

# Lost in the crowd: why London's busiest station is also one of the most dangerous

**Sexual assault reports in London's busiest Underground station nearly doubled in 2024, but the chances of survivors getting justice halved.**

● **Warning: contains content some readers may find distressing**

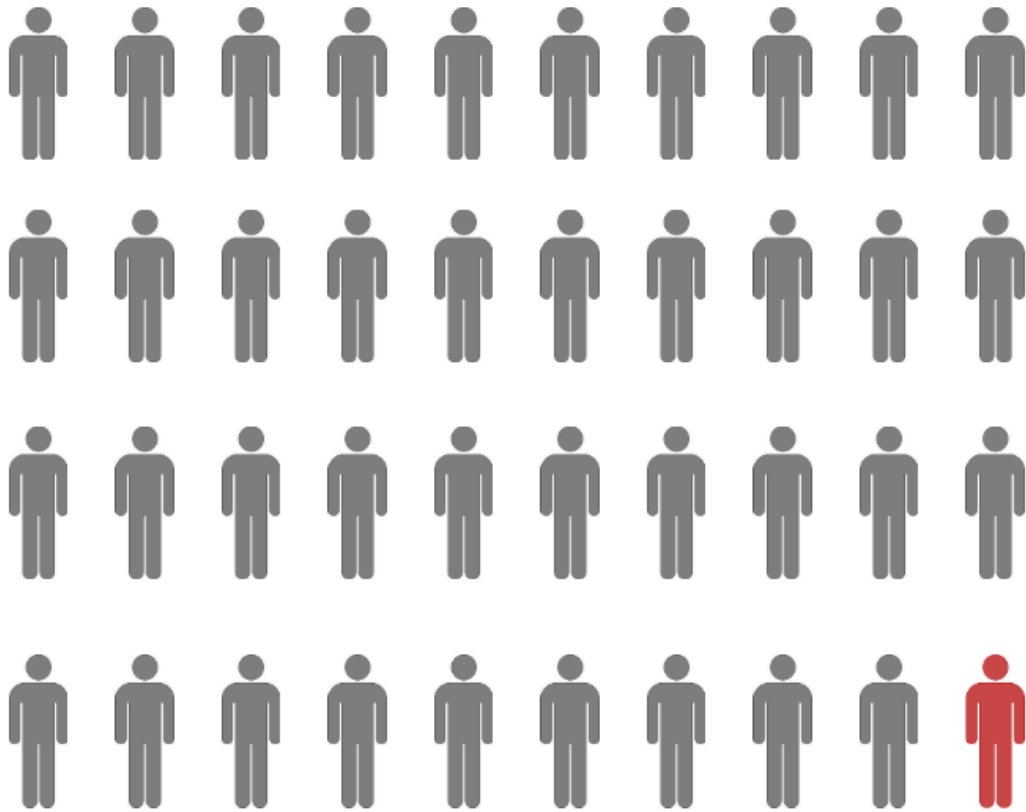


Over 149,000 people on average enter London's busiest station, Kings Cross St Pancras Underground Station, each weekday, according to Statista. Photograph: Christine Matthews/Geograph

Reports of sexual assault in Kings Cross St Pancras Underground Station, made to the British Transport Police (BTP) nearly doubled from 2023 to 2024, with reports rising nearly 50 per cent from 27 to 53.

The figures, provided by the BTP in response to a Freedom of Information request, show that the likelihood of reports resulting in charges dropped from 3.7 per cent in 2023 to 1.8 per cent in 2024.

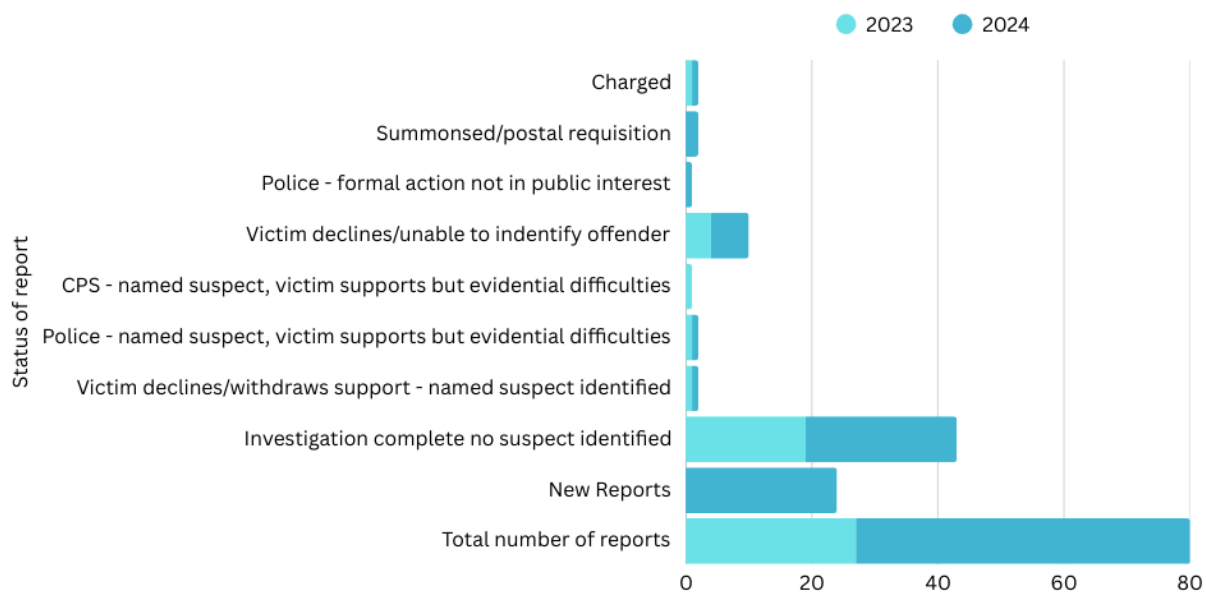
Across both years the data were provided for, approximately only one in forty reports of sexual assault in Kings Cross St Pancras resulted in the perpetrator being charged.



Just two of the 80 reports of sexual assault in Kings Cross St Pancras Underground station resulted in charges from 2023 to the end of 2024. Image: Elisabeth Montague

This increase in reports of sexual assault follows a concerning national trend. From 2023 to 2024, there was a two per cent increase in reports of sexual assault across the UK, according to the Office for National Statistics.

Data released by the BTP revealed that the most likely outcome for reports of sexual assault in Kings Cross St Pancras Underground Station was ‘Investigation complete with no suspect identified’, followed by ‘Victim declines/unable to identify offender’.



Statistics provided by the British Transport Police. Image: Elisabeth Montague

The data consisted of eight coded crime categories and included the cases of victims of all genders and age groups, as well as whether the assault was a result of penetration.

For example, in the data, the crime code 'E48' is categorised as 'Assault on a female aged under 13 by penetration.'

### Safety in numbers?

Other crime data suggests that most sexual offending in London Underground stations takes place during rush hour, usually from 5pm to 7pm, according to a survey commissioned by the BTP.

Jennifer Grant, a former Probation Officer for male sex offenders in London, explained that most assaults reported in rush hour are due to frotteurism: the act of nonconsensually rubbing your genitals against someone in a sexual manner.

She explained that during rush hour, commuters are often "rubbing up against people without meaning to at times as well, so it's a perfect environment."

"You can do those things almost in plain sight and hope that that person just kind of bashes it off," she said.

Grant noted that calling out assault often requires a lot of confidence, “especially when you're on something like the underground. You don't even make eye contact with people, do you?”

This lack of prosecutions not only discourages reporting but also emboldens repeat offenders who are likely to assault again.

Linda Lewis, Training and Development Consultant for The Survivors Trust UK who supports sexual abuse services in the voluntary sector, has trained BTP staff for several years.

Lewis recalls a serving police officer telling her about repeat frotteurism offenders who frequently commit sexual assaults on tube station platforms during rush hour.

“I've been there where you're waiting for the train to come on the platform and then suddenly then you've got a man standing behind with an erect penis pushing himself against a female. It's absolutely disgusting,” she said.

However, the 80 sexual assaults in Kings Cross St Pancras reported in two years are just a snapshot into the third of all women in the UK who have experienced sexual harassment or sexual assault on trains, a survey commissioned by the BTP suggests.



Approximately 10 million women in the UK have experienced sexual harassment or assault on Britain's trains. Image: Elisabeth Montague

## **Why have charges dropped?**

Despite London having the largest number of CCTV cameras of any city in Europe, according to Upcoming Security, Lewis explained that identifying and charging offenders is becoming increasingly difficult for the BTP.

Results from the British government's End-to-End Rape Review Report show that for every 70 reports of sexual assault, only one results in a charge, according to Lewis.

"It's one of the most difficult crimes to prove", she said, "because we've got such high benchmarks beyond all reasonable doubt and the defense only has to find a little bit of doubt and then they can't convict the suspect."

According to the BTP website, cases will either be referred to the Crown Prosecution Service, or more likely closed if there is a lack of evidence.

Lewis explained that many reports end with 'No Further Action', where police "investigated it but they couldn't get sufficient evidence because we've got the two benchmarks; sufficient evidence and in the public interest."

## **Why survivors stay silent**

The charity Rape Crisis England & Wales reports that 83 per cent of female victims and 80 per cent male victims of sexual assault do not report their experiences to the police.

Grant blames reluctance to report sexual assault to the BTP on the public having consistently "received the message that this isn't a crime serious enough to be reported and when it is reported, it's really hard for the police to investigate it."

"There's a lot of women who don't have any confidence in going to the system for help," she said, "they've seen the headlines: 'five per cent of rapes lead to their prosecutions'."

## **Preventing reoffending**

As a former Probation Officer who simultaneously worked with 50 offenders during her career, Grant explained how to prevent sex offenders potentially reoffending.

"If you want to prevent more offenses, we need to get them in the system," she said, referring to charging offenders and placing them on police records.

Grant explained the next step was to enter them into the probation service so that “they can be properly assessed, someone can look at why are they offending because it's different for everyone.”

Sexual assault perpetrators, 99 per cent of which are male according to the US Department of Justice, are motivated by a “need to be dominant over women and girls and they show that through sexual behavior in a criminal way,” according to Linda Lewis, who also previously worked in a local sex offender prison.

Lewis shared her concerns that the impact of sexual violence is often downplayed or dismissed, as she herself had “been victimized a couple of times on the tube.”

### **Training the British Transport Police**

The BTP is one of 120 member organisations working with The Survivors Trust UK. Lewis herself has trained BTP staff for several years in trauma-informed approaches to victims of sexual assault.

“When officers are working, they could very well be working with people who have experienced other traumas,” she said. Lewis explained that those who have previously been victims that might experience sexual assault again in underground stations can relive traumatic events.

Training BTP staff to acknowledge and validate reports of sexual assault is essential to stopping further psychological trauma to survivors, she noted.

“I've had survivors who've said to me that the officer was so kind, so respectful,” Lewis said. “These are the key things we need to do when you hear a disclosure and that's what I train police officers on - to always be respectful.”

### **A broken or underfunded system?**

To combat sexual offences committed inside London's stations and on public transport, the BTP has significantly increased advertisements that raise awareness of how to go about reporting crimes.



The BTP promotes their campaigns inside stations and on all modes of public transport. Image: British Transport Police

However, a recent budget settlement agreed on by the BTP Authority is stretching the police forces' resources, which the Chair of the BTP Federation said would "devastate the essential services and initiatives that help keep rail users safe."

This lack of funding has left the police force struggling to afford regular training provided by charities like The Survivors Trust UK.

"We charge for our training so understandably not everybody's got funding and I am aware the police have got little," Lewis said.

A hiring freeze announced by BTP officials in January has also impacted the ability of the BTP to increase police presence in stations and reduce the likelihood of sexual offences taking place.

Lewis noted that increasing police presence again requires funding and "there's so many stations around the country and the buses and all the different transport systems, it would be impossible to have police presence everywhere."

Despite increased reporting and awareness of sexual assault in London underground stations, the gap between survivors and justice is continuing to grow.

For the few survivors who find courage to report their assaults, most of them will be failed by the British justice system according to Lewis. "All we always ever focus on is criminal justice and we know the reality is - they don't get their justice."

*TFL urges anyone who witnesses or experiences sexual assault in Underground stations to report it by texting the BTP at 61016 or speaking to staff. Support is available from [Rape Crisis](#) at 0808 500 2222.*