# Session Objectives

In June 2021 London TravelWatch held a focus group with the Young Women's Trust to explore the topic of 'Feeling safe while travelling in London'. This focus group was designed and held alongside London TravelWatch's current research project looking into the issue of personal safety for London Transport users, with the aim of looking in more detail at the issues particularly facing young women. These slides highlight some of the key findings of this session, and how they compare to wider findings of the other research.
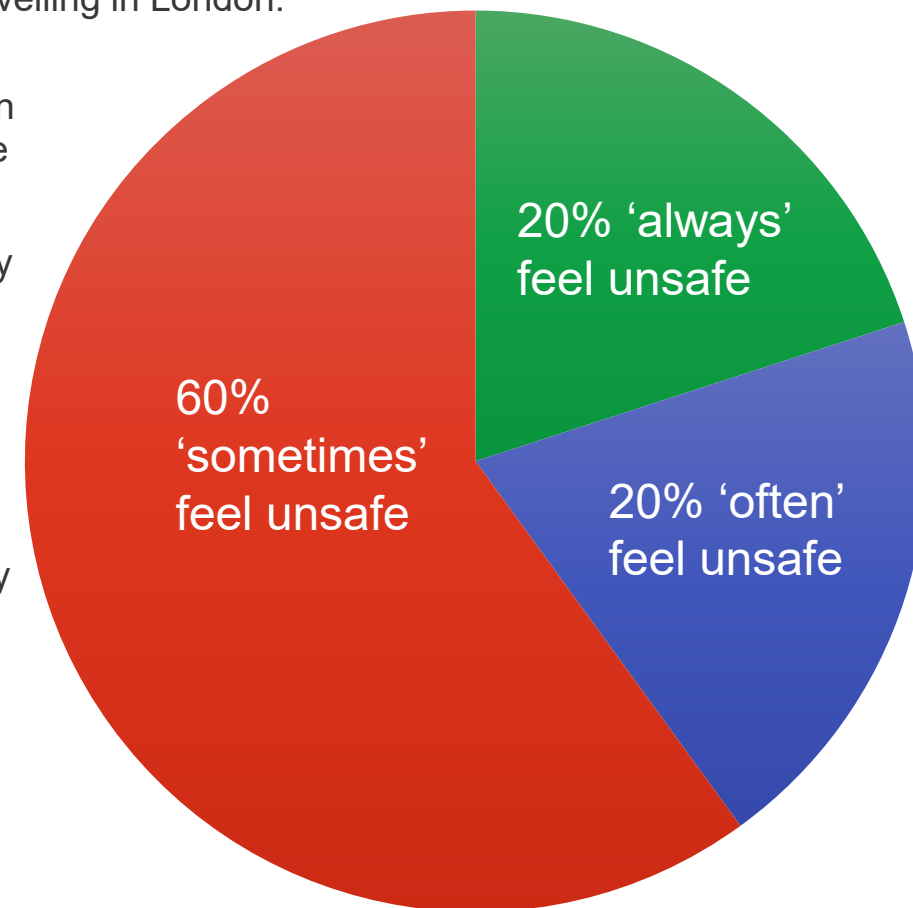
The objectives were to:

• explore what feeling safe while travelling means to young women in London

• highlight what the issues are, and behaviours associated with 'feeling safe'

• identify what needs to happen next to improve the safety of young women travelling in London

The young women who participated were of different ages ranging from 21 to 28 years old, from a mixture of ethnic backgrounds and living in Greater London and surrounding areas in the London TravelWatch remit.

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Wordcloud: How would you define 'unsafe' and 'safe' in your day-to-day life?

unsupported

feeling helpless
nowhere to turn to
having to watch your back
being hyperaware
feeling on edge

Unsafe

Safe

feeling comfortable
comfortable
supported when needed
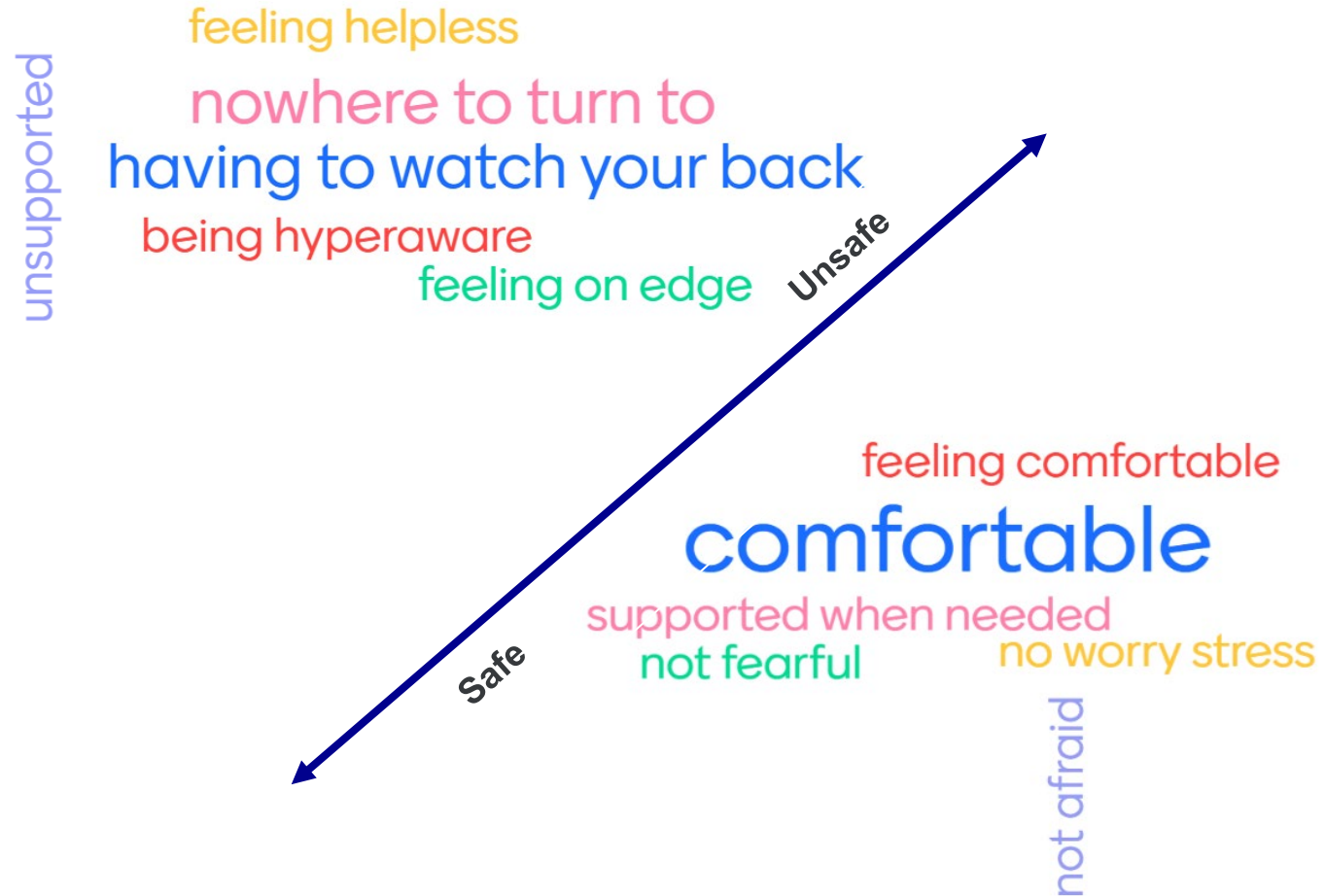not fearful
no worry stress

not afraid

# Photo prompts: what do these images make you think or feel?

Focus group participants were asked to look at a series of photo prompts, and think about:

How safe is this location?

• What situations can you imagine taking place here?

• How likely are they to happen to you?

• How likely are they to happen to someone else?

• What is there here that's unique – are there risks or other things that only happen in situations like this?

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**Picture 1**

'I feel claustrophobic. I feel quite panicky as well. What comes to my mind is feeling like I might be pushed...and I'd be worried about being pickpocketed as well...But like also I would feel worried about being harassed or being touched and stuff but then I couldn't really hide anything in that way, so that would be going through my mind too that it would be quite easy for someone to do something like that because they could just get lost in the crowd.'
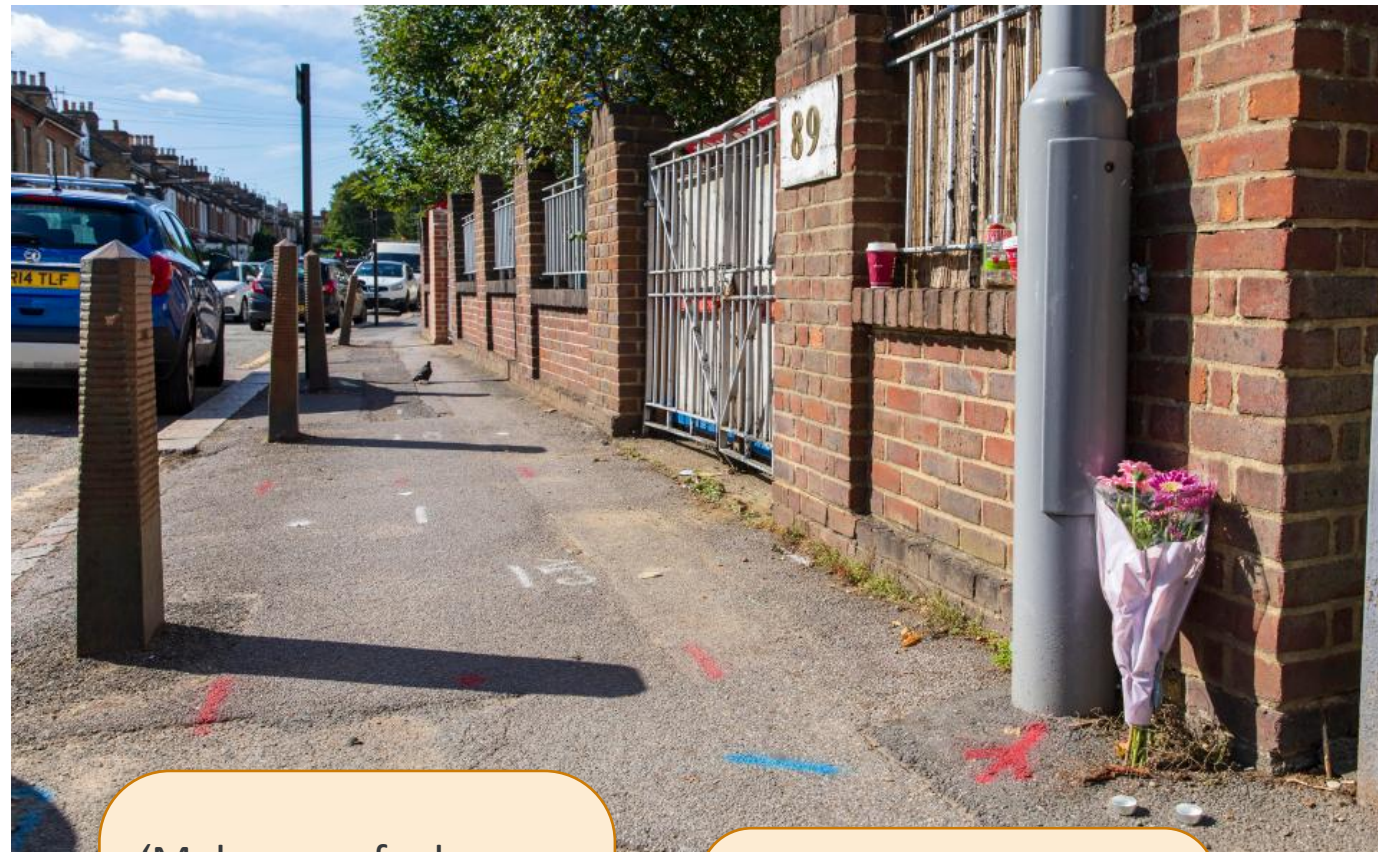
'for those with disabilities or babies/young children/pregnant, I'd be quite concerned for their safety'.

'So unsafe! I've been in situations like that on my way home from work in central London and I used to get pushed, shoved and I'd keep my hand over my handbag to stop pickpockets.'

**Picture 3**



'I find bus stops to be more of a safer spot but some bus stops don't have lights at night or in a quiet road [with] no one else there I feel really unsafe.'

'I personally would feel quite safe here, seeing that there are two black women there and being a black woman myself I would feel quite safe, and probably engage in conversation with them so that would make me feel quite safe as well.'

'[however] Though I would feel safe in that particular instance, there are times where I have felt unsafe at a bus stop. I have been pickpocketed at a bus stop by someone who watched me get on it then followed me throughout [the journey] and then at the second bus stop actually pickpocketed me and assaulted me in the process as well.'

'Likewise, I was followed too and ended up using a bus stop for safety since there were people there so it definitely can be both positive and negative.'

'bus stops tend to be quite safe but at night, alone, it's a different ball game, quite sheltered.'

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**Picture 4**

[On whether they would feel safe in this situation] ' I would probably say yes before the experience I spoke about, [being followed, pickpocketed and assaulted] but that happened 5 mins from home, so not anymore at all.'

'Public street, decently lit, pedestrians, I'd feel reasonably safe. Location does play a big part, boroughs and all as some have more crime rates than others.'

'Makes me feel quite nervous that it's at night, it would depend if there are more people around etc and the fact it's not sheltered can be worrying sometimes. If it's an area I've been to many times, I would feel safer.'

'I'd feel quite unsafe here, given it's quite dark and it isn't a sheltered stop. However, compared to a less well-lit/quiet street, it's a lot better.'
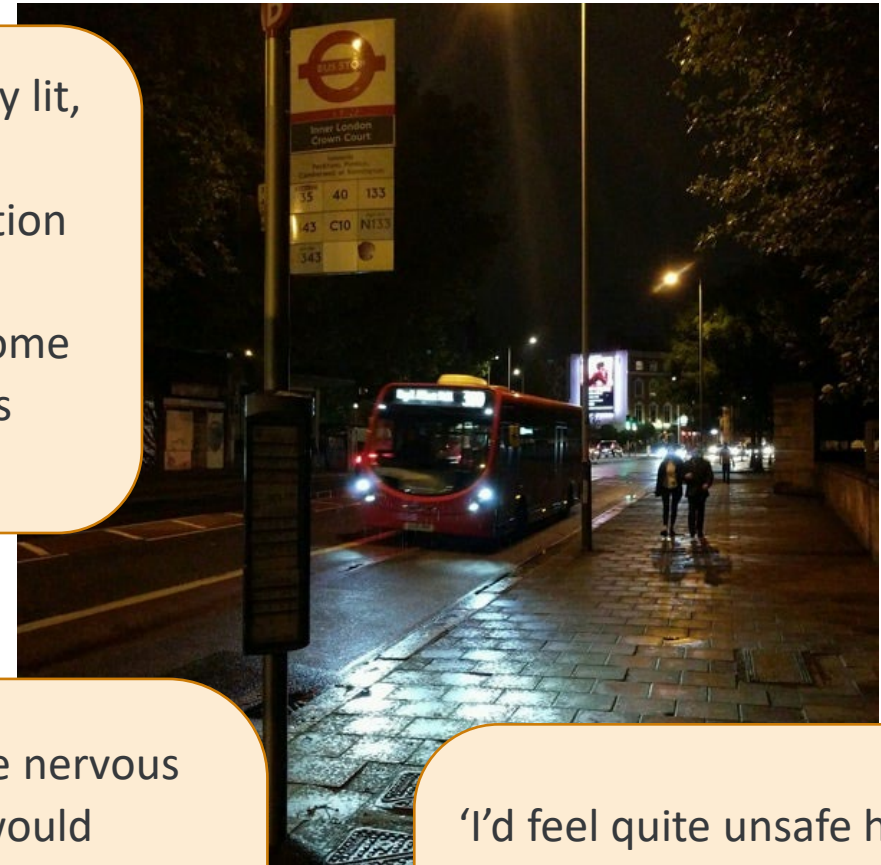
# Reflection and discussion: on different modes of transport

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'If I'm honest I don't think there's a particular mode of transport I feel safe on, I've had horrible experiences on almost all of them. I was going to say the Tube, but to be honest I've had a horrible experience on the Tube where I was followed almost the whole way home or where I've had to stay on the Tube until the end of the line in the hope that person will get off before me.'

'I feel safer on a bus because I feel there is a way out, people etc - I have had instances that have happened on the Tube which makes me feel very on edge especially during busy times so I try to stay on buses if there is an option/choice.'

'I feel a lot safer with my male friends, and I also feel safer when I see a member of the transport police on the tube, or even just any TfL worker.'

'TfL workers don't tend to be at my local stops off peak / night time, typically when they're needed the most.'

# Perceptions and expectations of bystanders and other transport users

'The stigma around London about how everyone behaves on public transport, just not caring about anyone else and being very focused on themselves, that can make you feel quite unsafe as well because you kind of feel like if anything does happen to me you're just left worrying and so you feel quite unsupported sometimes.'

'It's really helpful when men speak up. So in one instance when I was being followed, two men were like 'excuse me, are you alright?' and 'what are you doing?' to the guy who was kind of freaked out by it [the two men challenging him] after following me for about ten minutes all the way through to the end of the train. So sometimes men can stop other men.'

'I remember times when I've seen someone quite emotional on the train and wanting to sit next to them and ask if they're okay but then I'm like London people don't do that! You're supposed to leave everyone alone. So I'll kind of just sit there and like change my countenance or my facial expression to let them know if you do want to talk to me you can, but I'm not going to bother you kind of thing.'

# Perceptions and expectations of transport staff and police

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'Very recently my friend and I had just walked into a train station and we had 2 police officers come over to us and speak about a number to text if we felt unsafe, I felt that was really good to know. Should be more of that definitely.'

'I don't think other people would care to be honest, same with staff my case might be one of many. I don't feel TfL staff always seem approachable.'

'Everyone including cleaners should be trained to handle unsafe situations.'

'Yes - even if it just contacting transport police for you.'

'I feel like there are less transport staff available so sometimes worry that if you needed intervention from a transport worker they aren't around.'

# Expectations and ideas for the transport network and travelling environment

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'I think numbers to contact should be plastered everywhere.'

'Definitely also have more staff and ensure ALL transport staff are trained in handling unsafe situations.'

'I prefer it when there is a member on staff on platform I feel more safe. especially if I experience someone between stations in tube then I have someone to go to.'

'Can stations have 'safe spots' for moments like this to take people somewhere safe when incidents occur. Knowing there's somewhere to go.'

'Could kick off a volunteer / TfL worker initiative: "TfL guardians" where groups of people can monitor at night when incidents occur (could be Friday night - weekend especially.'

# Reflections on reporting process

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'I use all methods of transport like bus, train and Tube. The tube would be the most difficult to report [in the moment] as if you're underground you can't even call the police.'

'I think numbers to contact should be plastered everywhere.'

'I agree I think the tube is the hardest!'

'I had no idea there was a text message service. Definitely one to campaign [on].'

'We need that text message service advertised.'

# Reflections on reporting process: is it worth it?

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'I actually wouldn't report much at all, because nature of travelling and TfL, so many people and everything moving so fast, I just don't think anyone would care about anything I've suffered.'

'I'm less likely to report things out of fear of how that would be received and potentially receiving insensitive questions. So when I reported [an incident of pickpocketing and assault] they said 'oh yeah we reviewed it and in future maybe hold onto your phone next time.' So that kind of made me feel like even calling the police won't help.'

'I wouldn't report drunk people unless it was violence or racism.'

'I wouldn't report verbal harassment because I think it wouldn't be taken seriously.'

# Reflections on messaging and communications

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'Even receiving texts like we did regarding COVID - texts that everyone can receive - I think that would also help reduce behaviour that creates unsafe contexts if people know that they could get in trouble easily?'

'We should push focus on to consequences to the people making transport unsafe as well as keeping us safe''

'Yes - even if it just contacting transport police for you.'

'With details of what happens when the number is contacted as a warning to the dangerous people.'

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# Thoughts and ideas on what would improve personal safety while travelling

'Us/passengers: be vigilant, ensure personal hygiene and follow the rules / code of conduct, have emergency contacts on your phone, call someone when alone.'

'Recruit more staff during off peak / night time, an extended service provided by the transport police...having people at each station ready to intervene when any support is needed and a text service promoting the transport police details.'

'To make myself feel safer - I message my friend/family member to let them know where I am during a journey. What others could do to make me feel safer is definitely have more visible staff or police in stations or bus stops who know what to do with situations.'

'More posters and contact details in trains, buses, Tubes that's visible.'

# Thoughts and ideas on what would improve personal safety while travelling

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'I think it's important that we try shake off this London culture of "not interacting with others on public transport".'

'Working gradually to change the narrative of London being an "every man for himself" kind of place when travelling around. Also having support resources/helplines/numbers everywhere with the consequences of behaviours that cause unsafety.'

'Text services should be advertised and a direct contact number to report there and then should be available too.'

'Posters / campaigns 100% need more.'

'More posters and contact details in trains buses Tubes that's visible.'

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