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Pol: Subways need policing against pervs

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The Manhattan borough president wants more police in the subways to fend off perverts who attack straphangers.

Scott Stringer's office asked commuters how often someone sexually attacked or harassed them in the subway, and found frightening results. More than 60 percent of those who responded to the online study said they were sexually harassed and 10 percent said they'd been sexually assaulted.

"This whole notion of what happens underground stays underground is just not acceptable anymore," Stringer said. "Instead of fighting back, people have become afraid or believe that nothing can be done."

Rush hour was particularly perilous for harassment and attacks, according to Stringer's survey of more than 2,000 people. Almost all victims did not report the crime to police or Metropolitan Transportation Authority personnel.

Echoing some survey results, straphanger Whitney Forbes said she was once accosted by a man who began masturbating in front her during one rush hour.

"I was absolutely disgusted and moved to the back," said Forbes, 25, of the Upper East Side.

Beyond actual attacks, the survey showed most straphangers simply felt a threat of some kind of sexual incident.

Educating people to speak out, creating a phone hotline for attack victims and more detailed sex-crime reporting could curb underground harassment, Stringer said.

But officials with the NYPD and New York City Transit said they're already helping harassment victims. The police noted that they arrested 119 people for sexual abuse and lewdness this year.

Transit spokesman Paul Fleuranges said the agency already has brighter lights on new subway cars, but Stringer called for old cars to be retrofitted with better lighting. Transit also has already begun installing 1,031 digital security cameras in 61 stations, with more to come.

Stringer sent the results of his survey to the MTA and police. The survey was more anecdotal and less scientific, with respondents being people on his e-mail list and from women's advocacy groups.

He hopes to speak with the agencies to determine what can be done to help harassment victims.

"I think this goes to a public education campaign," Stringer said of what he'll do with the results. "This is not NYPD's fault, this is a culture that has been allowed to fester for generations."

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