

# **Am I safe in my city?**

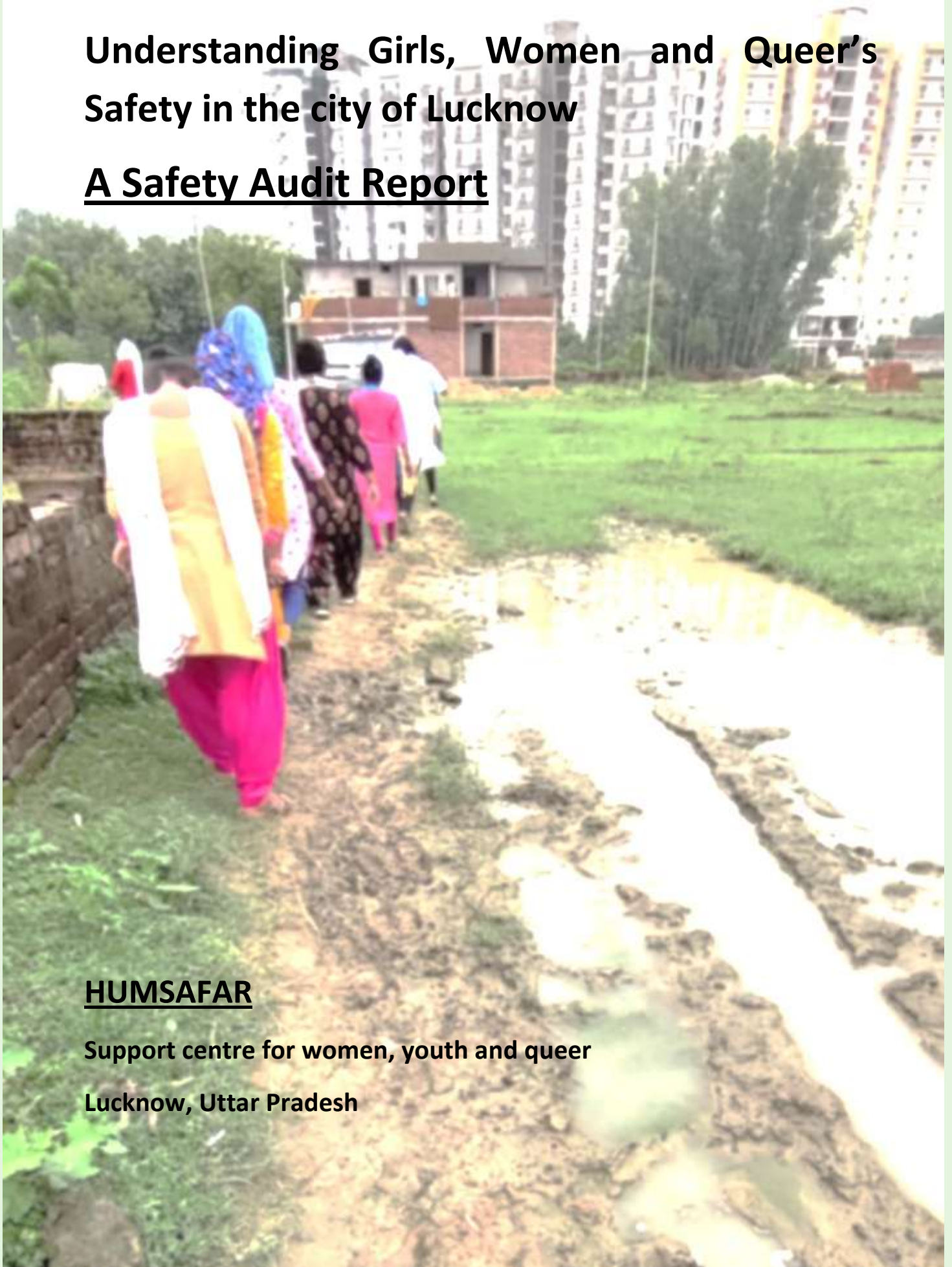
**Understanding Girls, Women and Queer's  
Safety in the city of Lucknow**

## **A Safety Audit Report**

**HUMSAFAR**

**Support centre for women, youth and queer**

**Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh**



# Acknowledgement

This study is a group effort to strengthen and document the unheard voices of those young girls, queer and trans person who are the representatives of the common working-class who in their everyday life face the incidents of Sexual Harassment and molestations on streets and public places.

We would like to express our gratitude towards all these girls, queer-trans and other youth associated with HUMSAFAR who took the lead, participated in the study and shared their stories. Recognising the traumatising every day experiences and expressing it in words wasn't an easy task for them. Still, they shared all their experiences which have been recorded in this report.

HUMSAFAR will also be grateful to Manmeet Kaur Bhatia who has helped us to design and worked with youth to lead the study as per the conceptualization of the HUMSAFAR team.

The lively illustrations in this report are by HUMSAFAR's young trans-activist Ritwik.

This study has been a result of the persistent efforts by the young members of the HUMSAFAR team and youth especially young girls from "***Yuva Tarang***", a platform of youth. The engagement with the youth of these communities from so many years has resulted in creating safe place and comfort zone for the young girls, women and queer friends, where they can easily open up their hearts and disclose their feelings.

HUMSAFAR hopes that this study will be able to portray the real image of the everyday struggle of young girls, women and Queer people on the streets of the Lucknow city and help in the advocacy in the future to make the public spaces secure, accessible and inclusive for all.

**HUMSAFAR**

(Support Centre for  
Women, Youth and Queer)

Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

# Overview

The study is a participatory action research which illustrates the gender based urban violence which is attributed by the different factors like poverty, discrimination, sexuality, exclusion and lack of gendered indicators in urban planning and development and predominantly underlying patriarchy leading to make city unsafe for girls, women and other vulnerable groups. The study also corroborates that the everyday occurrence of violence in public places has been normalized to such an extent that it was difficult for girls, women to identify their own experiences of violence and sexual harassments.

The study demonstrates that women and girls face many forms of harassments – from staring and leering to stalking and sexual assault. Men and boys dominate most of the public spaces not only during the dark but also during the day. Due to the unavailability of cheaper and safer public transport women and girls are exposed to high risk of harassment and violence. The level of trust in the police by all, women, girls and queers is very low and a few of them also shared their incidents of being assaulted or harassed by the police.

The city also lacks basic infrastructure like clean and safe public toilets for all, well-lit streets, no signage in the isolated spaces – contributing to the lack of safety and exclusion of the vulnerable groups.

This study stresses to redesign the city and its spaces in order to make the city truly gender inclusive and violence free for all the citizens with the help of not only changing the infrastructure of the city but at the same time also working on the behavioural changes and challenging the patriarchy.

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## About HUMSAFAR

HUMSAFAR, a Support Centre for women, youth and queer community in Crisis, was set up in Lucknow in November 2003 and was registered in 2008 to ensure a holistic feminist response to discrimination and violence across the sexual spectrum based on gender, religion, caste, and class.

### Working with Violence Survivors

HUMSAFAR has a multi-pronged approach to address gender-based violence. The casework unit, a rigorous curative side, provides a wide variety of support services to women survivors. This includes paralegal, legal, medical, social mediation, counselling, rescue, shelter, and rehabilitation support. During the last 17 years, HUMSAFAR has intervened in more than 10000 cases.

To create a supportive social environment for the women survivor who chooses to speak out and seek help against violence HUMSAFAR started a dynamic outreach program in communities living in the urban *bastis* (settlements) and among adolescents and youth in educational institutions, stakeholders, and network groups.

### Working on Livelihood Challenge

HUMSAFAR started its Livelihood Programme to equip survivors to challenge abusive relationship, rebuild their lives and equip them to reclaim their right to live life with dignity and choice. As part of the non-patriarchal livelihoods program, survivors have trained to drive electric or battery-operated e-rickshaws. Until now, HUMSAFAR has trained more than 150 women to become drivers in the last two years who are driving cars, three wheelers and autos and scooters and are linked with e commerce and transport services.

The pandemic has affected young girls, pushing them out of education and skills, jobs opportunities, leaving them more vulnerable and shoving them towards early and forced marriages. Humsafar has now started training young girls in driving two wheelers, supporting them in education and linking them to e commerce.

The livelihood programme of teaching driving to women and girl is also an effort to train them in non- patriarchal professions challenging the myth that women



are not good at technical skills and also reclaim the city by having more women and girls on roads to make the public spaces safe.

## Working with youth and queer community

At present, HUMSAFAR is working with women, youth and queer in 25 neighbourhoods and with young students in 20 schools and colleges of Lucknow, Hardoi, Unnao, and Sitapur- four districts of the Lucknow division.

HUMSAFAR encouraged youth to constitute an independent youth platform '**Yuva Tarang**' which is a meeting ground for youth from neighbouring communities as well as schools and colleges. '**Yuvati manch**' a collective of young girls is created with an aim to uplift them and sensitize them about their rights to make choices to realize their potential. Working with youth consists of joint open discussions with youth and their parents to break the gap between the generations and encourage conversation in between. This aims that families change the misogynic and discriminatory way of upbringing and support youth to realize their dreams and choices and do not force early marriage.

We work on the overall development of youth as a democratic rational citizen by enshrining the constitutional and progressive ideas so that they can celebrate diversity and challenge discrimination and the culture of hatred and violence in them through various activities and trainings.

Through HUMSAFAR's active youth program emerged the need to address the discrimination and violence faced by the queer community. By creating a safe space for queer youth, HUMSAFAR supports them in addressing challenges they face due to their sexual identity. Along with the fact that HUMSAFAR has succeeded in creating this safe space within the most deprived and lower income groups, where queer and non-binary identities are usually invisible and discriminated. Specially the *Hijra community* which is seen as symbol of mockery and are stigmatized and are deprived from all the basic human rights. We didn't look at it just as an issue of sexual orientation but addressed the caste and class issues which increase the oppression and stigma within the queer individuals.

## Research and Documentation

HUMSAFAR has undertaken evidence-based researches to help take legal measures to open up spaces for survivors. Towards this HUMSAFAR participated and has done several studies in the state of Uttar Pradesh.

- **Comprehensive Studies** on Efficacy of Section 498- A- IPC and section 125 Cr PC on maintenance in the State of Uttar Pradesh.
- **Study of survivors of burn injury in Uttar Pradesh:**
- **Impact of COVID 19 on youth from marginalized communities**
- **Impact of COVID 19 on Violence against Women (VAW)**
- **Facilitating courage with consent** – A study with young boys and girls, their perception, consciousness and recognition of the value of consent in close relationships with focus on human rights of women and queer.

### Legal intervention and networking

HUMSAFAR filed a Public Interest Litigation based on study on maintenance under Section 125Cr PC which was attached as evidence and High Court gave positive orders about implementation. In another jointly filed PIL, Uttar Pradesh High Court questioned the state government for the non -appointment of independent protection officers stipulated under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 (PWDV Act).

HUMSAFAR organized a **National consultation on Domestic Violence Laws – Implementation and Challenges** to question the systematic dilution of three women centric laws where activist, lawyers and academicians from 18 states across India deliberated and planned a joint strategy and roadmap. These laws provide women crucial supportive mechanisms to seek justice and to fight against violence inflicted on women, girls and queer communities.

HUMSAFAR holds the state-level secretariat of **AMAN Global Voices for Peace** – an international network established to curb domestic violence in India and to work towards the implementation of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (PWDVA).

**Campaign to establish IC under Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013**

HUMSAFAR works towards the effective implementation of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013. Hums afar has been instrumental in setting up the Internal Committees (IC) in 14 educational institutions and also a member of the Internal Committees (IC) of ***Sashastra Seema Bal***, Uttar Pradesh's Anti-Corruption Bureau, Government Railway Police Force (GRP), and more than 28 government and non-government departments. HUMSAFAR continues to do awareness programs in these institutions regarding the law.

HUMSAFAR has developed an understanding that a holistic and comprehensive response to discrimination and violence across the sexual spectrum based on gender, religion, caste, and class is possible only when linkages are formed with various rights-based feminists' networks. This approach has paved the way in bringing policy-level changes.



## Why the Safety Audit Project is needed

### **Are streets safe for women and girls?**

Sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence are an everyday occurrence in public spaces, both in rural and urban areas, for women and girls in every country around the globe. Women and girls experience different forms of sexual violence in the public spaces, unwanted sexual remarks, touches, undue admiration and in many cases rape and sexual assaults. It happens everywhere in and around schools, religious institutions, hospitals, public transports, workplaces and parks.

According to National Crime Research Bureau (NCRB) in 2020, India reported an average of 88 rape cases every day (Issa, 2021). Total of 66 lakhs cognizable crimes comprising 42 lakhs Indian Penal Code (IPC) crimes and 23 lakhs Special & Local Laws (SLL) crimes were registered in 2020. It shows an increase of 14 lakhs (28.0%) in registration of cases over 2019 (51 lakh cases). Crime rate registered per lakh population has increased from 385.5 in 2019 to 487.8 in 2020. Also, during 2020, registration of cases under IPC has increased by 31.9% whereas SLL crimes have increased by 21.6% over 2019.

A total of more than 3 lakh cases of crime against women were registered during 2020, showing a decline of 8.3% over 2019 (4 lakhs cases). Although it declined overall, but Uttar Pradesh holds the worst record.

# STATES WHICH REPORTED THE MOST CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN IN 2019

UP  
**59,853**

Rajasthan  
**41,550**

Maharashtra  
**37,144**

West Bengal  
**30,394**

Assam  
**30,025**





Between 2015 and 2019, crimes against women in the state had increased by over 66% according to a report by the National Crime Records Bureau (Bureau, 2020). Across India, cases of rape against women belonging to Scheduled Castes communities increased by 37%, and those of assault by 20%. The National Crime Records Bureau data also spelled further worry for Uttar Pradesh's already tenuous women's safety situation, with Lucknow topping the list of major cities when it comes to crimes against women. Times of India have reported that more than seven cases of such crimes were reported every day in 2018, in the state's capital. The city also registered the highest number of cases of harassment of women in public transport, compared to other cities. "At least two women were kidnapped daily in 2018 with total 636 reported in the year. Of these, 345 were being compelled for marriage. Women and girls of all age groups, even unborn, fell prey to some crime or the other," the report reads.

In the state of Uttar Pradesh, Crime against women increased over the years as highlighted in the table below. (Bureau, 2020)

**TABLE 3A.1**  
**Crime against Women (IPC + SLL) - 2017-2019**

S. No.	State/UT	2017	2018	2019	Percentage State Share To All-India (2019)	Mid-Year Projected Female Population (In Lakhs) (2019)	Rate of Total Crime against Women (2019)*
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<b>STATES:</b>							
1	Andhra Pradesh	17909	16438	17746	4.4	261.4	67.9
2	Arunachal Pradesh	337	368	317	0.1	7.3	43.3
3	Assam	23082	27687	30025	7.4	168.9	177.8
4	Bihar	14711	16920	18587	4.6	576.2	32.3
5	Chhattisgarh	7996	8587	7689	1.9	143.8	53.5
6	Goa	369	362	329	0.1	7.6	43.1
7	Gujarat	8133	8329	8799	2.2	324.9	27.1
8	Haryana	11370	14326	14683	3.6	135.3	108.5
9	Himachal Pradesh	1246	1633	1636	0.4	36.1	45.4
10	Jammu & Kashmir	3129	3437	3069	0.8	64.2	47.8
11	Jharkhand	5911	7083	8760	2.2	183.3	47.8
12	Karnataka	14078	13514	13828	3.4	325.1	42.5
13	Kerala	11057	10461	11462	2.8	182.9	62.7
14	Madhya Pradesh	29788	28942	27560	6.8	399.6	69.0
15	Maharashtra	31979	35497	37144	9.2	588.5	63.1
16	Manipur	236	271	266	0.1	15.5	17.2
17	Meghalaya	567	571	558	0.1	16.1	34.6
18	Mizoram	301	249	170	0.0	5.9	28.7
19	Nagaland	79	75	43	0.0	10.4	4.1
20	Odisha	20098	20274	23183	5.7	223.9	103.5
21	Punjab	4620	5302	5886	1.5	141.9	41.5
22	Rajasthan	25993	27866	41550	10.2	376.4	110.4
23	Sikkim	163	172	125	0.0	3.1	39.8
24	Tamil Nadu	5397	5822	5934	1.5	379.2	15.6
25	Telangana	17521	16027	18394	4.5	185.3	99.3
26	Uttarakhand	1944	2617	2941	0.8	54.8	48.3
27	Uttar Pradesh	56011	59445	59853	14.7	1081.4	55.4
28	West Bengal	30992	30394	30394	7.5	474.9	64.0
<b>TOTAL STATE(S)</b>		<b>345989</b>	<b>363776</b>	<b>391601</b>	<b>96.5</b>	<b>6393.3</b>	<b>61.3</b>

Homosexuality is regarded as deviant and variation from cultural concepts of the so called 'normal gender' and evokes hostility and violence (Youth, 2005). Talking about queer persons, there has been no relevant government data found for queers and transgendered communities. But there have been a few studies done by non-profit organizations. For example, according to a 2017 survey by Bangalore-based *Swasti Health Resource Centre* that encapsulated violence against Trans people, 44.7% respondents reported experiencing emotional, physical, and sexual violence. (Arora, 2021) This is vital because they continue to face Transphobic stigma and violence both in their families and the society.



## Voices from the Ground

***“Girl jumped out of the auto to resist the rapists, but she died” saying so the girls of the community where this incident took place broke down and this is how it all started.....***

There have been several incidents which were shared by our youth leaders. The youth identified various problems of street violence highly prevalent in their neighbourhood. For example, some of the girls shared the cases of molestation and verbal harassment in their neighbourhood where boys and men gather together to play cards and consume alcohol. Another incident shared by the mothers of the young girls where they mentioned that they were not able to use public toilets because it is always very dirty and without doors and lock. Another incident where one of the girls of our group told us that there is no street lights on the way from the community to the main road, so it is very intimidating to travel on those roads after sunset in the evening. She told us that once when she was returning back in the evening and some boys came to her and started verbally harassing her. She got very scared. Since then, she does not go from that route after dark. This incident could have been much more dangerous and therefore it is necessary to have street lights in the streets in the all localities to prevent such incidents.

HUMSAFAR with our young leaders wanted to conduct the process of safety audit by the youth in the public places in their areas to challenge sexual harassment and advocate for safe, inclusive public spaces. The audit will bring out safety issues in public places and youth and community members especially girls, women and queer persons can then lobby with the state machinery and do advocacy with other stakeholders to build safe public spaces.

Women's, girl's and queer's safety involves strategies, practices and policies which aim to reduce gender-based violence (or violence against women), including their fear of crime. It also involves safe spaces, freedom from poverty, financial security and autonomy.

Safety audit and building advocacy with state, society at large, community and family is very critical as living without fear, with access and freedom to all places, with bodily integrity and socio- cultural, economic security and



opportunities to live as per ones choices to realize ones potential are rights of all girls, women and queer persons and all human beings.

HUMSAFAR started safety audit with youth leaders in September 2021.

## Objective of the study

With this safety audit, the youth will not only be able to understand and know deeply about the problems related to the safety of women and girls of their settlements, but also compile them and advocate with the government and administration to overcome those problems and take appropriate steps.

The parameters of this safety audit are prepared in collaboration with the youth. Some of the parameters of a safety audit are as follows-

**1 – Evaluation of Government schemes for women and girls Survivors. ----Asha Jyoti Kendra, Helpline 1090, 181, Mahila Samman Cell, Rani Laxmibai Mahila and Bal Samman Kosh / Nirbhaya Fund, Pink Booth**

- Are women and girls aware of all these schemes and facilities?
- Have women and girls got help on all these helplines?
- How many women and girls have these schemes and facilities helped?

### **2 - Road (street light, crowd, security)**

- Are there street lights in the main streets of the community?
- How are the roads from the settlements to the main roads, are they deserted or crowded?
- What is the security arrangement on the deserted road, is there police or other security there?
- Is there a police booth? Are there police personnel present? Are women police personnel present?

### **3 - Public places (parks, markets, schools, public toilets, religious places)**

- Do women and girls living in the community use the park? Are the parks safe for them?

- Are there sufficient number of women present in the market?
- Is there a police booth there?
- Is there a toilet in the market? What is the condition of public toilets? What is the cost rate of services?
- Is there a public toilet in the community? What are their condition (doors, water system, latch, lights, ambiance etc.)? What is the cost to use these services?
- What is the way from community to school? Is it a deserted road or is it crowded?
- Are there liquor stores near the school?

#### **4 - Public transport -**

- What public transport facilities are available in the community? Are those vehicles safe for women and girls?
- How far from the community is public transport available?
- Are public resources readily available in communities after 7:00-7:30 pm?
- Are the rules of riding in a public transport vehicle followed properly?
- Is there availability of female driver driven traffic? Or are there vehicles specially driven for women (like Pink Auto etc)?

#### **5 –What are the experiences of sexual harassment?**

- Physical
- Sexual comments/songs
- Exhibiting penis
- Stalking

#### **6–Addressing and challenging sexual harassment**

- Whom do they complain?
- What are their experiences with family, friends
- Do they approach police and helplines or any other institutional mechanism

## 7-Impact of sexual harassment

- Normalization
- Restrictions on mobility
- Denial of opportunities
- Mental trauma
- Physical trauma

This safety audit is a part of a campaign to make our city and area safe for women, girls and other sexual identities, in which the youth are continuously raising their voices on the issues of caste and religious discrimination and violence for many years.

### Selection of the communities

It is necessary to mention that the selection of the communities has been done in a way that it almost covers the major areas of the city in a way that it encircles the city and connect almost every direction which is habitat to the economically marginalized population. We have only skipped the posh areas like Hazratganj, Gomtinagar and non-residential areas such as Cantonment, Vidhan Sabha and Mantri Niwas etc.

# Methodology

The intent of the study is to understand the security/safety status of women, girls and the queer community in the city of Lucknow by conducting a safety audit.

The safety audit methodology was developed by the Metropolitan Action Committee on Public Violence against Women and Children (METRAC) in Toronto in the 1980s after a series of brutal sexual assaults and murders of women created widespread public concern.

METRAC defines the safety audit as a methodology developed “to evaluate the environment from the standpoint of those who feel vulnerable and to make changes that reduce opportunities for assault.” (Violence, n.d.). In a safety audit, a group of girls, including residents or users of the area to be surveyed, walk through a particular area, observing factors that contribute to women’s safety or threat. A safety audit consists of a group of women/girls or other vulnerable groups walking in public spaces of their neighbourhood (a street, a public square, a park, etc.) to identify the physical and social characteristics that make these places safe or unsafe. To conduct such audits, it is important to choose routes that are taken by women every day to drop their children to school or the health centre, or a street or an avenue where people come to catch public transport to go to work. This working method allows looking at our neighbourhood from lens of girls, women and queer persons.

- **Study Design** – Action Research was carried out in this study with the help of various participatory tools. Qualitative method is used in the study in the form of qualitative interviews (case stories) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). A Safety Audit Walk (SAW), which is a participatory tool that is used for collecting and assessing information about perceptions of safety in public spaces, is also used in the study. A Safety Audit Survey was also organized so that these surveys generate quantitative information about safety which is an important complement to qualitative data collected through FGDs and Case Stories. A survey of 100 participants was conducted especially for quantitative data.

14 girls and queer leaders were chosen to assist researcher and team in safety audit process and project orientation and training was done with them to understand the need of the study and methodology. Other than that, background assessment of the Lucknow city on the city demographics through desk research is also done in the study.

- **Knowledge Gathering Tools** - As discussed earlier, the first step in developing a safety strategy is diagnosis of the local problems. It is key to identify the safety issues that women and girls actually face. Additionally, collecting this baseline data allows for better evaluation of interventions. Knowledge gathering tools for safer cities work include: Safety audit walks and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Participatory Mapping techniques. Each of these research tools will generate different insights and data. Used together, these two tools can provide a rich, nuanced picture of safety and threats in the city. The purpose of knowledge gathering in the early phases of safer cities work is not simply data collection. Rather, these knowledge gathering tools recognize that women, girls, and other community members have valuable knowledge generated from lived experience. These tools bring women, girls, queers and other community members into the process as full participants. The knowledge gathering process often prompts reflection and creates a sense of investment in building safer cities.

### Following Tools were used in the study –

1. **Focus group discussions** - In a focus group discussion (FGD), a group of people explore an issue through a facilitated and structured interaction between group members. FGDs are valuable tools for gathering information about what makes girls feel safe or unsafe in public spaces in their city and about how their safety and inclusion in public space can be improved. FGDs are especially useful if they are convened with groups of participants who may have distinct concerns. These groups include, for example, young girls whose parents work as domestic workers; hawkers (street sellers); transgender individuals.

2. **Case Stories** – The case stories of 10 girls, women and queers who participated in the FGDs were documented. Consent was taken and the names are changed in the study.
3. **Safety Audit Walks** - Participatory safety audit walks are a tool for exploring the elements of public spaces that contribute towards creating safety or vulnerability. Additionally, participatory safety audit walks identify possible actions for change and build public awareness, ownership, and commitment to implementing these actions at both the local and the policy levels. different from our everyday perspective. It allows us to become acquainted (or reacquainted) with the places we live and move around in everyday, but from a different position and perspective.
4. **Safety Audit Survey**- A Safety Audit Survey with 100 participants was conducted in a public space, with questions specifically related to safety in that area, as well as questions about safety more generally. Although a survey is conducted in a public space, but in this study most of the surveys were done at home/room because the respondents were not comfortable in answering the questions in publicly or were too shy to respond in front of their family. These surveys generate quantitative information about safety that is an important complement to qualitative data. A survey questionnaire is included in the Appendix I (in Hindi). Survey questions in the study addresses perceptions of safety, experiences of sexual harassment, perceived sources of vulnerability, and responses to sexual harassment.
5. **Participatory Mapping Technique**-Participatory mapping technique was applied to mark the safe and unsafe areas from point of view of participants. Girls and queer youth marked the areas by using and marking the areas, streets and public places as safe and unsafe by using happy and sad emojis, pebbles to show unsafe and bad roads and black circles to show lack of street lightening. The maps provided background evidence in survey and walks and helped in finding out the issues of infrastructure which will be further used in advocacy.



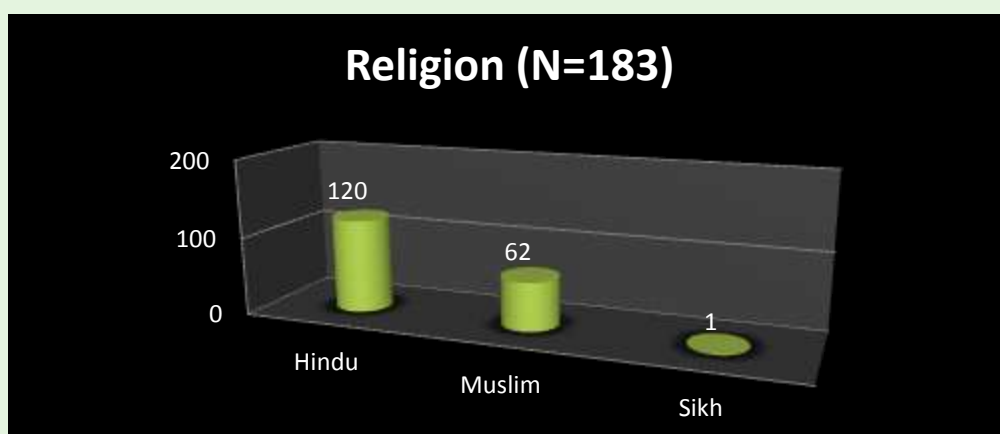
**Ethical considerations** - It is important to think about the ethical dimensions of research on violence against women, before beginning any knowledge gathering work. Talking with people about sexual harassment and violence raises sensitive issues, and respondents may be distressed by some of the questions, which ask them to recall frightening, threatening events. Moreover, participating in the research may expose women and girls to violence. It is crucial that the research team be trained to interact with respondents sensitively and competently. When you are researching harassment and violence against a person, it is especially important to protect respondents' confidentiality, and to obtain their informed consent before beginning the research.

## The story of my everyday struggle

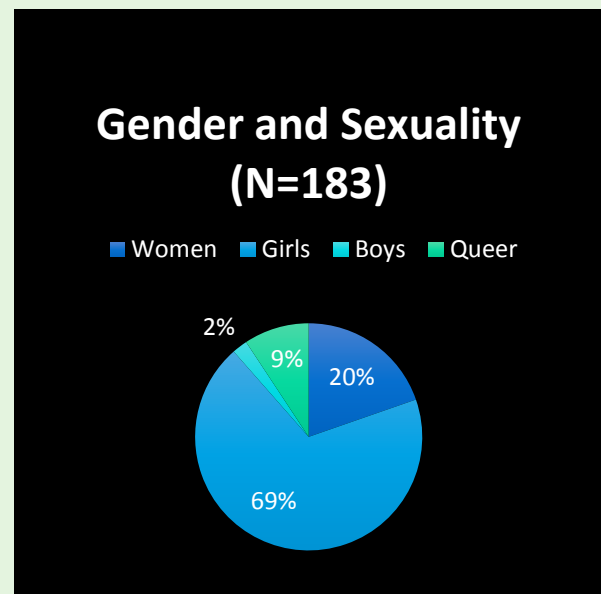
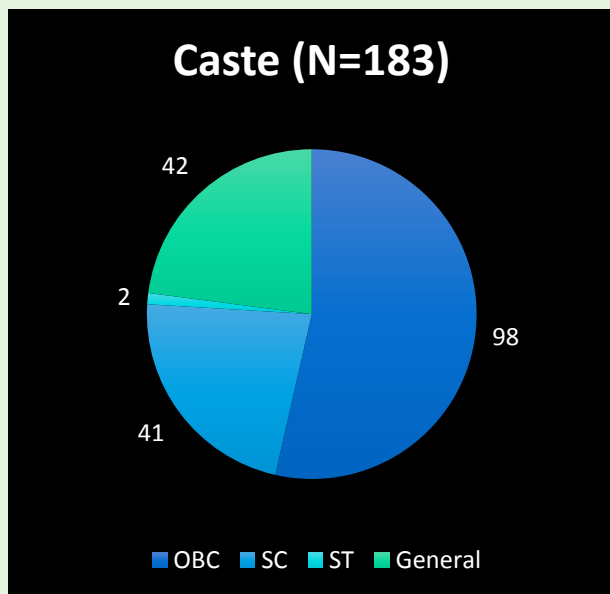
**Demographic status** – The study included the participants from diverse groups of women, girls and queers with specific vulnerabilities, who access various parts of the city during day and night. The study explored the intersection of gender with other vulnerabilities depending upon the nature of their work, age, ethnicity, economic status and sexuality, to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of these participants, their perceptions of the safety and access to the city.

- **FGD** – Total 12 FGDs were conducted in the 10 slums in Lucknow city wherein 135 girls, 53 women, 4 boys and 16 queer (including *Hijaras*) participated.
- **Safety Walk** - Total 85 girls participated in Safety Audit walk in 9 communities and we covered 5 parks, 22 main road intersections, cross roads which are used to approach schools and markets.
- **Safety Audit Survey** – A Safety Audit Survey of 100 was also been conducted, this quantified the data of 90 girls and 10 Trans women from the *Hijra* community.
- **Safety Mapping** - An exercise using PRA technique to map safe areas in 9 communities.

**Total numbers of participants included in the study were 208.**



The participants were from various religious groups belonging to different castes prevailing in India. The following graph show the bifurcation of the participants on the basis of religion, caste and sexuality.



When asked about the safest place for girls and women, most of the girls mentioned that  
**“There is NO SAFE SPACE for us, not even at HOME.”**

## Findings from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)



Focused group discussions were conducted in the same communities with diverse group of girls, and mixed group of girls and women. These intense discussions aimed to understand the nuances and various dimensions of the issue. Usually girls don't feel comfortable to talk about sexual harassment or abuse. The

FGDs gave them a closed safe space to speak up and talk about other aspects and their part of the incidences they have experienced.

Interestingly, the FGD participants pointed out that they felt unsafe both in deserted and in crowded spaces. In deserted spaces, they claimed there was greater fear of sexual assault and in crowded spaces; men often take advantage of the crowd to sexually harass women.

### **What is Safety to you?**

The FGDs started with the first question of knowing what safety means to the participants. Most of the participants responded by saying safety is “Self - defence”. Some of them also mentioned that safety is “being able to protect self and others from men and boys”.

As the conversation moved further, girls went deeper to probe what “safety” means to them. A young girl caught our attention when she said “when I can forget that I am a girl and the world won’t remind me of my physical body, I’ll believe that I am safe.”

This clearly demonstrates how men view women only as a female body and her spirit, soul, mind and her identity is denied. This denial leads to normalizing sexual harassment to the extent that many a time’s girls do not even think about it.

As Nisha exclaimed *“Oh...were you asking about this? It’s an everyday experience; we are used to it, we try to protect our bodies*

A challenge which we faced while conducting the FGDs was the normalization of harassment. Girls and women are taught to live with experiences of harassment. We saw that the girls who used to start the discussion by saying that no such incident happened with us, by the end of the discussion used to narrate many incidents of ordeal. In some cases we found that girls even could not identify that they are been molested or violated but knew something terrible happened to them, especially when the survivors were minor.

### **Do you feel safe anywhere or with anyone?**

The second question was to understand the space where they feel safe. Most of the respondents mentioned that they do not feel safe anywhere; Neither at home nor outside. Some of them mentioned that they do feel safer at home as compared to outside. Some of them mentioned that they feel safer with their family, relatives and friends and are generally scared talking to the strangers. Some of them also mentioned that they did not feel safer at home as well with some of their family members.

### **Have you faced any kind of violence or harassments?**

Although this question made girls silent for a few minutes but later after making them comfortable and giving them more time it was found that all of the girls and their friends have faced some or the other kind of harassments in the streets; be it verbal comments or whistling, physical touching, pinching, staring, leering, stalking or violent physical attack. They also shared a few cases of their own friends being harassed in the public.

## The speaking silence

People usually don't think about the impact of street harassment or any kind of harassment in the lives of the girls and women who have faced such kind of abuses. This is actually a reason behind the normalization of such cases. But it's not an issue which can be ignored or taken as lightly as it is been taken in our society. All these incidences have left irreversible impressions on their life and mental health. While conducting the FGDs we observed the body language of the girls.

Scratching their body parts, shivering body, heaviness in the voice and a long silence after sharing their stories spoke a lot more than what they have shared.

Many minor girls were hesitating in sharing their experiences, became very emotional and were not ready to articulate as they were recalling those painful moments.

In some of the cases respondents were sitting quite but through their restlessness and gestures we understood that they might want to say something. We had to specially focus on these respondents though investing our time specifically in normalising them and in building their trust so that they can share their stories with us.

Also we found girls were initially silent as they feared that no one will believe them and sometime the reason behind fear was of revealing the perpetrators identity. Like in a particular case the abuser was a religious preacher, so the girl was hesitating in sharing her experience. But after when she completely believed us, she shared-

"For the first time when he inserted his hand in my *kurta* (dress), I told about this to my mother.

But she scolded me saying that I am making stories, as so many girls go to him but she had never heard anything ill about him from anyone.

She also said that God will punish me if I ever spoke such things about him again."

**-Bushra**

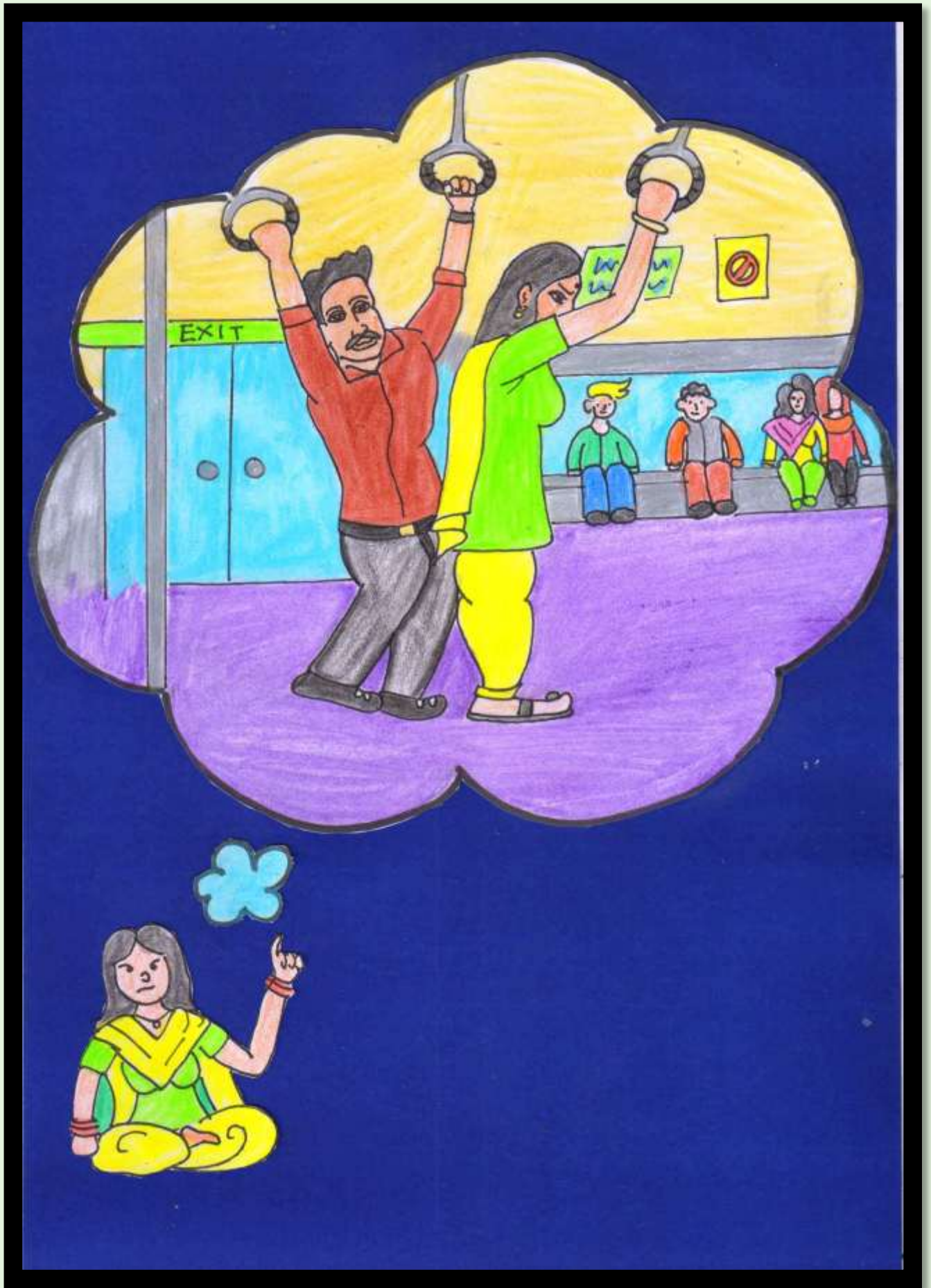
Here it is important to mention that this kind of behaviour was prominently found among the minor age group respondents who are in their early teen age.



The autonomy of women on their bodies and even on themselves has always been an issue of concern within the progressive and feminist spaces. It is necessary to mention that a key factor which we observed was that women and girls are not encouraged to talk about themselves, they have always told to bear it silently and often blamed as the cause of harassment and hence whether it is menstrual period or sexual harassment girls are told to keep silent and so they are.

In another view we saw that even though we organised the meetings in private closed places, still the girls weren't comfortable in participating in the conversations. After such experiences we started to conduct our FGDs at a park on the outskirts of their residential areas, where they were comfortable to participate in the conversation.

Upbringing and Exposure is another key factor in this. The girls who don't go to school or belong to a orthodox family and spent the majority of their time inside the house doing household work are found to be more introvert in comparison to those who go out. Like in many cases we found out that girls have not gone to the places marked risky by other girls, or haven't used public toilets in their life not because they had any negative experience in those areas but because they have been strictly instructed by their family members to avoid those places. Now this kind of mentality also plays a vital role in the issue of street safety. Rather than making the streets safer for women and girls, they are been restricted to use those. Like if large number of crime against women and girls are been reported after sunset, families and society will demand the girls to return back or restrict their mobility after sunset rather than making streets safer for girls and women.



## What are the factors contributing to the lack of safety for Girls and Women –

In general Lucknow was reported as being the unsafe place for women and girls by most of the participants. Parks and isolated areas like deserted streets were identified as being particularly unsafe places where they felt fearful of being robbed or raped. At the same time, they also mentioned that they did not feel safe and comfortable around their homes as well because of the men and boys' groups outside their homes or boys hooting outside their homes while passing around.

Sharing an incident a girl said-

"I was sitting at the doorstep of my house after lunch, my mother was behind the door and wasn't visible. Two men passing from the front of the house said something inappropriate. My mother heard it and scolded me for sitting on doorsteps and asked me to go inside rather than scolding those men."

-Karishma

**'Parents think that all-girls school are safe for us, but vagabond boy specially mark such schools and harasses girls while going to the school or returning back.'**

This was a common statement we have heard repeatedly while conducting the FGDs.

But more shocking was that when we took the conversation further, asking them that what you people do when such incidences happen, the answer were same that **'We ignore and change our ways'**.

For girls it has been so naturalised in their upbringing or in the social system that they normally move aside rather raising their voice against the perpetrators.

Even in some instances we saw that how certain kind of sexual harassments are seen as **'less serious'** like, rubbing the gentile intentionally in front of girls, following them on street.

Interestingly, the participants mentioned **that they felt unsafe both in the crowded spaces and deserted spaces**. Whenever they visit the crowded spaces like markets or a fair (*mela*), they are always pushed, touched, pinched by the men and boys. These experiences were not only shared by the young girls but also by their mothers as well.

Not just in case of intentional harassment but also in the patriarchal society men aren't taught about appropriate behaviour. Like in an instance a girl said-

"I frequently use public transports to travel. Women and girls from childhood are been taught to sit in with their body and legs folded whereas men sit stretched out without even thinking that it may cause inconvenience to the others( specially girls) sitting next to them.

**-Heena**

The usage of spaces by different social groups also had an impact on the safety of women and girls. For instance, if a women or girl sees a group of men or boys playing cards in any public space, it would be generally be avoided by them and they will take a longer route to go to their destination.

## What leads to sexual harassment in public spaces-

The data and output from the FGDs and Interview conducted pointed out to the factors which are responsible for unsafe environment in the city. These factors can be divided into two broad categories-

- Physical Factors
- Socio-Cultural Factors

### **Physical Factors of the city -**

#### **1. Commuting in the city –**

**Availability of Public Transport-** The one experience common to all women and girls in the city is related to public transport; accessing the same is seen as fraught with discomfort and danger. This danger is associated with the threat of harassment or even rape in deserted areas. Along with which it becomes excuse to restrict mobility of the girls which deprives them from exposures, and also bounds them with day timing.

Many girls said that they couldn't take admission in the preferred collage because it is far from their area, they don't take admissions in coaching institutes because most of them run in the evening shifts and parents won't allow them go outside after the sunset. This situation is same for the working women where they said that they would prefer job near the residence and at the same time employer should not demand evening shifts from them.



Street connecting Peer Nagar community to girls school Triloki Singh Inter College



**Unsafe Public transport** – buses and tempos in particular – are listed among the most unsafe places for women where sexual harassment seems to have become a regular feature. The bus is the most commonly used form of public transport in the city, in addition to the auto rickshaws, cycle rickshaws and taxis. Most of the women and girls said that pinching on the waist or putting the hands on their thighs was the most common act by men in the public transport. Also, at times the driver of the tempos and auto rickshaw used to hold the hands/ touch them inadequately while paying the money. Because of this, many girls said that they had to wait sometimes to see if there are no men already in the vehicle.

2. **Lack of street lights**– another common issue shared by the participants is the lack of proper lighting in many of the streets of the capital. The deserted routes connecting the communities from city centre are often found dark. In a common pattern of harassment girls said that in such dark places you can easily find men peeing on the roadside, and when girls pass from there, they show their genitals and sometimes start to masturbate in front of them. To avoid such incidences women and girls mentioned that due to lack of proper lighting in the streets they have to come back home early around in the winters.



Main road of Mansoor nagar community connecting to market.

23-year-old Ashima (changed name) told ***'I do not go out after 5pm from my home. It is not because my mother or my family stops me but instead, I don't want to. You know why, because I am scared of the darkness outside my home'.***



3. **Unsafe Public Toilets**-The capital lacks clean and accessible public toilets, and this is a grave issue. The lack of safe and clean public toilets poses a serious safety and public health hazard. In addition, toilets all over the city are poorly designed. For example, the entrance to the women's toilet is often at the same place as the entrance to the men's toilet and this adds to its inaccessibility for women. The locks of the toilets are broken and the door of the toilets is too high that it is body parts are visible from below. When asked about the usage of public toilets, all of them shared that they do not use public toilets because they are either very unclean or do not have locks in the door.

**"We hold our pee for hours and urinate only when we reach home because the toilets outside are unhygienic an unsafe".**

All of the respondents shared that now everyone have a private toilet at their homes but 3-4 years back because of the lack of or the very poor state of the public toilets leaves them no option but to use open fields, exposing them to the danger of sexual assault.

#### 4. **Street Drugs and Liquor Consumption in Groups and Illegal Liquor Shops**

– Most of the women and girls shared that there are spots in their locality where



Men gambling and consuming liquor on the roadside

the boys and men usually group together and consume liquor and drugs. Also, they mentioned that it is difficult to pass near the liquor shops since there is a huge group of men and boys consuming alcohol. Many of the girls also mentioned that after the pandemic lockdown, joblessness and leisure of men have pushed them to addiction of gambling and playing cards. The deserted places in the communities have turned into the gathering spaces for the same. This has also created uneasiness in the girls to move in the area where they live in.

Even women shared the same saying that they have now avoided sitting outside their own houses to enjoy the weather or just talk with their neighbours.

5. **When the protector becomes the perpetrator** - The FGD participants generally seemed to fear the police, claiming that when they did report incidents of gender-based violence, it is they who were judged or blamed for the situation. In some cases, participants reported further abuse and even sexual molestation at the hands of the police. ***'The police don't speak to us with respect.'*** FGD participants also noted that it is very difficult to file a case with the police and the perpetrator is often let off without charge. When this occurs, the participants reported, the perpetrators would come back and continue the harassment, emboldened by the fact that the complaint had not gone in favour the complainant, and the situation would actually worsen.

## Cultural Factors – Socio-Cultural Factors –

1. **Patriarchal misogyny-** In a combined FGDs of mothers and daughters, it was found that mothers due to lack of exposure and inherited patriarchal mind-set doesn't support their daughters. The fear of victim blaming has been major issue in the FGD conducted with the girls. Statements such as 'This world is made for men, nature has made man stronger' were made by women which demoralised the girls and pushed them towards a sense of grief which effect their self-confidence and invisibles women as an individual and independent citizen. Parents tend to overpower/put surveillance in the name of safety or protection from the outside world. Below are two instances.

"I was continuously harassed by a random guy on call. Once I handed over the call to my father and he scolded him. On the same night he again called me from another number and when I talked about it to my father again, he took away my phone and didn't give it to me again. But was it my fault that someone was harassing me?"

- Payal

2. **Portray of a Good Girls-** religious and cultural mythological stories are filled with definitions or parameters to scale good women/girl. They are expected to live under the control of the men of the family, chastity, virginity, loyalty towards the husband are some of the norms that glorify the a good girl/



women along with the fact that a women should be respected only when she is a good women and fulfils all the above criteria.

*“Once when I shared such an incident of harassment with my family, they asked me that what I was wearing when this incidence took place.*

*From that till four to five months my mother used to keep an eye on the watch when I used to return back from the school. It takes 15 minutes to reach home if I get two to three minutes late my family members taunted me saying ‘You have a usual habit of roaming out here and there, and then you’ll complain about others that someone harassed you’ this still hurts me so much.”*

A drop of tear rolled down from Naina’s eyes while sharing the instance.

It is important to note that we cannot blame the women/mothers for this attitude and perception because the misogynistic views and patriarchy has been engraved in their minds.

### **3. Victim blaming**

A major issue recorded in FGDs which enhanced the trauma of the girls was victim blaming. It is hard for every survivor to share the incidences of harassment or molestation with others, especially to elders of the family, but it hits when those whom they trusted and instead blames them for the harassment they experienced.

Questioning the girls ***what they were wearing at that time? Why were they coming from that way? Have you given some signs due to which they did so?***

Are the common questions made by the family members after they shared their harassment?

*“Once I met my tuition teacher on my way to home, he asked me about my studies and after little gossip, we left for our ways. When I entered my house, everyone was staring at me. I was then shown a video of my meeting with my male teacher. This video was made by uncle who is our neighbour who had seen me with my teacher. He made my video and sent it to my brother saying that ‘Your sister has gone shameless and is now walking with her lovers openly in the colony’. I cried and tried to convince my parents but no one believed me.”*

**- Shivani**



## Additional Victimization of Queers

Harassment is a serious problem and prevalent even for queer individuals. Following are the reasons discussed with the queer youth which affects their safety in public spaces.

**1. The Queer phobia in the society** – The Homophobia/Queer phobia is highly prevalent and is the major reason behind the unsafe environment, stigmatization, discrimination, criminalization and victimization of the queer youth. It is very difficult for queer to feel safe anywhere. The discrimination and phobia also prevents them from accessing safe healthcare services, bullying in the schools, ban in religious institutions. All trans/queer respondents mentioned that their sexuality is the major factor which affects their personal safety.



*Discussion with the queer folks regarding the safety issues in the public*

**2. Lack of safe spaces** – Queer folks is not accepted in their homes but also not in the public spaces outside their homes where they face sexual harassment, discrimination and abuse. They do not have the freedom to walk on roads and be who they actually are. Although there are a few cafes and some spaces like parks which are queer friendly but they are miniscule in numbers. These spaces are also raided by the police because they think homosexuality is illegal and wrong example for the society.

**3. No infrastructure for the queers** - Transgendered persons face the additional problem of not being able to use either men's or women's toilets as they are often refused entry in both.

"I do not understand which public toilet to use because when I enter the men's toilet, the men start abusing us and when we go to women's toilet, they start shouting and ask us to leave."



**3. Discriminatory attitude of police** – All of the queers mentioned it is the police that they fear the most. The police are violent and discriminatory to them for their sexual orientation.

“We have to wait for hours in the police station and in spite of waiting no one files our complaint. Rather they discriminate, abuse and make fun of us”

**4. Dating apps not being safe** – One of the queer folks mentioned their experience of being sexually harassed through a dating app.

“I liked a guy in the dating app and we used to talk a lot over chats. Once we decided to meet in person. He came over to my place and we had a good time. But once he was leaving, he asked for the payment to have that time with him and also asked for the transportation cost. He said that his boss who was using his dating account asked him to take the payment. When I refused to give the payment, he started threatening me”.

He then understood that even this online dating platform is a scam and homophobic.

**5. Acute Mental Stress** – The heightened levels of distress in the community is very strong. Not being able to express themselves freely in front of their family and friends at the same time not being able to find a safe space in the outside world has created situations of severe distress, suicidal thoughts and self-harm. They also shared that their access to the professional mental healthcare has also been very limited.

In a short survey with 10 queer folks, when asked about the factors which make the Lucknow city unsafe for them, majority of them answered that it is the **police station or police** who make them feel most unsafe. They mentioned that they are discriminated and sexualized in the police station by the staff. Other than that, they also mentioned that it is **difficult for them to take the public transport** because they are discriminated in the shared transport and thus, they had to book the full three-wheeler and pay more. The queer respondents mentioned that they fear of being sexually harassed and assaulted while going out of their homes especially from the men’s group or near the liquor shops.

हाय! मैं इस हिंजडे  
के साथ नहीं बैठूंगी।



## The struggles of the *Hijra* Community in India

*Hijra* Community is an organized group of Trans women who are prescriptively recognized in North India and also in some other regions in India. The community in itself runs in a dominant hierarchal manner in which a leader called as the “*Hijra Guru*” makes other young Trans women stay as her disciple only after which they are allowed to live with the gurus.

The gurus are extremely violent and have strict rules, for instance, once the Trans person enters the community they have to earn money through traditional beggary called “*Badhai Toli*”. They don’t have any kind of privacy and independence in their lives.

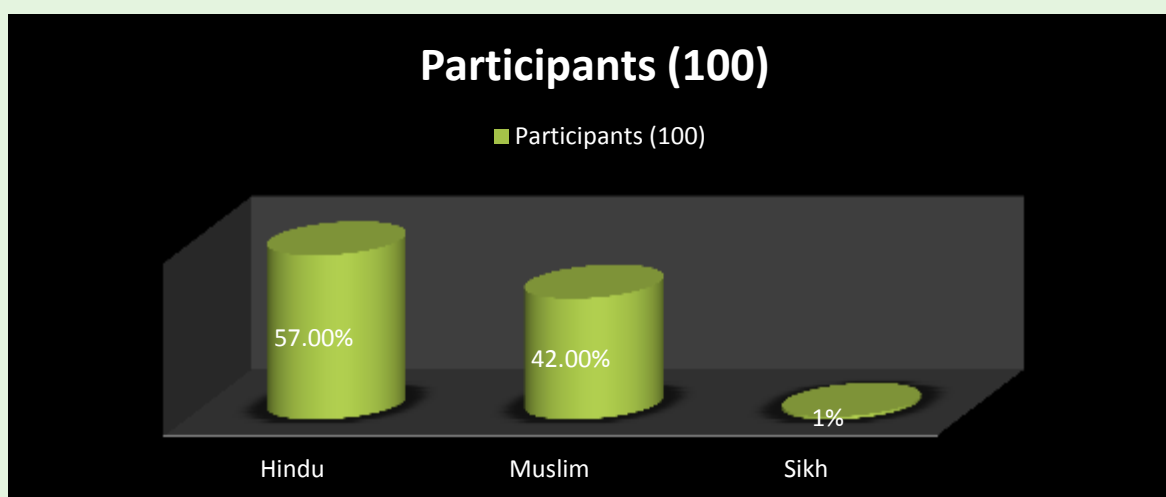
The *Hijras* community in itself works as trapping web for the marginalized individuals.

We in our study found that how the trans women in the search of a support system gets trapped in their own community.

The fear and rejection from the society leads them to enter this toxic cage and hence it is important to mention the accountability of the society which is uncompassionate and full of hate for the trans community where they feel unsafe within heteronormative society.

## Finding of the Safety Audit Survey

Apart from the FGDs and safety walks a survey of 100 was also been conducted, this quantified the data of 90 girls and 10 Trans women from the Hijra community.



The survey response gave us a refined idea to segregate the broad outcome of the rest of the findings.



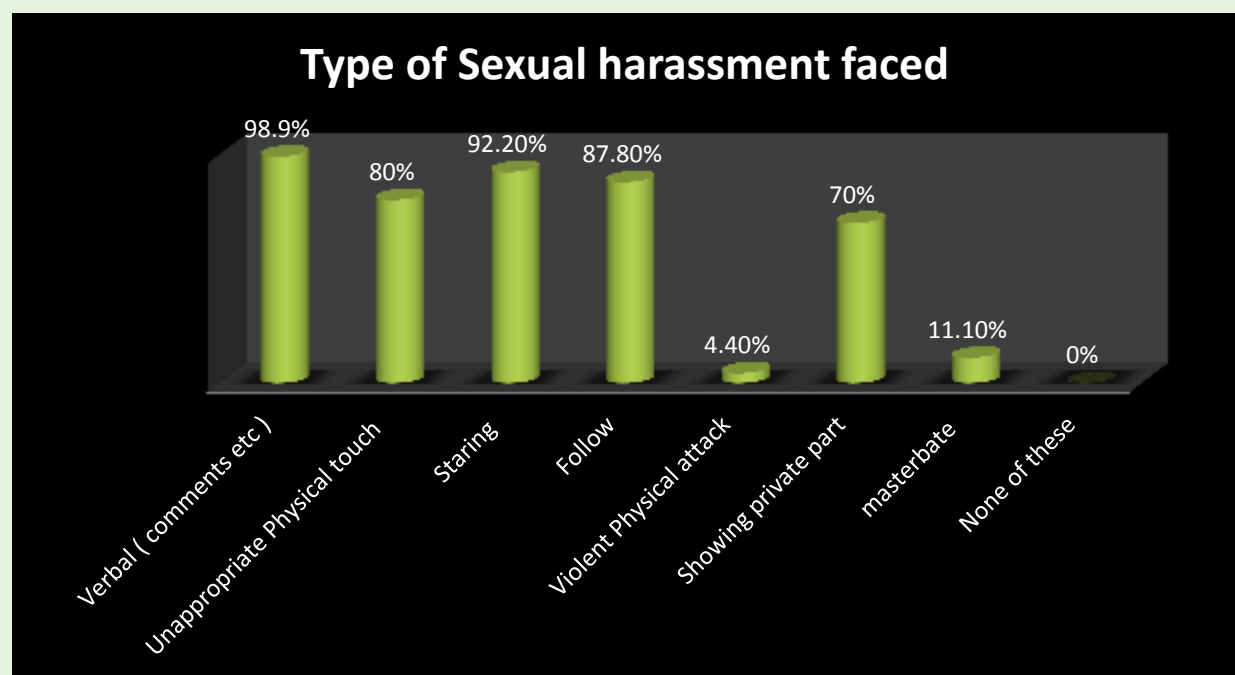
In response to the question of fear **97.8% of our respondents shared that they always have a fear of experiencing sexual harassment in the streets.** Along

with which **66.7%** shared that they are afraid of crimes like snatching or loot in the streets as well and the third most reported fear was of rape which was added by **55.6%** of the young girls surveyed. Apart from these fear of kidnapping was also been a cause of fear among the young girls.

The above mentioned factors for feeling unsafe on the streets was also been supported by the result data of our survey which noted that **98.6%** of the girls face harassment in public transport and also feel unsafe on deserted street, and specially in those areas which have liquor shops reported to be the most unsafe space for the women and girls as told by **93.3%** of them. **92.2%** respondents marked that they also feel unsafe and have experienced sexual molestation in crowded spaces. The issue of less or inappropriate street light was been raised by **76.7%** of the girls and **65.6%** said that police don't monitor such areas due to which such areas become more unsafe for us.

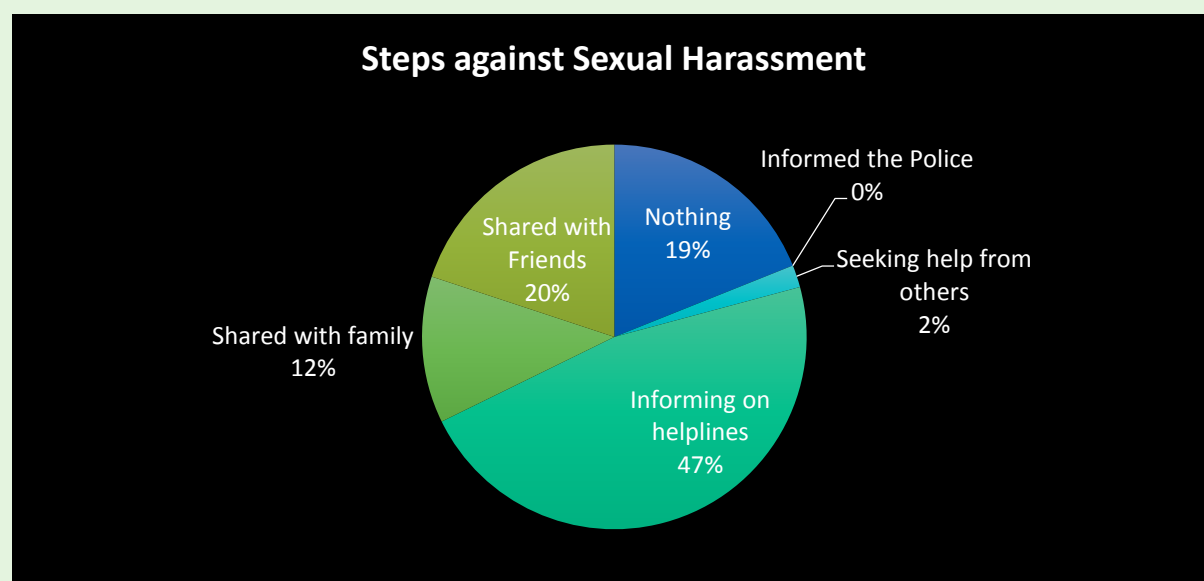
**"Our sex identity and sexual orientation is the reason because of which we are been targeted"**. The social structure which empowers the masculine sex to be dominant and weakens the feminine and invisibles the rest is the cause of this unsafe environment was a remark made by **96.7%** of the girls and **100%** trans persons.

In the survey we also wanted to mark the different forms of sexual harassment which is been experienced by our respondents.

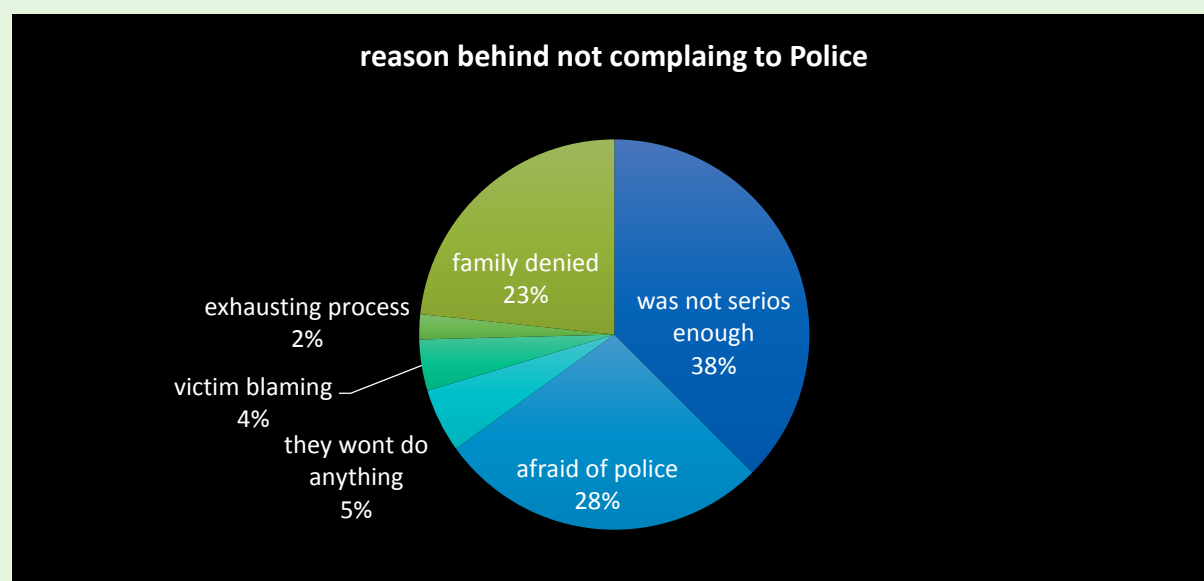


**98.9%** said that they have faced verbal commenting on the streets along with **92%** said that men follow them on street. In **80%** incidences molesters inappropriately touched and tried to molest the survivor. Apart from this a

serious issue of harassment was recorded by **70% of the girls** was that men usually in deserted street intentionally showed their penis to the girls passing through the way. And in **11% cases** they masturbated in front of the girls who were passing.



The gas lightening data was recorded when we asked our respondents about the frequency of these instances of harassment they faced and are facing. **76.7% girls said that they usually face such harassment** and **22.2% said that it is an approximately and everyday issue for them**. But the more shocking response was that. **44.4% girls said that they have never shared their experiences with anyone before**. **46.7% have shared with their friends** and only **26.9% told about the harassment they have faced to their family members**.

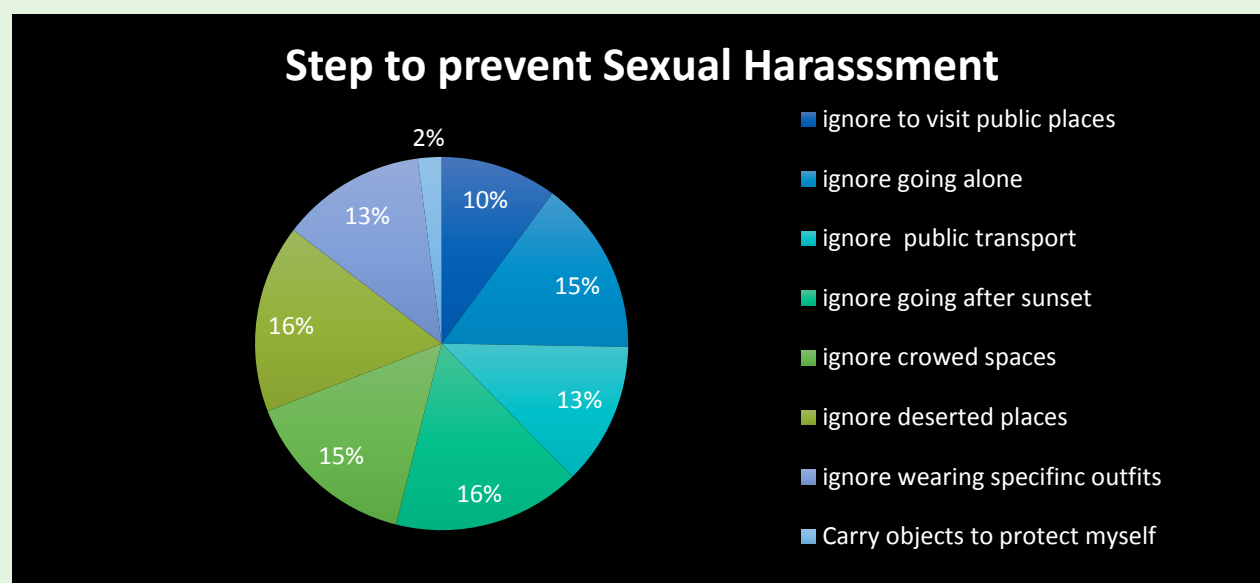


But **'None of them has ever reported any of these incidences to Police'**. And **96.6% said that they haven't ever approached any of the women helpline or**



other security providers, despite of the fact that 100% of the respondents knew about the helplines or other security provisions available for women and girls.

This is because complaining about harassment and going to the police is believed to be a taboo in the society. Issue of privacy is also a concern because the 3.4% respondents who have registered their complains only used the helpline numbers where the identity of the girl is not been recorded, nor they have to be physically present.



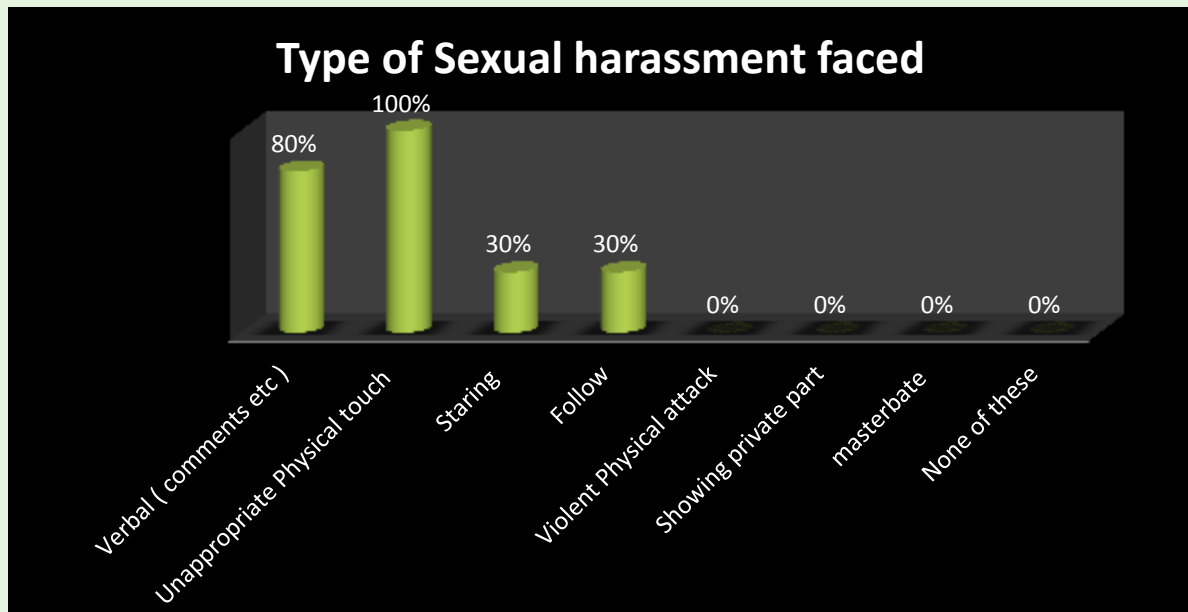
The survey found that instead of resisting these harassment and molestation issues the girls prefer or are forced to restrict themselves by the family of the respondents. 96.7% of the respondents told that they never to go out after sunset along with which 90% said that they even in the day light they don't prefer or are not allowed going alone especially from the deserted areas.

Also 74.4% respondents said that instead of wearing clothes in which they feel comfortable, they have to wear dress which can cover their body and body shape. And 60% girls said that they don't prefer to visit public places in fear of harassment. Even 73.3% mentioned that they even don't go to distant places to avoid harassment in public transport.

## Queer survey Analysis

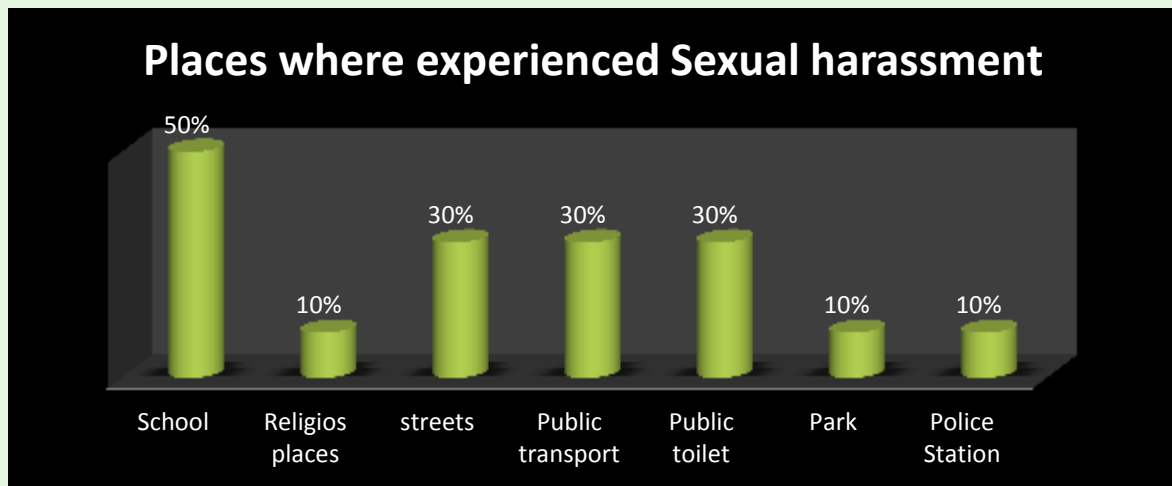
Comparing the queer survey data with the women survey we found that ultimately the oppression has been quite same as the girl surveyed above.

**The queer respondents said that 100% of them have experienced harassment through inappropriate touch whereas 80% of them had faced verbal commenting and abuse.**



The Trans people also face this harassment in their everyday life. According to the data **50% of the respondents said that they have experienced harassment and 30% said that they go through it every day.**

In some Instances, this experience differed, like raising the question of unsafe spaces, **50% of the Trans people said that they feel unsafe in their schools which should be the safes for children.** (Here it is important to note that the average literacy of the trans respondents is primary education, as the respondents said after the puberty they were confirmed of their identities so they left their schools or were disowned by their families due to which they could not continue with their studies and had to join the hijra sect.



Similarly, we found that again the reply was zero when it came to reach out to the police for reporting the issues of harassment by the transgender respondents, like it was with the girls surveyed. Yet again the perspective changes when it comes to the fact that there are no helpline numbers or any other such policy for the trans people where they can call for help.

## Area Mapping Activity-

Using the PRA Technique, we conducted the area mapping activity with respondent girls. Essentially participatory in character, the audit was to identify the spaces that are unsafe for the vulnerable groups, as well as the factors causing the lack of safety or the exclusion of these groups.

We asked the participants to make a map of their areas (attached from the next page) and mark the safe and unsafe places. The safe places were marked as “☺” and the unsafe places are marked as “☹”.



## Findings from Safety Audit Walk –

Safety Audit Walks are crucial to assessing the safety and accessibility of a city and its public spaces for women and other vulnerable groups. The safety walks were conducted in the afternoons and late evenings to see how public spaces are transformed from day to dark.



**Audit Walk Routes** – Safety Walks were been conducted after identifying the unsafe spaces near the communities. The roads which connect the community or respondents to the destination which they commonly visit such as school, collage, hospital, market or connecting to main roads were given priority for the walk

**The safety walk has been conducted in the following communities of Lucknow**

Peer Nagar	Bara ka Purwa
Hayat Nagar	Barawan kalan
Mansoor Nagar	Para
Vasant Kunj	Amrita Nagar
Chhandoiya	Ashyraheen

**Participants in the Safety Audit Walk** – All the girls (N ~183) who participated in the FGDs were part of the Safety Walk. Also 2-3 boys' of the youth group also participated in the walks.

**Audit Walk findings** - Some points that emerged from the safety audits:

1. **Poor maintenance of lights especially on the streets** – In most of the areas there was no street lights. It was not only the grove streets but also in the main roads where girls and everyone usually commute for their work/study or other work. Hence, they usually avoided to go out in the evenings and/or had to be dependent on the male family members.



2. **There are no public toilets for women/girls in the audited areas** – no public toilets were available in the audited area. Other than that, when asked about the other areas where they usually commute for study/work, all the girls mentioned that they do not use the public toilets because most of the time toilets are very dirty, stinky and are surrounded by a lot many men making it inaccessible for them to use.
3. **No or less frequent public transport available after 5-6pm in some area** – In many of the areas, the public transport is not/ less frequently available in the evenings and because of that the girls and women either avoid to go out because they have to wait longer for the public transport or else, they call their male family members to pick them up.
4. **Liquor Shops/ Street Drugs and Liquor Consumption in Groups** – In one of the areas during the walk it was found that the public park in front of the school was occupied by men and boys taking drugs. The girls said that they do not have a playground in the school campus and thus they always wanted to play in that park during the recess or enjoy the sun during the winters but due to the men and boys continuously staying there and consuming drugs, even a thought of going to park scares them.



## Analysis –

1. **Patriarchy & Cultural Norms** – Patriarchy is very much engraved in the religion and religion influences the patriarchy. While having a conversation with the many of the women it was mentioned by them that it is the responsibility of a girl how they portray and present themselves in the society. If they wear the revealing clothes, they have to face the repercussions. For example, if a girl is not wearing a duppata (a long stole) over a kurta, they are inviting men and boys. One of them mentioned that God gives the punishment to the girls if they do not cover themselves in the society.
2. **Restriction on the mobility especially of the girls** – restriction on mobility in some cases was chosen by the survivor to prevent sexual harassment and in majority was implemented by the family upon the survivors after they shared their experiences of harassment with their family members. This resulted as a huge opportunity and exposure loss for the girls. Due to which they are deprived from taking admissions in their preferred schools, colleges, coaching institutes and also don't go out for jobs of their choices. This on a broader prospect pushes the girls towards early and non-consensual marriages and economic dependence on the male members of the family.
3. **Normalizing the issues-** Right from the childhood, girls have been taught that they will be harassed if they loiter or move out of the homes. They should feel blessed if they don't face violence or hatred. Society glorifies women who compromise, ignore or stay quiet after experiencing violence. Thus, the women, girls and the queer people have accepted violence in the form of harassment, outrage of modesty and discrimination as a part of their misfortune. They accepted that all what is happening to them is normal and they have now learnt to ignore it in such a manner that they got habitual to it and one day their inner senses stops responding to all these oppressions and stores the trauma somewhere in their subconscious mind. This becomes a primary cause that the majority of the

survivors are not able to identify the harassment also which has left a scar on them.

4. **Stigmatization and Victim Blaming-** Women's intentions, character, chastity is always been questioned in the predominantly hetero-normative, patriarchal society. Cultural glorification of purity, monogamy, virginity has fertile the land of victim blaming and crippled the rationality of human.

The structural patriarchy always tries to overpower and control women's free will and negate women as an individual institution. Thus such notions have been propagated. Malpractices of witch-hunting, virginity test in marriage, has been popular and can still be heard. May the ratio of such practices have dwelled in the last decade but the mentality hasn't changed. From political rivalries to in-house disputes slut shaming of women and stigmatization is found common. All these have pushed women in fear of social judgment due to which they don't prefer to talk about the exploitation and violation of their individual rights. All these above stated were clearly invoked by the outcomes of FGDs.

5. **Mental trauma-** Mental stress has affected everyone and it is a shame that it has not been recognized as a serious issue yet. Rather mental health issues are stigmatized. All of them shared their experiences of facing mental trauma and stress but yet no one had anyone to talk about this or seek for a professional help.
6. **Queer struggle** –Being rejected from the blood relatives is hard but also being rejected from the outside world when you do not have your family is even harder. This is the struggle which is faced by the trans persons because they are first rejected from their families and when they try to be the part of their trans community, they face hierarchical discrimination on the basis of their caste or religion by their own leaders called as 'gurus'.
7. **Different dimension of the same struggle-** it was seen that the girls, women and queer face a lot of struggles and problems when it comes to the safety at public spaces but at the same time it was also seen that the

struggle for both women and girls and for queer was a bit different but also had some similarities. For instance, in most of the cases girls and women mentioned that they felt safer when there are police station/police around but in case of the queers/transgendered individuals they all feared the police. Also, at the same time it is important to remember that women/girls are also not feel safe with the police because a few of them also shared their experiences of being sexually harassed by the police. Secondly, due to homophobia/queer phobia prevailing in the society, even the women and girls also discriminate to them. For instance, one the transgendered person mentioned that when she/he wanted to get into the three-wheeler, the women immediately asked the driver to move because they did not want the transgendered person to sit with her.

8. **Loss/Limited exposure** – Due to the unsafe environment outside, the girls and women were restricted to their homes and therefore there was no/very limited exposure to the outside world. They were restricted to go the schools if any incident happened while going to the school. They are not allowed to go outside in the evenings. This affects not only their education but also their overall personality, development and growth and restricts their ability to survive in the outside world.
9. **Health Issues** – Other than the mental health issues, the girls and women have to face serious physical health issues. Sexual Harassment has serious repercussions on the physical and mental health of an individual, not able to access the hygienic and safe public toilets and instead spending hours without water has serious health issues on them as well.
10. **Complaining wasn't easy** – complaining or sharing the issue of harassment has never been an easy task for the survivor respondents. This is also the reason that maximum incidences of harassment and outrage of modesty goes unaddressed and unrecorded. Our In-depth interviews bifurcated this into two major parts-
  - Sharing with the family
  - Complaining to the police or authority

**Sharing with the family-** we found that girls didn't feel safe to share such incidents with family in fear that they will be blamed for it, like in some

instances where the girls have shared that someone is harassing them in the street or else somewhere in public areas, the member of the families asked them that what were they wearing? Did she show some seductive signs to the perpetrator? What was the need to visit that area where this incident took place?

Though these questions are traumatising but the major problem is additional restrictions on the girls in the name of safety precautions. This fear of loss of mobility pressurises them to hide such incidence

As this experience shows racism, patriarchy, beauty norms has huge role in further victimization of girls.

I narrated the incident of harassment I have experienced,  
My brother laughed out loud and said 'your complexion is dark, you look so ugly, was the man blind that he followed you.' Everybody laughed and made fun of my dark complexion.

-Nalini

**Complaining to the police or authority-** Visiting the police station and reaching out to the police is something which is seen as a taboo, like it is commonly said that people of reputed family specially women don't go to the police. There remains a fear that if the police come to visit us throughout the investigation the local people of the community will make gossips out of it and everyone will try to guess and interpret the case and rumours will ruin the image of the survivor.

Also, police and other such institutions are portrayed as a masculine and male dominating space. Socio-cultural inherited patriarchy within the police results in mansplaining of the case. History of other complainants that how anonymous complaints had been unaddressed and survivors were found unconvinced by the kind of investigation enacted is a reason behind the lack of trust on such institutions.

Exhausting and long investigation procedures also validated this argument of not reaching out to the police, like women shared that "Police demands too much details and documents also asks to call parents along (even when the

complainant is above 18). This is also the reason that girls feel more comfortable in reaching out to the helpline numbers where details are not required and privacy is respected. But because helpline numbers do not result justice nor even an active visible investigation, girls even don't reach out to them.

But in case of the queer respondents, we found that the social image of the Queer and trans people as a sexually driven and are jokers whom the society doesn't takes seriously is the reason that they don't file complaints for the harassments and violent crime which they face in their everyday life.

20 years old Sunita (name changed) shared ***'One day when my friends and I were coming back to home from the park, in the street two of the male police constables stopped us. They asked us to remove the bags and keep it down. Without asking anything, they started touching our bodies. The police constable squeezed my breasts and I could not utter a word. I was shocked and scared. From that day, I never trust the police even though their duty is to protect us.'***

This analysis has thus forced us to think those decades of democracy and policy making has still failed to achieve the required freedom for women, girls and non-binary identities. It is high time to address the alarming issue of street harassment as it cannot be just seen as a single incident of violence but an act that overpowers the dominant gender who objectifies women and tries to establish their autonomy on them. A single case of sexual harassment can also be the reason behind the lifelong suffering of the survivor.



## Plan for Action -

Community Awareness through creative mediums like puppet shows, street plays, storytelling, painting/drawing and banner presentation in the streets.

Women, Girls and Queers advocating for the infrastructure like street lights, safe and accessible public toilets for all with the state and local government officials

Liaoning and Advocacy with political parties and other Stakeholders to present the recommendations and encourage for action.

Sharing the Report with various youth and feminist portals and also encouraging the youth to write their stories by themselves.

Using the report for sensitization workshops and programs with various stakeholders like police, public transport drivers etc.

## **Recommendations –**

1. **Make public transport cheaper, safer and more accessible for all** - The suggestions include increasing the number of buses and trains exclusively for women and queer, particularly to ply on the routes used by large numbers of women and queer commuters. Announcing the names of destinations in buses is an important recommendation and would greatly benefit the visually challenged. Increasing the safety, hygiene and comfort among the girls, women and queers who are travelling on public transport should be increased. Working with bus drivers and conductors and appointing more women for these posts are significant policies that could go a long way in addressing the issue of safety in public transport.
2. **Including diverse stakeholders** - A wide variety of stakeholders have a role to play in safer cities work. In addition to local government and police, community-based organisations, women's groups, queer groups, student organizations, and associations of local businesses and street vendors, public transport drivers are prime partners for safer cities work.
3. **Working with Men and Boys** - Men and Boys are crucial participants in safer cities work. Changing attitudes and expectations cannot be accomplished without involving men and boys in the work to end all forms of violence against women, girls and queer.
4. **Gender sensitization of service providers** - Platforms- like Police, helplines need to be sensitized to address these issues appropriately, especially with a lot of empathy. When instances of abuse and violence are reported, police need to be sensitive and become proactive. Immediate medical supervision and a counsellor need to be introduced to the complainant. Police need to trust the complainant instead of becoming suspicious. Police should be linked to other civil society organizations that work on Gender-based violence. Police need to be sensitized to address these issues which affect women and need to be proactive in proceeding with the violence. Abuse whether physical/ verbal

give birth to a lot of traumas and affect psychological well-being. These need to be addressed while ensuring the woman filing complaint come out of the violent situation.

5. **Emergency Shelter Homes and Livelihood support for Women, girls and Queers** - To break the cycle of violence is expected to reach a safe, secure, and trustworthy place. The assurance of safe space encourages women to move out of an abusive marriage relationship and also to take a stand for themselves and their children. A backup place act as a support. Safe space is a need as many women in our country continue to stay with their perpetrators because - stay with their caregivers/guardians especially after the marriage has a stigma attached to it. After separation, women should be supported to seek psychological assistance and economic independence. To be able to support themselves and to be economically stable and sustain themselves and their children, women need livelihood support. Queer Shelter homes should also be a focus of the government.
6. **Strengthening the existing facilities and repurposing the unused/ non-functional buildings** - The Uttar Pradesh Government recently launched an initiative to set up 'pink booths' for women and girls to provide safety to women and girls. Data suggests that most of these facilities are shut. Government should open and strengthen these facilities and should hire more female staff to these centres. d. Recognizing role of NGOs, support centres for violence survivors as essential services: The role of support centres, helpline services are critical components and should be recognized as essential services like hospitals. They can play important role to reach out to violence survivors and provide counselling, rescue and reach out to women, girls and queer to challenge violence and act as bridge between police, hospitals and state machinery to challenge violence.
7. **Training and community awareness** - Issues around violence against women, girls and queer and how it violates human rights are important to be discussed within the community. Frequent advertisements, pamphlets

distribution, and raising awareness to challenge violence in public spaces are critical interventions. Issues like gender dysphoria should also be raised and discussed. For a strong collective to emerge, it is important to spread the right information with the right tools. It is important for HUMSAFAR to incorporate discussions around gender, patriarchy, choice, consent and sexuality. To also discuss about Sexual and Reproductive Health rights and laws connected to them (for example – POCSO Act, MTP Act, PCPNDT Act) various methods of contraception etc. It also builds the leadership among the community and strengthens a larger movement to take actions.

8. **Availability and accessibility of information** - Helpline numbers, shelter home information, emergency contact numbers, and contact numbers of civil society organizations need to be advertised and widely shared. To make services accessible, it is important to make information available. This can be done by painting helpline numbers and emergency contact numbers.
9. **Gender responsive Laws and Policies** - Women are married early and experience hardships, which surfaced during the study. Early and forced marriage, lack of knowledge of their constitutional rights, lack of emotional or economical support often force women to stay in an abusive relationship. Therefore, it becomes even more important to build their capacity and strengthen their leadership to lead and own their life. At the same, the government should guidelines on “Gender-Responsive Planning” for ensuring that everyone in the city can safely access and use public spaces.
10. **Government Partnerships with NGOs, CSOs and CBOs and Collective Space** – HUMSAFAR Sakhi Samuh is an excellent example of a collective space within the community. A space to reach out in case of crises or unprecedented situations. During in-depth interviews, many women did talk about the Sakhi Samuh’s and the link with the civil society organizations. A safe supportive space is the first step to leave an abusive marriage/relation

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# **Annexure – 1.**

## **SAFETY AUDIT**

### **Street Survey Questionnaire**

**Date:**

**Surveyor Name:**

- नाम -
- आयु -
- लंग -
- धर्म -
- जाति -

1. . आप अपने इलाके में व्यक्तिगत सुरक्षा से जुड़े कस जो खम को लेकर सबसे ज्यादा डरती हैं?

- कोई नहीं, मुझे कोई डर नहीं है
- यौन उत्पीड़न
- बलात्कार
- डकैती या पैसा या संपत्ति चोरी होना
- हत्या
- अन्य स्पष्ट करें

2. आपके असुर क्षत महसूस करने क्या कारण है ?

- रास्तों पर बिजली नहीं, बहुत कम रोशनी
- भीड़भाड़ वाला सार्वजनिक परिवहन/बस स्टॉप/स्टेशन
- स्वच्छ और सुर क्षत सार्वजनिक शौचालयों का अभाव
- सुनसान रास्ते / सड़कें

- प्रभावी/दृश्यमान पुलिस की कमी
- पुरुषों/लड़कों का समूह
- शराब की दुकानें और जुआ
- सार्वजनिक परिवहन का आसानी से ना मिलना
- अन्य स्पष्ट करें

3. इनमें से कोई भी कारक आपकी व्यक्तिगत सुरक्षा को क्यों प्रभावित करता है?

- लैंगिकता के कारण
- एक निश्चित धर्म का होना
- एक निश्चित जाति का होना
- अन्य स्पष्ट करें

4. इस क्षेत्र में सार्वजनिक स्थानों पर आपने किस प्रकार के यौन उत्पीड़न/हमले का सामना किया है?

- मौखिक (टिप्पणियां, सीटी बजाना आदि)
- शारीरिक (स्पर्श करना, महसूस करना आदि)
- घूरना
- पीछा करना
- हिंसक शारीरिक हमला
- अपने निजी अंगों को दिखाना
- हस्तमैथुन करना
- अन्य स्पष्ट करें
- कोई नहीं

5. आप का अपने क्षेत्र में यौन उत्पीड़न/हमले की घटनाओं से जुड़ा कितनी बार अनुभव रहा है?

- बस एक बार
- अक्सर
- हमेशा

6. आपने कन व शष्ट सार्वजनिक स्थानों पर यौन उत्पीड़न/हमले का सामना क्या है

- वद्यालय
- धा र्मक संस्था
- सड़क / गली
- सार्वजनिक परिवहन
- सार्वजनिक शौंचालय
- पार्क
- अन्य स्पष्ट करें

7. . जब आपका यौन उत्पीड़न/हमला हुआ, तो आपने क्या किया?

- कुछ नहीं किया
- अपराधी का सामना किया
- पु लस को इसकी सूचना दी
- आस पास से मदद मांगी
- हेल्पलाइन पर/ कसी अन्य सेवा को इसकी सूचना दी
- परिवार को बताया
- दोस्त से कहा/मदद मांगी
- अन्य स्पष्ट करें

8. अगर आपने इस घटना की सूचना पु लस को दी, तो उनकी प्रति क्रिया क्या थी

- उन्होंने मुझे ही घटना के लए दोषी ठहराया

- उन्होंने कुछ नहीं किया
- उन्होंने घटना को दर्ज किया/कार्यवाही की
- यदि आपने पुलिस को सूचना नहीं दी? तो क्यों
- घटना रिपोर्ट करने के लिए पर्याप्त गंभीर नहीं थी
- पुलिस के पास जाने से डर लगता है
- वे वैसे भी कुछ नहीं करेंगे
- वे मुझे दोष देंगे
- पुलिस पर क्रिया बहुत थकाऊ है
- परिवार ने मना किया
- अन्य स्पष्ट करें

**9. इस क्षेत्र में यौन उत्पीड़न/हमले से बचने के लिए आप क्या करती हैं?**

- कुछ सार्वजनिक स्थानों से पूरी तरह से बचती हैं
- अकेले बाहर जाने से बचती हैं
- सार्वजनिक परिवहन का उपयोग करने से बचती हैं
- अंधेरा होने के बाद अकेले बाहर जाने से बचती हैं
- भीड़ वाली जगहों पर जाने से बचती हैं
- सुनसान जगहों पर जाने से बचती हैं
- कुछ खास कपड़े पहनने से बचती हैं
- खुद को बचाने के लिए सामान ले जाना यदि हां तो क्या स्पष्ट करें .....
- अन्य स्पष्ट करें

**10. क्या आपको महिलाओं / लड़कियों की सुरक्षा के लिए बने हेल्पलाइन/सरकारी योजनाओं की जानकारी है?**

- आशा ज्योति केन्द्र
- हेल्पलाइन 1090,
- 181
- महिला सम्मान प्रकोश
- रानी लक्ष्मीबाई महिला एवं बाल सम्मान कोश / निर्भया फंड
- पंक बूथ
- 112
- पु लस
- अन्य स्पष्ट करें

12. क्या आपने कसी हेल्पलाइन/योजनाओ से मदद मांगी है? क्या अनुभव /क्या स्थिति रहा है?

- आशा ज्योति केन्द्र
- हेल्पलाइन 1090,
- 181
- महिला सम्मान प्रकोश
- रानी लक्ष्मीबाई महिला एवं बाल सम्मान कोश / निर्भया फंड
- पंक बूथ
- 112
- पु लस
- कभी नहीं मांगी
- अन्य स्पष्ट करें

13. यदि हां तो आपका अनुभव क्या रहा है?















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