



SAFETY IN NUMBERS:

How the Not One More Girl (NOMG) Initiative Addresses Sexual Harassment & Gender-Based Violence

September 2023

(At Alliance for Girls, girls and gender-expansive youth refers to cis girls, trans girls, non-binary youth, gender non-conforming youth, gender queer youth, and any girl-identified youth.)

SEXUAL HARASSMENT ON PUBLIC TRANSIT

When the #MeToo movement emerged, much of the cultural focus was on sexual harassment in the workplace, however, shortly thereafter, *The Washington Post* brought much needed attention to this issue on public transportation stating, "[buses and trains are ground zero for \[sexual harrassment\] incidents.](#)"

In addition, there were increasing numbers of transgender, gender non-conforming (TGNC), and female-identifying people who reported that they had been sexually harassed on public transportation. National data samples from some of the most populous US cities provide a picture of the scope of the issue (see infographics) and signal an urgent message that transit agencies have a responsibility to stop sexual harassment. Unfortunately, previous attempts by these agencies to address this have resulted in increased policing, which historically has not met the needs of people of color, undocumented people, or those who did not wish to report harassment. Furthermore, police are often not equipped with the tools to respond to sexual harassment.

¹ [nytimes.com/packages/pdf/nyregion/city_room/20070726_hiddeninplainsight.pdf?pagewanted=all](https://www.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/nyregion/city_room/20070726_hiddeninplainsight.pdf?pagewanted=all)

² https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/mti_publications/286/

³ BART Rider Survey, August 2020

2007



New York City subway riders reported that they had been sexually harassed.¹

March 2020



of students in San Jose State University said that they experienced some form of harassment on transit.²

2020 BART Survey



of BART riders reported that they had experienced gender-based sexual harassment.³

THE AFG MODEL

The [Alliance for Girls \(AFG\) model](#) starts with amplifying the voices of girls and gender-expansive youth. We do this through youth participatory action research where youth are in the driver's seat, asking the questions, analyzing the data, and giving recommendations. Then, we build the capacity of girls' champions by lifting up the best practices in this field and train across the sector to ensure that everyone is equipped to do this work well. Finally, with girls and gender-expansive youth in the driver's seat telling us what they need and an activated base of adults behind them, we advocate for policy change.

In 2019, AFG published the [Together We Rise](#) research report, a girl-led research study outlining the lived experiences and needs of girls and gender-expansive youth of color between the ages of 9–24 years old in the Bay Area. One hundred percent (100%) of the 63 girls and gender-expansive youth who participated in focus groups during this research study highlighted that they experience some form of physical and/or verbal harassment on a daily basis when taking public transit.

Our research became the rallying cry that mobilized Bay Area girls, gender-expansive youth, and the adult champions who serve them to advocate for change.



I made the mistake of sitting in the back [of the BART train]. This grown, buff man sat behind me. I got off at San Bruno. He gets off too. I started walking. I see he was following me. I stopped. He stopped. I called my best friend. She told me she was not home, but her sister was. I walked into my best friend's house. He followed me. I had to shut the door on him . . . I ran so fast that day. It was in the dark, too.



- Together We Rise youth participant

PHASE I OF NOT ONE MORE GIRL

Based on the report, AFG coordinated directly with girls and gender-expansive youth and some community-based organizations including the Betti Ono Foundation, Black Girls Brilliance, the Unity Council's Latina Mentorship and Achievement Program to create the Not One More Girl (NOMG) initiative as a way to reflect the voices and needs of the community, especially the voices of girls and gender-expansive youth of color. NOMG was created to find non-policing solutions to prevent and address sexual harassment and violence on public transportation. The project was led by Black and Latinx youth, organizations that serve girls and gender-expansive youth in the Bay Area, artists, and intergenerational community advocates. It was the first-of-its-kind initiative in the Bay Area to be embraced, funded, and adopted by a public transit agency to reimagine safety and identify options outside the traditional structure of police response.

Upon being presented the data from the [Together We Rise](#) report and hearing directly from over 50 youth leaders, community members, and girl-serving organizations in late 2019, Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), the nation's 5th largest transit agency, agreed to take action to address gender-based violence and sexual harassment on their trains and in their stations. In early 2020, AFG and its members worked with over 200 members of the Bay Area community and presented BART with a list of community-informed and data-driven [policy recommendations](#) to help achieve public safety with non-police interference. With support from the Betti Ono Foundation, Black Girls Brilliance, the Unity Council, the Women's Building, One Day at a Time Contra Costa, ACLU NorCal, Family Violence Law Center, Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Bay Area, YWCA Golden Gate Silicon Valley, Planned Parenthood Mar Monte, GirlVentures, Girls and Women of Color Collaborative and many more, the [BART Board formally passed a resolution in support of the NOMG initiative in February 2020](#).

Over the next two years, using input from over 100 hired youth, community leaders, and girl-serving organizations, BART collaborated with AFG and three of its member organizations, the Betti Ono Foundation, Black Girls Brilliance, and The Unity Council's Latina Mentorship and Achievement Program to create and launch the overall NOMG initiative and to incorporate the policy recommendations that came out of the [Together We Rise](#) report into a [twelve point resolution](#).

In April 2021, the NOMG initiative officially launched Phase I of the campaign to help build awareness of sexual harassment and violence on public transit, mobilize the community around this issue, and uplift the voices of those most impacted. The campaign included art, posters, and three pop-up events across East and West Oakland. The campaign engaged over 300 community members, 100 youth, over 10 BART staff, 11 artists, and over 15 organizations as key stakeholders and decision-makers in addressing and preventing sexual harassment and violence on BART.

Most importantly, girls and gender-expansive youth were at the center of NOMG Phase I. They were instrumental in providing overall strategy as key decision-makers and led the campaign's social media. They were featured in the posters, the pop-up events, and media interviews.

NOT ONE MORE GIRL PHASE I TIMELINE

2019

- AFG publishes the [Together We Rise](#) research report, a girl-led research study outlining the lived experiences and needs of girls and gender-expansive youth of color between the ages of 9-24 years old in the Bay Area.
- The Not One More Girl (NOMG) initiative is created as a way to reflect the voices and needs of the community, especially the voices of girls and gender-expansive youth of color.
- The NOMG initiative presents data from the Together We Rise report at a BART town hall and AFG hears directly from over 50 youth leaders, community members, and girl-serving organizations.

2021

- AFG publishes the [Radical Visions of Safety](#) report to gain deeper insight into the prevention of gender-based violence (GBV) from the lived, intersectional experiences of girls and gender-expansive youth most impacted.
- NOMG initiative on BART officially launches Phase I to help build awareness about sexual harassment and violence on public transit, mobilize the community around this issue, and uplift the voices of those most impacted. The campaign engages a total of over 300 community members, 100 youth, over 10 BART staff, 11 artists, and over 15 organizations as key stakeholders and decision-makers in addressing and preventing sexual harassment and violence on BART.
- BART conducts surveys to measure the impacts of the NOMG initiative that shows it raised awareness about sexual harassment and made a difference.

2020

- AFG, its members, and over 200 members of the Bay Area community present BART with a list of community-informed and data-driven policy recommendations that achieve public safety on BART services with non-police interference.
- BART Board formally passes a twelve-point resolution in support of the NOMG initiative in February 2020.

2022

- In February, Senator Dave Min (D-37) introduces SB 1161, a bill requiring the Mineta Transportation Institute at San Jose State University to create a community survey for California transit agencies so they can collect better data on passenger safety. In September, California Governor Gavin Newsom signs SB 1161.

2023

- In February, Senator Dave Min (D-37) introduces SB 434, Public Transit for All: Improving Safety & Increasing Ridership, a bill aimed at requiring California's top ten public transit systems to collect survey data to address street harassment on public transit and improve rider safety. The bill is currently making its way through the legislative process.
- In the fall, AFG and Evaluation Studio will begin work on the first youth-informed evaluation framework to support BART with assessing the prevalence and impact of sexual harassment and assault on its trains and platforms and impact of BART's current interventions.

NOT ONE MORE GIRL PHASE I IMPACT

Throughout the campaign, AFG and its partners worked closely with BART's administration, board, and Police Chief to effectively implement the girl and community-created recommendations. Some of the changes made by BART include:

01

Improved tracking of sexual harassment occurrences through the addition of a new BART Watch reporting category, along with inclusion of questions about unwanted verbal/nonverbal sexual harassment and gender-based violence, in alignment with the definitions used in the NOMG campaign Phase I question as part of the BART Passenger Environment Survey

02

Increased resources and non-police options for BART staff and riders through the launch of the "[Addressing Gender-Based Violence](#)" section of the BART.gov webpage outlining options for those who seek help via BART

03

Improved training for BART staff on sexual harassment using the [bystander intervention training video](#) resulting from the NOMG work

04

Increased youth representation at BART with the hiring of transitional-aged youth to serve on hiring panels for frontline safety roles

05

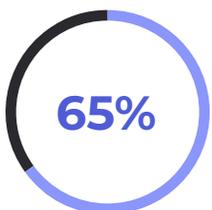
Increased visibility and awareness about sexual harassment through the display of 550 physical posters and additional digital posters that feature youth in an effort to help shift the culture of ridership and create empowering narratives for youth at BART stations and on BART trains, plus the display of a decal outlining what to do if a person experiences gender-based violence or sexual harassment in BART restrooms

06

Increased commitment to address sexual violence and harassment by updating the BART rider code of conduct to include the prohibition of sexual harassment

In late April 2021, BART conducted surveys to measure the impacts of Phase I of the NOMG initiative. An online survey among randomly selected riders showed that NOMG raised awareness about sexual harassment, what to do if it occurs, and made people feel safer when riding BART.

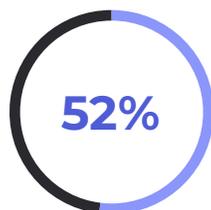
Respondents shared that they:



are more aware of sexual harassment/GBV



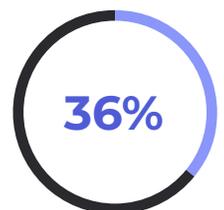
now know what to do if they witness sexual harassment/GBV on BART



know more about how sexual harassment/gender-based violence impacts girls, transgender, and gender non-conforming people on BART



know where to get help if they experience sexual harassment/GBV on BART



feel safer riding BART

Through the addition of questions about sexual harassment and gender-based violence experienced in the last six months on BART, the Passenger Environment Survey showed a decrease from 12% of riders answering yes between January-June 2021 to 7% answering yes in October-December 2021.

Compelled by the success of the NOMG model and Phase I of the initiative at BART, Alliance for Girls worked with Stop AAPI Hate to support state legislation around collecting public safety transit data. In Fall 2022, Governor Newsom signed SB 1161: No Place for Hate California, authored by Senator Dave Min, which was partially inspired by the NOMG recommendations from Phase I, a bill requiring the Mineta Transportation Institute at San Jose State University to create a community survey for California transit agencies so they can collect better data on passenger safety. As part of implementing SB 1161, AFG and BART connected with the Mineta Transportation Institute and through these discussions, AFG, [Evaluation Studio](#), and the Unity Council were able to give input on their survey, specially in terms of key questions to include surrounding sexual harassment and gender-based violence on transit that are girl and gender-expansive youth-friendly.

In 2023, Senator Dave Min and Stop AAPI Hate introduced SB 434, [Public Transit for All: Improving Safety & Increasing Ridership](#), a bill aimed at requiring California's top ten public transit systems to collect survey data to address street harassment on public transit and improve rider safety. AFG, along with its collaborators at Stop AAPI Hate, are actively advocating to push this bill forward and again uplift the work of the NOMG initiative.

In the fall, AFG and Evaluation Studio will begin work on the first youth-informed evaluation framework for BART that will focus on rider safety pertaining to sexual harassment and assault prevention and center how girls and gender-expansive youth define safety as outlined in AFG's 2021 [Radical Visions of Safety](#) research report. This evaluation framework will help BART assess the prevalence and impact of sexual harassment and assault on its trains and platforms, the impact of its programs to reduce and address sexual harassment and assault, and potential policy and program recommendations to better prevent and address this form of violence across its trains and platforms.

THE PATH FORWARD

NOMG's multi-pronged approach relied on youth research, community engagement and partnership, leadership development and training, narrative change, cultural strategy, and collective advocacy. Through this model, Alliance for Girls, the Betti Ono Foundation, Black Girls Brilliance, and the Unity Council's Latina Mentorship and Achievement Program demonstrated how community organizations, girls and gender-expansive youth, and community members can partner with transit agencies to create safer transit for all, especially girls and gender expansive youth of color. Working side-by-side with BIPOC girls and gender-expansive youth, local organizations, community advocates, and public agencies, transit agencies like BART can build and share power, change policy and culture, and co-create the equitable world that girls have been fighting for and dreaming of for a long time.



“

No Californian should feel unsafe on public transit, yet study after study shows that a majority of women, seniors, LGBTQ+ riders, and other vulnerable populations experience street harassment or worse while commuting. This legislation puts forward a data-driven safety framework that will help us understand why these incidents keep happening. The new survey tool developed by the Mineta Institute is the first step in a strategic approach by the Legislature to address this issue...

”

- California State Senator Dave Min, District 37

When we put forward solutions for community safety based on the input and lived experiences of girls and gender-expansive youth which includes cis girls, trans girls, non-binary youth, gender non-conforming youth, gender queer youth, and any girl-identified youth, our communities are stronger and safer for everyone. When girls thrive, communities thrive.

BART continues on its journey to implement the rest of the actions outlined in the twelve-point resolution passed in 2020. This case study can serve as an actionable resource for transit agencies and transit advocates seeking to enhance safety from sexual harassment and gender-based violence for riders.

CALL TO ACTION

Safety on public transit is essential for everyone, however, no one can truly experience safety if the most vulnerable, including girls and gender-expansive youth, are not prioritized.

If you want to advocate to address sexual harassment and gender-based violence on public transit in your area, here are some steps to consider:

(Please keep in mind that these are just potential steps you can take in your community. We strongly recommend first assessing the needs of the girls and gender-expansive youth within your community to ensure those most impacted by these obstacles are at the center of the decision-making process.)

1. **Convene community organizations interested in addressing sexual harassment on transit to discuss the issue and what changes you all would like to see on public transit to address the issue**
2. **Engage transit agencies and advocate to adopt a safety from sexual harassment initiative - make sure that those most impacted by sexual harassment are leading and centered in these conversations and the design of any safety from sexual harassment initiative plan**
3. **Host at least one community event for the transit agency to listen to the community**
4. **Bring forward a policy recommendation for the transit agency board to approve**

See sample policy [here](#) (Community mobilization and turnout at Board meetings to advocate for changes are critical.)

5. **Once the policy is passed, bring together community organizations, youth leaders, and transit agency staff who will lead the work**

Transit agencies should dedicate funds and contract community organizations for this work.

6. **Assess and take inventory of existing work and gaps within the transit agency**
7. **Identify a plan of action based on gaps and community needs**
8. **Work with transit agency staff and a dedicated, paid team of community leaders to implement the plan of action and communicate updates with the community**

To implement policy changes, find a senior-level staff and board member who can champion and advocate for the changes proposed and help push the agency during points of tension.

9. **After the action plan is implemented, evaluate the impact and outcomes using a participatory process**

10. **Assess if further actions are needed**

The goal is for transit agencies to see sexual harassment and gender-based violence as a core part of safety and security and integrate this approach system-wide permanently.

For more information about Alliance for Girls and its members, visit

alliance4girls.org

For more information about the Not One More Girl (NOMG) Phase I on BART, visit

<https://www.bart.gov/guide/safety/gbv>

or contact Alliance for Girls at

info@alliance4girls.org

