

Safecity Policy Project: Railway Stations Audit Report

Safecity is an initiative of Red Dot Foundation which aims to make cities safer by encouraging equal access to public spaces for everyone, especially women, through the use of crowdsourced data, community engagement and institutional accountability.

Safecity undertook a Safety Audit of 3 railway stations - Kurla, CST and Dadar in Mumbai during the months of November and December 2016 as a response to several reports of sexual harassment at railway stations in Mumbai on our crowdmap (maps.safecity.in) and similar incidents shared by participants during our workshops.

The Safety audit consisted of two components, one that involved collecting reports of sexual harassment from persons present at the railway station and the other being an audit of the facilities present at the railway stations and how they aid or impede safety in terms of sexual harassment: both these survey forms are available on request.

The project was carried out by the Safecity Policy team along with volunteers and interns who underwent a comprehensive training before commencing the audit. Reports were collected by speaking to people at the railway stations and explaining the concepts of harassment and sexual violence to them. We were able to reach 400 respondents across the three stations and sensitize 800+ persons. 100 reports of sexual harassment were collected at each station, amounting to 300 reports of sexual harassment in total. We had 100 respondents cumulatively across the three stations that said they had not been sexually harassed at the station they were then present at – in cases where they had been sexually harassed otherwise, reports were uploaded on our crowdmap separately. The Safecity team approached people of all genders and age proportionately. While several refused to report, what was alarming was the number that refused to respond stating that such sexual harassment is a part of their everyday life.

In a heartening incident that occurred at Dadar station; while speaking to a family regarding reporting of sexual harassment, the mother refused to submit a report - but later we had her adult daughter come up to the team and tell us that she wanted to submit a report so as to create awareness about the sexual harassment that occurs at railway stations for others.

We further discuss some key highlights from reports from persons at stations, our own observations by way of the audit and draw on possible solutions for remedying these issues.

Key highlights from the safety audit results:

1. The security personnel present was disproportionate at all stations. While Dadar had 80% female security personnel, CST had 33% and Kurla had 44% female security personnel only. It needs to be seen how proportionate the security personnel presence is in accordance with the footfall at the stations and the size of the station as well.
2. Railway toilets, the area outside the station and station exits ranked the lowest in terms of safety, other factors also did not do well to aid safety in terms of sexual harassment. Overall perceived station safety for Kurla was 2.86 for Dadar was 3.5 and for CST was 3 on a scale of 1 to 5 (for all) with 1 being extremely poor and 5 being excellent.

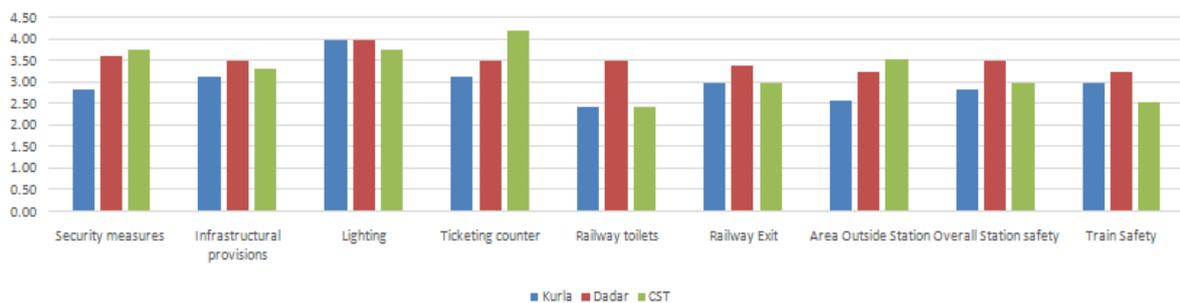


Fig. 1. Average rating of CST, Dadar and Kurla stations according to key safety points

3. Infrastructural provisions were found to be about average at all stations with certain varying individual characteristics at each station. There was a lack of space within stations and walking space at station exits. Provisions were also not disability- friendly.

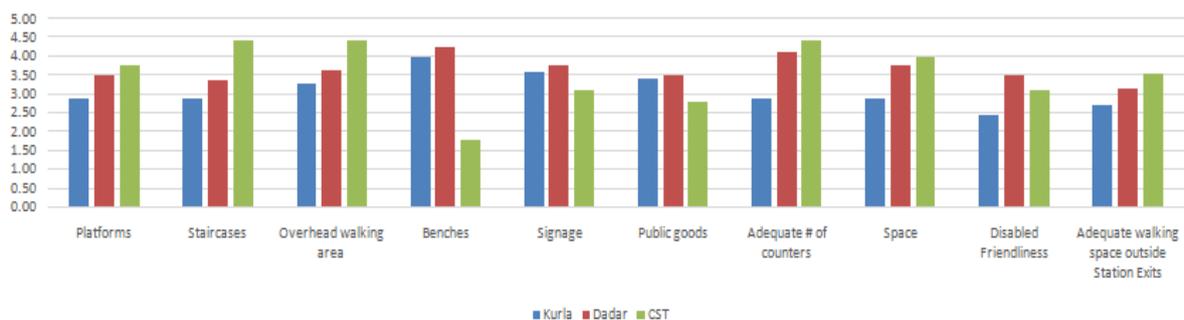


Fig. 2. Average rating of CST, Dadar and Kurla stations according to infrastructural capabilities

- Lighting at railway toilets was marked poor as was the lighting at station exits, the ticketing counter areas were slightly better. General lighting within the stations was adequate but certain corners of the station were left unlit due to non-functioning lights, especially so at Kurla station

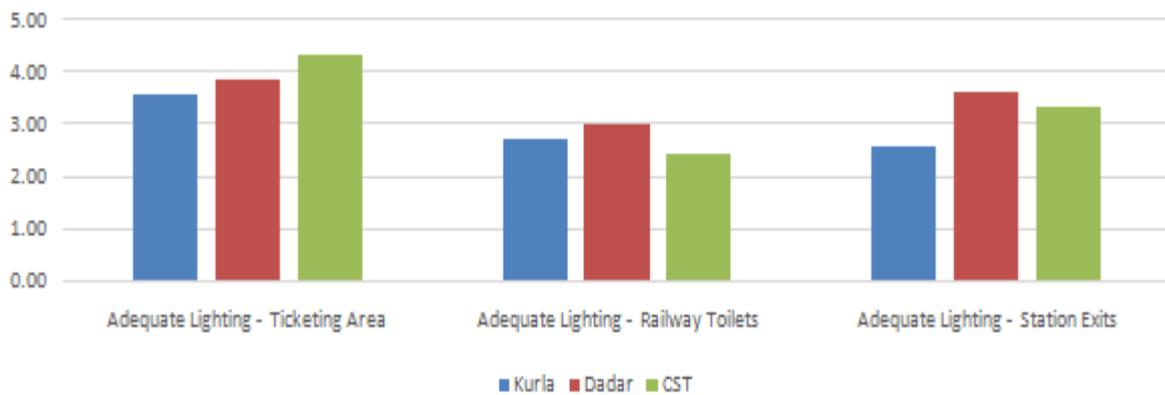


Fig. 3. Average rating of CST, Dadar and Kurla stations according to lighting parameters

- Railway toilets rated poorly for security personnel presence and were also not disability friendly. Dadar station toilets fare better than the toilets at CST and Kurla which were poor in terms of privacy and cleanliness.

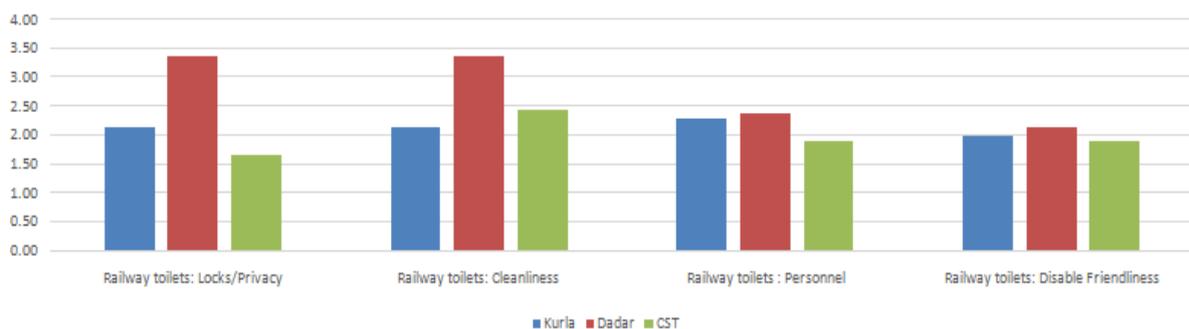


Fig. 4. Average rating of CST, Dadar and Kurla stations according to station toilet infrastructural parameters

Some other findings from our safety audits are incorporated directly by way of solutions towards the end of the report.

Key highlights from reports by persons at the railway stations:

1. While the Safecity team approached individuals of all genders equally, more women reported sexual harassment at the station at which we were present.
2. The number of incidents were higher in the evening hours i.e. from 5pm to 12am. CST is unsafe primarily between 8pm to 12am and 6am to 12pm. In Kurla and Dadar most reported incidents happen between 5pm to 8pm.

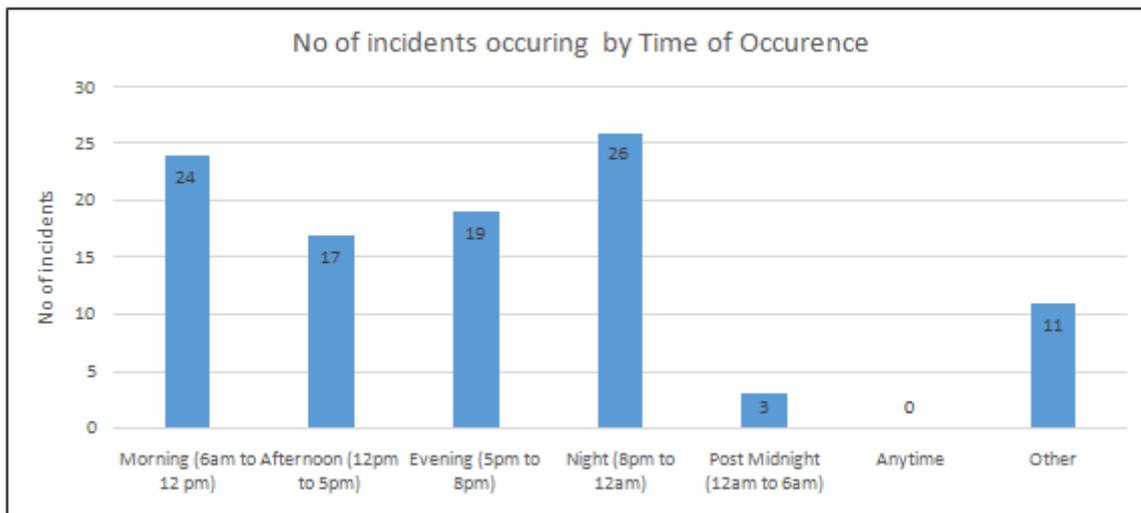


Fig. 5. Number of reports of sexual harassment by time of occurrence at CST

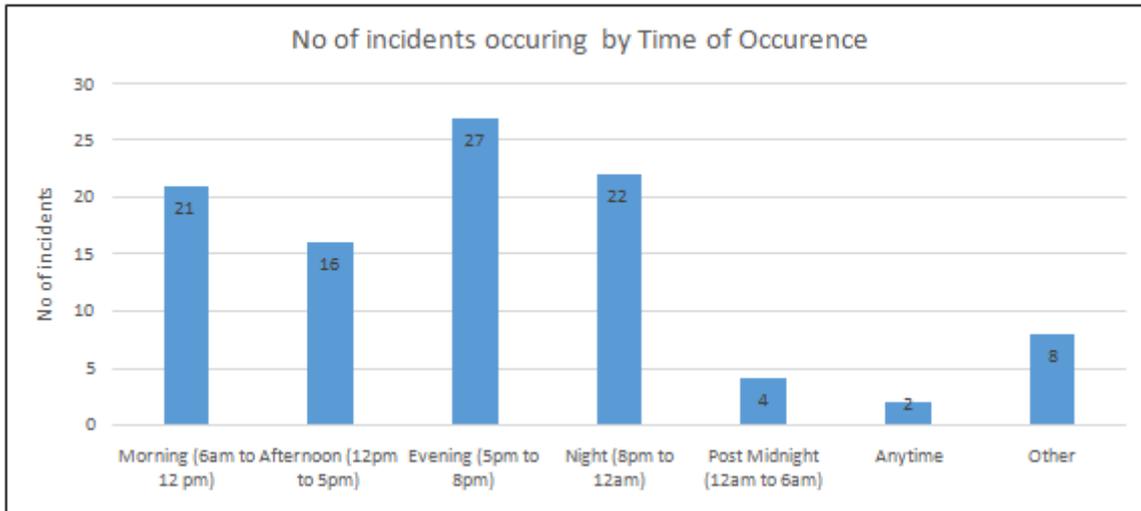


Fig. 6. Number of reports of sexual harassment by time of occurrence at Dadar

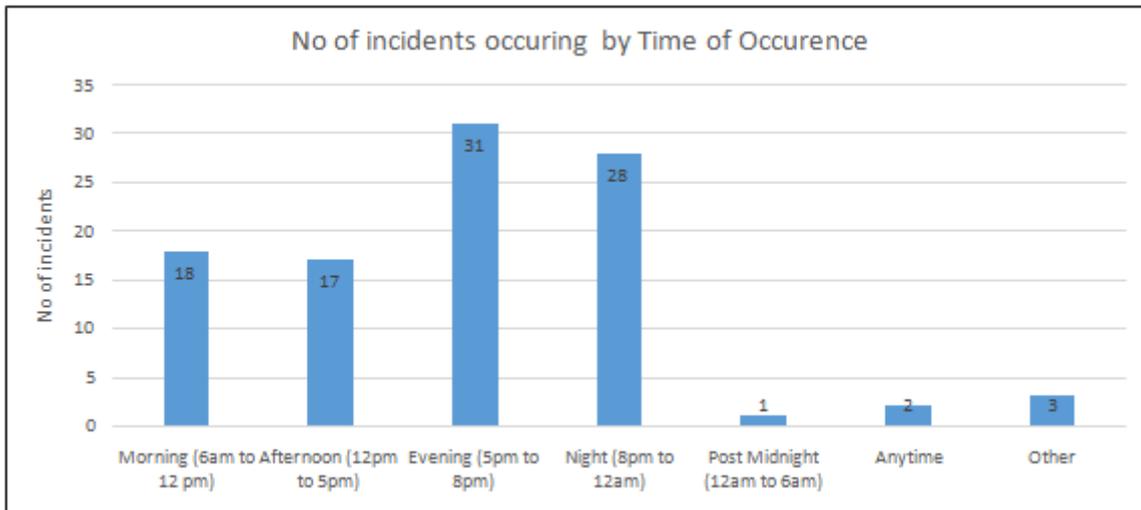


Fig. 7. Number of reports of sexual harassment by time of occurrence at Kurla

Additionally we looked at the nexus in the type of incident and the time of its occurrence:

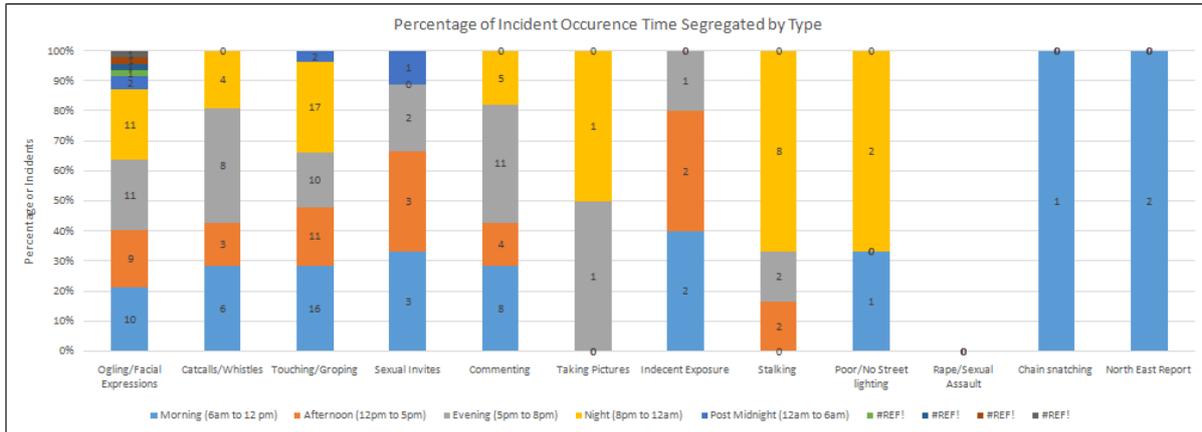


Fig. 8. Percentage of incident occurrence time segregated by type of incident at CST

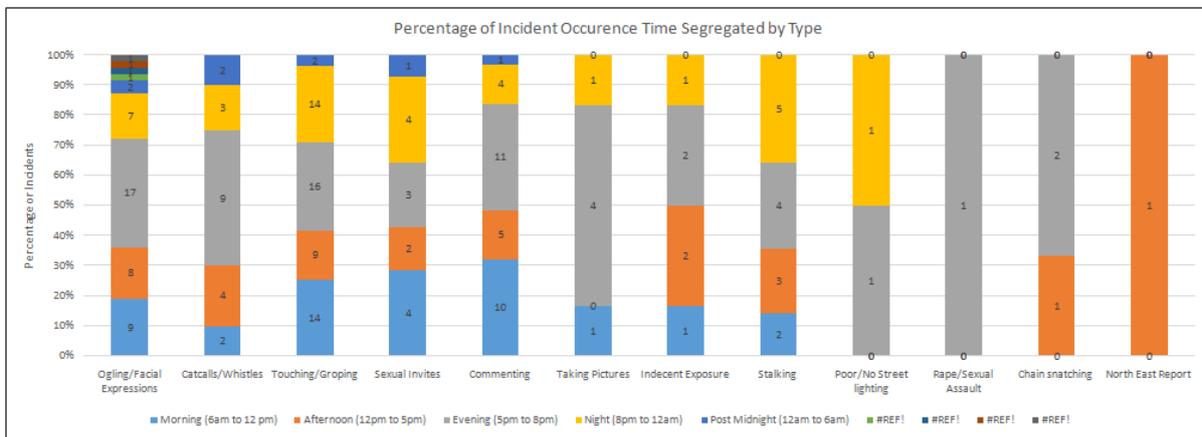


Fig. 9. Percentage of incident occurrence time segregated by type of incident at Dadar

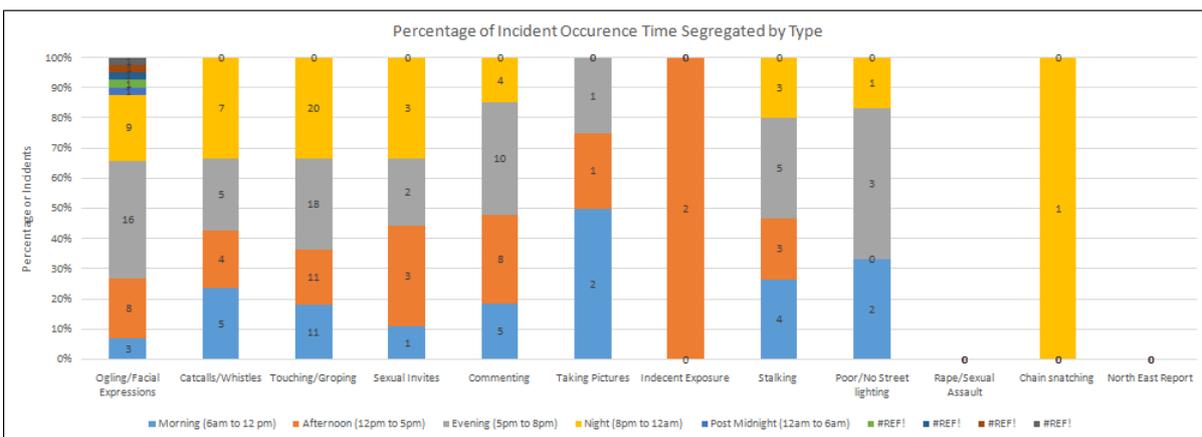


Fig. 10. Percentage of incident occurrence time segregated by type of incident at Kurla

3. Highest incidents of sexual harassment at the station fell under the category of Touching/Groping: CST (31%), Dadar (28%) and Kurla (32%)

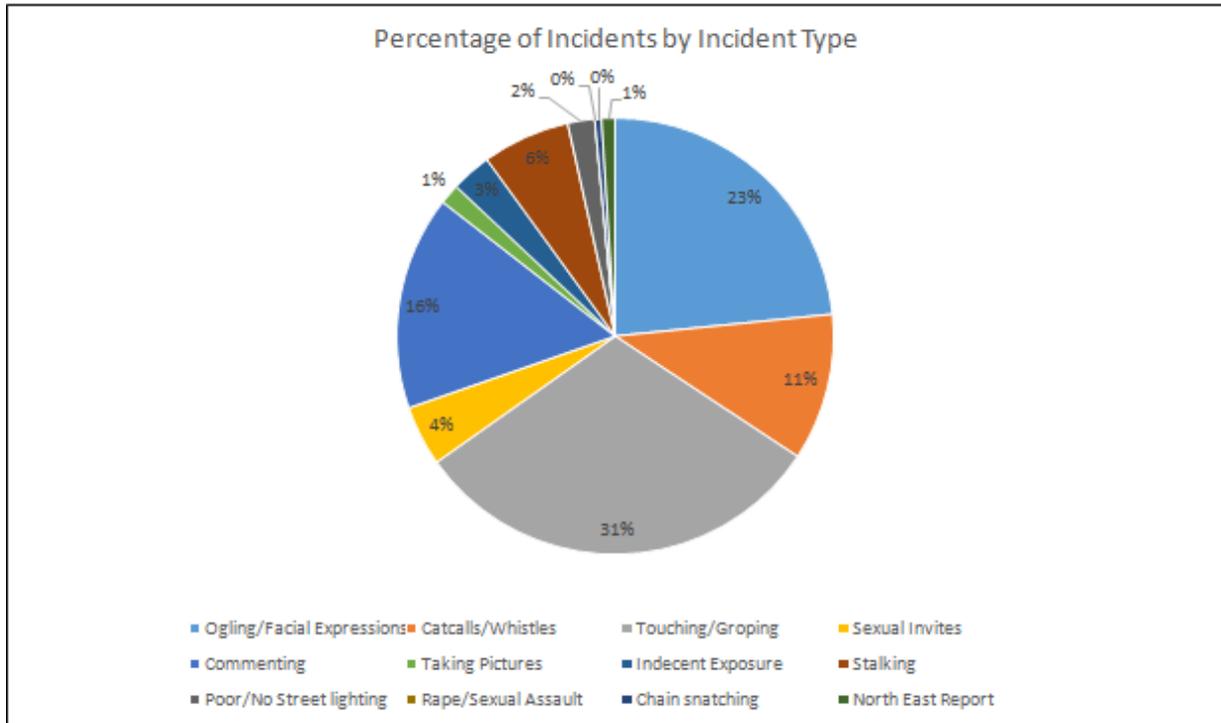


Fig. 11. Percentage of reports of sexual harassment by harassment type at CST

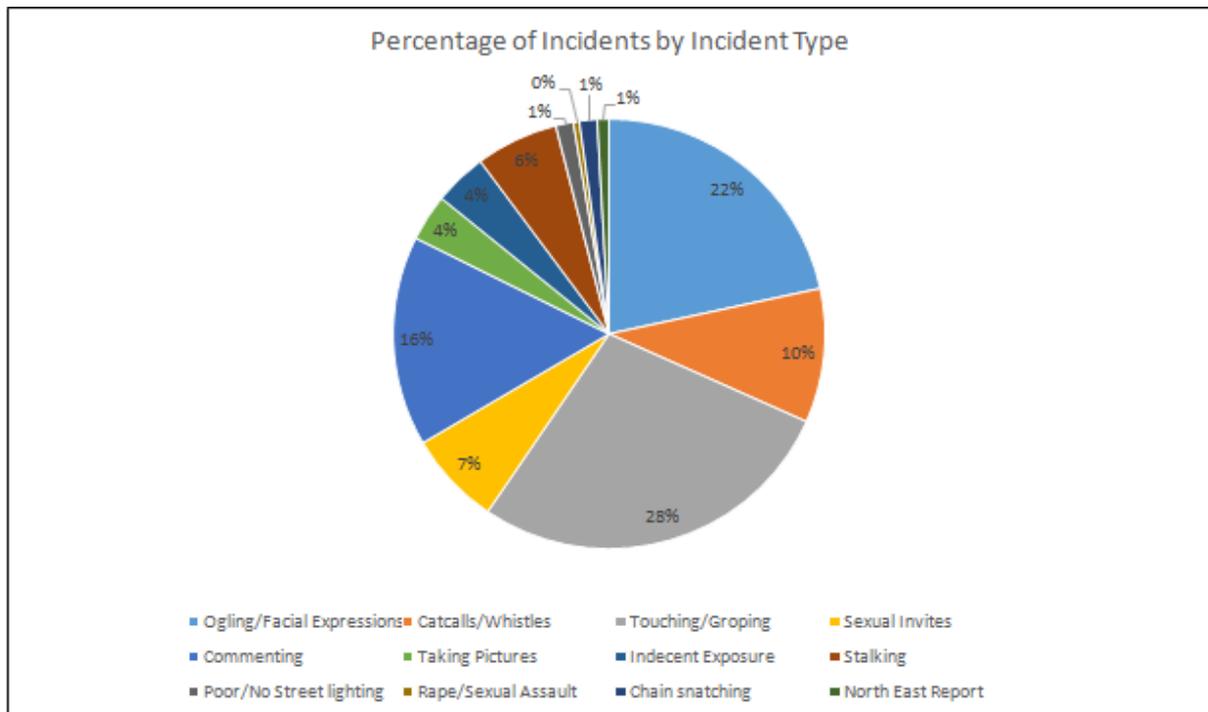


Fig. 12. Percentage of reports of sexual harassment by harassment type at Dadar

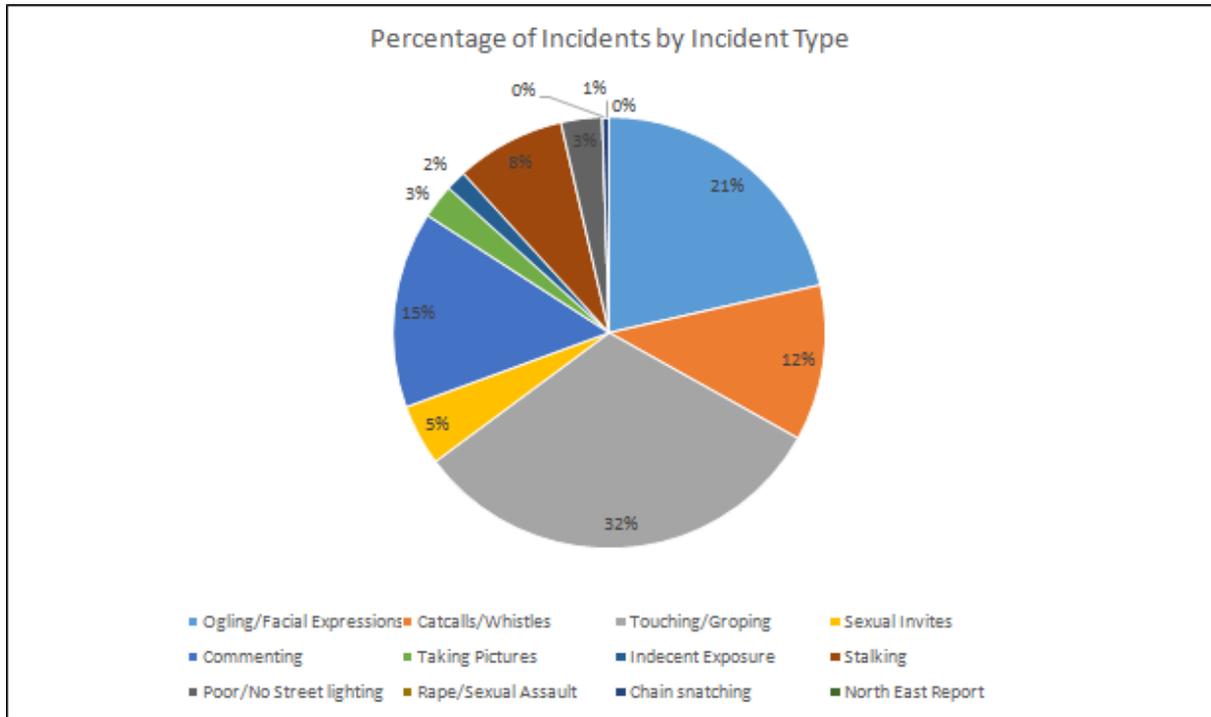


Fig. 13. Percentage of reports of sexual harassment by harassment type at Kurla

- The word cloud formed from responses of what made people feel unsafe at these railway stations showed a very high intensity of the word 'crowded' or its variations, probably linking to high number of instances of touching and groping which are easier for a perpetrator to get away with in a crowded place.

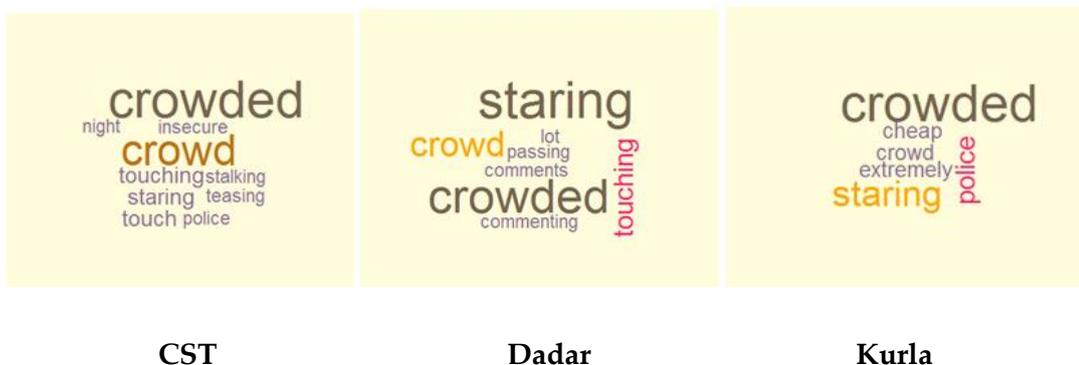


Fig. 15. Why do people feel unsafe at these stations?

- The kind of action taken by the respondents at CST and Kurla mostly involved getting away from the situation or perpetrator or ignoring the incident while at Dadar it mostly involved shouting at the perpetrator in different ways.

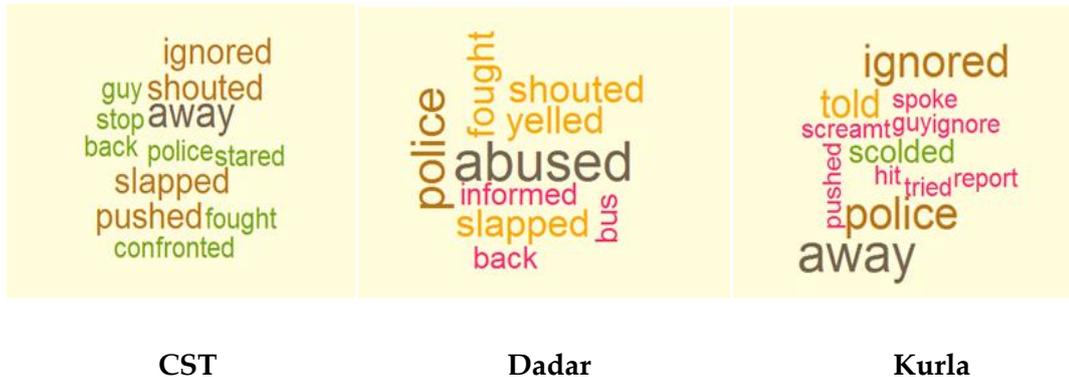


Fig. 16. What action do people take when faced with sexual harassment at these stations?

- While the word clouds threw up the word police in various intensities at the three stations, the instances of reporting with the police were particularly low: CST (15%), Dadar (15%) and Kurla (13%). Highlighting how while the person affected may talk to the police or request action, formal reporting does not necessarily take place. The word cloud throws up police primarily indicating police apathy/lack of presence when needed.
- Fewer people knew of women related legislations and the railway safety helpline at CST and Dadar stations as compared to Kurla station. But overall the awareness is still quite low. Even those who said they knew of such laws or the helpline only knew skeletal or incorrect information about the legislations and varied helpline numbers were quoted by respondents instead of the assigned railway helpline number. This highlights the need for a unified helpline number for India that can be easy for people to remember and act as a one stop contact for dealing with any kind of emergency situation.

9. People mostly did not report feeling safe at the stations. Numbers that reported feeling safe: CST (33%), Dadar (14%) and Kurla (25%).

Proposed solutions:

In several places, even if legislation provides for certain measures - lack of implementations defeats the purpose of the legislation; the solutions proposed are made keeping in mind that even if measures are available, they are not implemented and hence need to be relooked at.

1. The stations were built in keeping with a certain population strength, while the increase in population has been drastic, the simultaneous **increase of railway infrastructure** has not been as adequate. While increasing railway stations may not be feasible, it would be beneficial to increase and widen entry-exit points and ensure a certain radius outside these exits is free of any encroachments.
2. **Illegal parking** outside stations must be prohibited completely as it allows for spaces to be created that are not visible to everyone in that area and hence increases possibility of harassment in the vicinity of the vehicles.
3. **Security personnel** must represent all genders proportionately. We also found a tendency of all security personnel to congregate at one or two points in the station. There must be strict measures and checking by the stationmaster to ensure that the security is adequately spaced out across the station and is representative in terms of gender. Density of police personnel at the railway stations must also be increased, especially during the evenings i.e. 5pm to 12am and at the station exits.
4. **Lighting** needs to be improved especially in the area outside railway stations and at station exits. Here local citizens groups can be made responsible for ensuring surprise checks at the railway stations along with documentation to ensure that the lighting is functional and adequate.
5. **Helpdesks** present at stations were rarely being utilised by police personnel, they were being used in place of benches by civilian population. CCTV cameras around

the helpdesks and a fine for security personnel not being present at these helpdesks at the designated time should be strictly enforced. These helpdesks should also be used to disseminate information regarding sexual harassment and the immediate remedy available at the railway station. Printed material can be placed visibly on the helpdesk to provide details of how and who to approach in case of sexual harassment as well as provide details of laws that protect one from sexual harassment.

6. **Helpline phones** should be placed and cemented at various points at the station clearly in view of CCTV cameras, that allow a person to call the railway police present at the station for free from that phone, this could also incorporate an emergency button on that phone. **Smartcard machines** can be made/modified in a manner that allows reporting of incidents of sexual harassment at the railway station or in the train.
7. The **intercom system** at the railway stations can be used to make announcements regarding sexual harassment, penalties for perpetuating it and remedies available. This could be in line with the safety announcements that are already done with regard to unclaimed items lying around or foot-boarding on a train.
8. **Informative posters and wall art** that is currently being undertaken at railway stations across Mumbai should compulsorily include/depict information regarding sexual harassment or images that deter harassers. Posters can also be put up within the trains and announcements can be made on the intercom systems in the trains as well.
9. **Railway toilets** should be better lit and have better privacy measures and security personnel presence. To ensure this, local citizens groups can be made responsible here as well for ensuring surprise checks at the railway toilets along with documentation to ensure the toilet facilities are made safer for use.
10. The lack of knowledge regarding the railway helpline number is a major problem. Coupled with this is the issue that respondents knew different helpline numbers.

This highlights the need for a **unified helpline number**, not only for railway stations and sexual harassment but for all of India that can be easy for people to remember and act as a one stop contact for dealing with any kind of emergency situation.

11. Need for a **government audit** of railway stations that accounts for population increase and inbuilt population capacity of each station along with population forecasting to ensure that any railway infrastructure that is built is built to meet needs of future years. The audit should also undertake a rating of railway stations on measures of infrastructure and safety.
12. Tie ups with existing **apps** like M-Indicator or building of a separate app that allows for quick reporting and remedy of incidents of sexual harassment is necessary. These apps should also provide information regarding sexual harassment and channels of remedy.