

# SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN URBAN INDIA

A SOCIAL AUDIT REPORT  
COMMISSIONED IN 2020

CONDUCTED FOR  
Red Dot Foundation Global  
& Safecity

STUDY BY  
Developmatrix

UNDER  
Vital Voices -Voices  
Against Violence Initiative



# Report Foreword



Red Dot Foundation Global (RDFG) initiated this social audit study to understand Sexual Violence in urban India along with the importance of use of technology for addressing Sexual Violence

The study is initiated with the aim of 1] Understanding the Indian society, especially of persons between the age group of 18 to 40 years and living in urban spaces (Target Audience), understanding of the phenomenon of sexual violence, their approach and readiness to report stories of self-experiencing or witnessing Sexual Violence and 2] improving communication with the Target Audience in order to break their silence on SV and increase the reporting.

RDFG approached Developmatrix (DMX) to carry out comprehensive social audit of the Sexual Violence in Urban India and the targeted cities under purview were Delhi/NCR, Mumbai/MMR region, Pune, Bangalore and Patna.

DMX worked out the study plan, carried out interviews, Focussed Group Discussions (FGDs), collected quantitative data with online tool; analysed secondary data collected from articles/ research studies and documents.

The DMX team comprised of Latha Sankarnarayan; the CEO of Developmatrix, Aruna Jain; the social research lead and field research assistants. The respondents included 1] veterans in the field of women empowerment, gender based violence, attached to women's studies from premium social sciences schools; 2] Managers from NGOs working in the space of SV/DV/ women empowerment partnering with government systems and 3] RDFG employees/ partners and volunteers and 4] random persons from Target audience.

The study was conducted under the auspices of Vital Voices (VV) "Voices Against Violence" (VAV) grant.

Vital Voices is an international NGO co-founded by Hon. Hillary Clinton; it invests in women leaders who are solving the world's greatest challenges. Their project VAV works in the space of Sexual Violence (SV). They follow and support these leaders in their efforts to make a desired change.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This study has been initiated by Red Dot Foundation Global (RDFG) with the objective of:

1. Understanding the Indian Scenario in terms of cultural/ social/ historical and legal aspects and attitudes of people of India towards Sexual Violence
2. Planning further communication strategies to remove barriers in reporting acts of SV and popularise technology platforms with to address Sexual Violence.

In order to achieve the objective; RDFG had engaged Developmatrix (DMX) to undertake the social audit i.e. Study of Sexual Violence in Urban India and relevance of technology to address issues related to Sexual Violence.

Prestigious USA based organization Vital Voices (VV) whose objective is to uphold women's empowerment and follows women undertaking extraordinary social causes; has provided grant for this study, through its signature project "Voices against Violence" - a program in the space of Gender Based Violence (GBV).



## 2. STUDY DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

Developmatrix (DMX) conducted the study during the period June-October 2020 as per the terms agreed upon in the MOU with RDFG. The cities considered for the study were Delhi, Mumbai, Pune (including Satara), Patna and Bangalore.

Due to the present COVID 19 grave situation it was decided to undertake data collection digitally/ online. Qualitative data was collected by conducting online interviewing and Focussed Group Discussions with various specialists and practitioners in the space of SV/GBV/DV; RDFG partners and volunteers. Quantitative Data was planned by administering online questionnaires using Survey tool. Secondary data was collected through available studies on the net; statistical data published in journals; data collected through other activities/programmes related to SV.

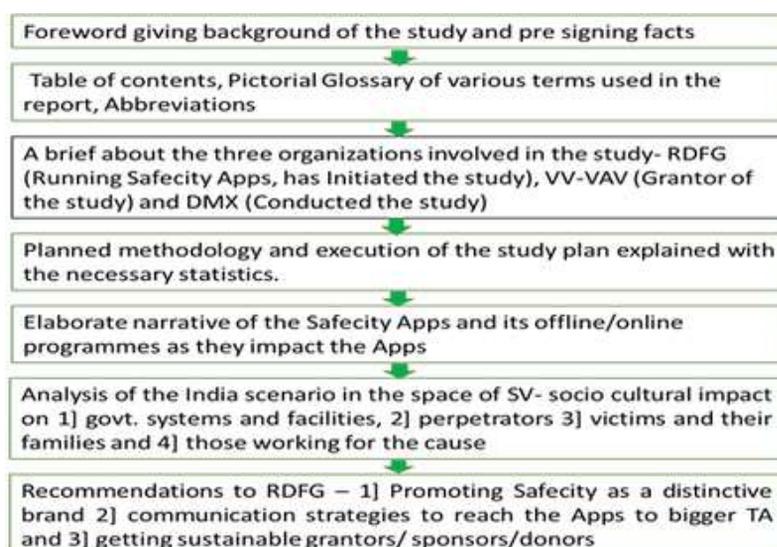
### EXECUTION OF THE PLAN

No of online/ telephonic interviews conducted	13 interviews with NGOs, Specialists, activists
No of FGDs conducted on Zoom	3 with RDF team, special needs youth and random Target Audience
No of questionnaires answered	500 targetted; 236 respondents

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (CONTD.)

## 3. FLOW OF THE NARRATIVE

The DMX team put the data received in order, analysed the data keeping in mind the study objectives, discussed, reconfirmed various facts from the RDFG team and made its recommendations. The narrative of the whole process forms this report.



## 4. MAJOR FINDINGS

Analysis of the data led to various findings which, are elaborated in chapter Four of the full version of the report. Here is a brief account of the findings:

### 4.1. Indian Scenario - Qualitative Analysis

DMX found that from across the discussions with various respondents, from the quantitative data and the secondary data there were certain common observations made by all about the Indian scenario of Sexual Violence and about the reporting of the experiences by victims or their families.

#### 1. Sexual Violence (SV) as a term

SV as a term is known to the TA and others. However, acts such as physical assault, rape as considered as SV but acts of eve teasing, soft touch though inappropriate, sexually coloured comments are not considered as crime/ offence at formal/ informal levels. There is a need to create awareness on what constitutes the term "Sexual Violence" under the law.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (CONTD.)

## 4.1. Indian Scenario - Qualitative Analysis (Contd.)

### 2. Legal Aspect - The laws/The judicial system/The police/The people/The change agents

In India besides the Indian Penal Code (IPC) there are compatible special laws made against Child Abuse (POCSO), Domestic Violence (PWDVA), women's sexual harassment at work place (POSH). It may be noted that all these laws took long years to pass in both the houses of the parliament. Though the police and the judiciary are aware of these laws; they are not implemented fully as in both the systems the implementers come from patriarchal society with deep rooted biases against women and also, the victims do not want to lodge complaints in the public domains because of the stigma attached and possible negative consequences in personal/ familial life. There is a need to train the govt. system implementers about how to implement the law effectively and create safe environment.

### 3. Socio Cultural Norms and Attitude

India is a patriarchal society. There are certain norms and mind-sets that are deep rooted in Indian psyche. These norms have hindered in making of the laws pro women, denial of justice to women and taking corrective action by the police.

### 4. Caste war in India

Sexual violence against Dalit (low caste) women was prevalent for ages and an accepted fact. Women from higher caste were generally at home and hence protected while lower caste women had to go to work and SV against them by their employers and their men was common. Insulting women's pride was the one way to show Dalits their place. In modern India the rate of SV against Dalits have come down but the practice still prevails

### 5. Domestic Violence in India

Domestic violence across all castes and cultures, across urban and rural spaces, across classes and educational levels is rampant in India too and cases hardly get reported. According to practitioners women do not complain against their family members due to various reasons, such as - economic insecurity, isolation, lack of proper shelter, social stigma. It's said unless their life/ marriage or shelter is in danger women won't talk about their exploitation in public domain. After 'Me Too' movement catching up in India things are improving in terms of awareness and more women willing to take action.

### 6. Sexual Violence in Urban Spaces

Soft SV on streets is common, it seems unemployment, frustrations, cramped houses and lack of structured recreation could be leading to more SV. Street Harassment is rampant and in offices, women do get sexually harassed but again, due the insecurity of losing job, fear of social stigma isolation and not getting a husband through arranged marriage system the cases are not reported. POSH Law is in practice but informal sector faces grave problem.

In case of slum and low housing settlements, lack of privacy due to cramped spaces leads to frequent sexual harassments and domestic violence cases are more.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (CONTD.)

## 4.1. Indian Scenario - Qualitative Analysis (Contd.)

### 7. Sexual Violence in Village Spaces

Sexual violence in villages mainly has the caste factor. Also, people in higher positions in the government system or higher positions do exploit women, teen-age girls/ boys but these cases do not get reported. Social organizations and activists do work against this but become prey to the local systems.

### 8. Use of Technology to address the issue of Sexual Violence

There are a number of helplines, Apps and other digital movements started especially in urban centres by the Government agencies as well as NGOs but again, reporting is rather low, basically because of the factors mentioned above and also because the society has yet to develop faith in police action and the confidentiality factor in digital technology.

### 9. Plight of the LGBTQI Community

According to LGBTQI activists India is yet to come to the terms with accepting sexual orientation of this community. As a result there are fronts against the community that have to be fought. They get abused at home and in **the society as they are still considered as "sexually abnormal"**. **Even at the police station or in the court they are not accepted well hence filing FIR is also difficult.** They need organizational support to get justice and safe space in the society.

### 10. Plight of youth with special needs

Special needs persons because of their physical/ mental condition become easy prey to sexual violence. Those who understand good touch-bad touch try to be safe by moving around in company, protected by parent but due to the handicap hardly can fight with perpetrators. For mentally challenged persons parents have to take care of their safety. The parents expressed a lot of anxiety as there are hardly any laws or facilities to make them safe.

### 11. COVID 19 effect on Sexual Violence

During the COVID there was less violence observed on the streets as there was a lock down and fear of catching Corona but domestic violence cases were very much on the rise. Practitioners got an increased number of cases and even police stations noted more cases. An activist/counsellor mentioned getting as many as 4 to 5 cases in a day at times during the lockdown. It was also observed that most of the rescue/shelter homes were closed or under quarantine protocol due to the lockdown and fear of contracting the Covid-19 virus due to induction of new cases. As such the victims of domestic abuse were forced to stay with their abusers (relatives/spouses). Even the police were constrained to handle domestic cases and were left without much option to send the victim to a home. It is recommended that any future policy for disaster relief should look at SV and rescue/shelter home center as part of the disaster relief framework and implement it. Even the United Nations has stressed on the importance of ensuring that hotlines and shelter homes are available for addressing SV during disasters including pandemics.

### 12. Reporting of cases of SV - preferences

Through the study responses and opinion of practitioners it was learnt that due to the reasons stated above victims do not like to report experiences of SV. Mostly the victim quits the job or education or avoids places where SV acts happen frequently. The respondents said that in case they experience any act of SV they would keep it to themselves or will talk about it to a friend or a close relative. Going to NGO also is emerging as an option.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (CONTD.)

## 4.2. Analysis of the Quantitative Data

In terms of understanding the perception of Sexual Violence, the survey threw up responses on expected lines basis other similar surveys across the globe e.g.: Power/Control or dominance was considered as prime reason for Sexual Violence.

However, a bit of a concern was that Lust/Sexual Urge was considered as an important reason (2nd highest response). This could be inferred as less awareness on Sexual Violence and cause as a result of social conditioning.

There is still a reluctance to report or share of stories of SV; however, among the younger audience this reluctance seems to be decreasing. The top 'go-to' contact for reporting on SV cases are NGOs and the police come later; which implies less trust on the legal/judicial system. There is a serious need for SV sensitive training for police officials especially at the lower or constable level. For organisations or platforms that work in the space of SV or GBV, it is more important to also collaborate with the local police and can help in sensitising SV to local police stations.

There is a preference also seen for reporting on SV through online/tech means. Awareness of availability of Tech apps for safety or for SV is however low. But there was a high response to the idea of using Tech/digital or mobile apps for safety and SV. Both combined indicates there is a need for Tech apps in SV.

The awareness or brand recall of few mobile apps suggest:

1. Very low awareness for recognition of any such apps
2. It does not indicate the use of such apps and from the data collected, the use of apps is currently low
3. Many of the apps are either dead like VithU or are emergency call/dial apps or apps for overall safety or issues concerned with women and none exclusively dedicated to reporting like Safecity.
4. There is a captive audience for tech apps - mainly youth up to age group of 35 years. However, the awareness of existence of such apps is low.

An in depth analysis of the Quantitative Data is found in the following pages.

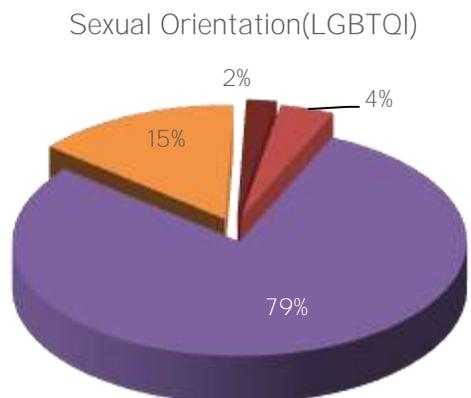
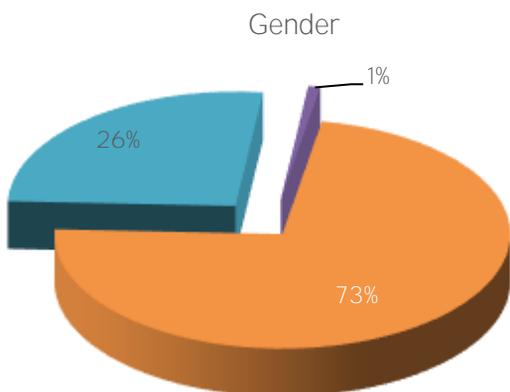
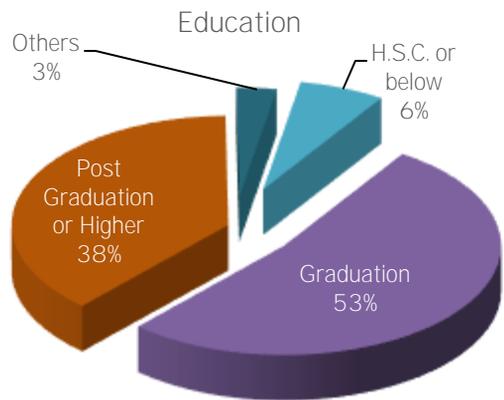
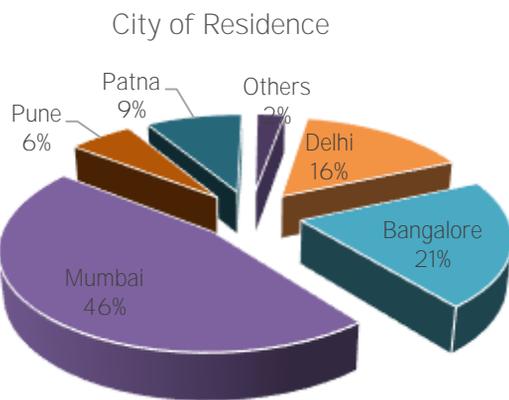
# Quantitative Analysis

## 7. SURVEY ANALYSIS

Total Survey Visits	302
Total respondents	236
Completed responses	189
Partial responses	47 (Partial Responses only to couple of questions)
Response to significant questions	210

All completed responses received in the online survey were analysed  
 Each response to each individual question has been analysed and not as aggregate

### 7.1. Profile of Target Audience

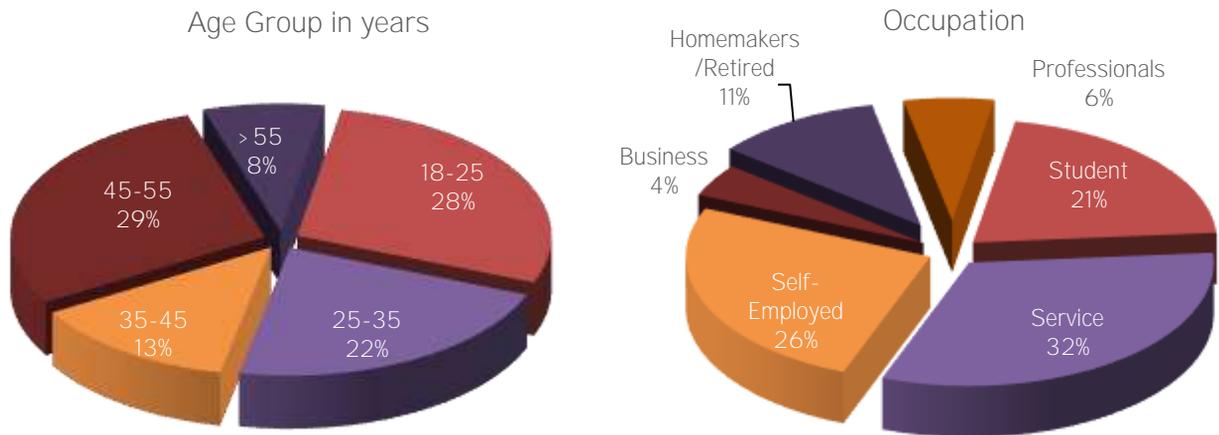


Female Male Prefer not to say

Yes No No, but I identify as an Ally Prefer not to say

# Quantitative Analysis

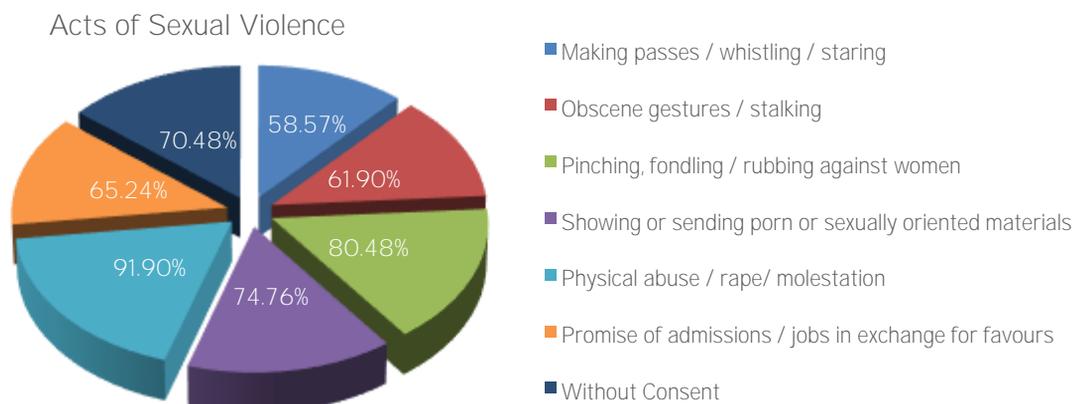
## 7.1. Profile of Target Audience



Note: Owing to Covid-19 there have been some instances of respondents who were staying in hometowns due to Lockdown whilst normally, they used to live in other cities for education or workplaces

## 7.2. Understanding of Sexual Violence

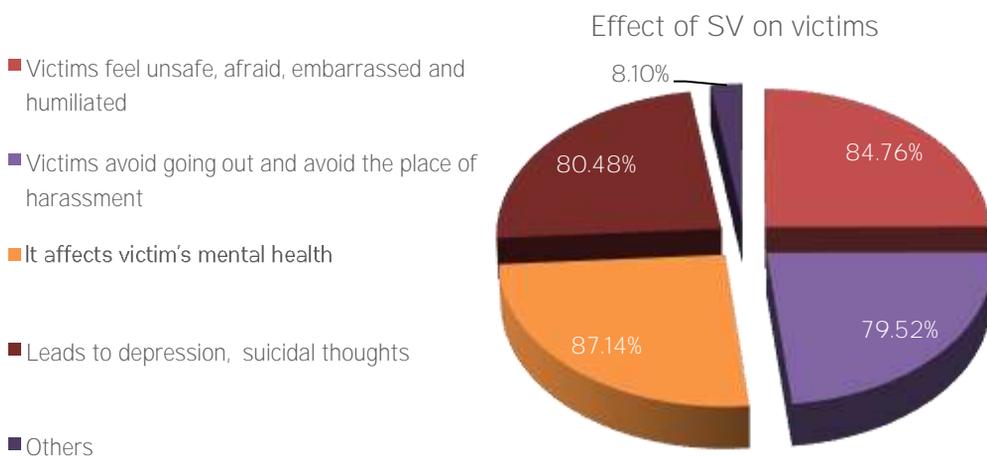
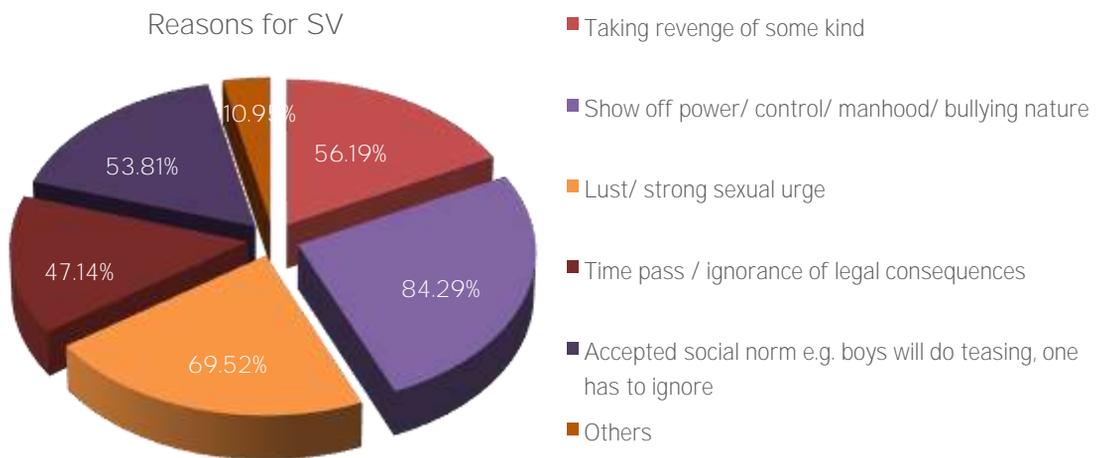
From our Qualitative, it was gathered that Sexual Violence as a term is recognized well. However, there is no clarity as to what they understand as SV. E.g. rape, physical sexual assault once/ repeated (as happens in DV cases) are considered as acts of SV by them but acts such as eve teasing, sexually oriented comments, staring or ogling, soft touching, sending sexually oriented messages are not considered as acts of SV. A number of them were not aware that these acts form SV under the Indian Law. In Quantitative, as seen, only on prompting do they distinguish between different acts of SV



# Quantitative Analysis

## 7.3. Perception of Sexual Violence

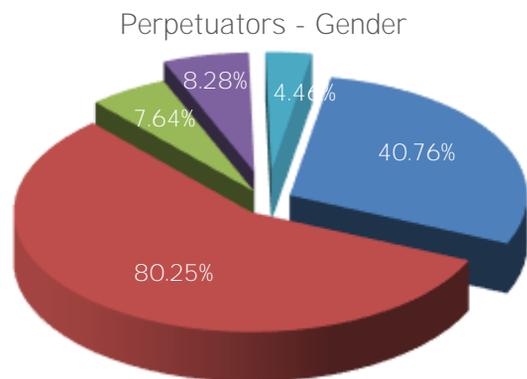
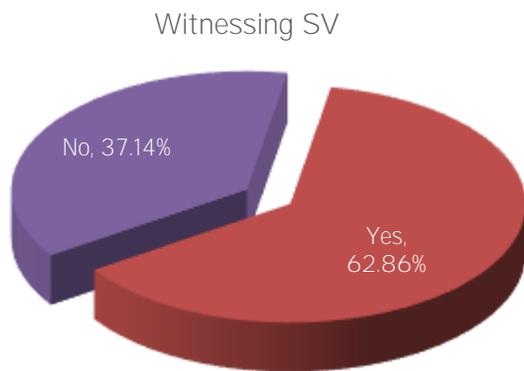
In terms of understanding the perception of Sexual Violence, the survey threw up responses on expected lines: Power/Control was considered as prime reason, Accepted Social Norms and Revenge almost eliciting the same response. However, a bit of a concern was that Lust/Sexual Urge was considered as an important reason (2<sup>nd</sup> highest response. This could be inferred as less awareness on Sexual Violence and also could be cause of social conditioning.



# Quantitative Analysis

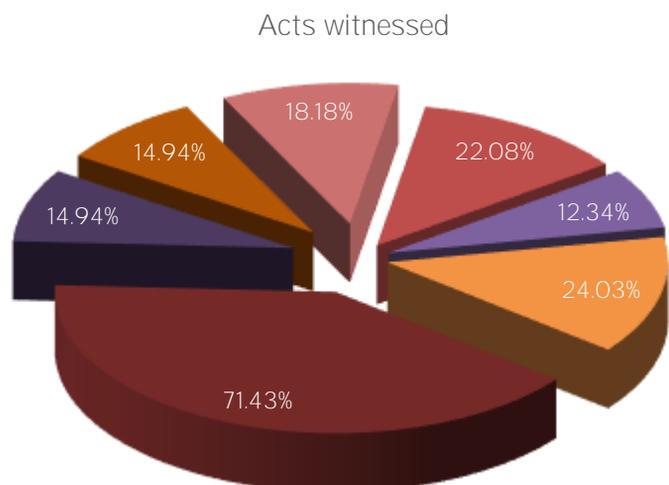
## 7.4. Witnessing Acts of Sexual Violence

More respondents witnessed acts of SV than experiencing SV. It may not be an accurate inference, but it could be possible, that people are still reluctant to state their personal experience.



■ Adolescent Boys ■ Men ■ Adolescent Girls ■ Women ■ Others

- Food Stalls/Street Vendors
- College Canteen
- Corner street of your residence/Building
- Public places such as railway stations / trains/ metro/ bus stops/parks/General Streets
- Educational institutes
- Your workplace/Office
- Residences/Place of stay

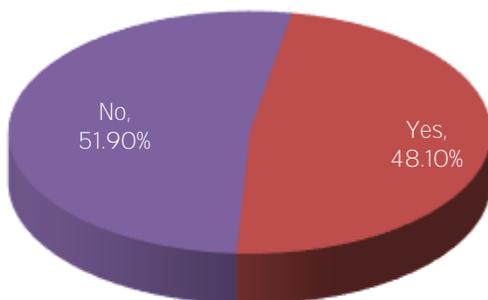


# Quantitative Analysis

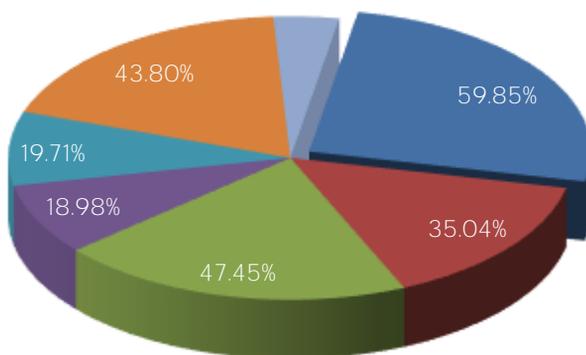
## 7.5. Experiencing Acts of Sexual Violence

The reaction to SV is usually fight alone or fight with friends and family. Posting or sharing on social media is less than 10%. So in effect, all that tech/mobile apps have managed to penetrated is only 10%. Therefore a lot will need to be promoted and intensify outreach to get the likely 59% to report or share their stories.

Experiencing SV



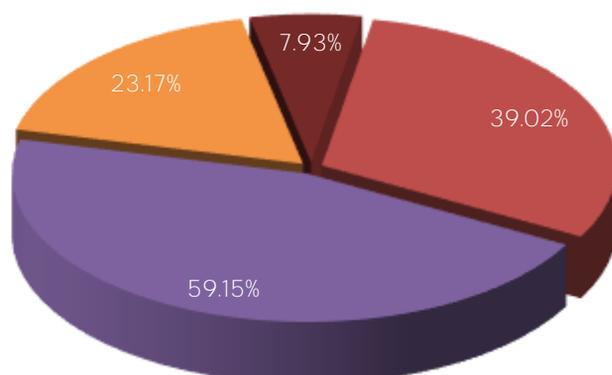
Facing SV



- Street harassment like making passes / whistling / staring / comments
- Obscene gestures / stalking
- Pinching, fondling / rubbing against your body
- Porn or sexually oriented materials shown/ sent
- Physical abuse / rape/ molestation
- Making passes / whistling / staring
- Others

- Just ignored
- Tried to fight back alone / with support of friends / bystanders
- Approached legal entities like police / governmental authorities / NGOs
- Shared the story or experience on social media/media

Reaction to SV Act/s



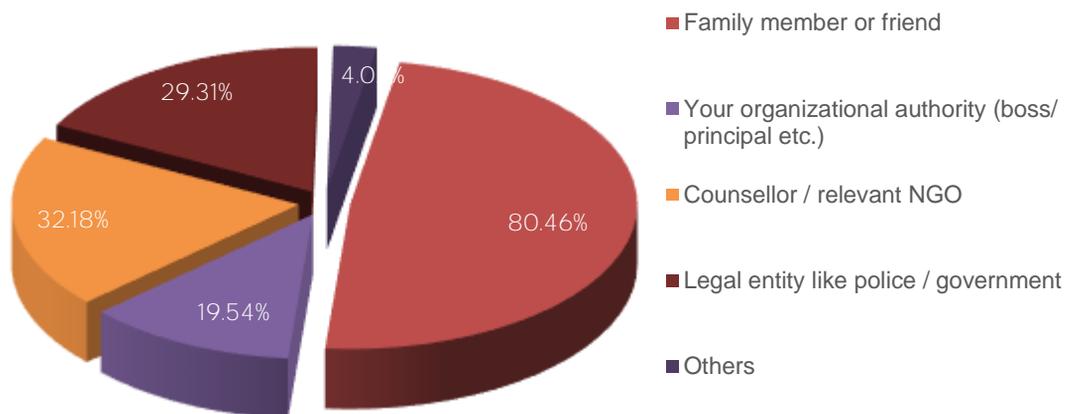
# Quantitative Analysis

## 7.6. Reporting Sexual Violence

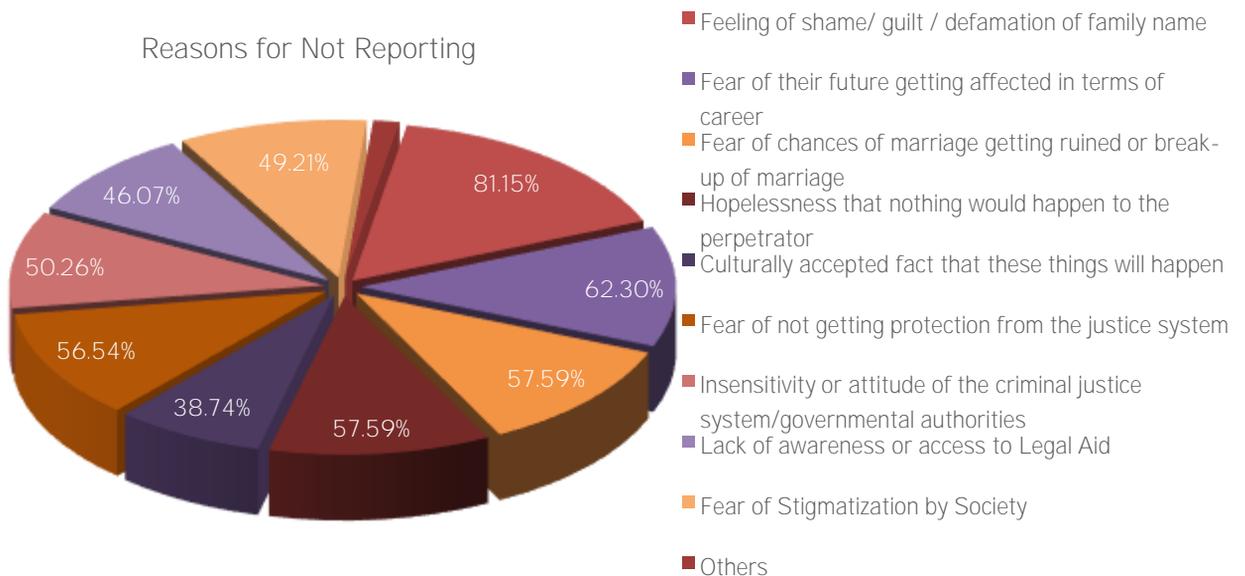
The personal experience of SV is most likely shared with friend/Family. NGOs/Counsellors rate almost as important as Police.

Societal conditioning still rules as a major reason for not reporting for e.g. Shame, Fear of future damage to reputation/career, etc

Share experience of SV



Reasons for Not Reporting

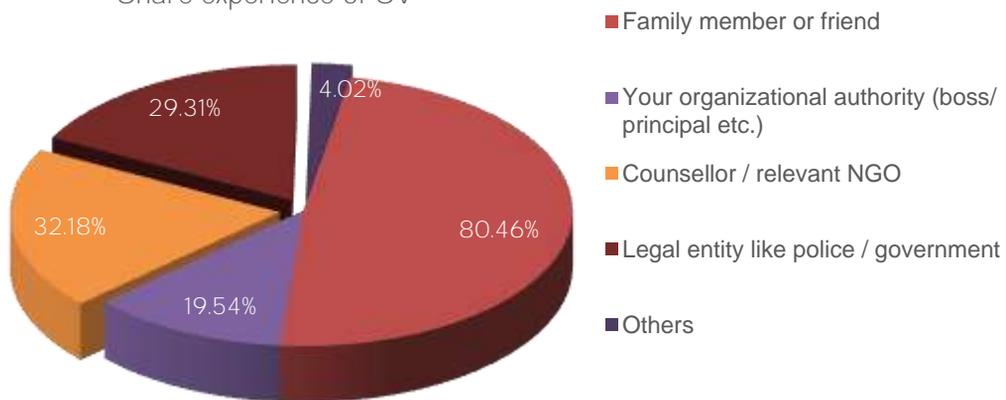


# Quantitative Analysis

## 7.6. Reporting Sexual Violence

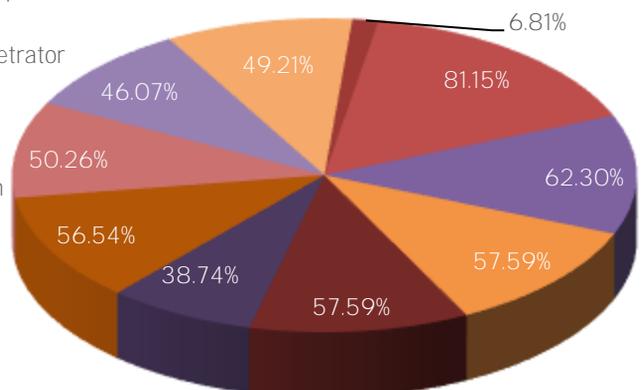
The personal experience of SV is most likely shared with friend/Family. NGOs/Counsellors rate almost as important as Police. Societal conditioning still rules as a major reason for not reporting for e.g. Shame, Fear of future damage to reputation/career, etc.

Share experience of SV



- Feeling of shame/ guilt / defamation of family name
- Fear of their future getting affected in terms of career
- Fear of chances of marriage getting ruined or break-up of marriage
- Hopelessness that nothing would happen to the perpetrator
- Culturally accepted fact that these things will happen
- Fear of not getting protection from the justice system
- Insensitivity or attitude of the criminal justice system/governmental authorities
- Lack of awareness or access to Legal Aid
- Fear of Stigmatization by Society
- Others

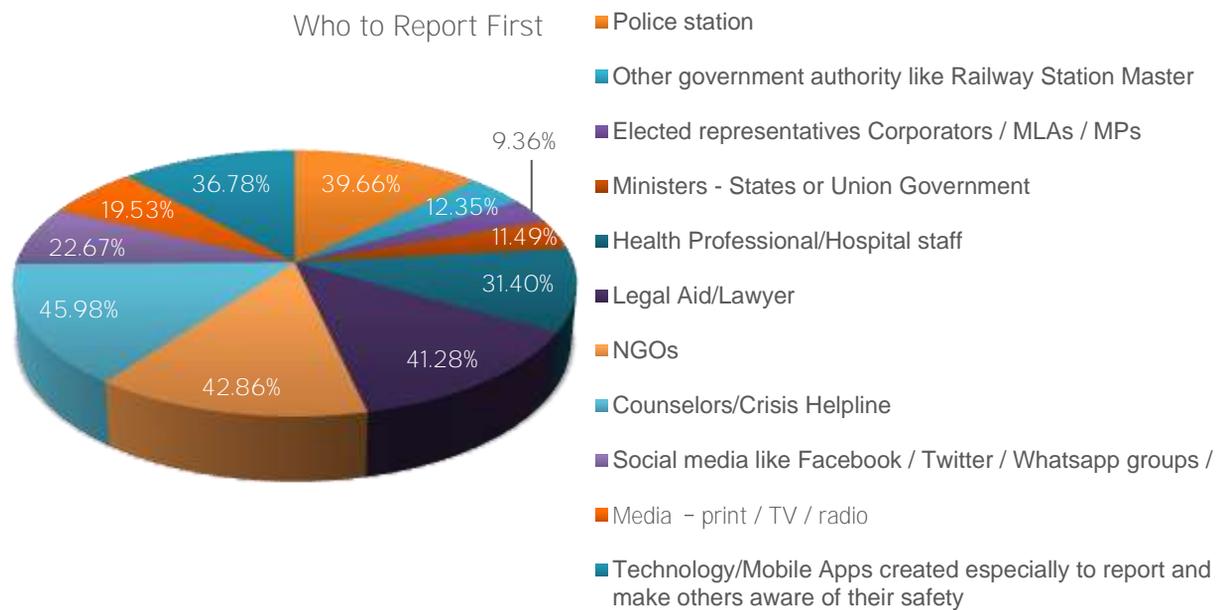
Reasons for Not Reporting



# Quantitative Analysis

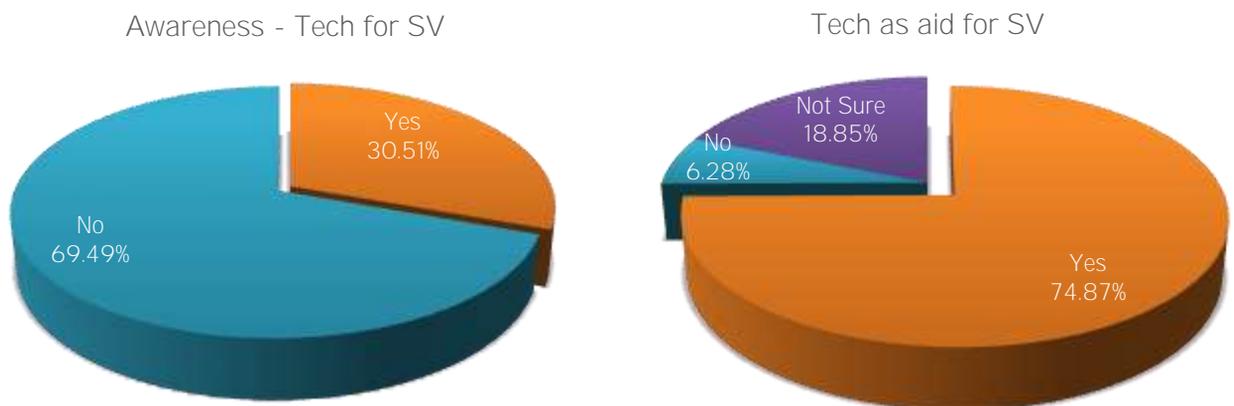
## 7.6. Reporting Sexual Violence (CONTD.)

Reporting to NGO/Counsellors, Lawyers, etc is more or as much preferred to Police. Surprisingly reporting online/tech base is also on par with Police - which is a good inference that there is definitely a need for Tech apps in SV.



## 7.7. Technology as Aid

Awareness of Tech apps availability seems low. But the idea of using Tech/digital or mobile apps for safety and SV is high. Again points to the need in the country for such apps. Safety therefore, is still a very much viable but also a need for the genre - SV.



# Quantitative Analysis

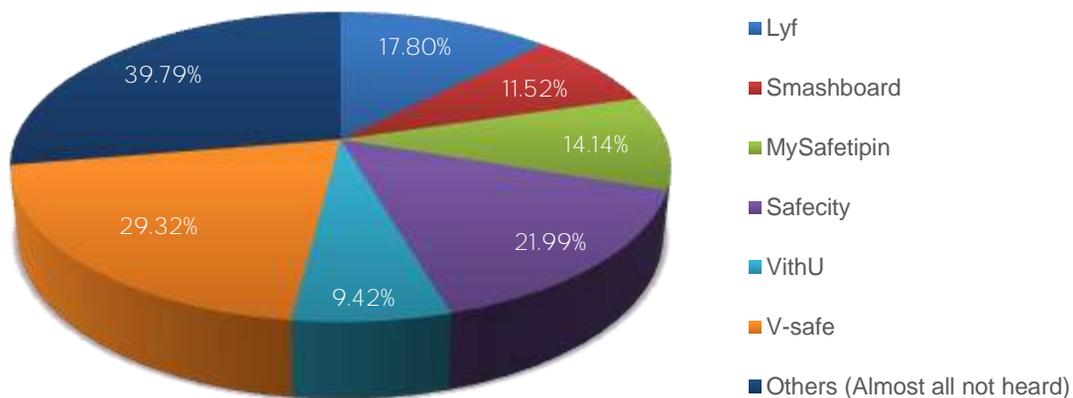
## 7.7. Technology as Aid (CONTD.)

The awareness of different brands should not be taken as awareness being high in case of tech availability or use of Tech in SV. These are prompted app names – usually prompted names trigger a higher brand/name recall as the respondent may have seen the ads or communications or even read in press about it. As a case in point, here the highest rating is for Others (which have majorly mentioned not aware of any of these apps).

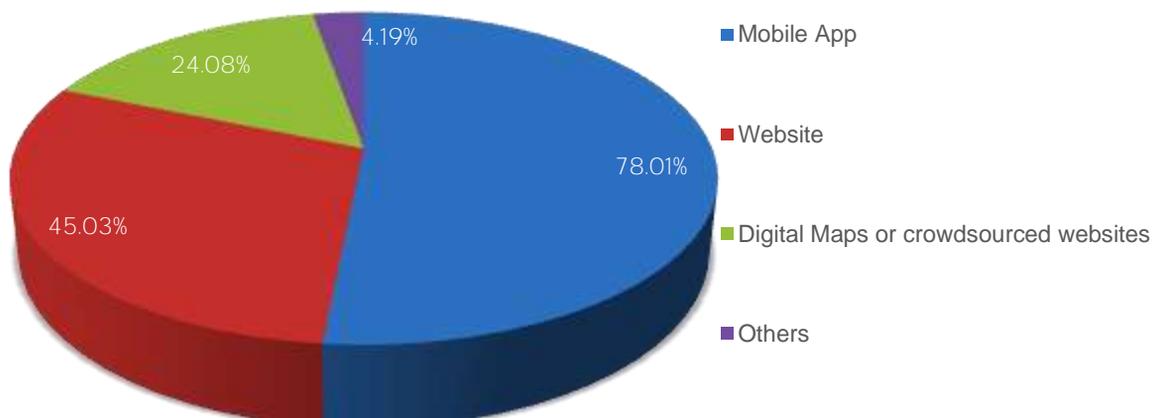
Some apps like VithU doesn't even exist now, however, it was created by a TV Channel few years ago for whom many celebrities endorsed plus used of mass media advertising. Hence likely, brand recall is still high. V-Safe was recently launched as a CSR initiative by the Big Conglomerate Vedanta through their company Hindustan Zinc. Again, it was heavily advertised and promoted.

Overall the survey does point to less awareness of different acts of SV; laws and what to do when witnessing or experiencing SV as well as reporting. It also points to low awareness of apps/Tech that can help in case of acts of SV.

Awareness of Safety/SV apps



Tech channels preferred for reporting



# Quantitative Analysis

## 8. CONCLUSION

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- 📌 The need for lot of awareness outreach to general audience on Sexual Violence, its acts, the laws and coping mechanisms including reporting.
- 📌 There is a captive audience for tech apps – mainly youth up to age group of 35 years. However, the awareness of existence of such apps is low.
- 📌 Technology eases the barrier when it comes to reporting especially among youth – it is easier to share experiences/stories of SV through technology as it ensures anonymity to some extent and also it is not constraining due to fear etc. Psychologically, its more difficult to talk about a painful experience face to face than write a few words online.