick me up, or just being drunk and gross men you know. (Kara, cis woman, heterosexual)*

> *Within the nightclubs and bars and things like that when people brush past and their hands will be whether intentionally or not in an inappropriate place or somewhere I'm not comfortable with. (Ursula, cis woman, heterosexual)*

At work

Participants who worked (or previously worked) in hospitality and retail positions frequently discussed experiencing harassment while at work, typically from customers.

> *I love my job, I love to talk to people, and make great connections, make new friends, I love it. But sometimes I think that being nice and do your job in a nice manner it's taken in the wrong way. A lot of times, I don't expect those compliments that are awkward and they're not requested. (Lara, cis woman, heterosexual)*

> *There was this man that would come in that was in his 40s or 50s and he would ask me lots of personal questions… I just remember he'd ask me a lot of things that would make me uncomfortable. And I would, I guess by that point, or maybe because I was so trapped in the situation for extended periods of time, I would actually tell him you know what you're saying isn't appropriate, or I don't want to talk to you about that, and he would keep doing it. And I just had to keep putting up with it because he was a regular customer. (Rory, agender, queer)*

While some participants discussed feeling supported by their employers, others felt that harassment was something they were expected to 'put up with' as part of their job, as Rory's comments demonstrate. The precarious nature of hospitality and retail work could also make it challenging for participants to challenge customers or raise concerns with their employer.

At home

While 'home' may seem to be an unusual location to discuss in relation to street or public harassment, participants often raised experiences of harassment occurring at

or near their home. Commonly, home-related harassment occurred in the context of being followed by someone:

> *I noticed this man because he was like really tall wearing a huge coat like trench coat it was just like comically suspicious and so I like took note of him, walked past and then when I was walking home I probably just had my headphones in and wasn't paying attention and I went to put the key in the door to like unlock the house I realised that he was right behind me and he followed me from maybe 300 metres up the street and he was asking if like some person who's name I'd never heard of still lived in the house and I was like "no they don't live here, I don't know who you are talking about" and I waited for them to go away before I quickly opened the door and ran inside and I deadlocked it. (Jen, cis woman, heterosexual)*

These experiences were typically seen as more threatening or serious, because there was the potential for perpetrators to determine where participants lived, whereas participants felt they were afforded some level of anonymity for harassment occurring in other public locations:

> *If I get yelled at or harassed or whatever, it's kind of in transit, you know like I'll be on my way to work, on my way to somewhere or away from my yeah, from like the safety of my house. And it felt like that had kind of been violated a little bit, there's like that safety of you know, that once you get home, no-one knows where you live. (Nora, cis woman, heterosexual)*

Exercise-related

A smaller number of participants discussed being targeted for harassment while they were exercising. This included being targeted while exercising in public spaces (e.g., in the park, or running on the footpath) and in gyms.

> *So going jogging in the morning, I like going jogging just to wake me up and I usually go sort of along this fairly main road, and just yeah quite often people – people will just beep usually, it's just people beeping and it's just you know I'm just sort of jogging or walking along with my dog or whatever and it's just yeah not nice. (Jen, cis woman, heterosexual)*

> *So, I started running or walking on the road and it became a point where it was every single time, I'd get multiple people shouting out, beeping at me like that kind of thing and it was like well which one do you like do. (Nora, cis woman, heterosexual)*

Although this was less commonly raised as a context of harassment, exercise settings are important to note as they had considerable impacts on participants. In particular, some participants said that they stopped exercising and/or harassment shaped when and how they exercised, suggesting that public harassment may also have significant public health implications:

At that time, my self-harm scars on my left arm were a few years old but still quite red, raised and gnarly. The gym was the one place I couldn't easily cover them, it was too hot during my workout, class was a kick boxing class, but there was an older woman in the class every week, she always had a snide comment about my arm…. And then I basically haven't joined a gym since, because this has been my experience of gyms. (Evelyn, cis woman, bisexual)

Perpetrators

Men were most commonly, though not exclusively, identified as the perpetrators of street harassment (see Hindes & Fileborn (2022) for a detailed overview of findings on perpetration). Although some participants described patterns in terms of the 'types' of men who typically engaged in harassment (e.g., young men, older men, men in groups, men alone), across the interviews there was no clear pattern:

Yeah, groups of males you know are stressful if you have to encounter them because you just never know – but from my experience it's mainly just been like individuals yeah. (Frances, cis woman, heterosexual)

I want to say like either 2 men walking, or like 2 or more, or one man in a car, yeah. (Aaron, trans masculine, bisexual)

It's mainly men, groups of men, yeah the car was young men I remember but otherwise they've been like kind of middle aged kind of fairly working class looking men. (Chris, cis man, homosexual/queer)

It was always, so this is when I was just 18 to 21, and these men were never under 30, it was always 30 to sort of 60. (Briony, cis woman, heterosexual)

A minority of participants discussed experiences of harassment perpetrated by women – typically racist, homophobic, or transphobic harassment, rather than sexual/sexist harassment:

But a woman just didn't like the look of me and told me that I was a stuck up bitch and she was going to come over and smack me. (Hetty, cis woman, bisexual)

I mean I have had a few women yell when they've been with men, not really women on their own with homophobic comments, but yeah. (Ingrid, cis woman, lesbian)

While it is clear that men's behaviour should be prioritised in prevention efforts, it is important to ensure that women's behaviour is also addressed.

Impacts

In line with previous research, participants identified extensive and profound harms resulting from their experiences. However, the harms of street harassment could also be context dependent and cumulative – individual incidents were not always harmful on their own but added up over time. Some participants also minimised or downplayed the impact that street harassment had on them, and many participants actively resisted the impacts of street harassment on their lives.

The impacts most commonly raised by participants included:

- Emotional and affective: by far the most common impact of street harassment identified by participants was emotional and affective harm. This included feeling afraid, angry, upset and so forth during and/or immediately after an incident of harassment.

- Safety work and behavioural modification: participants discussed engaging in extensive 'safety work' as a result of experiencing harassment. Safety work refers to the strategies we use to try and avoid or prevent street harassment (Vera-Gray & Kelly, 2020). In line with previous research (e.g., Vera-Gray, 2018), participants reported changing their behaviour in terms of how they dress, whether they display affection to a partner in public space, how and when they access and use public spaces, being hyper-vigilant and 'on guard' and so forth.

- Sense of self: this included impacts such as reduced self-esteem and self-confidence, impacting body image, feeling disempowered, impacting people's sense of belonging in the world, feeling small and vulnerable, and feeling objectified. As one participant explained, "I didn't realise all that stuff slowly crept into my personality over time" (Opal, cis woman, bisexual).

- Context dependent: whether harassment was harmful or impactful could also depend on a range of contextual factors, again affirming the findings of previous research (e.g., Fairchild, 2010). Contextual factors raised by participants included the time of day, whether they were alone, isolated spaces, how many perpetrators there were, the nature of the harassment (e.g., perceived severity, whether it was fleeting or prolonged), whether an area was perceived as being LGBTQ+ friendly, and perpetrator intoxication.

- Cumulative: for many participants, the harms of street harassment were associated with experiencing it repeatedly over time. Seemingly 'small' or 'trivial' incidents added up to cause harm.

- Minimisation: some participants minimised or downplayed the impacts that harassment had on them. This is not to deny that in some cases participants genuinely did not feel harmed by specific incidents of harassment. However, it was also clear that participants drew on dominant understandings of 'what

counts' as legitimate harm or felt that their experience was trivial because 'something worse' could have happened (Kelly & Radford, 1996). As one participant said of her experiences, "nothing too big, nothing too bad thank God" (Lara, cis woman, heterosexual), despite the fact that some of the incidents she discussed would likely meet legal definitions of indecent assault.

- Resistance: finally, it is important to recognise the ways in which participants resisted the impacts that street harassment had on their lives. While these participants typically acknowledged the harms these experiences had caused, they equally discussed engaging in conscious efforts to resist or refuse the impacts of harassment on their lives. This is not to suggest that victims of harassment should engage in such resistance or that there is a 'correct' way to respond to harassment. Nonetheless, participants did not simply passively accept street harassment.

Reporting and disclosure

Reporting incidents of harassment to authority figures such as police, security or venue management was not common. Participants identified a range of barriers to reporting their experiences, including:

- The belief that what happened was trivial, or likely to be viewed as such by others.
- That the emotional, physical and resource (e.g., time) burdens of reporting outweighed any potential benefits. As one participant put it "to go through all that time and energy and draining for what seemed to be a… very not justified outcome" (Amy, cis woman, heterosexual).
- The belief that police have a poor track record in responding to other forms of gender-based violence, and violence against LGBTQ+ communities, and would therefore be unlikely to respond 'well'.
- Negative experiences reporting gender-based and other violence to the police previously.
- Police or other authority figures were the perpetrators of the harassment.
- Not having any tangible evidence, such as a license plate number or description of the perpetrator, to report to police or other authorities. As such, participants felt there was little that could be done if they reported. For example, one participant commented "it's not necessarily the police's fault. Oh, you know, a man with brown hair and a beard, and hear was wearing a brown coat, told me I looked sexy. Cool, that doesn't mean anything" (Chrissy, cis woman, queer).
- Not knowing if the harassment constituted a criminal offence, or where they could go to report.
- Wanting to move on from the incident, and "not make a big deal out of it" (Yasmin, cis woman, heterosexual).
- Fear of the perpetrator and negative repercussions.
- Feeling embarrassed by what happened.

Unfortunately, for the small number of participants who did report to authorities, the response was often a negative one:

> *There's been quite a few times where I've talked to security guards, it's like oh sure, like how do we know that's true, like it's either they're friends or they don't really believe me and usually I have to leave because I feel uncomfortable. (Georgia, cis woman, bisexual)*

> *We stood out the front of the supermarket after that for about 40 minutes waiting for the police to come and the police didn't come, so we ended up just going to the police station and didn't have very nice experiences with the police either, just not really taking it seriously, a lot of misgendering, they just had no idea. (Elliot, trans man, bisexual)*

> *And I reported this to the uni, they didn't do anything about it, all they said was oh okay well we had a meeting with him, and he's said he's sorry. (Garnet, non-binary, pansexual)*

> *So, it was essentially it started as street harassment but became rape and I was the person my friend called to pick her up from where she'd gotten away to when it happened, and she wanted to go straight to the police station. She'd experienced rape before and regretted not reporting it, so she said this time I want to report it. And the process was so, so horrible. (Rory, agender, queer)*

An even smaller minority of participants discussed positive or supportive responses when they reported, however this was not the norm. A small number of participants also described supportive responses from individual authority figures, even if the end result was disappointing:

> *My boyfriend got very very mad, he called the bouncer and the guy got kicked out and that was very – that was very reassuring. (Lara, cis woman, heterosexual)*

> *But the woman who was in charge who like, the detective who we all talked to was amazing, like she was brilliant, just so angry for us and so determined, and really really sweet and sensitive and like when we all went there on the day she was brilliant, really compassionate and understood why we were all so upset and you know, made us feel really like we'd done the right thing coming forward, that we weren't making a fuss, it was all good. But I think she was just held back by the system I think. (Briony, cis woman, heterosexual)*

Almost all participants said that they disclosed their experiences of harassment to others, typically friends, partners, and family members. In line with findings from the pilot project (Fileborn, 2019), participants were highly selective about who they disclosed to, and which incidents they disclosed. Participants typically disclosed experiences to people who they knew would be supportive.

Many participants did have negative past experiences of disclosure. In particular, participants felt that cis-gender heterosexual men, and 'older people' had the least supportive responses. In the case of 'older people', many participants felt there was a generational divide in perceptions of street harassment, with older women viewing harassment as something that they 'put up with' or experienced as complimentary. Participants also typically said that they did not tell their parents about their experiences. This was often because they felt it would upset their parents or cause their parents to worry about their safety. Some young women believed that their own behaviour would be restricted by their parents if they told them about the harassment they encountered.

Overall, participants did have networks of support in response to their experiences. However, it was equally apparent that some individuals in their lives lacked an understanding of the nature and impacts of street harassment, engaged in overtly victim-blaming, or otherwise responded in counter-productive ways. This suggests a need for community educational campaigns aimed at dispelling myths and misperceptions about street harassment, and arming community members with the skills to respond appropriately to disclosures.

Bystander intervention

Bystander intervention was not commonly experienced by participants, again reflecting the findings of the pilot study (Fileborn, 2017). Participants were asked to reflect on why they thought bystanders were reluctant to intervene, and identified a range of potential barriers:

- The bystander effect and the bystanders' perception that it is not their responsibility to intervene

I think like I said maybe fear or fear of – not wanting to interfere or thinking it's not their business – maybe also like less than fear just people not being bothered and not feeling like it's their responsibility. (Jen, cis woman, heterosexual)

- Not knowing how to intervene appropriately

And I can empathise with people who you know know in their gut that they should maybe do something but feel a little bit like stuck or paralysed or they're not sure what to do. (Jen, cis woman, heterosexual)

- Being afraid or embarrassed

Yeah, it didn't even register to me that someone might try and intervene. I don't know that it would've been hugely helpful in that situation because it felt like this person was gearing up for a violent interaction. (Dave, cis man, heterosexual)

- Not recognising that harassment is occurring, or that it is serious enough to require intervention. There was a perception that white, cis-gender, heterosexual men were the *least* likely to recognise harassment when it was occurring. Non-recognition could also occur because many forms of harassment are subtle, ambiguous, or enacted by the perpetrator in a way that evaded detection by others.

> *It's sometimes really hard to tell if somebody actually is feeling really uncomfortable or you know it might be their mate who's just being an idiot sort of thing. It's sometimes really hard to kind of make that distinction. (Kara, cis woman, heterosexual)*

> *But I feel like in this situation especially, men could be doing more. Like if I see a man groping a girl and I feel like if I put myself in that situation, I might get targeted, I feel like a man is less likely to feel like that, because they're not going to turn around and sexualise them, like they might do to me. But then that's the other thing where it's like it's not on men's radar to do that. (Dee, cis woman, bisexual)*

While participants had experienced less intervention from men, many felt strongly that men had a clear and (potentially more) influential role to play as bystanders:

> *For other women, non-binary people or queer people or people of colour, like anyone else who is a minority or a repressed group, like I really do understand them not wanting to get involved, because if you're getting a vibe from a person that is unsafe, like and you know that you are probably also someone that they don't feel particularly kindly towards, like I understand that you're not going to want to just direct that onto you. (Pearl, cis woman, queer)*

While participants did not commonly experience bystander intervention, they clearly articulated the potential importance of this intervention:

> *I think it would make me feel supported to know that there were allies in the community who were willing to kind of word their values publicly. (Chris, cis man, homosexual/queer)*

> *I think definitely it would make you feel like validated that you'd been put in an uncomfortable situation that other people had noticed that. I think it also – like I was saying before it feels like the odds are weighted against you if something goes wrong that no one is going to interfere, if more people started stepping forward for like smaller things or you know what could be perceived as smaller things then I guess you just a feel a bit safer overall. (Jen, cis woman, heterosexual)*

Indeed, bystander intervention was frequently identified as providing an avenue for achieving justice, discussed further in the next section. However, a small number of participants *did not* desire bystander intervention or perceived bystander intervention as being problematic:

I think I would probably be embarrassed by it – I am one of those people who you know fall over in public and someone comes to help you up. (Chris, cis man, homosexual/queer)

I guess my initial reaction is like I don't need to be defended by other people which is silly but you know it's kind of like why am I the weak woman that can't do it myself. (Opal, cis woman, bisexual)

Understandings of justice and desired justice responses

Participants were asked to reflect on what the concept of 'justice' means to them, and how they thought justice could be achieved in response to street harassment. Perhaps unsurprisingly, participants often struggled to articulate how they defined justice, which is a diffuse and complex concept. In responding to this question, participants typically made general references to notions of fairness, equality, 'righting a wrong', validation and recognition, and vengeance and retribution:

I guess all I can really boil it down to is trying to achieve fairness, and trying to bring about sort of good outcomes to people who are trying to do the right thing in life, and have been wronged by a certain situation. (Amy, cis woman, heterosexual)

I guess it would be to do with righting the wrong I suppose like somehow trying to undo as much of the damage that's been caused. (Opal, cis woman, bisexual)

Some participants were critical of the concept of justice, and did not believe it was possible to achieve justice in response to their experiences:

I think it's too late, I think the damage is already done, like you know it's impacted my whole adult life from late teenage through to now, I don't think I would achieve justice. (Ingrid, cis woman, lesbian)

Participants' understandings of justice were often conveyed implicitly through their desired justice responses to street harassment. Here, it was clear that an emphasis on prevention and transformation of the conditions that enable street harassment were central to achieving justice:

I guess for me because a lot of it is so vague and so like there's not really any specific incident that I was particularly traumatised by it was just the pattern really like I wouldn't say I'm traumatised just changed but it's just the pattern so I suppose for me I would feel like things were getting to be made right if the pattern was going to stop happening and I suppose that would happen by re-training the next generation. (Opal, cis woman, bisexual)

I think just being safe, so if that's what it is, justice applying to street harassment I'd say just to be outside alone walking confidently, feeling safe, I don't have to be careful, I don't have to take precautions, I don't have to do anything. I feel safe in my own flesh, I feel safe I don't have to hide, and I can just be myself without having to worry about someone doing this or that. (Sarah, cis woman, heterosexual)

And to socialise a change or like to achieve justice when it comes to sexual harassment involves dismantling kind of sexist kind of institutions that you know, people in power are kind of invested in or entangled in. (Avery, cis woman, heterosexual)

Participants clearly articulated a desire for community-led responses to street harassment, and responses that recognised the interconnections between street harassment and other forms of systemic discrimination and disadvantage:

So local community led people led systems of justice would be, and properly funding all the welfare things, the education, health… housing, definitely housing. (Parker, non-binary, queer)

I don't know it's multifaceted. If young kids, young boys in particular and young girls had access to mental health services in schools and access to counselling, had access to free school meals, didn't have to go home poor, understood about gender roles and gender bias, understood about sexuality and basics of relationships and emotional content, and not this idea that you know lads don't cry and girls are alright crying. (Dave, cis man, heterosexual)

In terms of tangible interventions that participants thought could be implemented to achieve justice, there were some notable themes in responses:

- Education and training: participants frequently raised educational and training responses as a means of generating social and cultural change (e.g., by challenging the notion that street harassment is trivial or harmless, and tackling the power structures underpinning harassment), to work towards prevention, and as a way of holding perpetrators to account by enabling them to understand the impacts of their actions. Participants also commonly recommended training for groups likely to respond to disclosures of harassment, or witnessing it occurring, such as police, security, bystanders, and bar staff.

But that's you can see very tangibly like that woman was touched inappropriately, so you can sort of come to some result. But like all these other things that need to probably be addressed by some sort of like educational component, like if someone was getting in trouble for what they were doing, like having some sort of like factor of, I want to say rehabilitation, but like to be educated on why what they're doing is wrong. (Madeline, cis woman, heterosexual)

Justice to me would be like things like the training programs for different security guards, and even just general staff members, that being changed a lot, and it would be about interfering in those situations and shutting it down. Because to me justice would be like other people being able to go out and not experience these types of situations, especially not on a normal or regular basis. (Amy, cis woman, heterosexual)

Like I was never taught anything about trans people when I was growing up, not even gay education, like there was sex ed was between a man and a woman, you know – gender diversity about any other sexual orientation or you know, when I went to school I didn't, I don't know how it is now. And I feel like that makes it abnormal, so you know people grow up with that. (Virginia & Winona, trans women, heterosexual)

- Perpetrator accountability: participants wanted perpetrators to be held to account for their actions. Importantly, this did not necessarily mean that perpetrators should be subject to punitive responses through the criminal legal system. Rather, participants generally called for educative initiatives that assisted the perpetrator to understand the harms of their actions, the expression of community disapproval (e.g., through bystander intervention), the perpetrator issuing a 'genuine' apology and, the perpetrator engaging in genuine behaviour change.

Is actually kind of some sort of accountability, like if you've got a group of guys and one of them calls out to a girl and his mates are all like what are you doing, like the guy's going to be like oh maybe that was a shitty thing to do. (Kara, cis woman, heterosexual)

A true apology not like the court mandated one. Yeah where someone's like you know, gone through some maybe self-discoveries a bit too much but you know, recognise that they've done something wrong and apologise for it. But not, you know not a tokenistic one. (Nora, cis woman, heterosexual)

I don't want anything bad to happen to them, I feel like if they just were more educated on trans issues to know that we're human and we're not like a sex toy, you know we have feelings, we have emotions, we have families, we are the same, like we have our self-respect, we have our self-identity and we are people and I feel like that's hard for some of them to understand. (Virginia & Winona, trans women, heterosexual)

Like force them to go to a workshop for harassment for let's say 2 days, or 1 day even, that's something. And they have to go, if they don't go then give them the fine or something like that. Because you can give them the fine on the spot fine, and then what, they'll do it again. I mean you have to make them go through a certain effort and get educated around that issue. (Sarah, cis woman, heterosexual)

- Bystander intervention: as mentioned earlier, bystander intervention was commonly raised as a potential justice response. Participants felt that bystander intervention provided a direct and immediate way of expressing community disapproval of street harassment, thereby working to hold perpetrators to account.

> *Moving towards calling it out and like you know, of course it would be good, you know in that instance where I said that someone harassed me in front of my house to be able to call the cops but it would be better for someone who overheard it to actually shout out or you know, to address that person and say you shouldn't have done that. Or for the mate, you know the guy that was standing next to him, just say hey mate like that's not cool, like you shouldn't do that. I think that just acknowledgement and that calling it out would be more justice for me. (Nora, cis woman, heterosexual)*

- Reporting mechanisms: although comparatively less common than the other responses mentioned here, participants also raised the need for clear reporting avenues. This included reporting to police, as well as informal avenues for documenting experiences. Avenues for reporting were also seen as important as a data gathering exercise and providing tangible evidence of the magnitude of street harassment.

> *I mean having really clear policies, really clear legislation that outlines like you know a plan or like, I mean exactly what avenues women have and people to report, and yeah I guess having even like websites, government websites that explain like if you've experienced street harassment this is what we can do. (Georgia, cis woman, bisexual)*

> *But if you could just like tell someone or I don't know log it or something like some guy yells at me here and just log it and maybe if everyone was doing it then it might not be about the specific person maybe it's about an area like how you've done with the map thing like it might be that certain areas are really concentrated for lots of crap. (Opal, cis woman, bisexual)*

Criminal legal responses

Overall, participants were not supportive of the introduction of criminal legislation as a way of achieving justice. However, it is important to acknowledge that a minority of participants *did* support criminal legal intervention, or held conflicting or ambivalent perspectives on a criminal legal response:

> *From what I remember of the 'what works' literature, fines was the only form of punishment that actually had changed behaviour. So on that level from that research, I answer yes, I do think that fines are an effective way to change behaviour. However when you look at who does the fining and who gets fined, particularly in the light of what's happened recently with increased police powers and Covid fining, it's very difficult to support that because by and large it's poor people, black people, particularly indigenous kids, people who can't afford the*

fines get the fines, they're fined by white male cops mostly, the situation is inflamed by the police, instead of deescalated. (Parker, non-binary, queer)

Yeah, I think that would be good [introducing on-the-spot fines], I don't know how widely it would be implemented just because often if someone sees cops on the street they're not likely to harass someone or you know, exhibit any poor behaviour that might land them in a fine. But yeah, maybe that could be something, it could also just raise awareness for the fact that this is a community issue and you know, it's, you will be contravening the law if you do harass someone. (Nora, cis woman, heterosexual)

I don't think they're going to change how they think about women but at least they're being deterred from acting in a crappy way. (Opal, cis woman, bisexual)

For these participants, a criminal legal response (such as on-the-spot fines) was viewed as a mechanism for holding perpetrators to account, providing a deterrent function, and as communicating the 'wrongness' of street harassment. However, very few participants were unequivocally supportive of such responses.

For participants who did not support the introduction of criminal legal responses, there were a range of reasons for this:

- Not feasible to implement: many participants felt that unless police had directly witnessed an incident of harassment, it would be exceedingly difficult to enforce criminal legal regulations. For example, as discussed earlier there was often little tangible evidence of harassment occurring, and many forms of harassment were ambiguous in nature.

- Does not address the root causes of street harassment: participants did not believe that issuing a fine or other punishment alone would be sufficient to change perpetrators' behaviour or shift broader social and cultural norms around harassment. Some participants believed that criminal legal responses had the potential to be counterproductive – as one participant said, "they'd [harassers] probably just become more bitter" (Amy, cis woman, heterosexual). Another said:

  Yeah, I don't think an on-the-spot fine is going to really achieve much. Or those sorts of police responses. It doesn't really put any meaning or education behind why what they're doing is wrong. And I think it also then makes the perpetrator feel like a victim, suddenly they are now, all they were trying to do is talk to someone and now they have to pay this fine. (Rory, agender, queer)

- Likely to contribute towards the over-policing of marginalised groups and amplify other inequalities:

And how do you get about that? Well it isn't fucking locking people up I don't think. And this, not locking people up it's not through in having a system that disproportionately affects certain people in society and then saying oh well you know what that's, we can lock up fucking you know what is it 3% of Australia is Indigenous population and 25% is in prison. (Dave, cis man, heterosexual)

- Lack of trust in the police and legal system: as mentioned in the section on reporting, many participants fundamentally distrusted the criminal legal system. This distrust often stemmed from the notoriously poor track-record of the legal system in responding to gender-based violence, and histories of discrimination and violence from police against marginalised communities:

But more pointedly at the moment I'm aware of how they're specifically antithetical to justice in the way that it's carried out a lot of the time. And considering most of the data and studies that I've seen with regards to any kind of sexual harassment or assault, is to do with women and perpetrators being men that in that sense reporting assault to any law enforcement is you know notoriously not helpful to victims. And so in that sense I haven't trusted that that would be a useful way of doing it. (Alex, non-binary, queer)

I do feel like that form of justice like criminal punitive justice you know serves some groups and not others, and it does just serve the dominant group, and justice isn't dealt proportionately, it's dealt very subjectively, and it does follow like racial lines and gendered lines. (Tenesha, cis woman, bisexual)

Phase 3 – Interviews with key stakeholders

Stakeholder interviews focused on participants' understandings of street harassment, the extent to which they currently addressed street harassment in their current role their perspectives on the extent to which the issue is addressed in current policy more broadly, and their perspectives on potential justice responses to street harassment. Overall, stakeholder perspectives largely aligned with those of participants in Phase 2 of the project.

Nature and extent of street harassment

Participants in this Phase of the project typically had a nuanced understanding of what constitutes street harassment, and of the prevalence and impacts of this phenomenon. Participants typically articulated that street harassment could encompass a broad continuum of behaviours and situated it within the continuum of sexual violence.

While many participants did recognise that street harassment could occur as a form of homophobia, transphobia, racism and so forth, there was nonetheless a tendency to centre sexual harassment targeted towards cis-gender women. Similarly, while many participants reflected on the factors underpinning street harassment, masculinities and gendered power dynamics were most frequently mentioned. Certainly, masculinity and gendered power is central to understanding street

harassment. However, there was comparatively less recognition of the intersectional factors that can drive this behaviour, such as homophobia and transphobia.

Some participants placed emphasis on the impacts of harassment. For example, that harassment could be considered any behaviour that was intimidating or made the target feel unsafe, uncomfortable, unwelcome, or similar. While these definitions capture many instances of street harassment, they are arguably limited in that they may exclude more subtle or ambiguous forms of intrusion.

Current responses to street harassment

Participants varied considerably in the extent to which they currently addressed street harassment in their role or organisation. Some participants were based in organisations that exclusively addressed the issue, while for the majority street harassment was either not a part of their role or was something that they addressed peripherally.

Challenges in responding to street harassment

Participants were invited to reflect on what they saw as the key challenges in developing responses to street harassment. Key themes included:

- The broader cultural normalisation and trivialisation of street harassment: put simply, participants felt that street harassment was not recognised as a problem that required response and was particularly likely to be viewed as 'trivial' in comparison to more stereotypically 'serious' forms of gender-based violence, such as domestic violence. However, as many participants noted, this perspective misses the ways in which street harassment interconnects with stereotypically 'serious' violence.

  I don't think it's taken seriously at all, and I think that's by people who perpetrate it, people who witness it and people who experience it. (Int. 11)

  It's extremely normalised so I think it's one of those issues sometimes where because it happens so often it's almost as if well you know that's just what happens and there's not much you can do about it because it's often perpetrated by strangers and it's really difficult to respond in a proactive way that might stop the behaviour from happening. (Int. 13)

  Look I'd say it's probably obviously the poor cousin or other forms of violence, and probably is a result of where the violence against women sector has come from and where it's originated is obviously in the refuge movement, and responses to domestic violence, intimate partner violence and to a lesser extent non partner sexual assault. (Int. 2)

- Insufficient funding and resources: virtually all participants commented on the lack of funding and other resources required to implement responses to street

harassment. This was interconnected with the trivialisation of street harassment: street harassment was not funded because it was not viewed as an issue that required dedicated resources. More generally, many participants noted that a lack of funding and resources was a perennial issue that they faced, including in relation to domestic and sexual violence.

So, in short, I haven't had the resources to do a lot in this space. (Int. 1)

Resource constraints make that often challenging and often it's – your impact isn't seen for many years and therefore you know getting funding and evaluating your impact can be challenging. (Int. 10)

- A lack of data, and lack of clarity around 'what counts' as street harassment. Several participants commented that the lack of data on the prevalence and harms of street harassment was a barrier to implementing responses – a lack of data meant that there was little tangible 'evidence' of the extent of the problem, and that such data was required for making a convincing case for funding and resources. Likewise, the fluid nature of street harassment created challenges in clearly identifying precisely what behaviour was being addressed.

I'd say it's something we need more up to date data and there definitely has been a call for that from organisations that are working in this space. (Int. 2)

We're really working with government because what we've found is that … in those decision-making spaces is the lack of data, therefore like a lack of ability to advocate for the issue to actually be addressed in the first place. (Int. 4)

The scope is so large, and people have different definitions about what street and public harassment is and so it feels very like large and kind of hard to pin down, so I think that's one of the greatest challenges like what are we actually addressing and how are we going to do it. (Int. 13)

- Lack of political will and momentum behind the issue: building on the points above, participants believed that there was currently a lack of momentum around the issue of street harassment, and there was not sufficient political or community will to drive responses.

It's currently not one of our policy or advocacy priorities because there is not kind of a ground swell. (Int. 11)

I think there is still a challenge to overcome which is that it's not seen as the most pressing issue. It might be seen as important, and it's increasingly being seen as important and understood as being a serious issue. But when you pit it against all the other things that people have to compete for, it's sort of like oh well that can wait. (Int. 6)

It changed a little bit a couple of years ago when there, in Melbourne in particular, where there were a number of high-profile murders of women on their way home, and for a time it felt like the policy environment there in Victoria was starting to move towards recognising the need to tackle this in public space, and I feel like that has been de-prioritised again as well. Because it's never seen as serious as any of the other spaces. If you had to rank all those ones that I just mentioned, if you had to, if you'd asked policy makers to rank them, I would guess that most of them would put street harassment at the bottom of the list. (Int. 6)

- The ambiguous/fleeting nature of street harassment and subsequent challenges in identifying perpetrators. On a practical level, participants identified challenges in responding to individual perpetrators due to the often ambiguous and fleeting nature of street harassment. Participants suggested that it would be difficult to implement responses such as on-the-spot fines or other individual-level interventions due to the difficulty in confidently identifying perpetrators.

Because it's usually like a comment made as you're walking past or someone really creeping you out but to the average person that has no knowledge of the situation it might look like they're completely innocent it's very hard to gain that kind of public attention or have evidence of what's happening so it's a very lonely and isolating experience that I then think makes it harder to address in the same way that domestic violence happens behind closed doors and there's a stigma and a shame attached to it. (Int. 13)

When you get 6-foot blonde hair brown eyes wearing a black Adidas jacket with 3 stripes on the collar and a hat, you're like blonde hair 6 foot in Australia, good luck. So, it is really hard for us to identify those recidivist offenders. (Int. 1)

Stakeholder perspectives on justice responses

Stakeholders' perspectives on justice responses to street harassment largely aligned with those of participants in Phase 2. Stakeholder participants overwhelming advocated for preventative and transformative responses that address the root causes of harassment, rather than criminal legal regulation:

And I don't think we do that enough with society, especially around these less criminal actions. I think if we actually went alright let's have a look at why this individual did it, they grew up in a household that said this was acceptable, so how can we educate them to understand what that behaviour means, and that's what I'd rather do. (Int 1)

When you get all of these different forms of street harassment, you see that the commonality is structural oppression, so if we had to work towards achieving Utopia in this case, like a society where street harassment doesn't exist, it would be programs that fundamentally dismantle those structural oppressions. (Int. 5)

I would say you can't have one tool without a number of others that are sort of looking at all facets at the same time, it's just that criminalising something doesn't necessarily make it go away … and doesn't address the root cause which you know that person got caught that one time and gets an on-the-spot fine – is that going to change their behaviour particularly if there's no police or whoever else is enforcing it around – our focus is probably more on that longer term broader societal change and seeing that as really the most effective and important response. (Int. 10)

Justice for me sort of looks like a sense of having equal power you know obviously in an ideal world I guess you can be in public spaces and feel secure that you're not going to have to I guess be subjected to behaviour or acts or anything that make you uncomfortable or feel unsafe. (Int. 13)

In relation to the implementation of a criminal legal response, stakeholders shared similar concerns to those raised by participants in Phase 2. These included:

- That a criminal response would be challenging to implement given the nature of street harassment and is unlikely to have a strong deterrent effect because of these challenges.

- That a criminal response does not address the root causes of harassment, and is implemented after-the-fact rather than functioning as a preventative mechanism.

- That such a response could be counterproductive, and would disproportionately impact upon marginalised groups of men.

- That investment in criminal justice responses would not offer good value for money due to the small number of perpetrators who would be detected, "whereas putting that money into more education programs or something that's trying to change attitudes as a whole might have a great pay off" (Int. 13)

- The poor track record of the criminal legal system in responding to other forms of gender-based violence.

A minority of participants suggested that criminal legal responses could be implemented alongside community-based prevention efforts, however no participants unequivocally supported the implementation of criminal regulation:

On the spot fines, police really I reckon we could probably do better through public education and awareness raising but I agree that if it gets to a point where this issue's not improving then we need to kind of do some sort of enforcement and maybe an on-the-spot fine could work for those types of occasions where there is proof, and the challenge would be creating that proof. (Int. 12)

Another participant highlighted the symbolic and communicative function that criminal legislation could play:

It's the fact that the introduction of those kind of measures sends a very clear message that at the highest levels our law enforcement in our country does not tolerate this behaviour, it is not okay. And that in itself has got power, because so much of this behaviour is perpetrated in an environment where people are unclear as to whether it's acceptable or not. (Int. 6).

In line with their emphasis on preventative, transformative and community-based justice, the responses commonly advocated by stakeholder participants included:

- Education: participants strongly endorsed the introduction of educational initiatives across a range of settings (including schools, workplaces, public transport and similar, as well as educational interventions for perpetrators of harassment) that aimed to improve community awareness of street harassment, challenge the normalisation and trivialisation of harassment, teach safe and effective bystander skills, and challenge the attitudes and structures underpinning street harassment. However, participants from the men's behaviour change sector cautioned that such initiatives would require great care, as there was the potential for poorly implemented educational programs to backfire or collude with harassers.

  It's about education because it's such a hard crime or basically because of attitude it's such a hard crime to identify someone you know you could raise penalties for it but it doesn't actually do any good if you can't prove the crime and you can't track down the perpetrator so I do think it is education and you have to change the attitudes of society more generally because then you see that shift in what is an acceptable way to treat another human being. (Int. 13)

  I would say there seems to be some form of education piece that's required. Because I don't doubt that some of the harassment it's just that they don't realise the impact. (Int. 1)

  I think education is really important because again the same education programs that one would use to generally promote gender equity and healthy respectful relationships would also tackle the attitudes that underpin street harassment. (Int. 11)

  So I would say community education definitely. And it also starts at a young age as well, right, because you might see someone in your family do it, you might see your friends do it, you might see your community members doing it, so you think it's all normal, it's all good. (Int. 5)

- Bystander intervention was viewed as a promising avenue for justice, as it could immediately express disapproval and hold the harasser to account. However, some participants also raised concerns about bystander intervention, including the potential for vigilante justice, the potential for intervention to result in

violence perpetrated against the bystander, and the individualised nature of this intervention rather than addressing more complex structural drivers.

- Establishing avenues for reporting (whether formally or informally), in order to develop an evidence-base on the extent of harassment to inform other interventions. Reporting mechanisms were also seen as important as a form of validation, as they symbolically communicate that street harassment is serious enough to report

- Perpetrator accountability and restorative interventions. In line with participants in Phase 2, participants in Phase 3 emphasised forms of accountability that focused on the harasser *understanding* the impacts of their actions, taking steps to redress the harm caused, and undertake meaningful behavioural change.

  There's got to be some level of restorative sort of justice applied to them that you know can they learn from their past behaviours you know they could even potentially be great spokespeople for preventing the issue from happening ever again. (Int. 12)

  Justice would be people who perpetrate that behaviour understanding its impacts or even being held accountable to some degree. (Int. 13)

  I think justice for us means holding the perpetrator accountable and that means making the perpetrator understand not just that what he has done is wrong in terms of it being illegal, which technically it's not but unacceptance, but also understanding why what he has done causes harm. (Int. 11)

- The introduction of policy and procedures, particularly to the extent that these responses could help to drive structural change and create incentives or enforcement mechanisms for other responses discussed here. Participants again highlighted the communicative and symbolic function of (particularly) government policy in establishing street harassment as a serious issue. Policies and procedures were also seen as important in workplace settings, where hierarchical power structures could create barriers to informal responses to harassment, such as bystander intervention.

  I think education on its own can sometimes not necessarily effect change in the most holistic way, there are other structural things that we could potentially be looking at and this is probably already what's being done you know with the Gender Equality Act. (Int. 10).

  I think there is value in having some legislation that highlights what the issue is and more importantly what powers individuals have to be able to make a complaint or to report an incident that they feel needs to be reported. Whether

it's through legislation or whether it's through workplace policies and procedures. (Int. 12)

Top priorities moving forward

Participants were asked to reflect on what they felt were the 'top 3' next steps that needed to happen to work towards implementing policy and practice-based responses to street harassment. Key priorities included:

- Establishing clear mechanisms for data collection and/or reporting on incidents of street harassment. Many participants commented that they lacked the robust evidence base required to effect change in relation to street harassment.

  And then also potentially having some more of those options for reporting that are quite immediate and can at least make women think you know and other minorities think well hey at least I can do something about this this is my clear pathway to reporting it if that's what they choose to do and want to do and can do it fairly immediately. (Int. 13)

  I think that's you know, our experience in getting traction on the issue generally has been that the more data we have to start with the more we can convince people that this is a) a really big problem, and b) a gendered problem, and having that kind of data that makes it difficult to argue with either of those things is really the first step where you can get traction and you can get kind of recognition that this needs attention. (Int. 2)

- Advocacy and awareness raising to establish street harassment as a 'problem' requiring prevention and redress.

  I think from our – it would be greater advocacy about the issue and sort of raising awareness in that respect, and you know from there seeing the flow-on impacts of resourcing and funding provided by others into those areas, so commitments to do better, and to acknowledge the issue at hand would be probably the short-term focus. (Int. 11)

- The development of policy and strategy documents to guide the implementation of responses, and to ensure that existing policy and legislation adequately captures street harassment.

  And then the third area around enforcement, for us that is kind of reviewing I guess the legislative and policy environment, and reviewing you know whether the current laws are fit for purpose or whether there needs to be a clarification of those. (Int. 6)

- The implementation of public education campaigns.

Public education defining the issue what does it mean and who do we know are the main victims, who do we know are the main perpetrators and then really having conversations with both groups around well what could prevent those scenarios from happening in the first place. (Int. 12)

Feedback provided by participants at the key stakeholder forum largely reiterated these priorities. Forum participants generally suggested that educational responses and data collections were more straightforward to implement in the shorter term, and would contribute towards building momentum for longer-term changes such as the introduction of legislation.

Phase 4 – Community Attitudes

In this section, the findings of the online survey component of this study are discussed. Vignette 1 depicted misogynistic sexual street harassment experienced by a femme-presenting person. Vignette 2 described misogynistic racist sexual street harassment targeting an Asian woman. Vignette 3 detailed sexual street harassment targeting a (presumably) white, non-disabled, heterosexual, cisgender man. Vignette 4 described homophobic street harassment directed towards a man and his boyfriend. Vignette 5 depicted misogynistic Islamophobic sexual harassment directed towards a Muslim woman wearing a veil. All quotes have been reported verbatim.

Quantitative Findings

Participants' responses to the Likert scale survey items are recorded in the following table.

Table 3: Table of Median Values (Mdn)

Vignette	Wanted (Mdn)	Complimentary (Mdn)	Social Norms* (Mdn)	Harmful* (Mdn)	Responsible (Mdn)	Harassment* (Mdn)
Vignette 1	1	1	2	2	1	1
Vignette 2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Vignette 3	1	3	2	3	1	3
Vignette 4	1	1	1	1	1	1
Vignette 5	1	1	1	1	1	1

*reverse coded

This table illustrates that the majority of participants perceived the interactions detailed in this survey as street harassment, harmful to the victim, not wanted, not complimentary, in breach of social norms and did not hold the victim responsible for the interaction. The primary exception to this trend was vignette 3 which detailed an example of street harassment which targeted a (presumably) non-disabled, white, heterosexual, cisgender man. This vignette was more likely to be identified as wanted and complimentary to the target and less likely to be understood as harmful.

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative findings of the survey reflect that most participants believe that street harassment is problematic. These perceptions often drew from intersectional feminist understandings of harassment to critique the interactions expressed in the vignettes. Common perceptions of street harassment included:

- Street harassment impedes on the ability of individuals to express their identity and fully participate in public space.

Obviously homophobic comments are extremely harmful and reduce John's fundamental right to express his identity. (20 years, cisgender man/male, heterosexual)

- Street harassment represents an assertion of power over the target.

Calling someone disgusting is a strong claim, asserting dominance over that person with the accuser acting as if they represent a general opinion about another person. (39 years, cisgender man, heterosexual)

- Street harassment contains the implicit threat of further violence.

This is homophobic street harassment. Would he harmful for John as it comes with a potential threat of violence, it's dehumanising language, and it perpetuates homophobia. (23 years, non-Binary, bisexual)

- The historical and contemporary socio-historical context of violence increases the harm associated with street harassment.

This is a pretty aggressive move on his part given the wider cultural issue of islamophobia (30 years, cisgender woman, bisexual)

- Street harassment is a reflection of the perpetrator's entitlement.

What men are actually demanding is that women remember they are subject to & at the mercy of male entitlement and violence. (28 years, non-cisgender man, gay)

- Street harassment erases the inner life of the target, reducing them to a stereotype.

All of the recipients were just targeted as stereotypes rather than being spoken to as an individual, with a name, their own agenda and needs. (61 years, cisgender woman, heterosexual).

- Street harassment imposes the perpetrators' assumptions, wants, and desires onto the target.

[The] man is assuming that his opinion matters more than Hannah's religious freedom and her bodily autonomy as a woman. (44 years, cisgender woman, heterosexual)

- Street harassment impacts how (potential) targets utilise, traverse, and participate in public space.

I find this behaviour harmful because it may impact Jane's perceptions of her safety in the city, it may also prevent her from walking alone, thus limiting her ability to get from A to B. (26 years, cisgender woman, heterosexual)

- Street harassment negatively affects feelings of safety.

Unwanted harassment and totally unacceptable. Fetishisation of ethnicity and would make Alice very uncomfortable and feel unsafe. (21 years, cisgender woman/female, bisexual)

Although the findings of this survey reflect that the vast majority of participants expressed beliefs that were critical of street harassment, a small number of predominantly cisgender male and older participants expressed attitudes which dismissed or minimised the harm perceived to be inflicted by street harassment. The open response component of the survey reflected that respondents drew on a number of misperceptions and myths surrounding gender-based violence. The ways in which the harms of the interaction were minimised by participants varied depending on the intersectional position of the target. Common public misperceptions surrounding street harassment include:

- Street harassment is complimentary because it demonstrates appreciation or approval of the target's physical appearance.

To label this harassment constitutes a massive stretch… he's complimented her when she's clearly made an effort to look really great. (21 years, cisgender man, heterosexual)

- Victim blaming narratives which responsibilise targets for their experience of street harassment.

If you make yourself look attractive, you can expect attention from others… If you don't want unwanted attention, try maintaining a lower profile. (50 years, cisgender man, heterosexual)

- Hierarchical constructions of harm which discount the capacity of verbal violence to inflict 'real harm' on targets.

I have taught my daughter that this sort of male behaviour is stupid & clumsy at best and disrespectful at worst but she is only a 'victim' of it if she chooses to be - after all they're just words... If Jane is an empowered woman, she will be able to dismiss this guy in a heartbeat. (44 years, cisgender woman, heterosexual)

- The conceptualisation of street harassment as harmful is a form of 'feminist overreach'.

Many women find wolf whistles to be highly complementary and as an affirmation of the care and attention they have expended on their attention. Generally speaking those who rile against such attention are in fact jealous that they have not received such complements. Another example of women being told how they should feel in a certain situation by less attractive women. (Cisgender man, heterosexual)

- The perceived reduction in the social acceptability of street harassment impinges upon 'freedom of speech'.

I wonder how a man can openly express his experience of a beautifully presented woman now that this age old way of expressing it has now become demonised. (73 years, cisgender man, heterosexual)

- Hegemonic constructions of masculinity assume that street harassment is an involuntary product of a biological male 'essence'.

This just seems like a man who can't handle testosterone encountering an attractive lady... Remember, if men didn't have such intensely powerful sex drives enhanced by testosterone, they wouldn't have enough incentive to put in the decades of disciplined hard work it takes to become attractive to women and reproduce. (23 years, cisgender man)

- 'Real' men should be welcoming of the sexual advances of feminine strangers.

If Gavin feels hurt or harmed by this interaction or feels harassed, he is an over-sensitive boy - not a man. (44 years, cisgender woman, heterosexual)

- Contextual factors reduce the perceived harm inflicted by street harassment.

If the man was attractive to Jane and not threatening she may have enjoyed the affirmation of the effort she put into her appearance. On the other hand she might also have found it threatening and/or offensive. (65 years, cisgender man, gay)

- The intent of the initiator is central to whether or not an interaction should be considered street harassment.

The intent behind the behaviour is unlikely to be to harass, and I've seen a scenario like this where the woman was in the distance walking towards me and was facing away from the men when they whistled. She was grinning from ear to ear. (58 years, cisgender man, heterosexual)

Recommendations

The following section outlines high-level recommendations for policy and practice responses to street and public harassment, based upon the findings of this project. Given the general lack of research on street harassment, and lack of evaluation of the few interventions that have been implemented, it is vital that the implementation of the following suggestions be accompanied by robust evaluation and process of refinement. The development and implementation of these recommendations would also require significant government and community resourcing.

Prevention and transformation

Participants in both phases of the project clearly articulated the need for responses to street harassment to focus on preventing this behaviour from occurring and transforming the conditions that enable and underpin street harassment.

1. Responses to street harassment should prioritise prevention and transformation of underlying power structures, drawing on an intersectional lens.

2. Prevention efforts must address street harassment at the individual, community, and structural levels.

3. Street harassment should be explicitly addressed and incorporated into existing policy frameworks for preventing gender-based violence, racism, transphobia, homophobia and similar.

4. Efforts to dismantle structural oppression and discrimination should be continued and, in many cases, bolstered. This research points to the need to continue to address structural inequalities relating to the intersections of gender (including misogyny, sexism, and transphobia), diverse sexuality, and race. However, it is likely that many other forms of structural inequality require attention.

5. All policy and practice-based responses to street harassment must be responsive to the fact that there are cultural differences regarding what constitutes harassment.

6. All policy and practice-based responses to street harassment should be co-designed with people who have experienced street harassment, and in close consultation with diverse communities.

Further mechanisms for prevention and structural transformation are addressed in the following sections.

Data collection and reporting mechanisms

There was a clear need to develop mechanisms for systematically and routinely collecting data on the prevalence of street harassment, and to provide victims with multiple avenues for reporting their experiences. Stakeholder participants frequently commented on the lack of available, robust data on this issue, and identified this as a key barrier in establishing the need to take action against street harassment. Data collection was identified as an area of priority moving forward.

1. Questions on street harassment should be incorporated into existing local, state, and national surveys on victimisation and safety. This will help to build a robust body of knowledge on the prevalence, frequency, and impacts of harassment, demographic details of victims and perpetrators, and to identify locations where harassment is particularly prevalent.

    a. Targeted surveys addressing the experiences of marginalised and 'hard-to-reach' groups, including but not limited to LGBTQ+ people, people of colour, religious groups, First Nations people, disabled people, and sex workers are required to fill significant gaps in knowledge.

    b. Targeted research on the attitudes and behaviours of harassers is needed to fill significant gaps in knowledge, and to inform prevention initiatives and efforts to hold harassers to account.

    c. All research undertaken on street harassment should be informed by an intersectional lens.

2. Develop multiple avenues for reporting and/or documenting experiences of street harassment. This may include:

a. Text/phone and online reporting, including location-specific options such as for incidents occurring on public transport or in licensed venues.

b. Crowdmapping or crowdsourcing reporting, similar to the approaches used by Plan International, She's a Crowd, and the XYX Lab (Monash University).

c. Clarification of avenues for reporting formally to police, where this is desired.

d. Reporting options should include both formal and informal avenues, and anonymous and identifiable options.

3. All reporting and data-collection mechanisms should be co-designed with people who have lived experience of street harassment.

4. The use of data and potential outcomes of reporting should be clearly communicated to individuals making a report. Information on appropriate support services should be provided.

5. A consistent definition of street harassment should be implemented across different forms of data collection and/or reporting to ensure data sets are comparable. However, it is important to note that 'what counts' as street harassment is context-dependent, and as such any definition is by nature an artificial one that will inevitably exclude some experiences.

Training and education

The implementation of training and education was one of the most common suggestions made by participants in both phases of the project, and there was an identified need for targeted programs across a range of settings, as well as awareness-raising initiatives targeting the general community.

1. Street harassment should be incorporated into respectful relationships and consent education curriculum and delivered nationally. This should include addressing the nature, prevalence and harms of street harassment, the role of power and power imbalances (particularly those relating to gender, sexuality, and race – that is, drawing on an intersectional lens), and bystander intervention.

2. Educational responses to street harassment should be co-designed with people who have experienced diverse forms of street harassment.

3. Training on street harassment, bystander intervention and responding to disclosures should be introduced for staff and authority figures in settings that are 'high risk' for public harassment, and/or for groups who are likely to receive disclosures or reports of harassment. This includes, but is not limited to:
    a. Licensed venues (e.g., through the Good Night Out training program)
    b. Schools (both primary and secondary) and Universities

    c. Public transportation, including trains, trams, buses, and semi-private modes of transportation such as taxis and rideshare services
    d. Major public events
    e. Police and security guards
    f. Mental healthcare professionals

4. Bystander intervention training: given the extent to which participants valued bystander intervention as a potential justice mechanism, there is a need to provide widespread opportunity for members of the community to be trained in responding safely and effectively as a bystander. In many cases, bystander training could be incorporated into the other educational interventions outlined here.

5. Public awareness raising and education: there is a need for educational campaigns conveying the nature, extent, and impacts of street harassment, challenging popular misconceptions such as that street harassment is trivial or complimentary, and arming people with the skills to respond appropriately to disclosure. Such campaigns should also address bystander intervention. Participants frequently referred to the Respect Victoria 'Call It Out' campaign as an example of the type of initiative they would like to see implemented.

    a. Public awareness raising and education should also be explicitly targeted towards adults in mid-to-later life, as emerging evidence from this project suggests some members of these age groups may be more likely to condone street harassment.

6. Educational interventions for perpetrators: Participants in Phase 2 strongly advocated for educational interventions targeting harassers, for example engaging harassers in educational initiatives on the impacts of street harassment, gendered power and so forth. Discussions with stakeholders in the men's behaviour change sector in Phase 3 of the project suggested that such programs would currently not be feasible in relation to street harassment. Nonetheless, given the centrality of this response to those who had experienced harassment, we recommend that avenues for developing and implementing educational initiatives for harassers be explored.

Legislative reform and clarification

While a small number of participants did support the introduction of criminal legislation in response to street harassment, overall criminal legal responses were not supported, were viewed as counterproductive, unfeasible, unlikely to be effective in preventing or deterring harassment, and likely to further compound inequalities relating to race, mental health, disability and similar.

As such, we *do not* recommend the introduction of criminal legislation or on-the-spot fines as a mechanism for responding to harassment. However, we do advocate for the following:

1. The introduction of civil legislation, like that implemented in Washington, D.C. This approach captures the symbolic importance of legislation expressed by

participants (i.e., it 'sends a message' that street harassment is harmful and not tolerated), while avoiding the potential pitfalls of criminal regulation. Civil legislation can additionally create an onus for the state to implement other responses identified in this report, such as the collection of data, implementation of policy, and implementation of training. Civil legislation would also establish a consistent definition of street harassment, assisting with data collection efforts.

2. Clarification of the criminal status of street harassment: many participants expressed confusion as to what forms of harassment are currently addressed under criminal law, and therefore what they could reasonably report to police. There is a need for police to clarify the legal status of street harassment, and to communicate appropriate avenues for reporting where this is desired.

Project outputs to date

- Vera-Gray, F. & Fileborn, B. (forthcoming). Hiding the harm? An argument against misogyny hate crime. In C. Donovan, E. Hall, & J. Clayton (eds) *Landscapes of hate: spaces of abjection, discrimination and exclusion*. Policy Press: Bristol.
- Fileborn, B. (2020). Embodied geographies: navigating street harassment. In J. Berry, T. Moore, N. Kalms, & G. Bawden (Eds.), *Contentious cities: design and the gendered production of space*. Routledge.
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- Fileborn, B. & Trott, V. (2021). "It ain't a compliment": feminist data visualization and digital street harassment advocacy. *Convergence*. Online first.
- Fileborn, B. (2021). Digital mapping as feminist method: critical reflections. *Qualitative Research.* Online first.
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- Loney-Howes, R., Mendes, K., Fernandez Romero, D., Fileborn, B., & Nunez Puente, S. (2021). Digital footprints of #MeToo. *Feminist Media Studies,* online first.
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- Fileborn, B. (2020). Online justice and street harassment: critical cartographies, countermapping and spatial justice. *Onati Socio-Legal Series*. Accepted for publication 17 January 2020.

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