

About UN Women

UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.

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About ICRW

The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) is a global research institute with headquarters in Washington, D.C., and regional offices in Nairobi, Kenya, and New Delhi, India. Their research evidence identifies women's contributions as well as the obstacles that prevent them from being economically strong and able to fully participate in society. ICRW translates these insights into a path of action that honors women's human rights, ensures gender equality and creates the conditions in which all women can thrive.

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First Published in December 2012

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Department of Women and Child Development
Government of NCT of Delhi



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Safe Cities free from violence against women and girls

Baseline Findings from the “Safe City Delhi Initiative”ⁱ

The “normalization” of many forms of sexual violence has become a critical issue, deserving the attention of policy-makers and the public.

The largely ignored sexual assault and harassment in public spaces was highlighted in December 2012 with the brutal gang rape and subsequent death of a Delhi woman who was attacked on a moving city bus. In fact, a majority of Delhi's women and girls are at risk of sexual violence on a regular basis, as they go about daily routines, leading their everyday lives.

Sexual violence (SV) encompasses a broad range of unwanted behaviour ranging from verbal and sexual harassment, exhibitionism, touching or groping certain body parts, to rape. Whether experienced on the street or on a bus, in a market or in a park, sexual violence is a gross violation of women's rights to move about safely and participate in public life. Both fear and actual experience of sexual violence in the public realm have a profound effect on women's and girls' daily routines, lifestyles, and their emotional and physical health.

Unfortunately, there is a dearth of empirical data on what drives sexual violence in public spaces, and the extent of the problem. Little is known about how to change attitudes, perceptions and behaviours, as well as how to improve services and infrastructure.

UN Women launched the “Global Programme on Safe Cities Free of Violence against Women and Girls,” in 2010 in partnership with UN-Habitat, leading women's organizations, and global and local partners in five pilot cities across the world, including Delhi. The aim was to prevent sexual violence in public spaces. The Safe City Delhi Programme is a collaborative effort by UN Women, UN Habitat, the Government of Delhi and the Indian non-governmental organization, Jagori. The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) is the evaluation partner.

The first systematic household survey on sexual violence in public spaces was conducted in October and November 2012 as part of the evaluation of the Safe Cities programme. The programme baseline survey establishes key benchmark indicators of perceptions, attitudes and behaviours related to sexual violence that will be used in assessing progress after the first two-year phase of this pilot programme.

RESPONDENTS

The survey, conducted between October and November 2012, was administered to a representative sample of 2,001 women and adolescent girls, and 1003 men and adolescent boys, aged between 16-49 years. The respondents lived in seven Delhi wards encompassing both low and high income areas. Their mean age was 30 years.

The men were more educated than the women (nearly 90 per cent men had attended school compared to 75 per cent women). Among those who attended school, approximately 40 per cent of men and women had studied beyond 10th standard. Women and men differed in their occupations: three-fourths of the women were homemakers and another nine per cent were students. In contrast, more than half of the men (55 per cent) were employed by the government or the private sector, and another 16 per cent were shop owners or vendors.



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KEY FINDINGS

SAFETY PERCEPTIONS

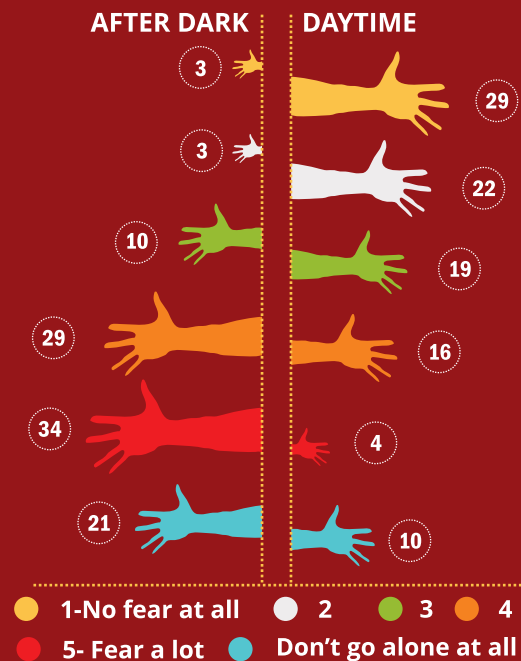
High proportions of women and adolescent girls feel that the city as a whole and their own neighborhoods are not safe spaces. This makes them fearful of going out alone at night and affects their actual mobility.

- Five per cent of women rank public spaces in Delhi as being 'safe' or 'very safe' in terms of sexual violence.
- Nearly 73 per cent respondents say that women and girls face sexual violence in their own neighborhoods. More than half state that these spaces are unsafe all the time.
- Respondents were asked to identify all the areas in the city where they feel unsafe. Streets are reported to be the most unsafe (80 per cent) followed by markets (50 per cent), parks (47 per cent) and bus stops (37 per cent). In the low income group approximately 25 per cent of low income women perceive public toilets as unsafe.
- Almost 63 per cent state that they feel fearful when they go out alone after dark. More than 21 per cent do not venture out alone at all.
- Data suggests that being alone is perceived as a key factor in increasing the vulnerability of women and girls to sexual violence in public spaces. More than 95 per cent of the respondents reported that they would feel safe in public spaces if someone accompanied them. Less than 10 per cent respondents believed that if authorities responded, they would feel safe.

Perception of Women and Girls about Safety in Delhi



Fear of experiencing sexual violence in public spaces when alone during daytime and after dark

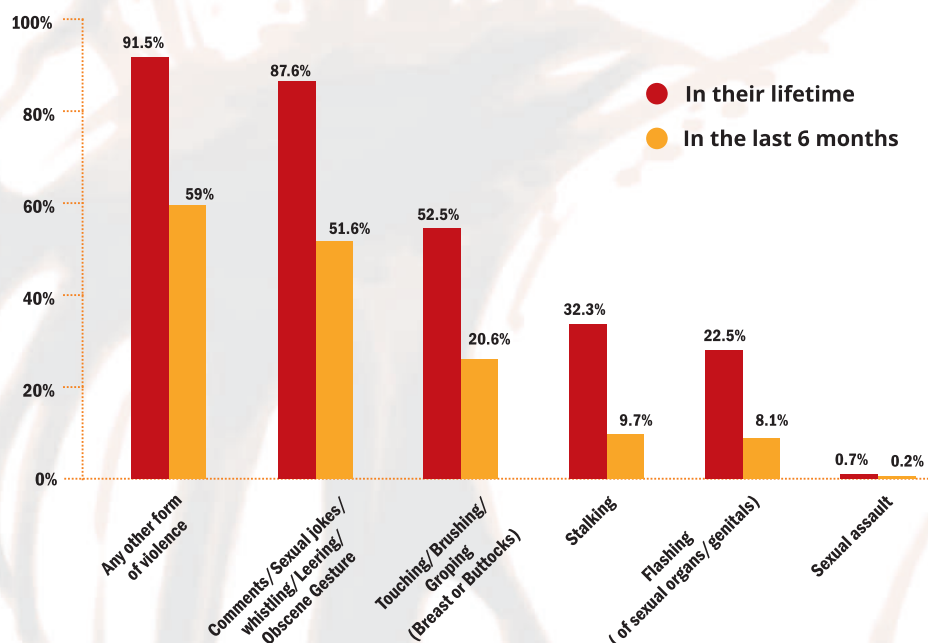


EXPERIENCE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The majority of female respondents have been subjected to some form of sexual violence in public spaces. Younger and more educated women are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence.

For the purposes of this study, we asked about a broad range of behaviors and divided the responses into five categories: 1) sexual harassment (sexual comments and jokes, whistling, leering or obscene gestures), 2) flashing/exposing of men's genitalia, 3) stalking, 4) touching or groping women's breasts or buttocks, and 5) sexual assault. (in this context referring to physically aggressive sexual attack)

Experience of sexual violence: Proportion of women and girls reported experiencing different forms of sexual violence in public spaces in Delhi



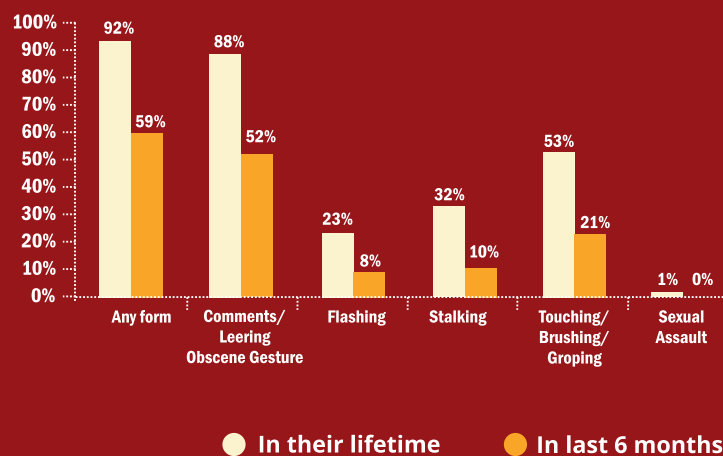
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Photo © Animesh Malakar

- Nine out of 10 female respondents report having experienced at least one form of sexual violence in Delhi's public spaces in their lifetime. Nearly six out of ten say they experienced at least one form in the last six months.
- The most common form of sexual violence is comments/sexual jokes/whistling/leering/obscene gesture, with 88 per cent reporting having experienced this type of sexual violence in their lifetime. More than half (53 per cent) say their breasts or buttocks have been touched or groped, while 32 per cent have been stalked. Fifteen per cent women report that they have been sexually assaulted in public spaces in Delhi.
- Women living in low and high income areas report similar levels of sexual violence in the six months prior to the survey. Younger and more educated women are more likely to experience some form of sexual violence in this time period compared to their older and less educated peers.

Women's experience of sexual violence

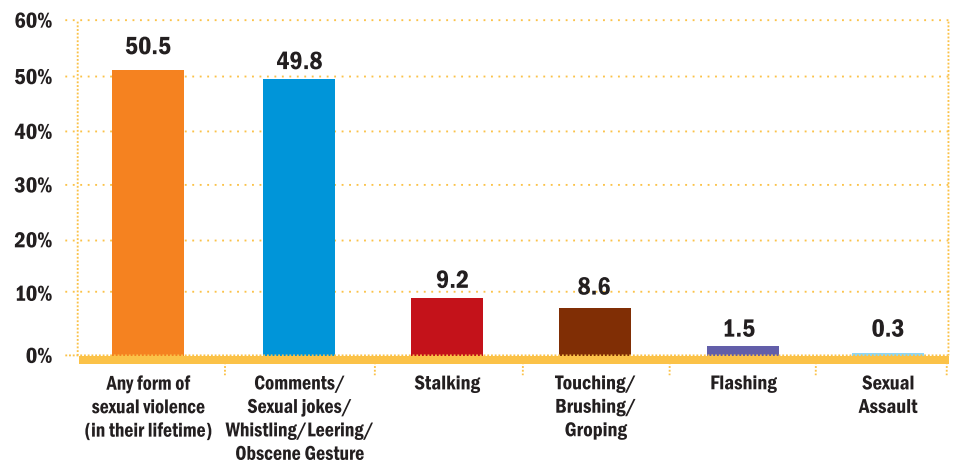


PERPETRATION

Half of the men and adolescent boys report having perpetrated some form of sexual violence against women and girls, primarily by sexually harassing them verbally or visually. Younger and more educated men are more likely to report perpetration in public places.

For the purposes of this study, we asked about a broad range of behaviors and divided the responses into five categories: 1) sexual harassment (sexual comments and jokes, whistling, leering or obscene gestures), 2) flashing/exposing of men's genitalia, 3) stalking, 4) touching or groping women's breasts or buttocks, and 5) sexual assault (in this context referring to physically aggressive sexual attack).

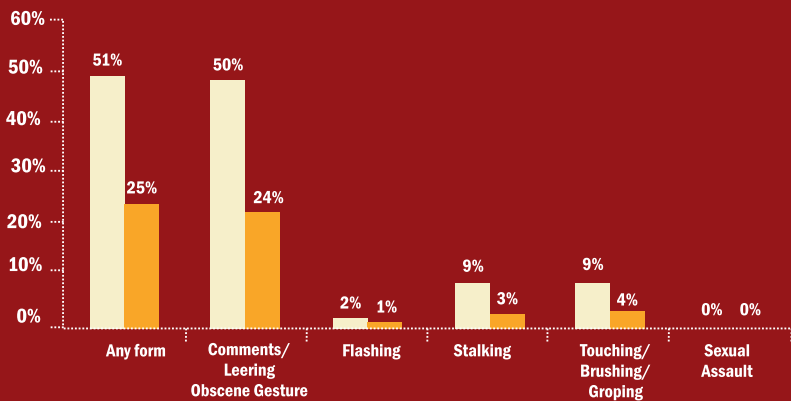
Perpetration of violence (in their lifetime): Proportion of men and boys who reported perpetrating sexual violence by form (in their lifetime)





- Fifty one per cent of the male respondents report that they have perpetrated at least one form of sexual violence against women and girls in public spaces in Delhi in their lives. One fourth (25 per cent) have done so in the last six months.
- The most common form is sexually harassing women by making sexual comments or jokes, whistling, leering or making obscene gestures, with 50 per cent reporting having done so in their lifetime. Stalking and touching or groping a woman's breasts or buttocks is each reported by nine per cent of men.

Men's perpetration of sexual violence



● In their lifetime

● In last 6 months

BLAMING THE VICTIM

Men blame women for the sexual violence that women experience

- Three out of four men feel that “women provoke men by the way they dress.”
- Around 40 per cent of men fully or partially agree with these statements: “If a woman is being teased in a public space, it is usually her own fault” and “women going out at night deserve to be sexually harassed.”

Over 30 per cent fully or partially agree with the statement, “When a woman is raped she usually did something careless to put herself in that situation.”

Photo © UN Women/Inverted Commas



REPORTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Many incidents of sexual violence go unreported. Among women who have taken action, confronting the perpetrator is more common than informing the police or asking the public for help.

Proportion of women and girls who responded to violence experienced during last 6 months and reasons for not doing anything by different forms of sexual violence				
	Comments/ Sexual jokes/ whistling/ Leering/ Obscene Gesture	Stalking	Touching/Brushing/ Groping (Breast or Buttocks)	Flashing
Response to violence in last 6 month				
Did nothing	58.1	43.1	40.1	71.2
Confronted the perpetrator	40.7	48.0	58.8	23.5
Told to family members/friends	10.8	19.1	18.6	5.6
Ask people around to help/take some action	0.8	2.1	1.7	3.1
Reported to Police	0.8	7.7	0.7	0.6
Reasons for not doing anything				
Incident was minor	61.4	48.8	47.9	30.2
Did not want to attract attention	35.3	40.5	33.9	33.0
Fear of retaliation from perpetrator	22.5	14.3	22.1	23.3
Felt ashamed of it	17.5	18.6	27.4	42.6
Fear that others would blame me	11.4	15.3	20.9	13.9
Fear that mobility would be restricted	8.0	8.2	9.7	7.0
Fear of hurting family reputation	21.0	19.0	19.5	21.7

- When looking at women's experiences of sexual violence in the six months prior to the survey, it is common for women to have done nothing in response. This is particularly true for women who have witnessed men exposing their genitals – flashing (71 per cent), and who have been subjected to sexual comments, whistling, leering or obscene gestures (58 per cent).
- However, a substantial proportion of women responded in some way.
- In cases of physical or prolonged sexual violence, a substantial proportion of women have responded. Nearly 6 in 10 women who reported to have been touched or groped confronted the perpetrator. Approximately half (48 per cent) who have been stalked did the same.
- Depending on the act, 6-19 per cent of women told family members or friends. Few asked people around to help and less than one per cent reported the incident to the police.
- A common reason respondents give for keeping quiet, particularly in response to sexual comments, leering and obscene gestures, is the perception that the offence is minor. Other reasons that were given are that the women do not want to attract attention, they feel ashamed of what happened (especially with regards to flashing), they fear retaliation and they fear hurting their family's reputation.
- The major reasons why women do not report the incidents to the police are that they feel the police would trivialize the matter, not do anything, blame them for the incident, or turn around and harass them.
- Despite the existence of helplines set up by the police, less than eight per cent of women knew of any helpline number to call if harassed in public spaces. Among them, more than half either did not remember the number or recalled an incorrect one.



BY-STANDER INTERVENTION

While women are more likely to intervene than men, overall bystander intervention is low for both groups.

- The most common reason men and women give for not intervening is that “it was none of my business” (56 per cent and 61 per cent, respectively). Other reasons are “the incident was minor” or they “feared retaliation from the perpetrator.”
- More men than women report witnessing at least one form of sexual violence in public spaces in Delhi in the last six months (78 per cent men compared to 30 per cent women).
- Seventy eight per cent men reported having witnessed at least one form of sexual violence against women in public spaces in Delhi in the last six months as opposed to only 30 per cent of women who have witnessed other facing sexual violence.

BELIEF VS. BEHAVIOUR

In sharp contrast to reported behaviour, the vast majority of women and men believe that women should take action in response to acts of sexual violence in public places.

- Approximately 90 per cent of women and men believe that women should fight back when harassed in public spaces, that women should report such incidents to the police and that women should inform others about the sexual violence they experience outside the home.
- Ninety four per cent of men agree with the statement "People should intervene if they see sexual harassment in public spaces."



Photo © Jash Meekroll



Photo © Deeksha Singh

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT LAWS

Although men and women know that sexual violence against women and girls in public spaces is a crime, yet, they are unaware of a law or act specifically against sexual harassment.

Twenty six per cent women and 14 per cent men are aware of a law on sexual harassment. In fact, at the time of the survey, the Indian Penal Code (IPC) contained specific sections referring to physical acts or words that "insult the modesty of a woman," although the term sexual harassment was not precisely defined or referred to in these provisions.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall the survey provides a disturbing snapshot of the lives of Delhi's women and girls, who are subject to a barrage of verbal and physical acts by men along the continuum of sexual violence. Women's experiences of sexual violence therefore justify their perceptions that Delhi and their own neighborhoods are unsafe for them and their peers.

The study also shows that many instances of sexual violence go unreported, particularly to the police, who are mistrusted by many female respondents. This is in strong contrast to both women and men who believe that women should report sexual violence to the police and others.

Additionally the findings reveal that the probability of public intervention, particularly among men, is low and that many men blame women for the sexual violence they experience, thereby perpetuating gender stereotypes.

Behind the lack of reporting and bystander intervention, not surprisingly, are attitudes that trivialize and normalize many forms of sexual violence in public spaces. These attitudes make women hesitant to report harassment and violence, and are responsible for the reluctance of bystanders to pay attention to them. Authorities perceive harassment and violence in public space as "minor", and lay the blame on women. These attitudes, combined with the knowledge that any action or enforcement under the law would be rare or non-existent, contribute to a sense of impunity among men.

The findings point to a number of recommendations for improving the safety of women and girls in Delhi's public spaces:

- Police protocols and procedures for effective response to sexual violence must be set up, strictly implemented and communicated to the public to foster greater trust in reporting among women and girls.
- Helplines and other help seeking mechanisms need to be widely publicized in prominent public spaces; periodic monitoring should be undertaken of their use and effectiveness.
- Men and boys should be engaged in discussions and campaigns to transform inequitable gender attitudes, reduce perpetration behaviours and increase bystander intervention.
- Advocate for the discussion of gender equality and the use of violence within the discourse of 'quality education' to ensure that schooling incorporates a responsibility beyond information and skill focused curricula.
- New provisions in the Criminal Law Amendment Bill 2013 (which amends the IPC to explicitly outlaw acts such as sexual harassment, voyeurism and stalking) needs to be widely publicized.
- Systematic national estimation and review of sexual violence in public spaces in rural and urban areas needs to be undertaken at periodic intervals.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report has been written by the International Center for Research Women with the technical and financial support of UN Women Safe Cities Delhi Programme team in New Delhi and New York. The findings in this report are based on a baseline evaluation of the UN Women Safe Cities Delhi Programme.

UN Women gratefully acknowledge our partners and individuals who have contributed in several ways to the current study. We acknowledge the support and encouragement received from the Department of Women and Child Development, Delhi Government, (DWCD), and especially Prof. Kiran Walia, Minister for Women and Child Development, Delhi Government and Mr. Rajiv Kale, Secretary, DWCD for the overall support in the project. We would also like to thank Office of the Registrar General, Census of India for providing district maps of Delhi to ICRW for the survey mapping.

We are thankful to the entire Jagori team – Kalpana Viswanath, Anupriya Ghosh, Prableen Kaur and Suneeta Dhar for their inputs and collaborative spirit. We are grateful to the Research Team (mentioned below) at ICRW for their analytical and comprehensive research. The authors would like to acknowledge the data collection partners Mindfield Research Services Pvt. Ltd. for efficient implementation of the field study and data management.

Finally, UN Women wishes to thank the study respondents from Delhi for providing of their valuable time and sharing their thoughts and personal experiences with the ICRW research team – their contribution to the study is invaluable in terms of sharing personal stories that will enrich the programme as we move forward.

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Suggested Citation: UN Women and ICRW. 2013. "Unsafe: An Epidemic of Sexual Violence in Delhi's Public Spaces: Baseline Findings from the Safe Cities Delhi Programme". UN Women: New York & ICRW: Washington D.C.

ⁱ This is a summary report based on the baseline assessment of the Safe Cities Delhi Programme. The complete report can be accessed at: www.unwomenindia.org

ⁱⁱ The other cities are Quito (Ecuador), Kigali (Rwanda), Port Moresby (Papua New Guinea) and Cairo (Egypt)

ⁱⁱⁱ This study uses the operational definition for sexual violence as per UN Women's Global Program document 'Glossary and Definition of Key Terms', March 2011. Here, as is noted above, SV is defined as a broad concept that includes a range of acts (and settings) in which women and girls can be sexually violated. Examples include all forms of sexual harassment, forced actual or attempted sexual intercourse, unwanted sexual contact, making a person engage in a sexual act without consent, unwanted sexual comments, sexual molestation and abuse of children, among others.

^{iv} The questions in the survey tools used both sexual harassment/violence, unless specific forms were being probed. However, as SV is a broader concept, the findings use the term 'SV'

^v The seven wards include three intervention wards - Malviya Nagar, Badarpur and Molarband and four wards - Zakir Nagar, Hari Nagar, Shahpurjat and Mayur Vihar Phase-I from rest of the Delhi. Weights were applied to make the data representative of Delhi. ICRW's Institutional Review Board approved the study and all participants provided informed consent prior to answering the survey questions.

^{vi} In this study, public places include streets, markets, parks, bus stops, railway and metro stations, on public transportation (buses, metro, trains and taxis/autorickshaws), public toilets, cinemas, religious places, community halls and parking areas.

^{vii} Any form of sexual contact (up to and including rape) between two or more people without voluntary consent. Consent obtained through pressure, coercion, force, or threats of force is not voluntary consent

^{viii} Current prevalence for this study is defined as violence experienced in the last 6 months. This baseline survey was conducted in November 2012, and the Progress Assessment is due to be conducted same time in 2013. This constrained timeline means that there is one year between the two time points of data collection meant to track shifts and changes in perception, experience and other key indicators. Using the standard timeframe of one year for current prevalence thus was not feasible, as it would provide no time gap for impact of program activities to be assessed.

^{ix} Relevant IPC sections are 354 (outrage of modesty), 254 and 509 (Eve-teasing), 375 (anti-rape bill) and 384 (Guidelines on sexual harassment in the workplace). Recently, the IPC has been updated with the passage of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill 2013, which now includes a definition of sexual harassment, inclusion of specific forms of sexual violence, among other changes.