



Safety & Security Survey Findings and Recommendations

ILIUM

Ilium Associates, Inc. December 16, 2024

Forward

In 2023 the California State Senate passed into law Senate Bill 434 which required the ten largest transit service providers in the state, which includes LADOT Transit, to survey riders from underrepresented communities and those who had witnessed or directly experienced harassment while riding public transit or while waiting for the service. LADOT Transit commissioned its marketing agency of record, Ilium Associates, which for over two decades had conducted Customer Satisfaction Surveys for LADOT Transit's Commuter Express, DASH and Cityride services, to conduct what has become known as the Safety and Security Survey (SSS).

Safety and Security has been an important issue for LADOT Transit as its service area, the City of Los Angeles, has the second largest homeless population of any major metropolitan area in the US.¹ While LADOT Transit had a low number of onboard or at the bus stop safety and security incidents prior to the pandemic; the decision to operate DASH services free of fare payment beginning in March 2020 increased the number of homeless people riding LADOT Transit services, particularly Downtown and Community DASH. Operating service free of fares increased the number of safety and security incidents on LADOT Transit services which resulted in heightened attention to monitoring and reporting safety and security incidents.

The SSS requirement came at an opportune time for LADOT Transit to identify the number and types of incidents encountered by its riders; whether riders had been victims of assaults or harassments themselves, whether riders reported these incidents as well as their perceptions of personal safety while waiting for and riding Commuter Express and DASH.

Survey Partners

Ilium Associates, on behalf of LADOT Transit, thanks the following individuals and community organizations for their support in developing and administering the Safety and Security Survey.

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¹ US News & World Report December 27, 2023

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Methodology

Ilium based its methodology on the survey requirements detailed in Senate Bill 434 and later guidance from Caltrans, the State of California department with responsibility for all transportation policies and services. Ilium also called upon its previous experience in fielding LADOT Transit surveys to design the survey instrument and the sampling plan to achieve the objectives of the senate bill and the data requirements stipulated by Caltrans.

Ilium determined that the survey should complement previous rider satisfaction surveys which asked safety and security questions but not duplicate that research. Previous Customer Satisfaction Surveys had been self-administered, on-board surveys for Commuter Express and DASH services. The directive of Senate Bill 434 was to engage riders, particularly those from underrepresented populations.

Ilium recommended and LADOT Transit agreed that the SSS would be executed through intercept or face-to-face surveys at bus stops, transit centers and park and ride lots. Those intercept interviews would be supplemented by an online survey that would be made available through the LADOT Transit website and the websites of partners Community Based Organizations and Social Service agencies to reach underrepresented populations.

It was determined that intercept interviews would be conducted by LADOT Transit's Outreach Team at bus stops, transit centers and park and ride locations based on the sampling plan discussed in the next section of this report. The Outreach Team was supplemented by survey teams from two Community Based Organizations-Asian Americans for Housing and Environmental Justice which deployed multilingual teams (Spanish, Korean, Japanese, etc.) and Streets are for Everyone or SAFE which deployed multi-ethnic teams in the South Central area of Los Angeles. Additionally, the LGBTQ Center of Los Angeles and Maternal and Children's Health Services, also made the survey available to each organization's clients and customers through each organization's own communications channels. In person survey teams also attended major events at Vida Sana in Pico Union, and Maternal and Children's diaper and food giveaways.

To expedite the survey work, the Outreach Teams were provided with iPads with Wi Fi connectivity to compensate for the potential of poor Wi-Fi coverage. The market research software platform SurveyMonkey was used so that the data could be collected in real time, data entry costs were eliminated, and results were available on an expedited basis and the Outreach Teams could observe rider reactions to questions. To the latter point, riders

provided the Outreach Teams with useful suggestions and opinions on service quality, fares and routing and scheduling.

In addition, the survey was also posted on the LADOT Transit website.

Sampling Plan

The sampling plan was developed from multiple LADOT Transit data sources including the following:

- Bus Stop List
- Most Recent On and Off Counts at each Bus Stop
- Most Recent Ridership Route Data
- Limited English Proficiency Plan
- LADOT Transit Safety and Security Incident Reports

Ilium reviewed LADOT Transit's list of 106 bus stops and identified 53 of those stops for the intercept interviews because many served multiple DASH and/or Commuter Express routes, and they provided the demographic and geographic coverage Ilium sought to achieve equity.

In compliance with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requirements, LADOT Transit has been reporting safety and security incidents since 2015. That research allowed Ilium to identify the location and time of safety and security incidents for both Commuter Express and DASH services to ensure routes and bus stops where incidents had taken place were locations that received special intercept interview attention.

Ilium chose bus stops that provided a representative number of Commuter Express and DASH routes and stops geographically. Demographically, there is a significant difference in rider profiles between Commuter Express and DASH riders; and as a result, Ilium chose stops along routes for both services, thereby ensuring representation from the demographic profile of each service as extrapolated from the 2023/2024 Onboard Customer Satisfaction Surveys for each service.

Survey Instrument

Caltrans had contracted with San Jose State University's Mineta Transportation Institute to create a survey instrument that allowed for the tabulation and comparison of survey results between the required ten agencies. Ilium complied with the Caltrans guidance but found the resulting survey to be lacking in specificity for the needs of LADOT Transit.

Ilium added the following questions in order to make the results more actionable for LADOT Transit to improve the safety and security of its passengers:

Question

Which LADOT Transit Service do you ride?

Rationale: LADOT Transit operates both express bus and local fixed-route services with distinct characteristics and ridership. In order to extrapolate the results into activities that

would improve rider safety and security, the LADOT Transit survey asked the rider which service they rode.

Which LADOT Transit service was being ridden when the incident took place?

Rationale: Identifying which service was being ridden when an incident took place, allows LADOT Transit to focus its enforcement efforts on the service on which the majority of incidents took place.

If incident reported, was response satisfactory?

Rationale: LADOT Transit wished to know whether the response to the rider's notification met the expectation of the rider in order to improve the quality of future responses to rider incident and to improve the training of those responding to these reports.

If not satisfactory, why not?

Rationale: Similar to the previous question, LADOT Transit sought to improve the quality of the response to such incidents and will use the data from the survey to improve its training.

What would make riding LADOT Transit more safe and secure?

Rationale: LADOT Transit was determined to gather opinions of riders as to what they considered as being the most appropriate action to improve perceptions of safety and security on its services. The list of actions that was offered in the survey included activities LADOT Transit had taken previously (Police patrolling bus stops and onboard services); programs that were underway or being developed at the time of the survey (More lighted bus stops through StreetsLA's STAP, rider education campaigns and real time information screens) and those being studied (elimination of stops by homeless encampments).

The survey instrument was pre-tested for the purpose of readability, presentation, structure and relevance. As the primary audiences for the survey were LADOT Transit riders who are predominantly minority and from low-income households, it was important that the survey recognize the cultural and economic differences of these populations. Of particular importance was ensuring that the survey language was inclusive and sensitive to LGBTQ, Indigenous and Immigrant populations which are served by LADOT Transit Services. The survey was offered in English as well as the ten languages identified in the LEP Plan (Armenian, Chinese, Hebrew, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai and Vietnamese).

To achieve these goals, Ilium received input on the survey questions from Community Based Organizations including Maternal and Children's Health Services, a provider of healthcare services and health education to minority, Indigenous and Immigrant populations; Asian Americans for Housing and Environmental Justice, which is an advocacy organization for the City of Los Angeles' large (11.8%)² Asian Population and the LGBTQ Center of Los Angeles.

² American Community Survey 2023

These groups critiqued the draft questionnaire in the development stages and conducted informal testing which led to revisions to the survey that ensured inclusivity and participation by diverse populations.

Safety and Security Survey Results

The overwhelming majority (92%) of LADOT Transit riders surveyed feel safe when riding during the daytime although that number drops to 58% during the evening hours. Surveyed rider perceptions of safety have to be tempered by fact that 27% of the riders surveyed have experienced or seen an incident or adverse behaviors. Of those who experienced or witnessed an incident, 59% indicated that it was a seldom occurrence, 28% indicated it was once or twice a month and 13% indicated it was a frequent occurrence. The majority of these incidents took place during the day (76%) and while waiting at bus stops (56%) as opposed to on board the bus. Given that most LADOT Transit services end operations by 7:00 PM, it stands to reason that the incidents are more likely to occur in the daytime.

While the general opinion of LADOT Transit riders is that the service is safe, more needs to be done to ensure rider safety both onboard and at the bus stop. LADOT Transit’s top priority must be to encourage its riders to report incidents as 85% of those witnessing an incident never reported it. Reporting incidents has been the most important factor is reducing incidents for those transit agencies that have achieved success with their safety and security efforts.

Hostile comments or gestures, inappropriate language and sexual comments are the safety and security issues identified by surveyed riders; and riders said that these incidents take place more often when they are waiting for the service rather than onboard the bus.

The results of each survey question follow.

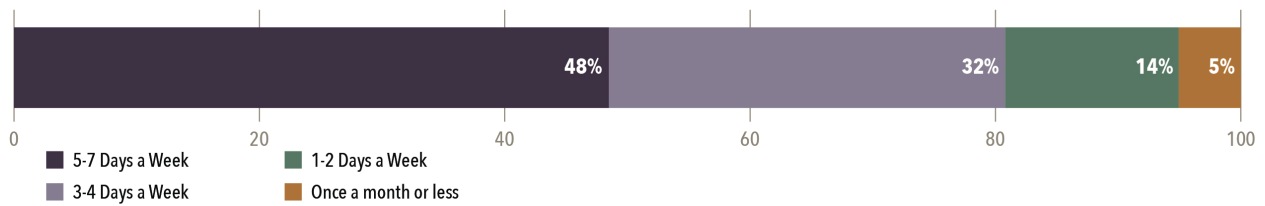
Service Use

The majority of respondents (84%) ride DASH, 12% ride Commuter Express and 7% ride both services. Almost half of respondent (49%) ride five to seven days a week with another 32% who ride three to four days a week. Most riders (56%) ride alone while another 23% ride with others and another 21% do both.

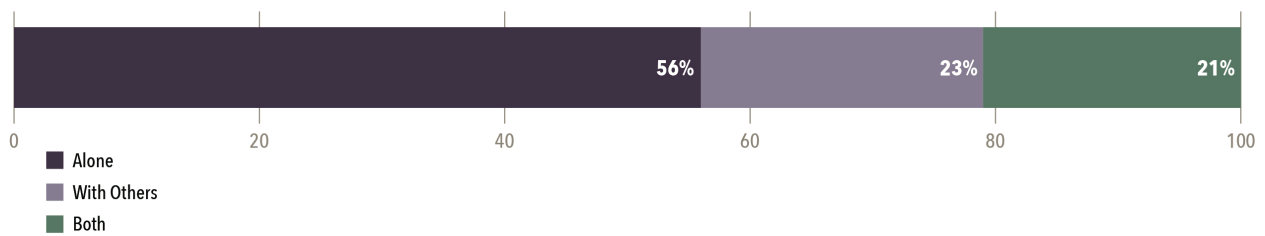
Which LADOT Transit services do you ride?



Over the past year, how often have you ridden LADOT Transit services?



Do you usually ride alone or with others?



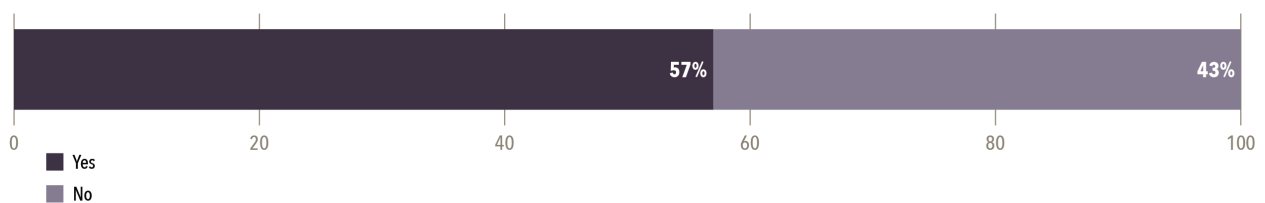
Safety and Security Perceptions

As stated above, the overwhelming majority of respondents feel safe riding during the day, but that safety perception drops significantly at night. Since only a few DASH routes and one Commuter Express route operate past 7:00 PM, the fact that the overwhelming majority feels safe riding during the day is significant.

Do you feel safe and secure when riding LADOT Transit during the daytime?



Do you feel safe and secure when riding LADOT Transit at night?



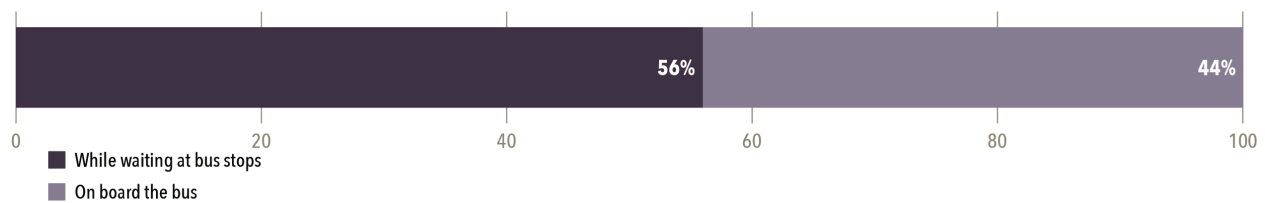
Safety and Security Issues

Slightly over a quarter (27%) of respondents have either witnessed or been a victim of an incident. Of those who have had experienced an issue, 76% said that the incident occurred during the day, which again is to be expected since most LADOT Transit services operate during the day.

Have you experienced or witnessed an incident while waiting or while riding LADOT Transit in the past year?



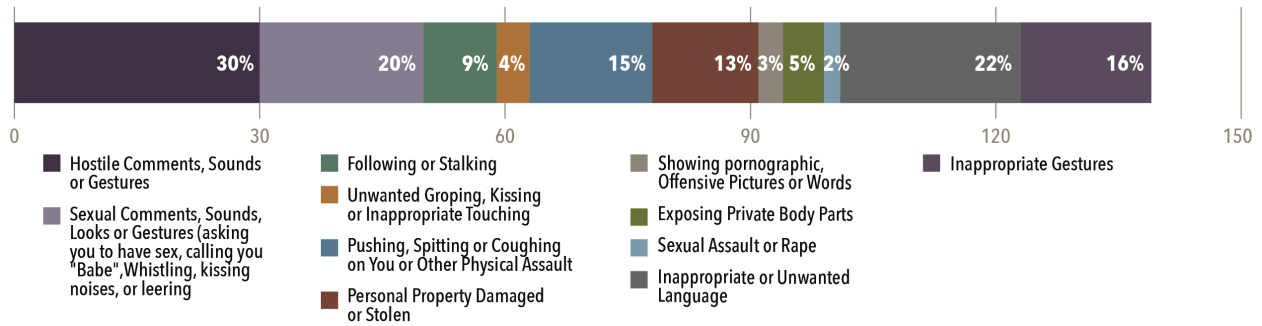
Where did most of these incidents take place?



There were eleven types of incidents identified in the survey questionnaire. The types of incidents that were mentioned more than 10% of the time by those respondents who indicated they had either been a victim or witnessed an incident were:

Hostile Comments, Sounds or Gestures	(30%)
Inappropriate or Unwanted Language	(22%)
Sexual Comments	(20%)
Inappropriate Gestures	(16%)
Pushing, Spitting or Coughing on You or Other Physical Assault	(15%)
Personal Property Damaged or Stolen	(13%)

If yes, which type of incident have you experienced?



Of those who indicated that they had experienced or witnessed an incident, 41% indicated it was either once or twice a month (28%) or a frequent occurrence (13%). The remaining 59% of respondents indicated it was a seldom occurrence. While most incidents occurred while waiting for the bus (56%), another 44% did indicate the incident occurred on the bus.

How often did you experience or see any of these behaviors when using LADOT Transit in the past year?



Further examination of the demographics of those experiencing an issue either frequently or once or twice a month revealed that they were more likely female, Latino, aged 35-64, with Spanish as their primary language. Additionally, almost a third of the respondents identified as LGBTQIA. The actual percentages by each of the categories are broken down on the following page.

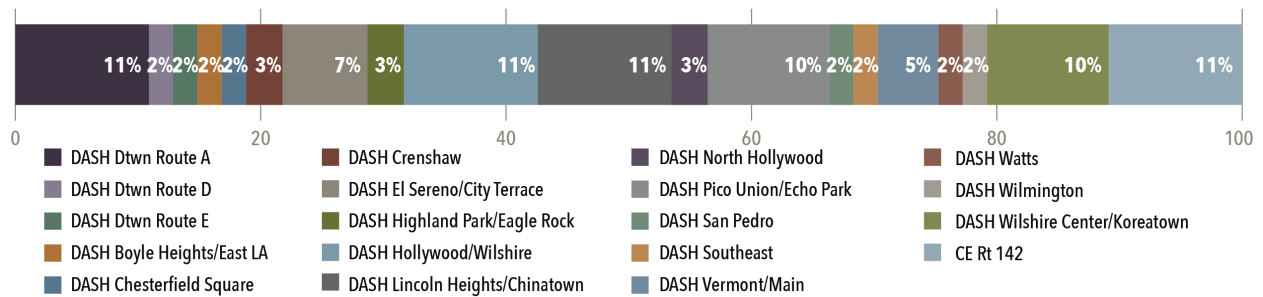
How often did you experience or see any of these behaviors when using LADOT Transit in the past year?

How do you describe yourself?	Frequently	Sometimes (once or twice a month)	Seldom (once or twice in the past year)
Female	86%	59%	51%
Male	14%	25%	40%
Transgender Gender	0%	13%	7%
Non-Binary	0%	0%	3%
Prefer not to Answer	0%	3%	0%
Do you identify as LGBTQIA?			
Yes	14%	18%	24%
No	86%	82%	76%
With what race or ethnic group do you identify?			
Hispanic/Latino	80%	44%	23%
Black/African American	0%	21%	20%
Asian/Pacific Islander	13%	18%	29%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	0%	3%	3%
White	7%	9%	21%
Prefer not to Answer	0%	6%	4%
What is your age group?			
Under 18	13%	12%	6%
18-34	20%	41%	50%
35-64	67%	41%	6%
65 and older	0%	6%	11%
What is your primary language?			
English	25%	42%	59%
Spanish	56%	39%	12%
Armenian	0%	0%	3%
Chinese	0%	3%	5%
Hebrew	0%	0%	1%
Japanese	0%	0%	3%
Korean	0%	3%	5%
Russian	0%	0%	1%
Tagalog	6%	6%	4%
Thai	6%	6%	4%
Vietnamese	6%	0%	1%

Those who experienced an issue on the bus identified the LADOT Transit route where the incident took place. The routes identified by more than 5% of respondents are as follows:

- DASH Downtown Route A (12%)
- DASH Hollywood/Wilshire (12%)
- DASH Lincoln Heights/Chinatown (12%)
- Commuter Express Route 142 (12%)
- DASH Pico Union/Echo Park (10%)
- DASH Wilshire Center/Koreatown (10%)
- DASH El Sereno/City Terrace (7%)
- DASH Vermont/Main (5%)

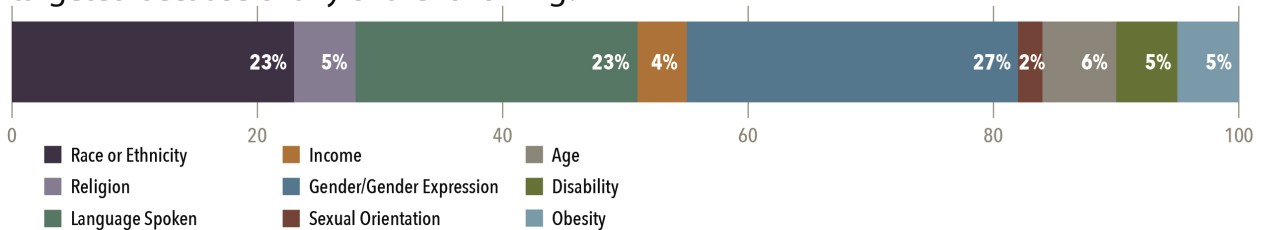
Which route did the incident take place?



Respondents who stated they had witnessed or experienced an incident were asked why they thought they or the victim was targeted. There were three reasons identified most often:

- Gender/Gender Expression (27%)
- Language Spoken (23%)
- Race or Ethnicity (23%)

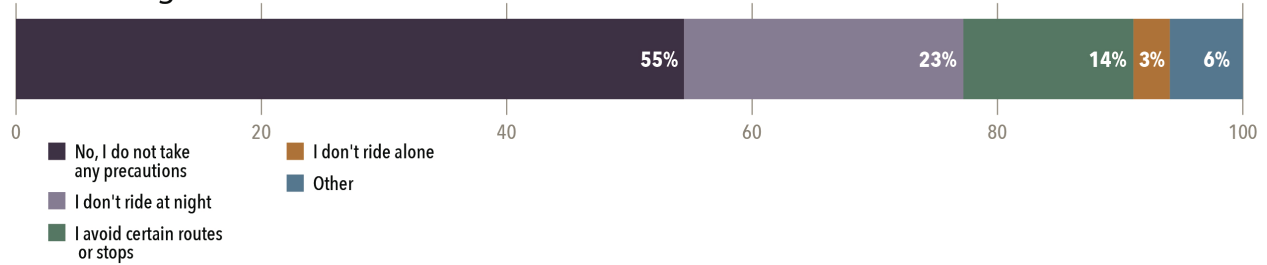
When these incident(s) occurred, do you think that you or the victim was targeted because of any of the following?



Most respondents (55%) indicated that they take no precautions to avoid such incidents, however the remaining 45% did indicate they take precautions as follows:

- I don't ride at night (23%)
- I avoid certain routes or stops (14%)
- I don't ride alone (3%)
- Other (7%)

Do you currently take any safety precautions to avoid such incidents when using LADOT Transit?

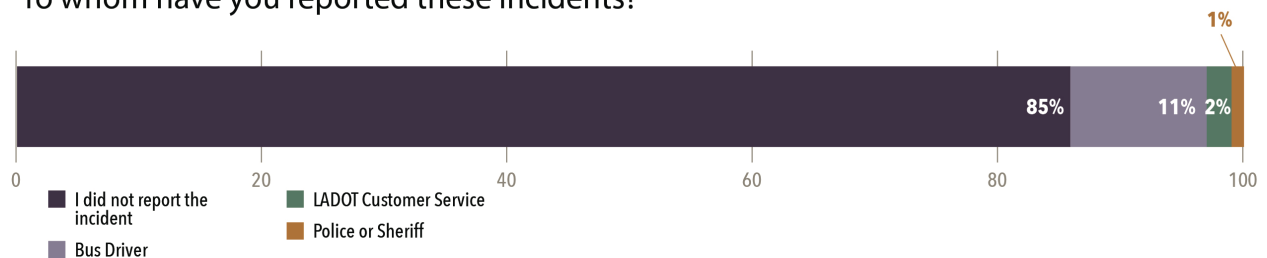


Those indicating 'Other' listed several precautions which are recorded below, the first two of which were mentioned the most:

- Being aware of their surroundings
- Carrying pepper spray
- Only riding for school
- Sitting by the Driver
- Carrying a pocket knife
- Carrying a taser
- Sitting in the back

Of most concern is the fact that most incidents go unreported. Of those experiencing or witnessing an incident, 85% did not report it to anyone. Those that did report it generally reported it to the Bus Driver (11%). The respondents were then asked whether the response they received was satisfactory, of which 78% reported the received response was not satisfactory. When probed further as to why the response was unsatisfactory, most stated that the driver could not do anything about it or the police took too long to arrive or the stolen article was not retrieved.

To whom have you reported these incidents?



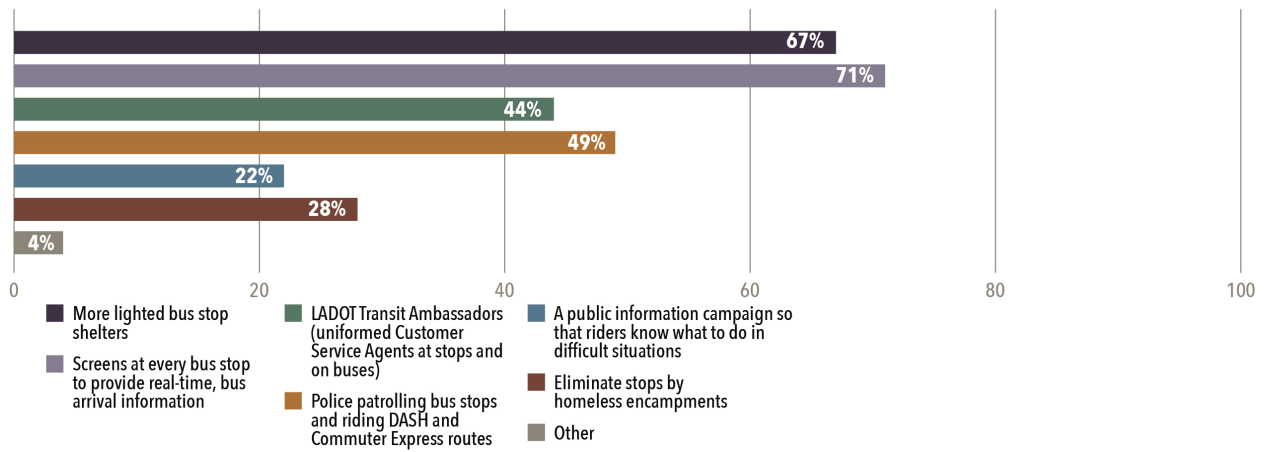
If you reported the incident, was the response satisfactory?



When asked what the respondent thought would make riding LADOT Transit more safe and secure. Respondents were allowed to choose more than one of the listed choices or suggest something that was not listed. The majority (71%) indicated *Screens at Every Bus Stop to Provide Real-Time Bus Arrival Information* and another 67% indicated *More Lighted Bus Shelters*. Almost half (48%) selected having *Police Patrolling Stops and Riding LADOT Services* and another 43% selected *Uniformed Customer Service Agents at Stops and On the Buses*. Some of the suggestions included:

- Cameras at stops, not just on the bus
- Moving stops away from liquor stores and gas stations
- Eliminate free fares
- Have in-house LADOT Transit police
- Run more frequently
- Have a discreet way to get help & a fast response if a serious issue arises

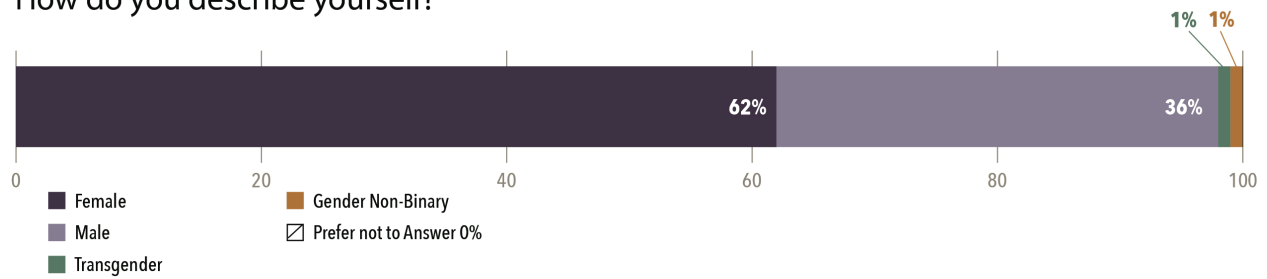
What do you think would make riding LADOT Transit more safe and secure?



Demographics

The majority of respondents were Female at 62%; another 36% identified as Male. Another 1% identified either as Non-Binary or as Transgender.

How do you describe yourself?



Respondents were also asked whether they identified as LGBTQIA, of which 8% responded positively.

Do you identify as LGBTQIA?

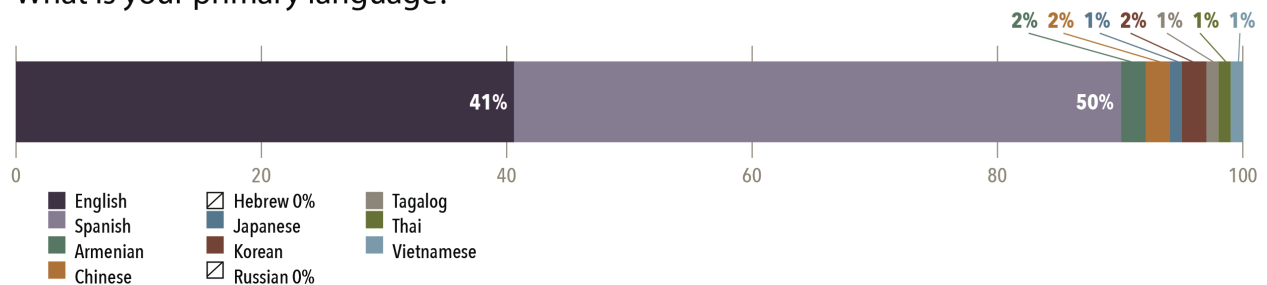


As for race or ethnic group, an overwhelming majority of respondents were Hispanic/Latino. With what race or ethnic group do you identify?



As might be expected from the large majority identifying as Hispanic/Latino, Spanish was selected as the primary language by almost half of the respondents, with English registering second at 41%.

What is your primary language?



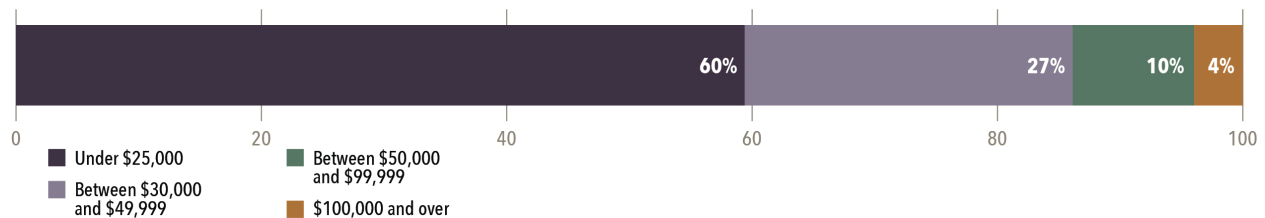
Just over 50% of respondents were in the 35-64 age group with another 31% in the 18-34 age group.

What is your age group?



With regard to income, 60% of the respondents indicated that their annual income is under \$25,000.

What is your annual household income?



Recommendations to Improve Rider Safety and Security

The results of the Safety and Security survey provided valuable insight for near and long term recommendations to improve safety and security for those using LADOT Transit service. Fortunately, LADOT Transit has already begun to implement activities that will address many of the concerns raised by riders in the survey.

The following recommendations resulting from the survey focus on the development and implementation of integrated activities that are intended to mitigate incidents but to also respond to them with measurable results.

Encourage Riders to Report Incidents

The majority of riders (85%) responding to the survey who were victims of incidents or were exposed to incidents did not report them. It has been proven through numerous studies that the more incidents get reported, the more LADOT Transit can focus its resources on combatting these incidents, identifying those committing them and preventing similar incidents in the future. When riders report incidents, it provides the data necessary to pinpoint mitigation activities to the specific LADOT Transit service, route, day of the week

and time of day. Reporting allows for predictive activities that would reduce the types of incidents that take place.

LADOT Transit already collects incident data from MV Transportation's bus operators. That data is used to compile the annual FTA incident reports; however, those reports may only comprise a limited portion of the actual number of incidents that take place on all LADOT Transits services.

Ilium has already developed the 'If You See Something, Do Something About It' campaign that encourages riders to report incidents. That creative campaign will include these elements:

- Interior transit advertising cards
- Website banner notifications
- Onboard Hanover Displays
- Social media
- Handbills for distribution on board and at outreach events
- Shelter and bench advertising
- Onboard announcements

In addition, the LADOT Transit Customer Service Center (CSC) will remind callers to the center to report incidents they witness onboard or while waiting for DASH, Commuter Express or LAnow service.

Engage Social Service Agencies, Healthcare Providers, Schools, LGBTQ Service Centers and Community Based Organizations to Raise Awareness of Rider Safety

Through its outreach efforts, LADOT Transit has developed strong working relationships with dozens of organizations that provide essential services to the minorities and those living in low-income households, many of whom are also LADOT Transit riders. Ilium has already worked with one of these, Maternal and Children's Health (MCH), to include about the use of LADOT Transit's DASH service as a healthier option for young mothers with pre-school age children. MCH includes information about DASH in its public health education classes and Ilium is asking MCH to change its training module to include information from the 'See Something, Do Something About it' Campaign that raises rider awareness of the importance of reporting incidents on LADOT Transit services. That educational effort would also include tips on how to make riding LADOT Transit safer, especially for those who feel unsafe because of their gender identity or ethnic origin.

The survey results revealed that the overwhelming number of riders reporting incidents were young female riders who stated their reluctance to report incidents. Counselors at organizations such as MCH, LA Vida Sana Wellness and Central City Neighborhood Partners that work with these populations are perfectly positioned to encourage their clients to report incidents with the fear of repercussion.

Deploy Behavioral and Mental Health Specialists at Stops and on Routes in Which Incidents Have Taken Place

Those transit agencies that have had the greatest success in reducing incidents are those that have deployed Behavioral and Mental Health Specialists to respond to these episodes in transit facilities or onboard service. Organizations like Philadelphia's SEPTA and Toronto's TTC have decreased homeless and vulnerable people activity by deploying specialists that can connect homeless with housing and social services and offer mental or behavioral services to others.

The results of the Safety and Security survey determined that 41% of the riders surveyed have experienced or seen an incident or adverse behaviors while waiting for or riding LADOT Transit services. As LADOT Transit collects data from driver reports of incidents and the public education effort 'If You See Something, Do Something About It' is intended to raise rider awareness of the need to report incidents, LADOT Transit will have the information necessary to pinpoint incidents to the day, time of day and route to effectively deploy specialists to make its services safer and more secure.

The purpose of the LADOT Transit's specialists would be to measurably reduce disruptive, violent or offensive behavior on LADOT Transit services by intervening, deescalating and preventing incidents. The Specialists would interact with riders, drivers, street supervisors and the public to create a respectful experience on-board and while waiting for services, in compliance with the principles of the LADOT Transit's Riders Code of Conduct.

The role of the specialists is not to do the job of the Los Angeles Police Department rather it is to provide the experience of professionals in the handling of people with mental and behavioral disorders who are involved in many of the incidents that take place at bus stops and onboard buses. Mental health and behavioral specialist are available from LA County Department of Health and the Office of the Mayor of Los Angeles.

Safety and Security At Bus Stops

Enhancing rider safety begins at the bus stop. This is particularly true for LADOT Transit riders who in the 2023 Customer Satisfaction Survey stated they felt less safe waiting for the bus than on the bus. This concern for safety while waiting for the bus was confirmed in the Safety and Security survey in which riders had experienced a greater level of incidents while waiting for the bus than onboard.

LADOT Transit does not control the amenities provided to transit riders in the City of Los Angeles rather the City of Los Angeles' Public Works Department's StreetsLA Division manages the regionwide street furniture program of bus shelters and benches. In the past three years, StreetsLA has developed its *Sidewalk and Transit Amenities Program* or STAP which will upgrade all street furniture in the City of Los Angeles over a five-year period beginning in 2022. As part of that effort, all 1600 bus stop shelters in the City will be replaced with new shelters with enhancements that improve rider safety.

LADOT Transit has provided a priority list of bus stops to StreetsLA of stops with high daily activity, many of which are stops at which LADOT Transit has had reported incidents such as all the stops along 7th Street in Downtown LA and along the Pico Union DASH route. The new bus stop design offers enhanced lighting, more comfortable seating and greater protection from weather and heat.

These improvements in shelter design and functionality coupled with the public education campaign should result in greater rider safety while waiting for service.

Consolidate Incident Reporting

LADOT Transit should establish clear reporting procedures that consolidate the incident reporting captured by MV Transportation drivers, Los Angeles Police Department reports and those incidents reported to the LADOT Transit Customer Service Center (CSC). Data currently comes in from these three sources with manual tabulation of results. Reporting formats should be standardized so that data can be reported in a 'dashboard' format for analysis and actions. Establishing an online reporting format with a portal into LADOT Transit TransTrack consolidation software would be the most appropriate place. Information received from Rider Incident reports can be handled by CSC personnel and then reported into TransTrack.

Other transit agencies such as Chicago's Metra Commuter Railroad have developed their own safety applications which are used by riders as well as agency personnel to report issues and incidents. Having the convenience of a smartphone application allows for real time reporting of incidents which can be read by dispatchers, CSC representatives and LADOT Transit Project Managers.