



# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS



<b>AAV</b>	ActionAid Vietnam
<b>MOLISA</b>	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
<b>CEDAW</b>	The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>CGFED</b>	Research Centre for Gender, Family and Environment in Development
<b>LGBT</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender
<b>WB</b>	World Bank
<b>UNIFEM</b>	United Nations Development Fund for Women



## Key Messages



### 63.4% women and girls

Feel anxious about the danger in public places, while the ratio from men and witnesses is 66.7%

### 82.1% of women and girls

Worry about theft and pickpocketing in public places, while only 29% of men worry.

### 48 % of women and girls

Feel sexual harassment is a concern in public places and 29% of men and witnesses agree

### 51,1 % women and girls

Feel unsafe on overcrowded buses and at bus stops

### 41,4 % women and girls

Feel unsafe in places where many young men gathering

### 34,8 % women and girls

Feel unsafe in public places where there is no police or civil defense team

### 31,3 % women and girls

Do not use public toilets because they are not available or not adequately clean

## Introduction

## Introduction

Gender-based violence, particularly violence against women and girls is a global problem, which occurs in all countries and all walks of life, including Vietnam. According to a global study by the World Health Organization in 2013, 35% of women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual violence. Another research study by AAV and the CGFED carried out in Vietnam in 2014 found that 87% of women and girls who had experienced sexual harassment said it had happened in a public area such as streets, parks, public buses and public toilets where they do not feel safe as well.

The urban population in Vietnam is growing rapidly. In the period 1999–2009, the urban population increased with an average annual growth rate of 3.4% per year, while in rural areas the population growth rate was slower at only 0.4% peryear. Currently, 35.7% of Vietnam's population live in urban areas and is estimated to increase to about 40% by 2020. "As a result, urban space is significantly expanded across the country" says the Ministry of Construction (2016).

It is said that the process of urbanization brings many occupation opportunities, but also brings a lot of challenges, particularly in the provision and maintaining of accessible, affordable and safe public services for women and girls. Vietnam has about 70,000 crimes each year, in which 70% occurred in urban areas<sup>1</sup>. 25% – 30% of all criminal

<sup>1</sup>Manual for Crime Prevention, 2008

### THIS POLICY BRIEF WILL COVER THE FOLLOWING MAIN ISSUES

- Potential dangers women and girls can experience in public places
- Factors affecting women and girls' safety or the risks of being unsafe in public places
- Factors increasing the risk of insecurity for women and girls
- Demand to use public toilets
- The quality of public toilets (if any)
- Forms of harassment against women and girls in public places
- Women and girls' frequency of being harassed
- Time of day harassment occurs and characteristics of the group causing harassment
- Reaction of victims
- Self-defense methods for women and girls against harassment

### TERMS

**"Violence"** in the policy brief covers all forms of harassment, sexual assault against women, most of them are migrant women and girls in public places.

**"Sexual harassment"** means any act of harassment and sexual assault, including actions such as staring, touching, touching certain

cases in the country occur in 5 big cities including Hanoi, Hai Phong, Ho Chi Minh City, Da Nang and Can Tho. In these urban areas women and girls are more at risk of becoming victims of crime and gender-based violence and harassment in public spaces.

With the support of Irish Aid, AAV collaborated with with the Gender Equality Department – Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA), CGFED and Action Network for safe city for women and girls (SafeCities.Net) to conduct a research in 5 cities in Vietnam survey on gender-based violence on buses and at public toilets. The survey's findings would then contribute to gender-sensitive policy recommendations to help build safer cities in Vietnam. The study was carried out in August and September 2016 with survey responses from 2033 people living in 5 big provinces/ cities including Hanoi, Hai Phong, Uong Bi, Ho Chi minh, Tra Vinh. The study evaluates change in the situation of gender-based violence on public buses and review the service quality of public toilets at parks and bus stations. based on gender perspective to build more evidences to advocate for quality improvement of gender responsive public services towards a safe city for women and girls.

parts of women's body, intentional display of the genitals, cat-calls, whistling, gossiping, commenting on the appearance, flirting, continuously pursuing verbally or by messages/ emails that make the other person feel uncomfortable psychologically.

**"Sexual abuse"** refers to all acts of physical coercion, such as touching, rape and forced sex.

**"Public place"** means places outside a person's home, where they can study, work, enjoy entertainment and socially interact with others. For example these activities can take place in the streets, bus stations, passenger stations, on public transport, in offices, factories, markets/–supermarkets, schools, hospitals, exhibition centers, restaurants, parks, stadiums, theaters <sup>2</sup>

**"Safety"** of women and girls in public places means that women and girls feel comfortable to enjoy public spaces without fear of violence or harassment<sup>3</sup>. (AAV, survey on the status of violence against women and girls in public places in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh city, 5/3013).

<sup>2</sup>Definitions made by women and girls in a survey implemented by AAV on violence against women and girls at public places in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh city, May 2013

<sup>3</sup>As above





## Research method

The research survey involved collecting qualitative and quantitative information from 2 key target groups at bus stations and public toilets in the 5 cities. The first group of respondents were women and girls, to ask them about their experiences of using these public places. The second group were a combination of men and women aged 16–60, who were asked about their experience of witnessing violence or harassment. These 'witnesses' included; high school students, university students, migrant women, street traders and officers, all chosen because they use the buses and bus stations regularly

In preparation to asking the public sensitive questions on gender-based violence, the survey interviewers were trained and well equipped with a toolkit so they could understand the sensitivity and the exact requirements for collecting the information. 1,011 questionnaires were collected in public toilet areas, in which 584 questionnaires were from women and girls and 427 from the group of 'witnesses'. In the bus station areas, 1,022 questionnaires were collected, in which 504 questionnaires from women and girls and 518 ones from the group of witnesses. The survey comprised of a series of open ended questions to allow respondents to share their opinions, comments and perceptions of how well the state agency leader group have provided and management public bus stations and public toilets.

## Research area

In total the research collected information from 2033 respondents in 5 cities/ provinces; Hanoi, Uong Bi, Hai Phong, Tra Vinh and Ho Chi Minh city. 1,011 questionnaires were collected in public toilet areas, in which 584 questionnaires were from women and girls and 427 from the group of 'witnesses'. In the bus station areas, 1,022 questionnaires were collected, in which 504 questionnaires from women and girls and 518 ones from the group of witnesses. The 5 cities were chosen because they are socio-economic and cultural centers of Vietnam. However, due to time restraints and resource limitations this research survey was not able to provide evidence from a representative sample size from people in these 5 cities/ provinces, it only provides an illustration of the current situation drawing on experiences of women and girls, and the opinions from the wider public.

Table 1: Number of respondents divided by region (Buses)

Province	District/ phoenix	Women and girls	Men and witnesses	Total
Hanoi	Cau Giay	46	49	95
	Hai Ba Trung	51	57	108
	Hoan Kiem	2	0	2
	Long Bien	47	50	97
	Tay Ho	50	50	100
	Thanh Xuan	48	48	96
Sub-total (1)		244	254	498
Ho Chi Minh city	Binh Tan	94	57	151
	Go Vap	40	49	89
	District 1	44	55	99
	District 4	37	52	89
	District 6	10	10	20
	Thu Duc	35	41	76
Sub-total (2)		260	264	524
Total		504	518	1022

Source: Survey Report on the forms of violence against women and girls in the bus area and public toilet 2016



Table 2: Number of respondents by region (public toilet)

Province	District/ phoenix	Women and girls	Men and witnesses	Total
Hanoi	Ba Dinh	28	18	46
	Cau Giay	17	37	54
	Ha Dong	25	23	48
	Hai Ba Tung	1	2	3
	Hoan Kiem	30	22	52
	Nam Tu Liem	0	1	1
	Sub-total (1)	101	103	204
Ho Chi Minh city	Binh Tan	94	57	151
	Go Vap	40	49	89
	District 1	44	55	99
	District 4	37	52	89
	District 6	10	10	20
	Sub-total (2)	260	264	524
Hai Phong	Hong Bang	46	44	90
	Le Chan	68	37	105
	Ngo Quyen	5	0	5
	Sub-total (3)	119	81	200

Province	District/ phoenix	Women and girls	Men and witnesses	Total
Quang Ninh	Bac Son	1	0	1
	Phuong Dong, Tp. Uong Bi	2	5	7
	Quang Trung, Uong Bi City	40	28	68
	Thanh Son, Uong Bi city	27	19	46
	Uong Bi city	42	17	59
	Trung Vuong, Uong Bi city	3	4	7
	Yen Thanh, Uong Bi city	5	8	13
	Sub-total (4)	120	81	201
Tra Vinh	Long Duc, Tra Vinh city	3	2	5
	Phoenix 1, Tra Vinh city	39	26	65
	Phoenix 3, Tra Vinh city	60	43	103
	Phoenix 7, Tra Vinh city	1	0	1
	Phoenix 8, Tra Vinh city	12	8	20
	Phoenix 9, Tra Vinh city	5	0	5
	Sub-total (5)	120	79	199
	Total	584	427	1011

Source: Survey Report on the forms of violence against women and girls in the bus area and public toilet 2016

# Key findings



## Potential dangers for women and girls in public places

The survey results indicates

- 63.4% of women and girls feel anxious about the threat of violence or harassment in public places and this ratio of men and witnesses is 66.7%
- 82.1% of women and girls worry about theft and pickpocketing in public places, while only 29% of the other group of men and witnesses agreed
- 48% of women and girls feel at risk of sexual harassment in public places and 29% of men and witnesses agreed

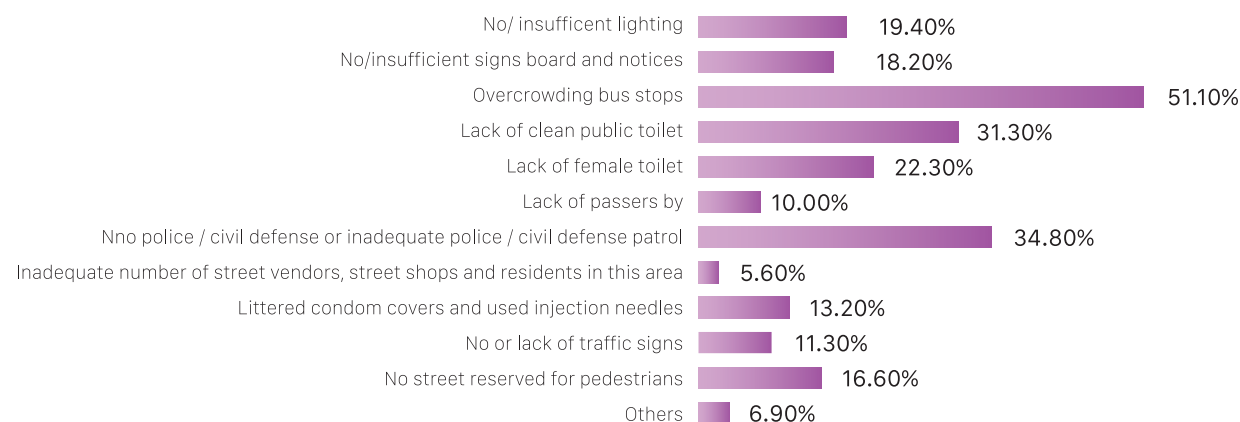
## Factors affecting women and girls' security in public places

### External factors

When comparing the results from the women and girls group of respondents with previous studies from 2014, we can see differences as follow:

- 51,1% feel at risk in overcrowded buses and bus stops
- 34,8% feel unsafe without police/ civil defense or inadequate police/ civil defense patrol
- 31,3% do not use public toilet they because they are not adequately clean and 19,4% feel unsafe if the toilet with no or insufficient lighting.

Figure 1 – External factors affecting women and girls' safety in public spaces, results from the women and girls group

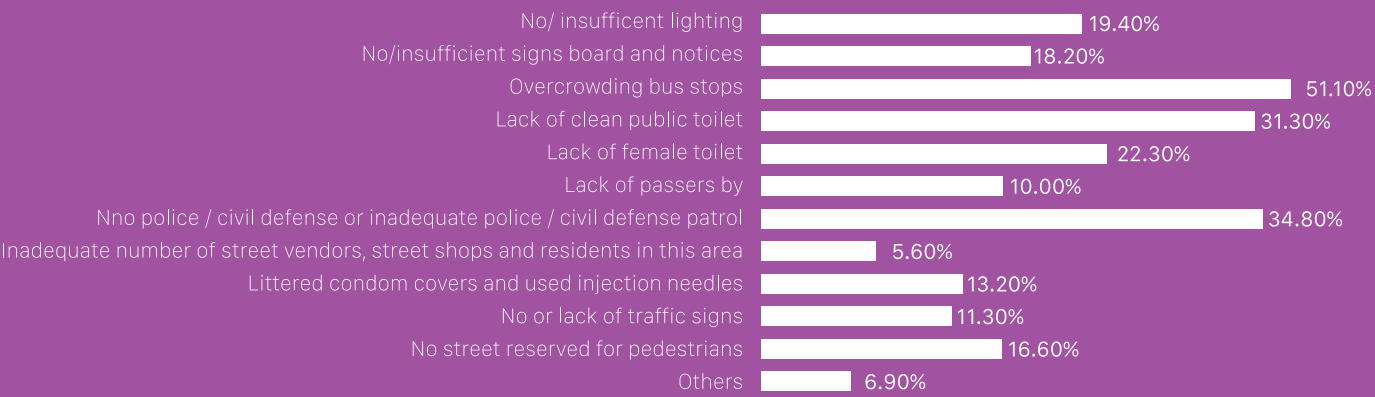


Source: Survey Report on the forms of violence against women and girls in the bus area and public toilet 2016



The men and witnesses group shared similar experiences and opinions to those of the women and girls group shown in figure 1. The three most important factors women and girls identified affecting their safety were; overcrowding bus stops (40.7%), no police / civil defense or inadequate police / civil defense patrol (38,7,3%), lack of public toilet (37.9%).

Figure 2 - External factors affecting the safety of women and girls, results from the men and witnesses group



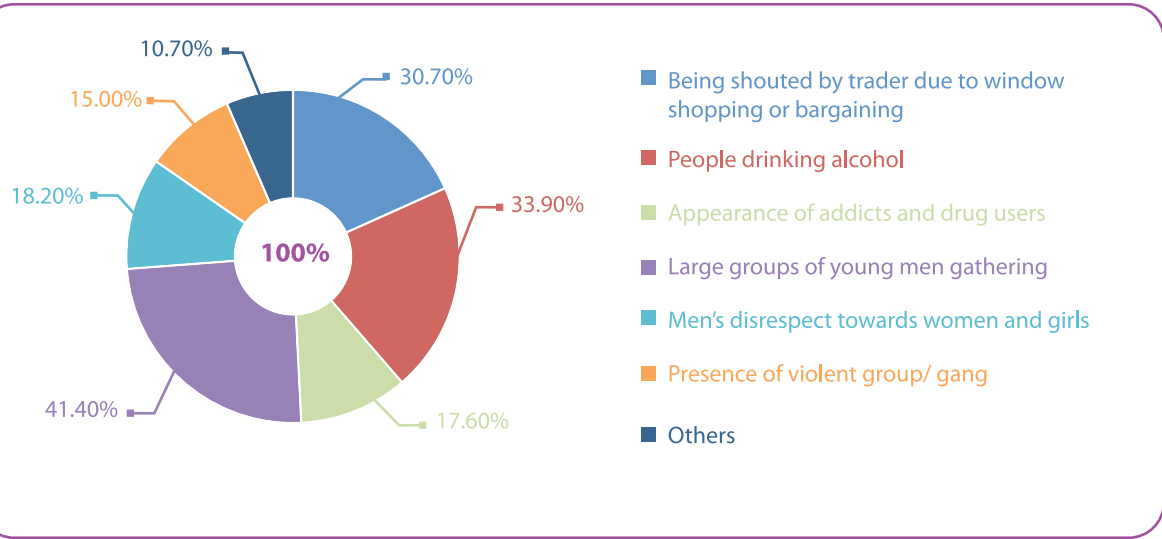
Source: Survey Report on the forms of violence against women and girls in the bus area and public toilet 2016

Social factors

Social factors affect the safety of women and girls, this could include the attitudes and presence of street traders, gangs, crowds, alcohol and beer shops, appearance of addicts and drug users.

41.4% of respondents in the women and girls group said the largest influencing factor to their fear of violence or harassment came when they were in areas with many young people and/ men gathering. Other influencing factors included the presence of drunks, drug users and the presence of gangs, with 18.2% of women and girls giving the reason that it is due to men's disrespect towards women.

Figure 3 – Social factors affecting the safety of women and girls, results from the women and girls group

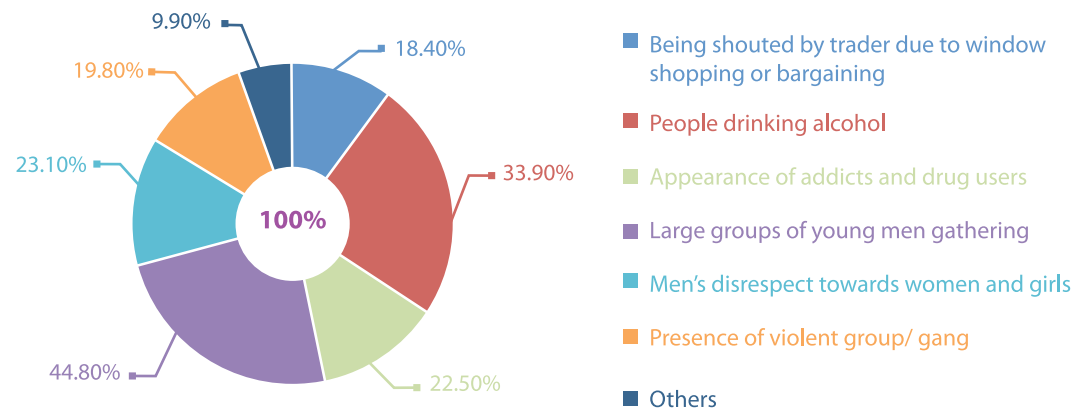


Source: Survey Report on the forms of violence against women and girls in the bus area and public toilet 2016



Figure 4: Social factors affecting the safety of women and girls, results from men and witnesses group

In comparison to the results from the women and girls group in figure 3, an even larger proportion of the men and witnesses group (44.8%) shared that areas with large groups of young people and/ men gathering is a factor impacting women and girls' safety in public places. 44.2% of respondents also pointed out that locations with drunken people and disrespect from men towards women (23.1%) are also elements affecting the security of women and girls.

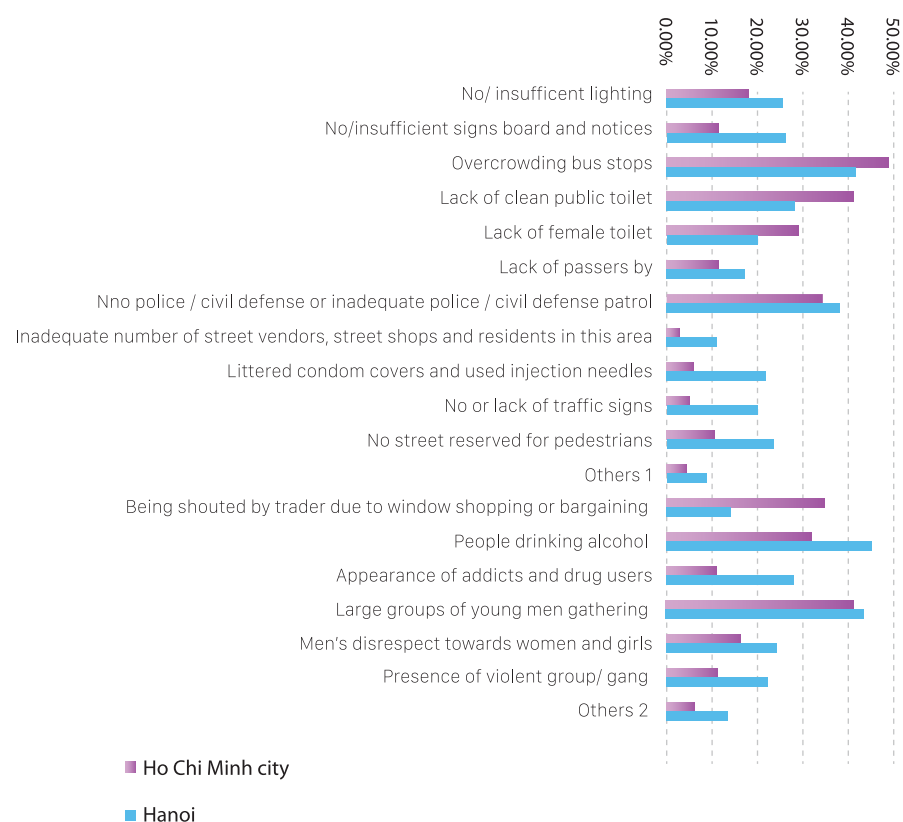


Source: Survey Report on the forms of violence against women and girls in the bus area and public toilet 2016

There is a similarity in the opinions of respondents in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi in the external and social factors causing insecurity in bus stations and at overcrowded bus stops. In terms of external factors, there are some factors in Hanoi are particularly higher than Ho Chi Minh city, even almost double. These include; lack of clean toilets (HCM city 41.6%, Hanoi 28.8%) and lack of female toilets (HCM city 29.5%, Hanoi 20.2%), insufficient or no signs board and notices; lack of traffic guide signs; littered condom covers and used injection needles. Other factors which are higher in Ho Chi Minh city include; no or lack of traffic signs, no street reserved for pedestrians, no or inefficient lights...

With the social factors affecting the security of women and girls, aside from disrespectful attitude of traders towards women in Hanoi which is significantly higher than in Ho Chi Minh city, all other influencing factors scored higher in Ho Chi Minh than in Hanoi. These factors include people drinking alcohol, injecting drug users, groups young people and men, or men who are disrespectful to women and girls. This shows quite a big difference between the research results from 2014 to 2016, with women experiencing an increase threat of violence and harassments in these two cities.

In all 5 cities/ provinces over 50% of respondents shared the biggest factor influencing women and girls' lack of safety using public toilets was due to the fact that most toilets are not located in areas where many people pass. The second influencing factor is places with many young men gathered. In relation to men disrespecting women as influencing women and girls' safety, Hanoi still has the highest rate (44.4%). This result is similar to that relating to women and girls' safety on public buses, as well as research findings from 2014. When comparing the different areas, the presence of gangs is also a notable influence in threatening women and girls' safety in Ho Chi Minh city (28.8%).



Source: Survey Report on the forms of violence against women and girls in the bus area and public toilet 2016

Figure 5: Factors affecting the safety of women and girls at bus stops divided by area



Table 3: Factors affect the safety of women and girls at Public toilets – Divided by area

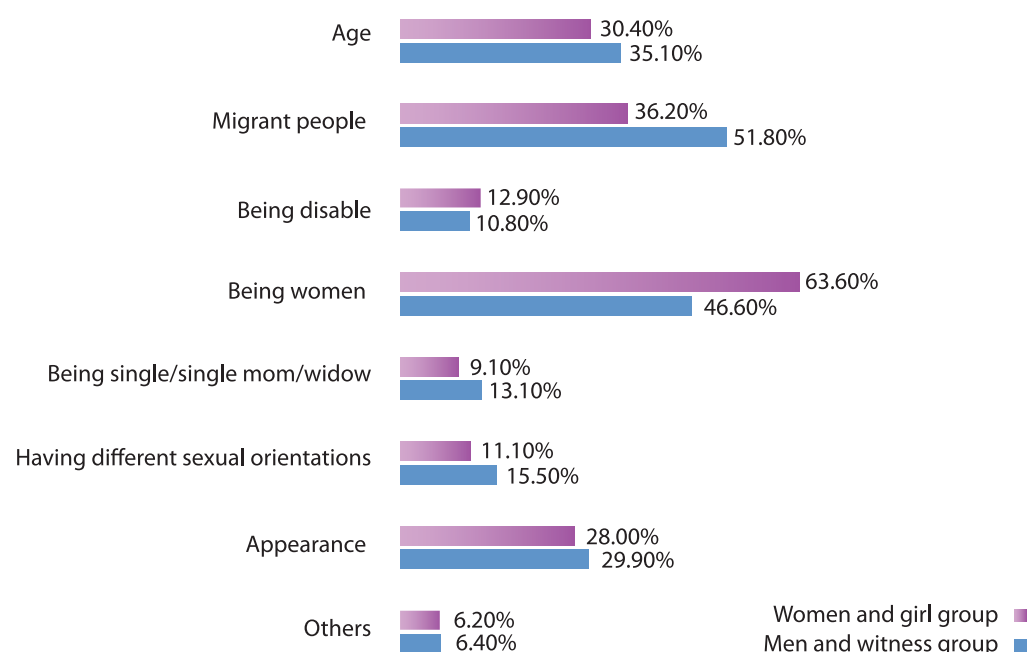
FACTOR	PROVINCE/ CITY					AVERAGE
	Hanoi	Ho Chi Minh city	Hai Phong	Quang Ninh	Tra Vinh	
No or insufficient lighting	42.4%	47.5%	51.8%	47.7%	23.5%	42.9%
Lack or no notice board	18.5%	11.9%	12.0%	12.1%	11.1%	13.8%
Lack of public female toilets	24.5%	15.3%	20.5%	7.6%	29.6%	19.2%
Lack of passers by,	53.6%	52.5%	45.8%	50.0%	53.1%	51.2%
no / inadequate police / civil defense patrol	33.8%	45.8%	28.9%	25.8%	13.6%	29.1%
Inadequate number of street traders, street shops and residents in this area	4.6%	13.6%	15.7%	6.1%	19.8%	10.3%
Many condom covers, injection needles littered	25.2%	25.4%	28.9%	12.1%	2.5%	18.8%
Others 1	2.6%	16.9%	16.9%	4.5%	11.1%	8.5%
People drinking alcohol	25.8%	35.6%	27.7%	34.8%	32.1%	30.6%
Drug users	23.8%	40.7%	39.8%	34.1%	14.8%	29.6%
Many young men gathering	46.4%	59.3%	55.4%	45.5%	33.3%	47.0%
Men disrespectful towards women and girls	44.4%	32.2%	34.9%	13.6%	6.2%	27.3%
Presence of violent group/ gang	23.2%	28.8%	10.8%	11.4%	3.7%	15.6%
Others 2	4.6%	10.2%	4.8%	4.5%	17.3%	7.3%

Source: Survey Report on the forms of violence against women and girls in the bus area and public toilet 2016

## Factors increasing women and girls' insecurity in public places

The majority of interviewees from the women and girl group said that they do not feel safe just because they are women (63.60%). Group of young women aged 16-23 are also easier to be harassed than other groups. In addition, the survey result shows that regions discrimination still exists which make women and girls who come from other areas or other places face with higher risk than locals (51.8 % of men and witnesses). Additionally, the appearance (good-looking, sexy dressing or attractive) also lead to risk of danger for women and girls. This shows that society still exists attribution psychology blaming on women if they are harassed, abused or forced for sex. In other words, women are considered as the causing factor when bad things happens to them, rather than unsafe spaces which has not improved (UNIFEM, 2010).

Figure 6. Factors increasing women and girls insecurity



Source: Survey Report on the forms of violence against women and girls in the bus area and public toilet 2016

## Demand to use public toilets in public areas

**Inadequate number of public toilets** compared to the demand is the main issue for women accessing these facilities safely. Approximately half of the respondents said that they had wanted to use a public toilet but decided not to use it (48.3% women and girl group; 51.6% men and witness group).

Considering the study area, HCM city has the biggest number of interviewees using public toilet, up to 65.7%. The next one is Tra Vinh (58.8%). Hanoi, on the other hand, the lowest rate (24.6%). The main reason for not using public toilet in this area are "always crowded," "not found", "use only when really necessary and do not remember how long it was."

"Public toilets are currently managed unsystematically and formalistically which cannot help meet quality standards. There is no sufficiency in quantity while the quality depends on workers (who deliver frequent cleaning services without specific regulations)." (In-depth interview 05 – Quang Ninh)

"I have ever used public toilets so I can confirm the fear of others when using them. Firstly, they are not clean. Secondly, what will happen if some men come as well. That is my worry. For instance, there must be separated entrances, one for male and one for female, so that people can feel safe, isn't it? However, the entrances are normally for common use and the female can only go to the toilets after passing the ones for male. That's why I am always anxious" (In-depth interview 05 – Quang Ninh)



Table 4. Number of people using public toilets divided by area

USE/NOT USE	PROVINCE/ CITY					AVERAGE
	Hanoi	Ho Chi Minh city	Hai Phong	Quang Ninh	Tra Vinh	
Yes	24.6%	65.7%	43.0%	37.8%	58.8%	46.0%
No	70.4%	30.9%	50.0%	59.7%	38.2%	49.8%
Others	4.9%	3.4%	7.0%	2.5%	3.0%	4.2%

Source: Survey Report on the forms of violence against women and girls in the bus area and public toilet 2016

## Quality of public toilets at public places

Besides lacking of public toilets, the biggest reason for not using public toilet for the women and girls group was "not clean" (46.7%); same as the men and witness group. In Hanoi, 66% of interviewees thought public toilets in their area were not clean which is also the main reason why they do not use them.

**Hanoi is the city/ province least meeting facility requirements of public toilets, with only 24.5% of respondents using the facilities).** Meanwhile Ho Chi Minh city scored highest on meeting the

requirements of providing public toilet facilities (85.1%), followed by Tra Vinh (78.8%); Hai Phong (62.8%) and Quang Ninh (50.6%). Some places have been equipped but the facilities are old, broken or unusable. Experiences and comments respondents repeated frequently about the shortage or broken equipment in public toilets included; "there was door lock but broken", "only water and bin, no paper or hand wash", "broken light bulb so impossible to turn on", "no spray, wash hose is clogged," " no towels paper", "no cleaner" and "dirty water, broken water tape but no one fix".

Table 5a. Reasons for not using public toilet, divided by area

REASON	PROVINCE/ CITY					AVERAGE
	Hanoi	Ho Chi Minh city	Hai Phong	Quang Ninh	Tra Vinh	
Can not find	12.0%	15.9%	8.8%	61.7%	4.9%	21.9%
Unsafe	12.0%	26.1%	18.4%	11.7%	8.6%	14.6%
Not clean	66.0%	33.3%	41.2%	31.7%	39.5%	44.8%
Do not have female toilet	8.1%	0.0%	1.3%	1.5%	13.9%	4.3%
Inadequate facilities	6.8%	4.3%	7.7%	3.1%	5.6%	5.7%

Source: Survey Report on the forms of violence against women and girls in the bus area and public toilet 2016



Table 5b: Suitable facilities in public toilets, divided by area

SUITABLE FACILITIES	PROVINCE/ CITY					AVERAGE
	Hanoi	Ho Chi Minh city	Hai Phong	Quang Ninh	Tra Vinh	
Yes	24.5%	85.1%	62.8%	50.6%	78.8%	66.8%
No	47.2%	13.4%	32.6%	29.1%	14.4%	23.6%
Do not care	28.3%	1.5%	4.7%	20.3%	6.8%	9.6%

Source: Survey Report on the forms of violence against women and girls in the bus area and public toilet 2016

Forms of harassment that happen to women and girls in public areas

51.3% of group women-girls had experienced at least one of these given forms of harassment in their life. Specifically, **whistling, cat-calling and ogling** are the most common forms that they experienced with a ratio of 28.5% and 39.9% in men and witnessed experience. Notably, there are four cases of female respondents had been raped and the men-witness group informed that they know about 10 cases.

61% of the men and witness group had seen at least once in their life time, sexual harassment behaviours against women and girls in public places. These forms of sexual harassment witnessed the most frequently are whistling, bedevil (39.9%); ogling (25.8%); staring at certain parts of the body or the whole body (29.8%); and intentionally touching (24.8%).

Table 6: Harassment forms experienced in lifetime according to respondent groups

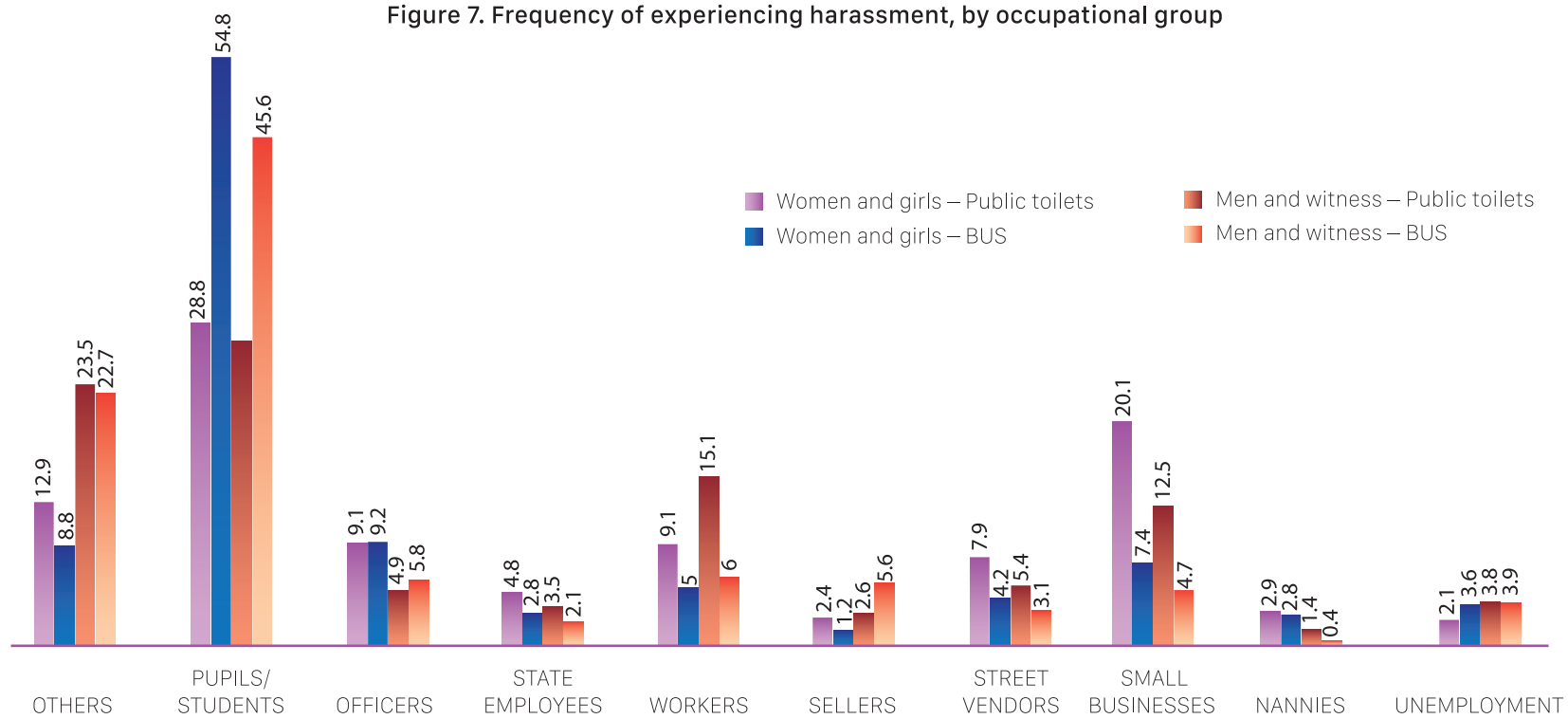
Harassments forms	Women-Girls		Men- Witnessed	
	Quantity	%	Quantity	%
Being ogled	122	24.4%	133	25.8%
Being stared at certain parts of the body or the whole body	99	19.8%	154	29.8%
Being shown by others’ genitals	20	4.0%	45	8.7%
Being whistled, bedevil	143	28.5%	206	39.9%
Being commented on appearance or parts of body	36	7.2%	87	16.9%
Being figured or touched intentionally	58	11.6%	128	24.8%
Being raped	3	0.6%	10	1.9%
Being told sex stories	13	2.6%	50	9.7%
Being directly offered to have sex	7	1.4%	17	3.3%
Others	6	1.2%	12	2.3%
Witnessing no form	244	48.7%	201	39.0%

Source: Survey Report on the forms of violence against women and girls in the bus area and public toilet 2016

The results show that each occupational group often face a different form of sexual harassment. Student or trade seller groups faced being whistled at and teased the most (40% and 49% respectively). Meanwhile, the group of state employees is often stared at certain parts of the body or the whole body (39.5%). Students group, workers, small businesses, unemployment, and other professions are the vulnerable groups and more marginalized than other groups, all were raped. Although the sample size of officers and nannies is smaller than the other groups, the results still shows the trends as well as the risk these groups face in public places.



Figure 7. Frequency of experiencing harassment, by occupational group

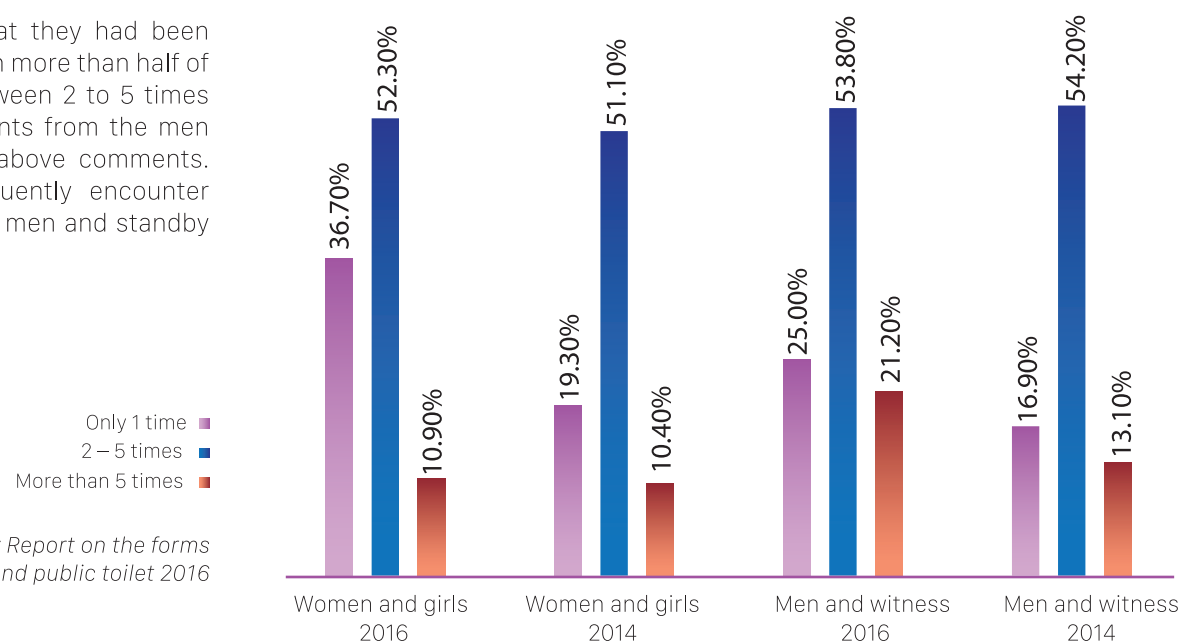


Source: Survey Report on the forms of violence against women and girls in the bus area and public toilet 2016

## Frequency of women and girls being harassed

Up to 36.7% of women and girls shared that they had been harassed more than once in a lifetime, in which more than half of them have experienced being harrassed between 2 to 5 times (52.3%). Respectively, 53.8% of the respondents from the men and witnesses group also agreed with the above comments. Especially, 10.9% of women and girls frequently encounter harassment (more than 5 times) and 21.2% of men and standby people often witnesses this behavior .

Figure 8. Frequency of witnessing harassment behaviour According to the survey groups and comparison the results between 2014 and 2016



Source: Survey Report on the forms of violence against women and girls in the bus area and public toilet 2016

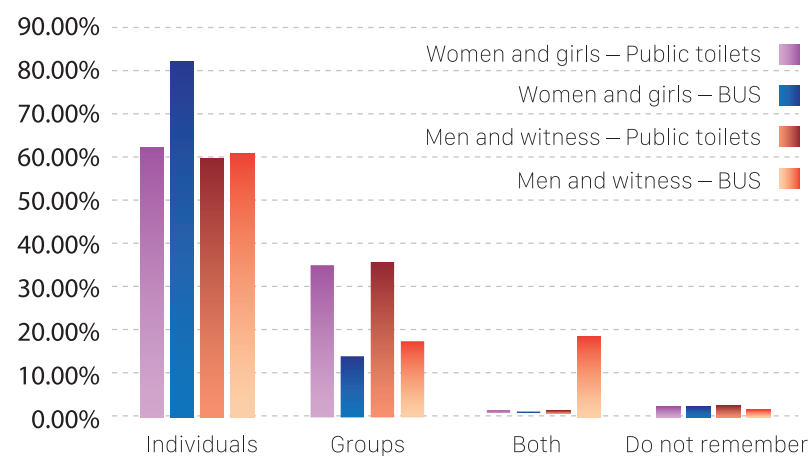


## Time occurs harassment and characteristics of the target group cause harassment

The survey data shows that women and girls are likely to encounter harassment at any time of the day. The majority of respondents agreed that harassment most often occurs during the day, with 46% of the women and girl group agreeing and 42.9% of the men and witnesses group. 6PM to 10PM is also the time duration that harassment easy to occur with 36.2% women and girls agreeing and also the men and witnesses group , 36.3% respectively. The others witnessed harassment at midnight or during early hours of the morning.

Harassment could be done by individuals or by groups. However, individuals are more common, particularly in public toilet areas (83% women and girls and, 60.7% men and witnesses agree).

Figure 9: Objects who cause harassment, in groups or individually.



Source: Survey Report on the forms of violence against women and girls in the bus area and public toilet 2016

## The reaction of the victim towards harassment behavior

Facing harassment, mostly women and girls did not do anything. 56.6% of respondents in the bus-relevant questionnaires said they did not have any reaction. 17.5% shared that they told or asked for help from someone else. Only 4.5% said they reported to the hotline number, 6.4% reported to the police and 0.9% reported to the union or higher-level leaders.

In terms of occupational groups, "no reaction" was the most common chosen reaction in all occupational groups, and especially small household business group (71.4,3%) and workers (87.5 %). Meanwhile, officers, unemployed and state employees choose to "warn other people" relatively high (40.9%, 37.5% and 33.3% respectively).

Table 7. Immediately reaction to sexual harassment behavior, by occupational group

REACTION	OCCUPATION									AVERAGE
	Other	Student	Office worker	State workers	Workers	Sale workers	Street traders	Small business	Unemployed waiting for recruitment	
Warning other people	24.3%	18.3%	40.9%	33.3%	.0%	23.1%	.0%	.0%	37.5%	20.4%
No reaction	48.6%	45.0%	31.8%	33.3%	87.5%	46.2%	50.0%	71.4%	37.5%	47.1%
Reporting to hotline	.0%	3.8%	9.1%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	2.9%
Telling or asking for help from somebody else	13.5%	13.0%	4.5%	.0%	12.5%	7.7%	.0%	14.3%	12.5%	11.7%
Warning other co-workers	.0%	7.6%	4.5%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	4.6%
Reporting to police	5.4%	6.1%	.0%	.0%	.0%	15.4%	.0%	.0%	.0%	5.0%
Others	8.1%	6.1%	9.1%	33.3%	.0%	7.7%	50.0%	14.3%	12.5%	8.3%

Source: Survey Report on the forms of violence against women and girls in the bus area and public toilet 2016

## Women solutions to preventing sexual harassment in public places

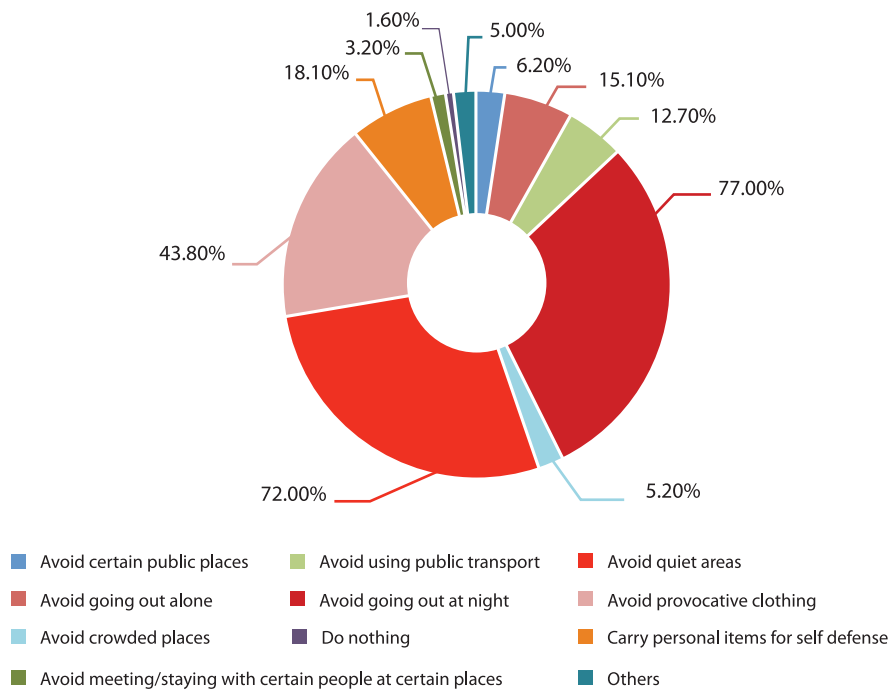
Due to the high risk of facing sexual harassment in public places, women and girls have had to find different ways and solutions to protect themselves.

For the public toilet in particular, as above mentioned many women chose to not use public toilet to avoid risks of harassment.

77% of women avoid going out at night  
72% of women avoid quiet areas  
43.8% of women avoid provocative clothing  
15.1% carry personal items such as needles, spicy spray, garlic, pliers, small craft scissors, nail clippers

Source: Survey Report on the forms of violence against women and girls in the bus area and public toilet 2016

Figure 10. Women's methods to avoid sexual harassment



## Conclusion



## Conclusion

According to statistics, there are over 3.9 billion people living in cities and developing towns, with this number projected to continue to rise<sup>4</sup>. In many of these cities women and girls live with the threat of violence, limiting their ability to access and enjoy their right to public places, such as schools, parks, public facilities, transport, work and leisure activities. Living with the threat of violence has a detrimental physical, psychological and social effect for women and girls, limiting their right to enjoy and access a safe city.

Without safer cities, women will have to continue to deal with the risk of violence or sexual harassment from their male supervisors and colleagues at work. It is not just at work, it is also on their way to and from work that due to limited street lighting women risk being stalked, harassed or raped by individuals or groups. Women and girls also face cat calling and intentional touching when taking crowded public transportation and on their way home from school. In areas where women and girls don't have access to clean water and sanitation, where they live or while at work, public bathrooms and toilets are the only choice they have in accessing personal sanitation. However as this research shows, women and girls do not always have access to accessible, safe, clean and appropriate public toilet facilities they need, instead they face solicitation, harassment and the threat of sexual violence.

So far, people and organizations in 20 countries around the world have started launching a campaign to build safe cities for women. "A Safe City" is always a dream of women and girls, and to meet this criteria a city must ensure:

- (i) City citizens and visitors can travel freely without being fear of assault and be safe though day or night
- (ii) City citizens and visitors are free to choose how to dress up without the fear of harassment
- (iii) City children go to schools that are free from discrimination, isolation, teasing or violence
- (iv) City citizens are free to work in a safe environment with full awareness of their citizen rights
- (v) City citizens can access and use public services with equal quality and accountability
- (vi) City citizens and visitors free to engage in healthy entertainment activities
- (vii) City citizens are encouraged to actively participate in planning and implementation of action plans to build their cities become green - clean - beautiful
- (viii) City citizens proud of their city

However, it is clear that in Vietnam, public bus areas are potentially unsafe for women and girls. Women and girls do not feel safe in public places, crowded places and solitude places in all times of a day. Whistling and teasing are the forms of harassment which are considered to be the most common; meanwhile commenting about physical appearance or body parts and intentionally touching have frequently occurred.

The biggest external factors that threaten the safety of women and girls is overcrowded buses and bus stops (51.1% from women and girls and 40.7% from men and witnesses). Additionally, the other high threat for women and

<sup>4</sup><http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/news/population/world-urbanization-prospects-2014.html>

girls are lack of public toilets, especially female ones; meanwhile, the ratio of considering the factor that many young men gathering is still high as the result in 2014.

In terms of human factors sadly, the reason "women and girls are not safe just because they are women" still accounts for the highest proportion (63.6%). In addition to discrimination towards migrant people from different provinces, 16 to 18 aged group is believed to be the one experienced harassment the most.

More than a half the respondents from the women and girl group of respondents had faced harassment between 2 to 5 times, and more than a half of the respondents from the men and witnesses group reported seeing 2 to 5 cases of harassment against women and girls. Among those who have experienced harassment, the occupational group with the highest rate are women working as nannies. The perpetrators causing harassment are on average aged 15 to 25 and are more common to act as individuals rather than by group.

The study also draws on the many external and social factors affecting safety of women and girls in public places. Many factors related to external environment and infrastructure include; lighting systems, access to clean toilets or female-only toilets in public areas, this is due to lack of gender sensitivity planning, designing and maintaining public facilities. The study also shows social factors, such as disrespectful attitudes towards women and girls by men and the community which exacerbates women and girls' insecurity. Women get blamed because they have no ability to protect themselves, not by the unsafe environment or lack of solution to ensure social security.

Obviously public toilet facilities in urban areas in Vietnam currently have not yet met the demand of citizens. The existing public toilets are evaluated as unsafe, unclean and inconvenient for using. This leads to consequences that people prefer to not use public toilets or choose to do it quickly somewhere else when needed, "better than using public toilets". Usually, there are no separate rooms for men and women in public toilets in small cities. Survey respondents reported facilities often being inadequate with; broken or no light bulbs, water taps, and often no cleaner or regular management. The public toilets were often located in areas with; lack of toilet signs, lights, and with dangerous drug needles littered close by. In all 5 study areas, public toilets in Ho Chi Minh city was rated highest in terms of safety and adequate equipment, while Hanoi is ranked the lowest in both quantity and quality.

Moreover, there is a fact that authorities have underestimated or are not fully aware of the gender-sensitive requirements or demand for providing clean and safe public toilets to ensure safety of women and girls. Many laws in Vietnam have been issued to protect women and girls and ensure gender equality. Attached to it is the law provisions which prescribes sanctions for violations such as Article 39, the Gender Equality Law (2006) stipulates that "All violations of the law on gender equality must be detected, prevented immediately. The handling of violations of the legislation on gender equality must be conducted promptly, fairly and thoroughly in accordance with the law "(CP C. p., 2009). However, the term "sexual harassment" was only mentioned in the legislation system for the first time in the amended Labour Law in 2012, and just at the provisions in workplace. Before that, only serious acts of rape were handled according to the Penal Code. The shortage in definition on this issue leads to the difficulty for Government agencies to specify offenses for offenders as well as protect the rights of victims.



## Policy recommendations



### Policy recommendations

All citizens should have the right to live in a safe city, especially for women and girls who currently do not enjoy their right to the city. The following recommendations are drawn from the research survey to ensure better accessibility, provision and maintenance of gender-sensitive public services and to ensure that women and girls can enjoy public spaces more safely:

#### Applying legislative acts on harassment in order to ensure justice and fairness to the victims

- Further regulations and legal mechanisms to protect children and women against sexual harassment, especially the behavior that is often perceived as normal and easily overlooked;
- The law requires stronger penalties for those who commit acts of harassment to deter similar behavior in the community, and to ensure justice and fairness to the victims

#### Regarding bus and public toilet services

- Installing camera on buses and at bus hubs and lounges;
- Building more bus stops to reduce overcrowded and avoid harmful invasive cases of women and girls;
- Installing new lighting systems in public places such as bus stations, public toilets and solitude areas;
- Constructing more public toilets in crowded areas to ensure and meet the criterias of safety, cleanliness, gender-sensitivity as well as creating comfort and peace of mind for users;
- Renovating public toilets to ensure hygiene, safety, cleanliness for users, especially for women and girls;

- Developing long-term and detailed plans and setting budget allocation for public services to ensure adequate public services with quality.

#### Raising awareness and building capacity on violence and sexual harassment prevention in public spaces for students in schools and communities

- Integrating knowledge about social and interpersonal skills for women and girls, especially about how to protect themselves;
- Communicating the regulations on handling cases of gender-based violence and sexual assault.

#### For authorities and officials who are responsible for maintaining social security in public areas such as the police and civil defense:

- Raising awareness about gender, gender-sensitivity and human rights (focusing on women's rights and child rights) for the authorities and the security forces;
- Additional strengthening security forces to carry out patrol in public places, especially in solitude places;
- Regularly conducting participatory surveys assess gender violence in public places to have immediate and in time interventions.

Organizing communication campaign all over the country to remove gender violence and sexual harassment in transportations and public services (bus and public toilet) with focus on behaviors which is difficult to recognize or easy to be acceptable.

To bring a Safe City For Women and Girls, Gender Equality Department, CGFED and ActionAid Vietnam calling individuals and organizations who pay attention to the safety of women and children in cities, please join our Campaign "Safe City for women and girls". Let's strengthen the efficiency of public expenditure to turn dreams come true.



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