

Women and girls in public spaces

Gender Keys 02

A high risk activity or a human right ?

In the first issue of Gender Keys, we learned that urban spaces are not the same for men and women. Women do not live them, nor do they feel them, nor do they enjoy them in the same way. The reason is **gender inequalities that translate into a male public space**, in which women, as well as vulnerable groups due to sex, ethnicity, disability or age, are excluded.

Sexual violence against women and girls remains one of the most serious - and most tolerated - human rights violations worldwide. Although it takes place mostly in the home, sexual violence against women and girls also **occurs in our metropolises' squares, parks, markets, streets, restrooms and public transport**.

In metropolitan spaces, day-to-day activities that require leaving home - working, studying, running errands or having fun - become **high-risk activities for women and girls**, travelling through territories that have been **planned without incorporating their voices** and, therefore, alien to their experiences.

Because of daily threats ranging from sexual assault, including harassment and touching, to rape and femicide, **women and girls around the world still fear public spaces**.

Fear restricts women's and girls' rights, and **hinders access** to opportunities and the enjoyment of experiences in urban spaces.

There are places, parks and neighborhoods where women do not go out after certain hours, simply because they are women. A reality that translates into the **fear of living in the city**, limiting women's mobility, and consequently their access to and participation in, employment, health, education and leisure options, according in equal conditions.

SOCIAL CHALLENGES

Sexual violence against women and girls is not a problem for women, but for society as a whole. If, on the one hand, the planning and design of metropolitan public spaces can reinforce gender inequalities and exclusions, they also have the potential to reverse them.



Sexual violence against women and girls in Global Agendas

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995): ending it is key to achieving gender equality

The 57th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (2013): is a serious problem and measures must be put in place to stop it.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:

Target 5.2: eliminate all its forms in public and private spheres

Target 11.7: provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces for women and children



There is a diversity of actors involved in the management of sexual violence against women and girls in public spaces on a metropolitan scale.

One of the main ones is the **metropolitan local government**, which is responsible for offering solutions and mobilizing other actors, in order to

reduce two factors:

1) cases involving **sexual violence** against women and girls **in public spaces**

2) the **perception of insecurity** that limits women and girls' use of public spaces and so, their full right to the city.

TRANSFORMATIVE TOOLS

BOGOTÁ

Through its Women's Safety Audit, the city council coordinates the mobile application "**SafetiPin**" as a participatory tool to collect and evaluate information on perceptions of urban safety in public spaces [\[+info\]](#)

LYON

Women contribute to changing the public transport system (**SYTRAL**) through exploratory tours that point out areas where they feel unsafe; at the same time, SYTRAL staff receives training on women's safety issues [\[+info\]](#)

MARRAKECH

The program "**Safe and Friendly City for All**" promotes alliances and multisectorial collaborations to prevent and respond to sexual harassment against women and girls in public spaces, mainly in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods [\[+info\]](#)

SEOUL

The "**Safe City for Women**" programme raises awareness and sensitizes citizens, with an emphasis on schools and workspaces, and promotes networking and research on "dating violence" [\[+info\]](#)

For additional information on transformative initiatives, see the study on "[Safety and Public Space: mapping Metropolitan Gender Policies](#)", which indicates that 36% of Metropolis members have initiatives in place to achieve greater freedom of movement, re-appropriation and conquest of public space by women and girls.

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