

# Women's Employment and Safety Perceptions: Evidence from Low-Income Neighborhoods of Dhaka, Bangladesh

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# Introduction

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- Concerns about safety and security play a significant role in determining women's mobility and their labor market outcomes.
- Globally, women regularly encounter violence and harassment in public spaces.
- The 2015 National Survey on Violence Against Women by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics reports that **18.3%** of women in Bangladesh identify public space (vehicles, roads, street) as a place where sexual violence occurs.
- A survey conducted by ActionAid in 2016 reports that **84%** of Bangladeshi women routinely experience insults or sexual comments while in public spaces.
- Few studies report that sexual harassment or feeling less safe/secure is correlated to women being less likely to be participating in the labor market. (see: Kotikula, Hill and Raza 2019).
- This policy brief builds on the existing evidence and investigates the association between women's safety perception and their labor market outcomes in Dhaka.

# Research Objective(s)

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This brief mainly discusses:

- The gender gap in safety perceptions.
- The correlation between female labor supply and safety perception.

# Data and Sample

## Data

- We use the **Dhaka Low-Income Area Gender, Inclusion, and Poverty (DIGNITY)** survey collected by the World Bank in low-income neighborhoods of Dhaka in 2018.
- The data is **representative of slums and low-income areas** of the Dhaka City Corporations (North and South) and of a low-income area from the Greater Dhaka Statistical Metropolitan Area.



# Data and Sample...

## Data

- The dataset includes a **household module**, for which the heads of the households were interviewed, and an **individual module**, for which two persons, one male and one female were interviewed.
- In addition to **sociodemographic characteristics** at the household level, the data **includes individual-level information** on time use, employment, work history, attitudes and perceptions about work, and women's economic empowerment.

## Sample

- Women and men aged 15 – 64 years (working age).



# Definition of Safety Perception

Broad definition of safety perception based on two questions:

- 1: Do you **feel physically safe in your street** (the street on which your home is located)?
- 2: Do you **feel physically safe going outside** of your community on your own?

## *Safety perception*

- = 1 if individuals report **feeling physically safe all the time** in the streets on which their homes are located, or they **feel physically safe all the time** when on their own outside their communities.
- = 0 if individuals **do not go outside** their communities, if they report **only feeling physically safe in the daytime**, or they **do not at all feel safe** in their streets or going outside their communities.

# Gender Gap in Safety Perceptions

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Women

Of the sample of women:

**69** percent report feeling safe outside.

Men

Of the sample of men:

**96** percent report feeling safe outside.

# Gender Gap in Safety Perceptions...

## Age

- Women consistently report feeling less safe than men of all ages.
- Percentage of women who feel safe increases as they get older.
- The gender gap in safety perception shrinks with increase in age.

## Education

- There is inverse relationship between women's perception of safety and educational attainment.
- The gender gap in safety perceptions also increases with women's educational attainment.

## Living Standard

- Women and men in relatively well-off households feel safer than their counterparts in less well-off households.
- The rise in wealth reduces the gender gap in safety perception.

# Gender Gap in Safety Perceptions...

## Living Areas

- No significant differences in women's safety perception by the areas they live.
- However, men living in slums are less likely to feel safe than those not living in slums.
- Not much variation in the gender gap of safety perceptions by area.

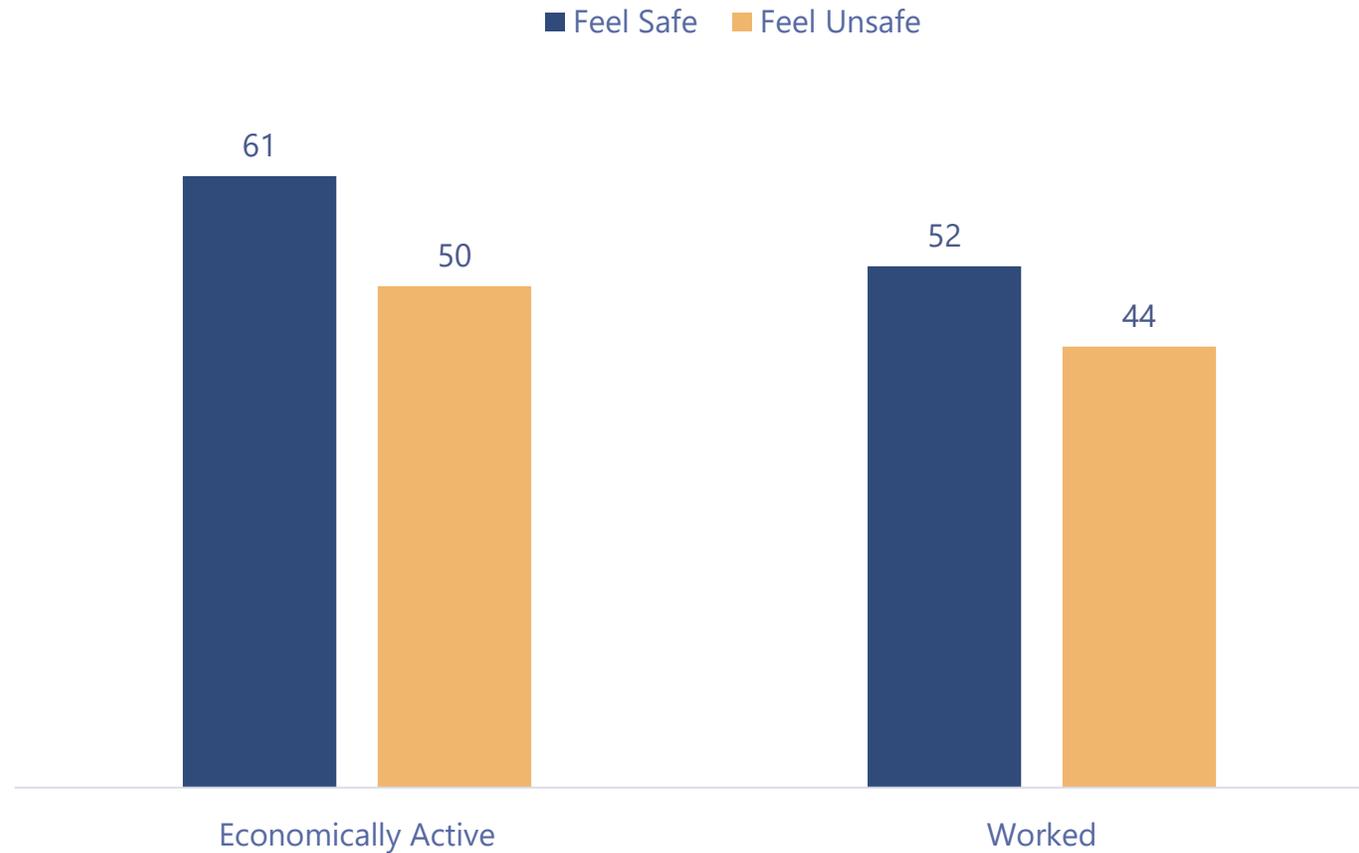
## Concern of Eviction

- Eviction concern significantly reduce the perception of safety for women, but not so for men.
- Concern about eviction also increases the gender gap in safety perception.

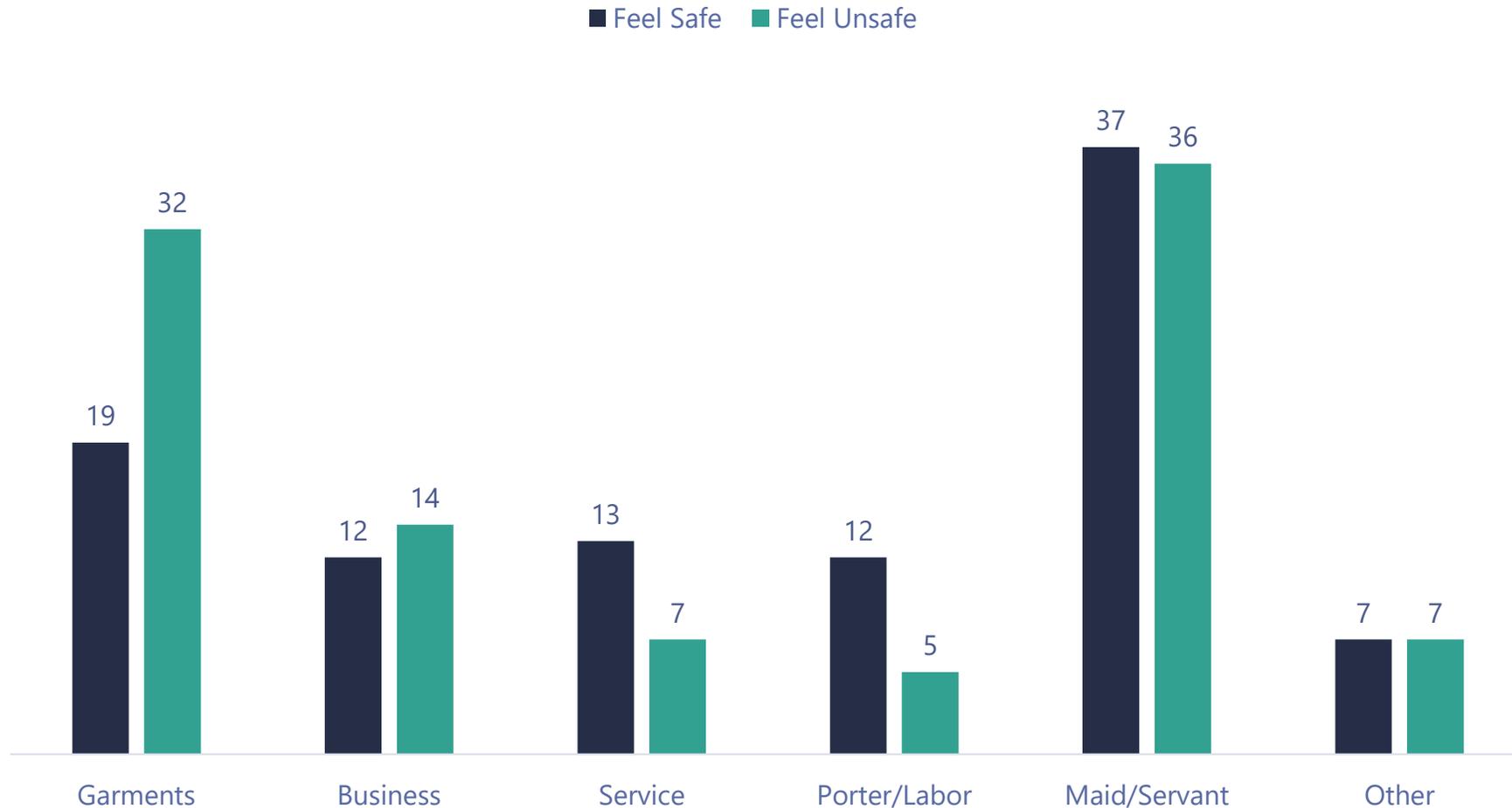
## Streetlights

- The desire to have improvement in the neighborhood streetlights decreases women's and men's likelihood of feeling safe.
- Fewer women feel secure than men who desire streetlight improvements.

# Female Labor Supply and Safety Perception

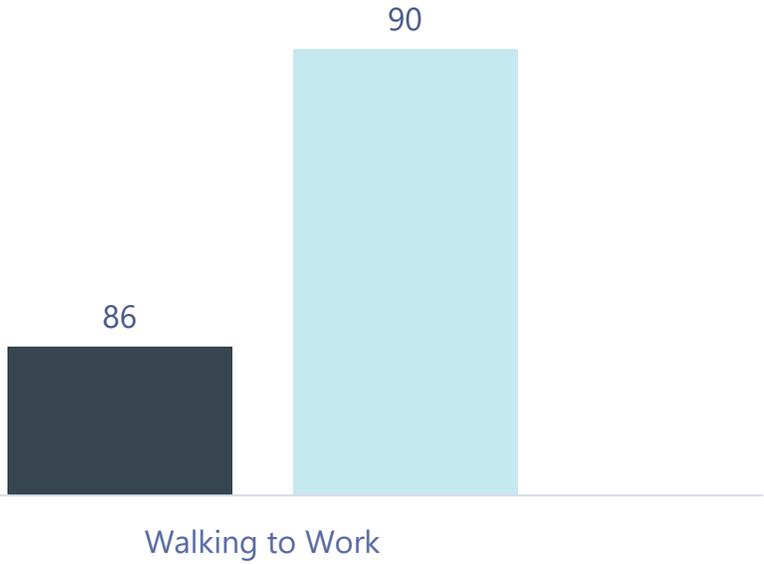


# Female Occupation and Safety Perception



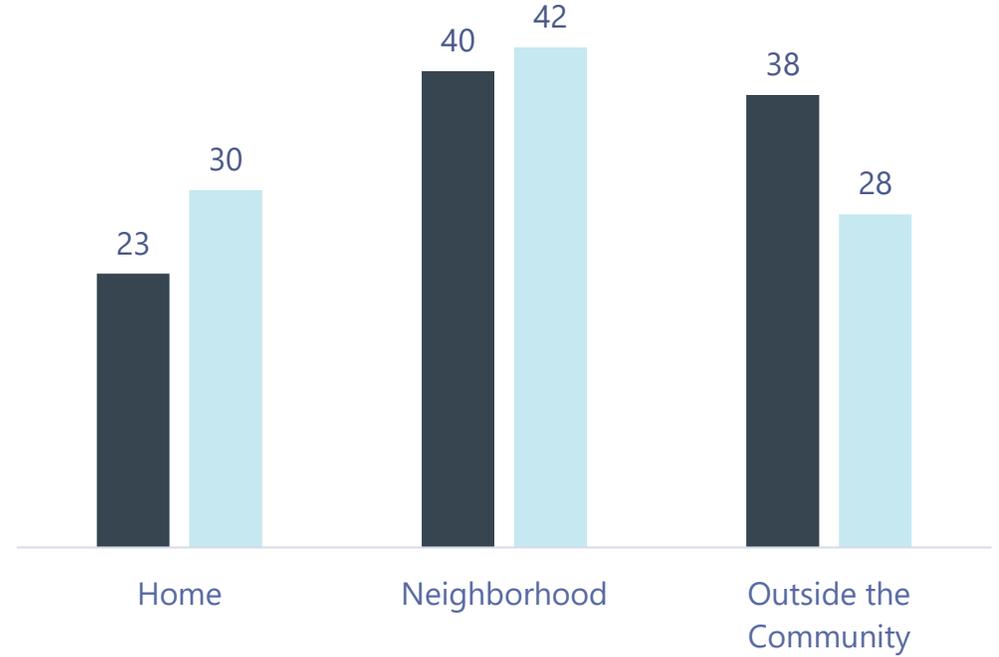
# Walk to Work

■ Feel Safe ■ Feel Unsafe



# Location of Work

■ Feel Safe ■ Feel Unsafe



# Conclusion

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**Providing women equal access to thrive by establishing an environment in which women feel safe is necessary to achieve economic development.**

- Immediate measures could be:
  - Ensure adequate streetlights.
  - Provide gender sensitive training to law enforcement and security officers.
  - City surveillance systems can be made widely available.
- Long-term measures could be:
  - Ensure active participation of women in planning and designing new urban developments.
  - Ensure women's participation in formulating laws.
  - Undertake awareness-building programs and advocacy campaigns.
  - Promote a respectful attitude toward women and a cultural shift.

# THANK YOU

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