GENDER ANALYSIS
BANGLADESH

(July – December 2024)

IMPACT OF THE CIVIL UNREST ON
WOMEN AND MARGINALISED GROUPS

UN
WOMEN

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2. List of Acronyms

Acronym	Full Form
ANC	Antenatal Care
DGHS	Directorate General of Health Services
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FFM	Fact-Finding Mission
FSW	Female Sex Worker
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IDI	In-Depth Interview
KII	Key Informant Interview
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OPD	Organisation of Persons with Disabilities
PNC	Postnatal Care
GA	Gender Analysis
SBFSW	Street Based Female Sex Worker
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

3. Executive Summary

In mid-2024, Bangladesh witnessed civil unrest. Originating from student-led protests because of the reinstatement of quotas in public service recruitment, it rapidly escalated into a broader movement demanding political accountability and reform. The Gender Analysis (GA) Bangladesh 2024 provides an evidence-based assessment of the gendered dimensions of the unrest, examining its impact on women, girls, gender-diverse individuals, and other marginalised groups. Drawing on qualitative and quantitative data collected from 24 districts across the country, this report highlights the widespread violations of rights, economic precarity, service disruptions, gendered violence, and political exclusion that disproportionately affected these communities during and after the unrest.

Women and gender-diverse individuals who played a central role in the protests were disproportionately targeted by both security forces and politically affiliated actors. According to the OHCHR fact-finding mission (FFM) report titled "Human Rights Violations and Abuses Related to the Protests of July and August 2024 in Bangladesh", female protesters were subjected to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), including threats of rape and in some documented cases, sexual assault perpetrated by Awami League supporters. Evidence also indicates that women and girls were deliberately attacked, arbitrarily detained, and tortured to intimidate them from participating in the movement and to reinforce patriarchal norms that seek to suppress female political agency. The systemic use of gender-based violence (GBV) as a political tool, resulted in heightened fear, reduced mobility, and a retreat from public life for many women and gender-diverse individuals in the aftermath of the unrest.

Beyond direct violence, the unrest significantly disrupted access to essential services, particularly sexual and reproductive health (SRH), general healthcare, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services. Among women surveyed, 30 per cent reported inability to access SRH services, while 34 per cent of women aged 18–29 faced difficulties in maintaining menstrual hygiene due to WASH disruptions. These barriers disproportionately affected low-income women, gender-diverse individuals, and female-headed households, exacerbating pre-existing health inequalities. The breakdown of service delivery also had profound implications for survivors of gender-based violence, who faced severe limitations in accessing justice and psychosocial support due to a lack of institutional functionality and prevailing social stigma.

The economic impact of the unrest was profound, particularly for women, gender-diverse individuals, and informal sector workers. Among young adults, 58 per cent lost part-time employment, and 16 per cent of women reported business closures, reflecting the gendered economic precarity intensified by the unrest. For women engaged in sex work and transgender individuals, the limited access to income sources led to greater vulnerability to abuse, extortion, and forced displacement, compounding their pre-existing limitations to access services.

The psychological toll of the unrest was particularly severe for women, gender-diverse individuals, and youth, with mental health concerns escalating in the post-unrest period. Fear of future violence was reported by 58 per cent of young adults, while 48 per cent of women and 76 per cent of gender-diverse individuals expressed a heightened sense of insecurity in public spaces. Feelings of depression and anxiety were significantly more prevalent among young adults and gender-diverse persons, underscoring the urgent need for gender-sensitive mental health interventions. The findings further suggest that suicidal thoughts among young adults increased sharply, reflecting the cumulative distress caused by economic instability, social exclusion, and exposure to violence.

Ethnic and religious minorities also faced disproportionate threats and targeted attacks, particularly in Hindu, Ahmadiyya, Buddhist, and Christian communities. The OHCHR (2025) FFM report documents attacks on places of worship, looting of minority-owned homes, and instances of forced displacement. The Voice of America Bangla and ORGQuest survey similarly found that 33.9 per cent of

non-Muslim respondents reported security concerns, indicating a widespread climate of fear among religious minorities.

The unrest also exposed profound structural barriers to women's political participation and leadership. While women were visible in organising and mobilising protests, the post-unrest period saw a significant withdrawal from leadership roles. The GA survey found that 14 per cent of female respondents were completely disengaged from leadership, 5 per cent planned to step away, and 38 per cent reported a gradual decline in their participation. Political and civic spaces remain highly exclusionary, with patriarchal norms, institutional bias, and safety concerns collectively discouraging women from sustaining their activism. The OHCHR (2025) FFM report similarly underscores that gendered discrimination in public life remains entrenched, with female leaders facing systemic harassment, verbal abuse, and threats of violence, making long-term political engagement increasingly untenable.

Photo Credit: UN Women/Monon Muntaka

4. Introduction

Bangladesh's political landscape has shifted significantly over the past two decades. According to the 2023 Democracy Index by the Economist Intelligence Unit, the country's score has been on a steady decline, standing at 0.59—a 4 per cent relative negative change since 2006. This regression demonstrates Bangladesh's transition from a "flawed democracy" to a "hybrid regime," a term that encapsulates the fragility of its democratic institutions and governance structures. Against this backdrop of democratic erosion, the nation faced an unprecedented wave of civil unrest mid-2024.

The events of July and August 2024 marked a historic turning point. Initially sparked by demands for quota reforms in public service recruitment, the unrest evolved into a broader, student-led, anti-discrimination movement. The collapse of the Awami League government on 5 August 2024 created a profound power vacuum exacerbated by the absence of effective law enforcement, particularly the police. This breakdown in governance unleashed widespread violence, disproportionately impacting women and minority groups.

According to the OHCHR (2025) FFM report, as many as 1,400 protest-related deaths may have occurred between 15 July and 5 August 2024, including at least 13 women. The Ministry of Health recorded 841 deaths, among them 10 women, along with 12,272 injuries, of which 394 were sustained by women and four by persons listed as "other". Furthermore, an independent dataset cited in the report indicates that children comprised approximately 12 per cent of total fatalities, with 118 child deaths documented out of 986 reported cases. These figures underscore the severe humanitarian impact of the unrest and highlight the need for comprehensive, independent investigations into potential human rights violations.

Women played a transformative role in the Anti-Discrimination Movement, demonstrating their capacity to drive societal change in the face of systemic oppression. Images from the Anti-Discrimination Movement show girls and women at the forefront—demanding justice, calling for the resignation of the Prime Minister, and facing brutal repression. However, their visibility during the movement starkly contrasts their experience after the protests. Women, including female coordinators of the Anti-Discrimination Movement, appear to have been less active and visible in comparison to men in initiatives and discussions following the civil unrest. Furthermore, among the advisers of the Interim Government, only four are women, and no female coordinator from the Anti-Discrimination Movement currently serves in the cabinet. Additionally, out of the 11 reform commissions established by the Interim Government, only one is headed by a woman—reflecting a starkly imbalanced male-to-female ratio in leadership roles. Although no comprehensive national statistics exist on female participation in local political leadership roles during the movement, existing data reveals that only 0.79 per cent of women were nominated for local government political leadership positions, i.e. 44 women compared to 5,541 men (Hafiz et al., 2024). This systemic exclusion underscores the barriers women endure in political and civic life.

The unrest also emphasised the vulnerabilities of marginalised groups, such as women engaged in sex work. Among those from this community who took part in the assessment, 80 per cent reported experiencing violence even before the unrest. Following the events of 5 August 2024, this group faced heightened violence and systemic neglect, prompting them to issue a 10-point demand for protection and rights (Dhaka Tribune, 2024).

Religious minorities were significantly impacted in the aftermath of the civil unrest. The OHCHR (2025) FFM, in their report, stated that 1,769 acts of vandalism targeting minority communities were documented after 5 August, with 1,234 of these incidents having political motivations. Furthermore, the report highlighted that teachers from religious minority backgrounds were coerced into resigning under various pretexts, often facing threats from violent mobs.

The Anti-Discrimination Movement emerged as a unique, youth-led uprising, demonstrating the power of collective action in advocating for justice. Since 28 February 2024, the movement has transitioned into a formal political entity, the National Citizen Party (NCP), positioning itself as a force for building a "Second Republic" in Bangladesh. However, despite this evolution (24 women out of 217 member body as of March 3 2025), there has been less focus on women's political participation within the party's agenda or leadership structures, reflecting the persistent marginalisation of gender equality in mainstream political discourse. The movement's early momentum, which saw women playing a prominent role in mobilization and resistance, has yet to translate into formal commitments to gender-inclusive governance. However, the current context underscores the pressing need for sustained efforts to ensure that women and minority voices remain central to the discourse on justice and equality, preventing their marginalisation in the broader sociopolitical landscape.

4.1 Objective

This GA aimed to assess the multifaceted and gendered impacts of the recent civil unrest on the most vulnerable groups through an intersectional lens. The analysis focused on several key dimensions, including rights, mental well-being, economic and livelihood opportunities, and safety and security, while taking into account the country's unique social and cultural contexts. Specifically, it aimed to:

1. Evaluate the challenges faced by women, girls, and other marginalised groups in accessing essential services during this period.

2. Identify the differential impacts of the unrest on food security, livelihoods, and the evolving roles and responsibilities of women, including unpaid care work and workplace protections.

3. Assess the broader gendered experiences of civil unrest, including fears, psychosocial impacts, mental health challenges, and the prevalence of GBV, both offline and online.

4. Identify the systematic barriers to leadership for women and marginalised groups following the unrest.

5. Provide gender-responsive short-term and long-term recommendations to inform programmatic and advocacy efforts of the UN and its partners.

Photo Credit: UN Women/Monon Muntaka

5. Methodology

This GA utilised a mixed-method approach to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the impacts on vulnerable groups. The quantitative component included a survey questionnaire developed in collaboration with UN Women, UNICEF, UNAIDS, and UNFPA. Administered first online and subsequently offline in Barishal, Khulna, and Sylhet divisions, this dual strategy ensured inclusivity, capturing responses from populations with and without internet access. The qualitative component involved FGDs, IDIs, and KIIs, enabling rich, contextual insights into the lived experiences of women, girls, and vulnerable groups. Special attention was given to engaging female street-based sex workers through trained facilitators and dedicated FGDs. Details of the methodology, including the survey framework, enumerator training, and the step-by-step implementation process, are elaborated in the annex.

5.1 Timeline of the movement

This GA considers the pre-unrest phase as the period leading up to July 2024, the unrest phase spanning from July to August 5, 2024, and the post-movement phase beginning after August 5, 2024. Drawing on the framework by Blumer, Mauss, and Tilly, these phases align with the evolution of social movements. In the pre-movement stage, grievances and social conditions set the stage for mobilization. During the movement, shared goals and ideals brought coherence and visibility, with women playing transformative roles despite facing repression. The post-movement stage reflects the challenges of institutionalization, with outcomes ranging from systemic backlash to diminished momentum, underscoring the need for sustained advocacy to address the structural inequities highlighted during the unrest (Mauss, 1975; Tilly, 1978).

5.2 Composition of the respondents

FIGURE 1
Gender representation of the respondents
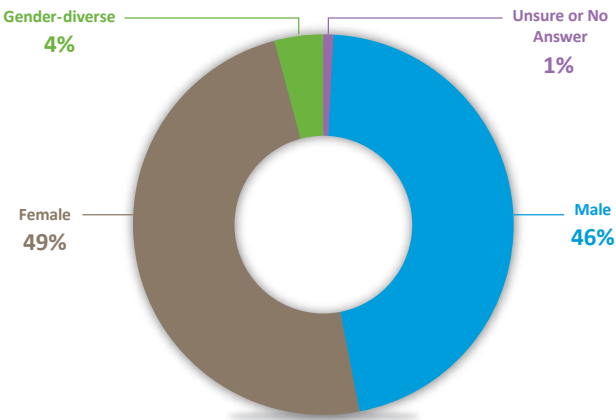
This GA involved a comprehensive survey of respondents across eight divisions and 24 districts in Bangladesh, ensuring representation from diverse geographic and demographic groups. The study encompassed a total of 2,938 survey respondents across eight divisions and 24 districts, supplemented by 62 FGD participants and 19 individuals who participated in IDIs and KIIs. The study also includes data from 49 respondents below the age of 18, for whom parental consent was obtained to ensure ethical compliance. Their responses are specifically incorporated into Figures 8, 13, and 21, which provide a comparative analysis of the 12-17 age group alongside older demographics. Notably, these are the only figures in this study that include the 12-17 age group, enabling a comparative understanding of how younger respondents navigated the recent unrest

and its broader socio-economic impact. Moreover, the gender distribution of respondents reflects an inclusive approach, with 49 per cent identifying as female, 46 per cent as male, 4 per cent as gender-diverse, and 1 per cent either unsure or choosing not to answer. The age distribution indicates that the majority of respondents were between the ages of 18 and 29, comprising 28 per cent of women, 20.3 per cent of men, and 3 per cent of gender-diverse individuals. Respondents in other age brackets, such as 30-39 years and 40-49 years, also provided substantial insights into the unrest's impact across different life stages. A detailed breakdown of the demographic composition is available in the annex.[1]

5.3 Limitations of the study

The GA was designed following the principles of RGA (Rapid Gender analysis) for swift assessments, necessitating a condensed time frame for data collection and analysis. This expedited approach may have resulted in incomplete data gathering and a superficial understanding of intricate gender dynamics, potentially overlooking nuanced issues that require more in-depth exploration. Due to time constraints and practicality, the GA was conducted in 24 out of the 64 districts of Bangladesh. While the sample size of 2,938 respondents offers a semblance of national representation, it constitutes only a small fraction of the country's population of approximately 170 million. Consequently, many perspectives and regional variations may have been excluded, limiting the generalisability of the findings across the entire nation. Another key limitation of this study is the potential disproportionate representation of religious groups within the sample. While efforts were made to ensure inclusivity, the survey did not incorporate a stratified sampling method explicitly designed to reflect the religious diversity all throughout Bangladesh. Consequently, the findings may not fully capture the distinct gendered experiences of religious minority communities, particularly in regions where they constitute a significant portion or majority of the population. This limitation underscores the need for further studies that incorporate a more balanced

religious representation to enhance the inclusivity of gender analysis.

The analysis attempted to compare gender-related data from periods before, during, and after the unrest. However, the lack of consistent and comparable data sets with similar contexts and parameters hindered comprehensive analysis across all relevant variables. This limitation restricted the ability to identify trends over time across all the variables. Moreover, practical considerations led to the exclusion of certain vulnerable populations, including the Rohingya refugees, who are an important demographic in Bangladesh but were not included in this analysis. The Rohingya population, under the government designation of FDMN (Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals), has a separate Joint Response Plan, as detailed in the 2024 plan released on March 13, 2024. This response plan outlines five strategic objectives that, while crucial, is separate from the priorities of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022-2026, leading to their exclusion from the scope of this study. While the Rohingya refugee population remains a priority for humanitarian interventions, their experiences and needs were outside the scope of this gender analysis.

Furthermore, the survey included women engaged in sex work from major cities like Dhaka, Narayanganj, Barishal, and Khulna. However, data collection from other regions of Bangladesh was not feasible due to logistical constraints. This geographical limitation restricts the understanding of the diverse experiences and needs of women engaged in sex work across various parts of the country. The selection of respondents was influenced by accessibility and logistical feasibility, which may have introduced biases. As a result, certain groups or individuals who are harder to reach or less likely to participate might be underrepresented. Given the rapid nature of the analysis, the findings represent a snapshot in time and may not account for ongoing or evolving gender dynamics. Longitudinal studies would be necessary to capture changes and trends over a more extended period.

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[1]The data presented is not nationally representative as the study focused on specific districts rather than a countrywide survey. Districts were selected for practical reasons, including accessibility and relevance to the unrest that set the basis for this research. The sampling process was also influenced by the urgency of the situation, as data had to be collected within a limited timeframe. This selection approach inevitably affects the generalisability of the findings to the broader population.

Furthermore, the age distribution of respondents skews toward younger adults, particularly those between the ages of 18 and 29. This is primarily due to the data collection process, which relied heavily on universities as focal points for respondent outreach. The decision to engage universities was strategic, as these institutions were at the heart of the civil unrest that took place in Bangladesh in July. Universities served as key access points to a larger pool of respondents, especially younger individuals, given their significant role in the unfolding of events. As a result, the perspectives captured in this analysis are more reflective of the views and experiences of younger demographics.

FIGURE 2
Age distribution of the respondents (18-79+)
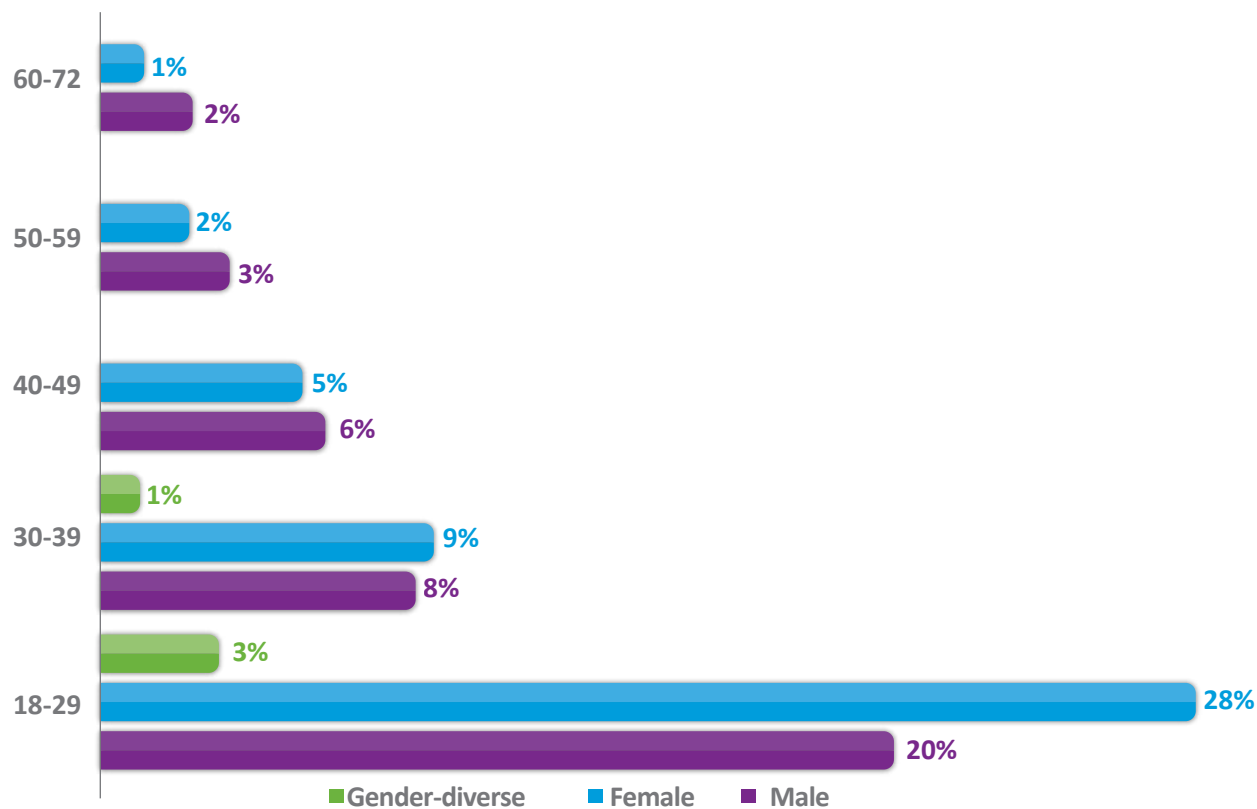
5.4 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were considered throughout the research process of this GA to ensure the protection, dignity, and rights of all participants. The study adhered to the Do No Harm principle, prioritising the well-being and safety of respondents at all stages of data collection. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and all respondents had the right to withdraw at any point without consequence. Data collection from minors was conducted exclusively through trained enumerators in physical settings, and informed parental consent was obtained before engaging children below 18 in the research process. Thirty-four enumerators were given one-day of training to handle sensitive disclosures with discretion. The study also ensured strict confidentiality and anonymity of respondents, with all personal identifiers removed from the reporting.

6. Findings

6.1 Women and marginalised groups faced heightened violence during and after crises

The incidence of violence varied significantly across age groups and gender identities during and after periods of civil unrest.

6.1.1 incidence of violence by age group

FIGURE 3

Age distribution on the incidence of violence (18-70+)
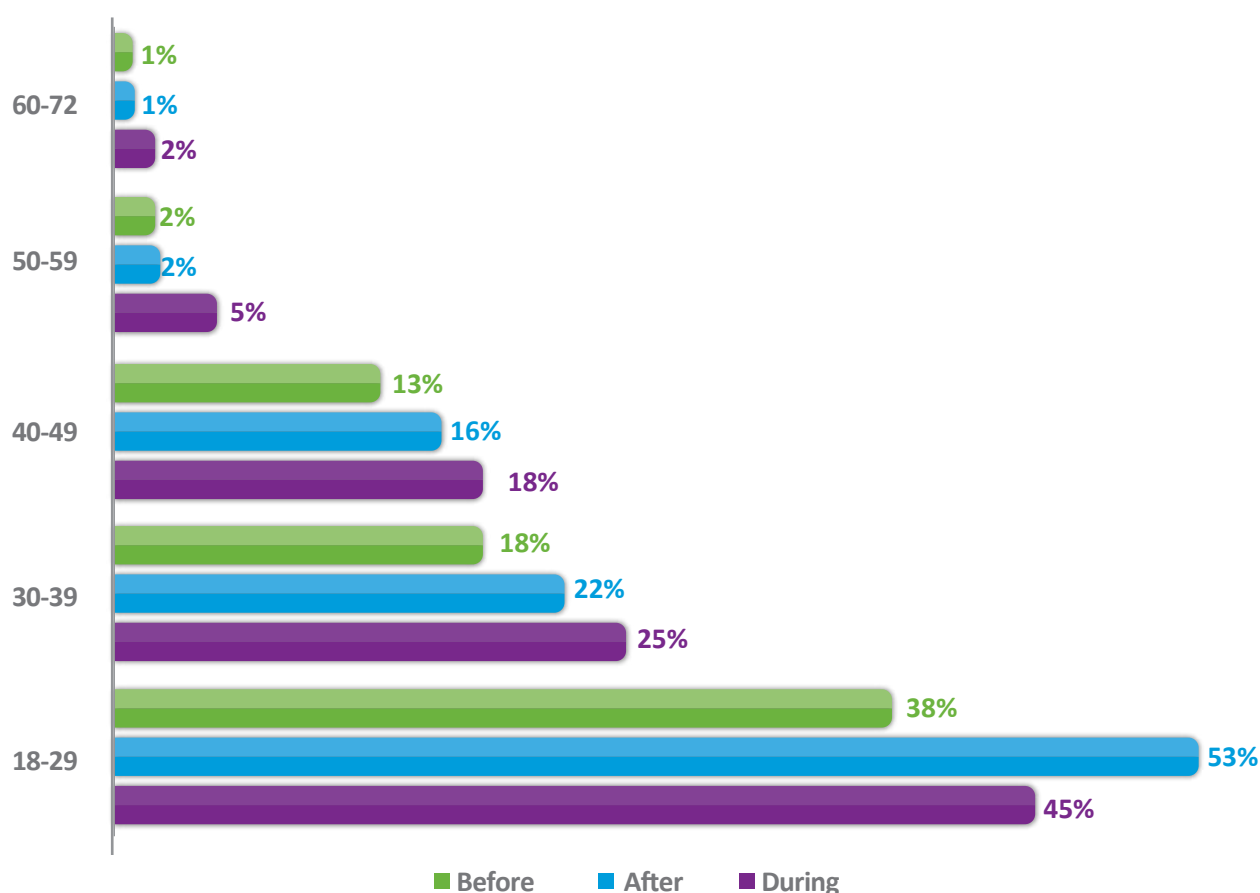
Individuals aged 18–29 experienced the highest levels of violence, with incidents peaking during the unrest at 53 per cent, compared to 45 per cent post-unrest and 38 per cent before. Those aged 30–39 also reported a significant increase in violence during the unrest, with 25 per cent affected, compared to 18 per cent pre-unrest and 22 per cent post-unrest. In contrast, violence against older age groups (40 and above) remained low, with less than 2 per cent reporting incidents. Younger populations, particularly those aged 18–29, were disproportionately affected, making them the demographic most vulnerable to violence during periods of instability. A 39-year-old female FGD respondent from Bagerhat recounted:

6.1.2 Incidence of violence by gender

FIGURE 4

Incidence of violence by gender
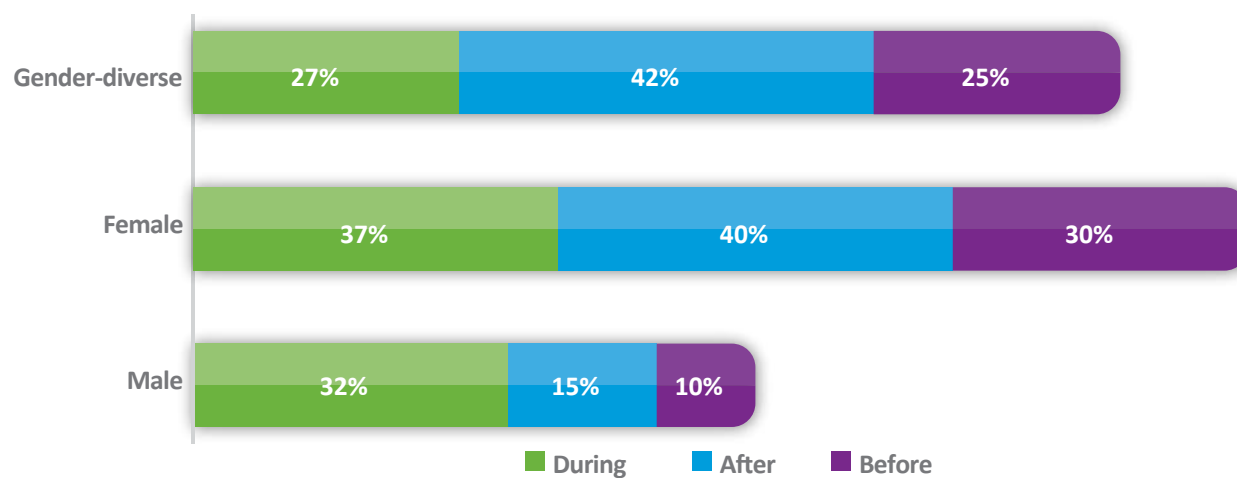
Gender-diverse individuals faced the highest levels of violence post-unrest, with 42 per cent reporting incidents, compared to 27 per cent during and 25 per cent before the unrest. Women also reported elevated levels of violence, rising from 30 per cent pre-unrest to 40 per cent post-unrest. Men experienced significantly lower levels of violence, with rates dropping from 32 per cent during the unrest to 15 per cent post-unrest. This disparity reflects the compounded risks faced by gender-diverse individuals and women, particularly during recovery when institutional and social support systems are weakened. According to the OHCHR (2025) FFM Report, female protesters faced heightened sexual and gender-based violence, including physical assaults, rape threats, and arbitrary detention, reportedly by the ruling party supporters, aimed at deterring their participation in protests and undermining their role in the Anti-Discrimination Movement.

6.1.3 Types of violence experienced across genders

Gender-diverse individuals reported the highest levels of verbal threats 15 per cent and psychological harassment 12 per cent, emphasizing the unique challenges faced by this group. Women also faced significant risks, with 13 per cent experiencing verbal threats and 6 per cent reporting physical violence.

FIGURE 5
Types of violence experienced

Legend:
- Harassment in public settings
- Harassment in institutional settings
- Physical violence
- Psychological harrassment/ violence
- Verbal threats
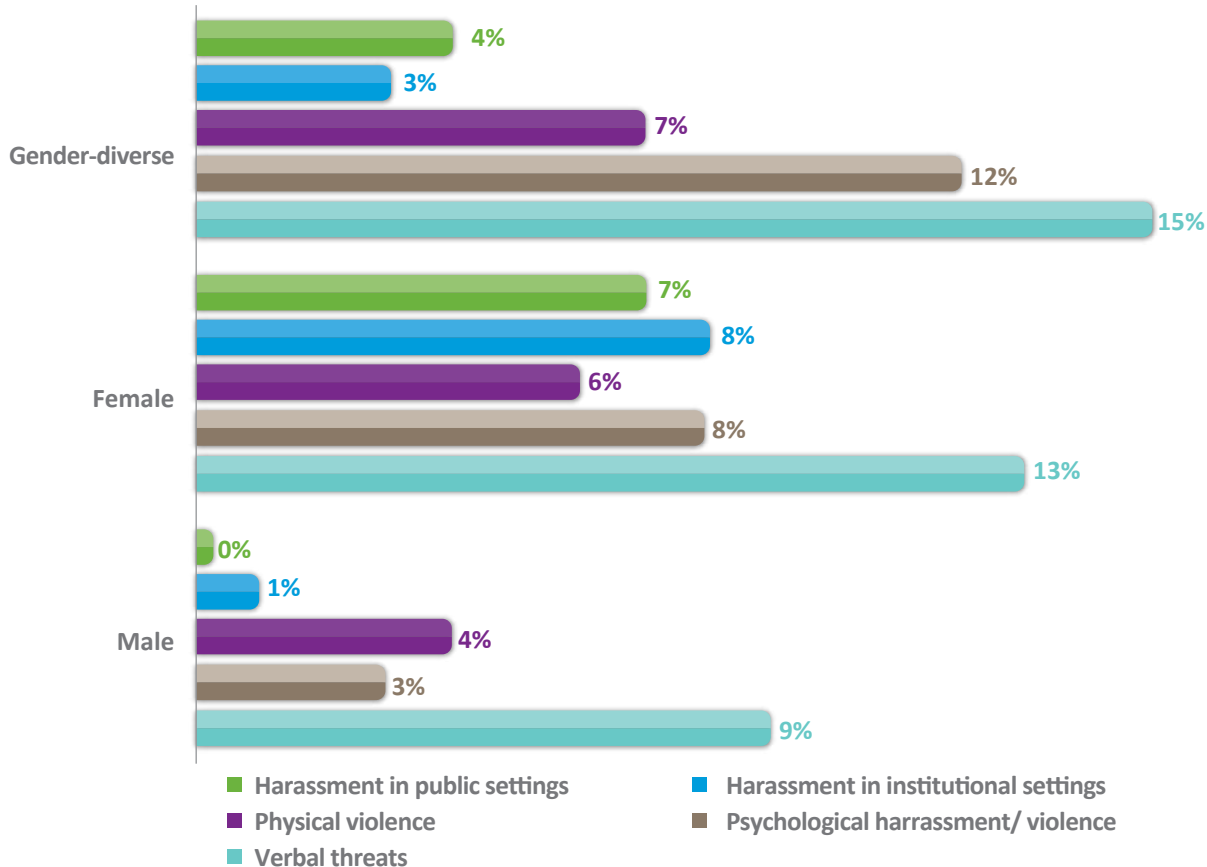
Institutional harassment affected 8 per cent of women, compared to 3 per cent of gender-diverse individuals and 1 per cent of men. Men reported the lowest levels across all forms of violence, with only 4 per cent experiencing physical violence. These findings highlight the intersectional challenges faced by gender-diverse individuals and the systemic vulnerabilities that disproportionately impact women. A female 23-year-old university student from Dhaka shared in an IDI:

> *Lately, I've faced issues while commuting to my university. I often hear comments about my dress from strangers. Just the other day, I witnessed a group of women publicly confront another young woman about her attire. It's frustrating and makes me feel unsafe.*

According to the OHCHR (2025) FFM report, violence targeting female protesters was systematically gendered in both its aims and methods, reflecting entrenched patterns of abuse specifically directed against women and girls. The report highlights that such violence was strategically employed as a tool to suppress women's participation, dismantle female leadership within the anti-discrimination movement, and reinforce patriarchal control over public and political spaces.

Physical assaults on female protesters were not only acts of brutality but also deliberate mechanisms of gender-based humiliation. Perpetrators frequently targeted areas such as the face, chest, pelvis, and buttocks—inflicting harm that was both physically and psychologically demeaning. These attacks were routinely accompanied by gender-based slurs, with women protesters being labelled as "whores," "sluts," and "prostitutes," underscoring the deeply ingrained misogyny that sought to silence and stigmatise their activism.

The OHCHR (2025) FFM report further documents instances where female protesters faced heightened levels of sexualised violence, including groping, physical sexual assault, and rape threats. In several reported cases, women were arbitrarily detained, tortured, or subjected to inhumane treatment, demonstrating the systematic use of gendered violence as a means of political repression.

6.1.4 Correlation between types of violence and gender

Psychological Harassment[2] exhibited the strongest correlation with gender-diverse identity (0.40), followed by women who faced the same (0.31). Women spoke about multiple forms of violence, reflecting broader systemic challenges. Men on the other hand reported lower levels of violence.

FIGURE 6

Types of violence and harassment by gender (correlation values- higher means greater correlation)

6.2 Women and gender-diverse individuals report decline in sense of safety and security amid institutional failures

The perception of safety during periods of unrest varies significantly across different gender identities, with gender-diverse individuals experiencing the highest levels of insecurity. The findings reveal that a staggering

76 per cent of the gender-diverse respondents reported a reduced sense of safety, positioning them as the most vulnerable group within the study. This sense of heightened vulnerability underscores the compounded challenges faced by individuals whose identities diverge from societal norms. A participant from gender-diverse community shared during a Focus Group Discussion:

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[2]Verbal threats, as a component of psychological harassment, exhibited the strongest correlation with individuals identifying as gender-diverse (0.45), highlighting heightened vulnerability to this form of aggression. Similarly, women also experienced significant correlations (0.39), underscoring the psychological burden faced by these groups compared to others.

> *When I look at the news on social and mainstream media, I see campaigns targeting us. Even university professors, the most educated members of society, actively run campaigns against my community. It's hopeless—where do we go if even, they disregard us?*

> *Recently, a group of people demanded money from a female tea stall owner, falsely claiming to be coordinators of the student movement. It turned out they were exploiting the situation, targeting her because they assumed a woman would be easier to coerce. If this continues, where will people seek help?*

Women also reported significant declines in their sense of safety, with 48 per cent expressing heightened sense of insecurity. This finding speaks to the disproportionate impact of socio-political constraints on women, particularly in environments where they encounter both targeted and systemic vulnerabilities. A young university student from Barishal during an FGD recounted:

In contrast, men reported the lowest decline in their perceived sense of safety, with 26 per cent indicating that they felt less secure. This relative stability reflects the societal privileges that men often experience in the civil unrest settings, where they are less likely to be targeted and generally feel less threatened compared to women and gender-diverse individuals.

FIGURE 7

Perceived reduction in sense of safety and security by gender

Gender-diverse	76%
Female	48%
Male	26%
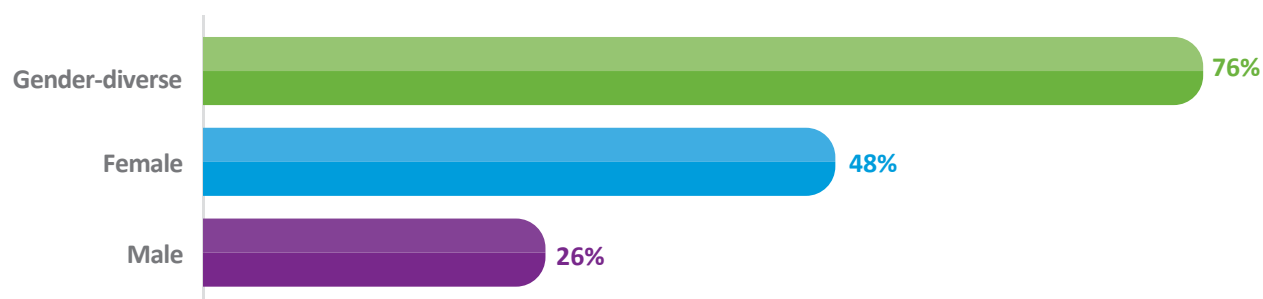
6.2.1 Perceptions of safety and security

Delving deeper into the reasons behind respondents' feelings of insecurity, the analysis identifies community tensions, the absence of law enforcement, and the fear of future violence as the primary drivers across all gender and age groups.

Figure 8

Top reasons for feeling unsafe by age distribution

Chart legend: ■ Tension within the community ■ Absence of law enforcement ■ Fear of future violence
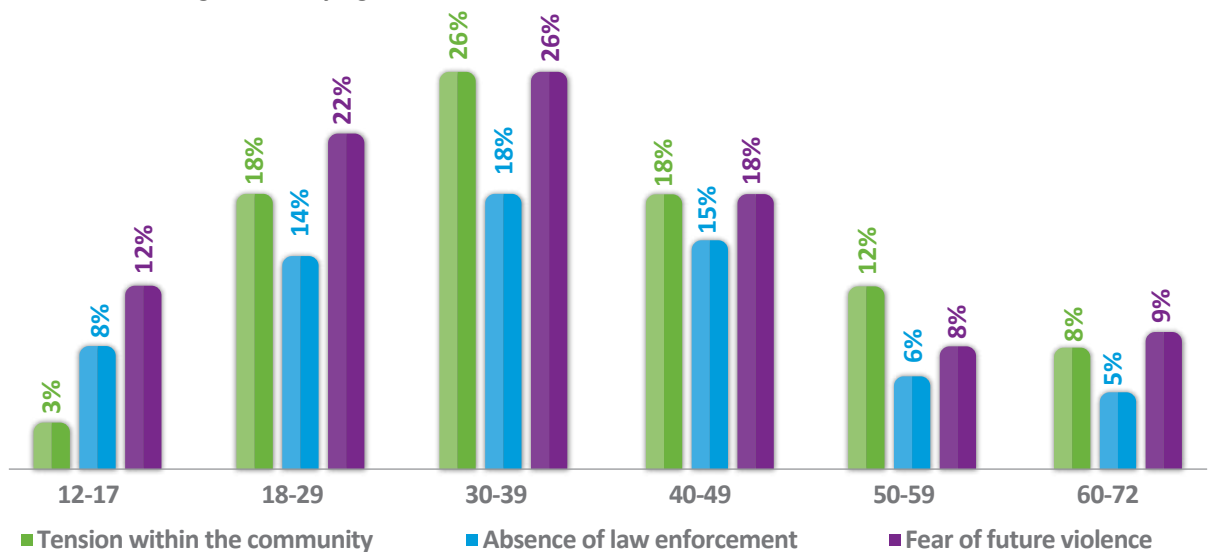
Among the youngest age group, aged 12-17 years, 12 per cent of respondents identified the predominant fear of future violence as a significant factor contributing to their sense of insecurity. The absence of law enforcement also emerged as a notable concern for this group, with 8 per cent reporting it as a key driver of their vulnerability. Community tensions are the least cited reason for insecurity in this age range, with only 3 per cent of respondents highlighting this as a reason.

The fear of future violence remained the most significant factor for 18–29-year-olds, with 22 per cent of representatives in this group feeling insecure because of it. Community tension and the absence of law enforcement were also considerable concerns, affecting 18 per cent and 14 per cent of respondents within this age bracket, respectively. This pattern suggests that individuals in their late teens and early twenties are particularly susceptible to the combined effects of social instability and uncertainty about future violence.

26 per cent of respondents aged between 30-39 years identify both community tensions and the fear of future violence as primary drivers of insecurity, while the absence of law enforcement affects 18 per cent of respondents in this age range. This indicates that

individuals in their thirties may experience a more nuanced set of concerns, with a heightened awareness of the social and institutional factors contributing to their perceived insecurity.

In contrast, respondents in the 40-49 age bracket report of a somewhat lower level of insecurity. The fear of future violence and community tensions are identified by 18 per cent of respondents, while the absence of law enforcement is cited by 15 per cent. Although the perception of insecurity persists, it appears to decrease as age increases, suggesting that older individuals in this group may feel slightly more secure or resilient to the perceived risks of an unrest.

For those aged 50-59, the concerns shift significantly, with community tensions reported by 12 per cent, the fear of future violence by 8 per cent, and the absence of law enforcement by 6 per cent. This group seems less affected by the instability that is perceived by younger age groups, possibly due to increased stability, resources, or life experience.

Finally, the 60-72 age group demonstrates the least concern regarding insecurity, with community tensions reported by only 8 per cent, fear of future violence by 9 per cent, and the absence of law enforcement by 5 per cent. This age group appears to be the least

impacted by the feelings of insecurity, suggesting that older individuals may benefit from stronger support systems, greater resilience, or perhaps a more distant relationship with the immediate effects of societal instability.

The data clearly indicates that younger individuals, particularly those in the 18-39 age range, report the highest levels of insecurity due to the fear of future violence and social tensions. As age increases, the sense of vulnerability decreases, with older individuals, especially those in the 50+ age group, exhibiting much lower levels of perceived insecurity. These trends suggest that younger people are more likely to feel the direct impact of crises driven by social instability and a greater sense of exposure to risk. Conversely, older individuals may benefit from access to protective resources, or a more stable sense of security, which could explain their lower levels of concern during such times.

6.3 Women and gender-diverse groups face disproportionate impact from disruptions in essential services during the civil unrest

The disruption of essential services during the protest and civil unrest had profound and far-reaching impacts on communities, particularly on public health and individual well-being. Among the services most severely affected, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services emerged as the most significant, accounting for 30 per cent of the disruptions across the 18-29 years age group. This category includes crucial services such as antenatal and postnatal care, family planning, childbirth services, menstrual hygiene, and HIV-related care. The interruption of these services disproportionately affected women and gender-diverse individuals, whose health and well-being are heavily reliant on continuous access to reproductive healthcare. This disruption likely deepened existing gender disparities in health outcomes, exacerbating the inequities that were already prevalent in the system.

FIGURE 9

Affected area of essential services for women

- Health (general)
- Sexual and reproductive health services (ANC/PNC/family planning, childbirth, menstrual hygiene, HIV etc)
- WASH services
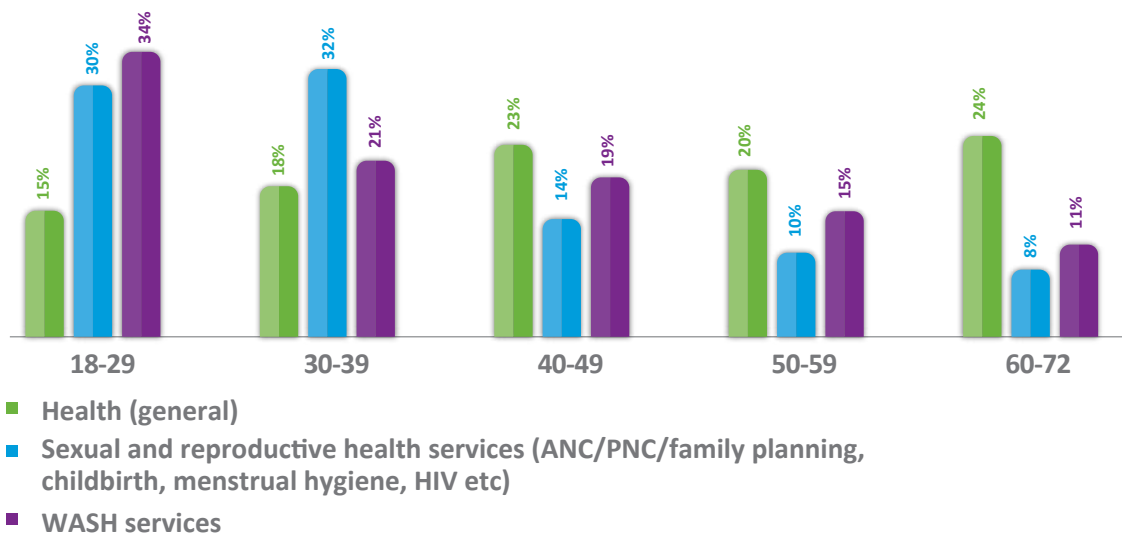
In Bangladesh, a pre-existing rural-urban divide in WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) services continues to exacerbate disparities in access to essential resources. Urban areas benefit from a higher coverage of combined WASH facilities (51.8%), whereas rural areas lag behind with only 36.9 per cent coverage (Ahmed et al., 2021). This gap was further intensified during the civil unrest, particularly affecting 34% of individuals in the 18-29 age group, with a cascading impact on public health and hygiene. Communities already struggling with inadequate access to clean water and sanitation facilities faced heightened vulnerabilities, including an increased risk of disease outbreaks. The disruption of reliable WASH services also posed significant barriers to personal hygiene, disproportionately affecting women and girls, especially during menstruation, pregnancy, and the postpartum period. Similarly, among individuals aged 30-39, 32 per cent reported disruptions in SRHR services, while 21 per cent experienced challenges in accessing WASH facilities.

A **respondent from the Bihari community** residing in Mohammadpur camp reflected on these hardships:

> *"During the curfew and internet disruption, we struggled with electricity and water supply. Although electricity and water are provided free of charge across more than 100 Bihari camps in Bangladesh, we faced interruptions at that time—and we had no idea who to approach to resolve the issue."*

The 40-49 age group experienced less disruption in SRHR services, with 14 per cent of respondents in this group reporting interruptions. However, disruptions to WASH services still affected 19 per cent, highlighting how essential services were disrupted across all age ranges, though the specific nature and extent varied. In the 50-59 age group, SRHR services were disrupted for 10 per cent of respondents, while 15 per cent experienced disruptions in WASH services. The 60-72 age group reported the lowest impact in both categories, with 8 per cent facing interruptions in SRHR and 11 per cent affected by WASH disruptions.

General healthcare services also suffered, affecting 15 per cent of individuals in the 18-29 age group. The inability to access general healthcare services strained health systems, leaving individuals without treatment

for chronic illnesses, injuries, and mental health issues. A poignant example of these challenges comes from a male university student from Sylhet, who shared in a focus group discussion:

> *During the protest, one of my friends was injured; he was from Sylhet. He does not live in our student residence hall like the Shah Paran Hall and Mujtaba Ali Hall; he has joined the protest with us. But his parents did not take him to the hospital. We heard that in fear of getting arrested, he was treated at home by doctors. In a way, he was lucky; us living in the residence halls had no other option but to go to the hospital, and some of them were harassed or arrested later.*

This testimony illustrates the compounded risks and barriers that arose during the unrest, where even accessing healthcare became a perilous endeavour.

Women and the gender-diverse population were the most affected by the lack of SRHR services, with the highest reported disruptions amongst the 18–29-year-olds and 30–39-year-olds. These interruptions, combined with disruptions in WASH services, compounded vulnerabilities, particularly for marginalised groups, such as those living in rural or disaster-prone areas further exacerbated impact on these communities during and post unrest.

The compounded vulnerabilities faced by women and gender-diverse groups during the unrest were not limited to disruptions in SRHR and WASH services. Other marginalised communities, particularly persons with disabilities, experienced a distinct set of challenges that exacerbated their already fragile situation. The lack of access to essential services during the unrest further highlighted the inequities and gaps in support for these groups, making it even more urgent to address their specific needs.

6.4 Economic loss

FIGURE 10

Top causes of economic loss
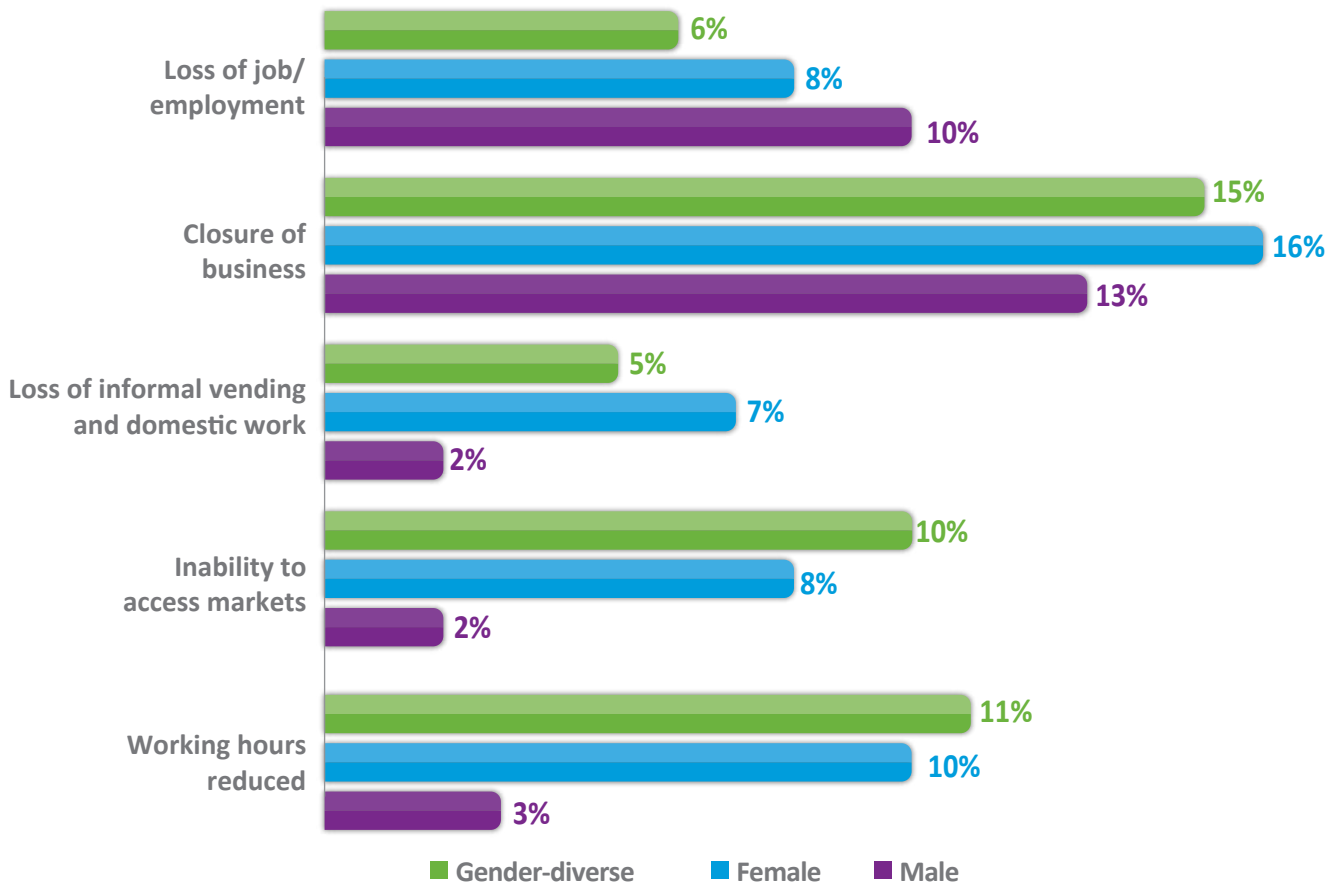
The civil unrest in Bangladesh led to significant economic disruptions, with distinct gender-specific impacts noted across various groups. One of the primary drivers of economic loss was the reduction in job and employment opportunities. Men experienced the highest rates of job loss at 10 per cent, followed by women at 8 per cent, and gender-diverse individuals at 6 per cent. This disparity highlights the vulnerability of sectors where men are typically overrepresented, such as manufacturing and formal industries. However, while men reported the highest level of job losses, other economic challenges disproportionately affected women and gender-diverse individuals, illustrating a broader range of vulnerabilities that extended beyond traditional employment losses.

Business closures emerged as a significant source of economic disruption, particularly impacting women. A notable 16 per cent of women reported business closures, closely followed by men at 13 per cent, and gender-diverse individuals at 15 per cent. This trend underscores the widespread effect of the unrest on small businesses and informal trade, which are essential sources of livelihood for many, especially female entrepreneurs. A female entrepreneur shared her experience:

> *I run a Facebook page with another woman, selling various products. During the movement, we could not sell a single item. Even now, we have lost our customer reach. We usually take products on credit, but we cannot repay our supplier. I do not know how we will move forward with our business.*

Women were also affected in the informal sector, particularly in vending and domestic work, with 7 per cent of women reporting a loss of income from these sources. In contrast, gender-diverse individuals were less affected, with 5 per cent reporting income loss, and men faced the least impact, with just 2 per cent. This pattern reflects the heavy reliance of women on informal economic activities, which are highly susceptible to social and economic instability. A female university student said:

> *I have been tutoring students for years, but after July, security concerns forced my parents to stop me from leaving the house. I lost most of my jobs since they were not nearby, and I have been struggling to find online work.*

Market inaccessibility emerged as a significant challenge, disproportionately affecting marginalised groups. Gender-diverse individuals reported the highest impact (10 per cent), followed by women (8 per cent) and men (2 per cent). Particularly in urban areas, restricted access to markets was primarily driven by the curfew and internet blackout imposed from 18 to 28 July, which severely disrupted economic activities. Prior to the blackout, the digital delivery systems and mobile financial services of Bangladesh processed up to 200,000 packages per day, but the shutdown brought operations to a complete halt which incurred a total loss of USD 5 million (Hasan, 2024). This not only affected logistics and e-commerce platforms but also had a cascading impact on digital entrepreneurs across Bangladesh, limiting their ability to engage in online trade and sustain their businesses.

The unrest further underscored systemic barriers faced by marginalised groups, particularly those engaged in the informal economy, where digital connectivity is a critical enabler of trade. Reduced working hours were also widely reported, disproportionately affecting women (10%) and gender-diverse individuals (11%) compared to men (3%). This disparity reflects the precarious nature of employment for women and gender-diverse people, who are often concentrated in informal or flexible labour sectors with less protection. The combined impact of market inaccessibility and work-hour reductions exacerbated economic instability, further marginalising those already in the periphery of financial security.

FIGURE 11

Profession of the respondents
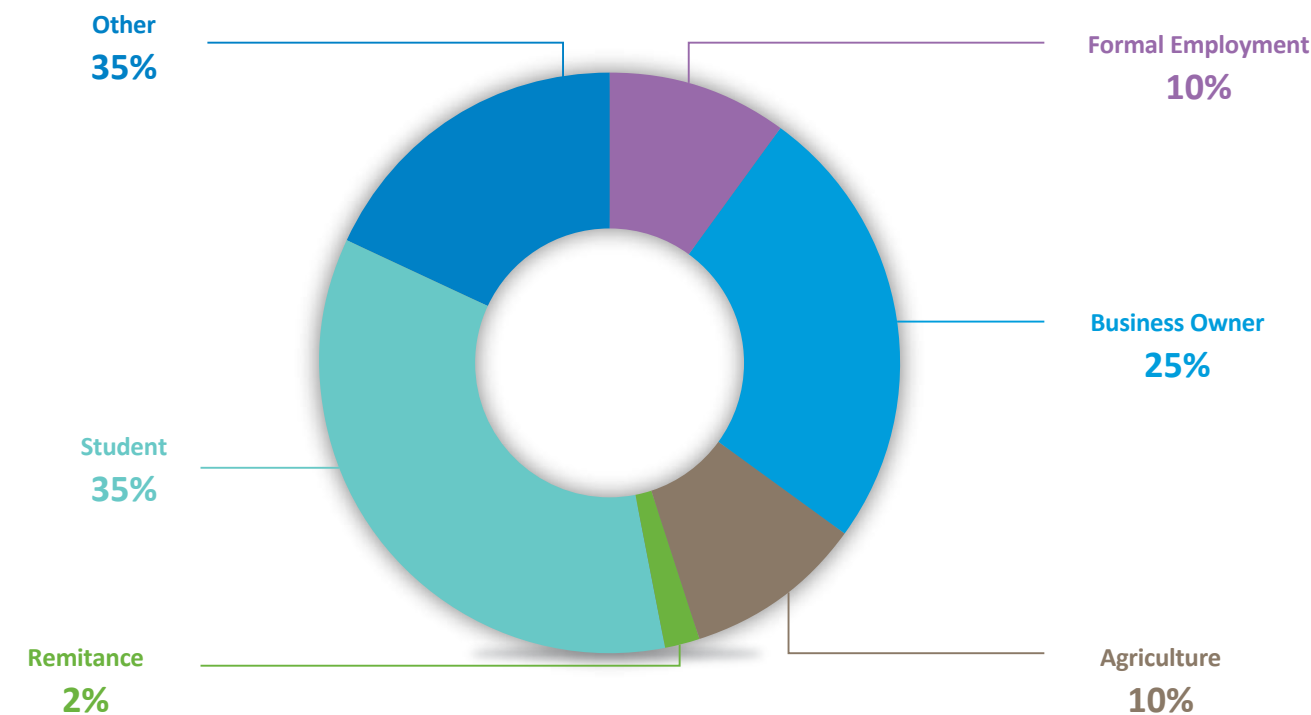
The data also provide valuable insights into the broader employment landscape during the civil unrest. Among respondents, 25 per cent were business owners, underscoring the significant role that entrepreneurship plays in sustaining livelihoods during times of instability. Ten per cent were engaged in formal employment, representing a more stable source of income compared to the informal sectors. Another 10 per cent were involved in agriculture, a sector that remains critical in many communities, while 2 per cent of individuals relied on remittances. Notably, 35 per cent of respondents identified as students. These young people especially faced economic instability during the unrest due to lost income from private tuitions (a practice in Bangladesh where university students become private tutors of school and college students in exchange of a monthly honorarium). The remaining 18 per cent of respondents fell into various other employment categories, further emphasizing the diversity of work that individuals depend on for their income.

These findings underscore the gendered nature of economic vulnerabilities during crises. Women were disproportionately affected in areas such as informal vending and domestic work, while gender-diverse individuals faced specific barriers in market access and trade. The high rates of job losses and business closures highlight the widespread nature of economic disruption, extending beyond individual livelihoods to impact entire communities. This emphasises the need for a nuanced understanding of the specific sectors and demographic groups affected, paving the way for more targeted recovery efforts that address the unique challenges faced by different gender groups.

6.5 Social media harassment: disproportionate impact on women and gender-diverse groups

Experience of social media harassment
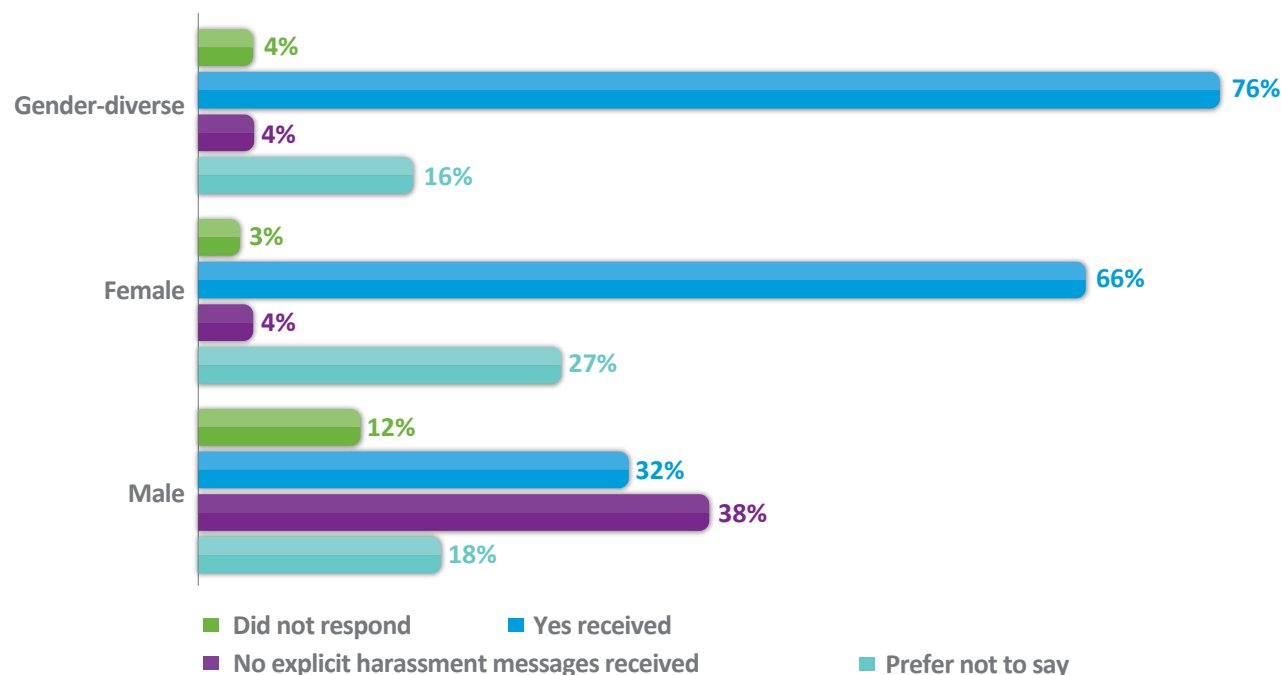
The period of civil unrest in Bangladesh witnessed a significant surge in incidents of social media harassment, disproportionately affecting women and gender-diverse individuals. According to the data, a staggering 76 per cent of gender-diverse individuals reported receiving explicit harassing messages, the highest among all gender groups. Women were also notably impacted, with 66 per cent having similar experiences. In contrast, 32 per cent of men reported receiving explicit harassing messages. These figures underscore the gendered nature of online abuse during and after times of instability, reflecting broader forms of societal marginalisation where women and gender-diverse individuals are targeted, in both physical and digital spaces.

A closer examination of the responses reveals that 4 per cent of women and 4 per cent of gender-diverse individuals reported no incidents of explicit messages of harassment. However, a significant 38 per cent of men reported that they did not receive any explicit messages of harassment, a higher rate than their female and gender-diverse counterparts, suggesting that men were less likely to be targeted.

Furthermore, the data indicates that 27 per cent of women and 16 per cent of gender-diverse individuals preferred not to disclose their experiences of harassment. This reluctance may stem from fear, stigma, or a lack of trust in available support mechanisms, highlighting the pervasive culture of silence surrounding online harassment, especially among marginalised gender groups. Conversely, a smaller proportion of men, at 18 per cent, chose not to disclose their experiences of harassment. In addition, intimate partner violence was found to be pervasive, with 64 per cent of survivors not reporting their experiences in the Violence Against Women (VAW) Survey 2024 by

the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. It is seen by many as a "normal" family matter, which perpetuates the culture of silence around gender-based violence. Data on prevalence, though considered one of the few available tools to estimate the scope of violence against women, fails to capture the systemic barriers that deny survivors access to justice. In the study the survey enumerators also commented on the shocking degree of violence older women had faced, and expressed surprise that many had never before been known to disclose their abuse (BBS, 2025).

FIGURE 13

Age distribution of respondents who said social media harassment increased
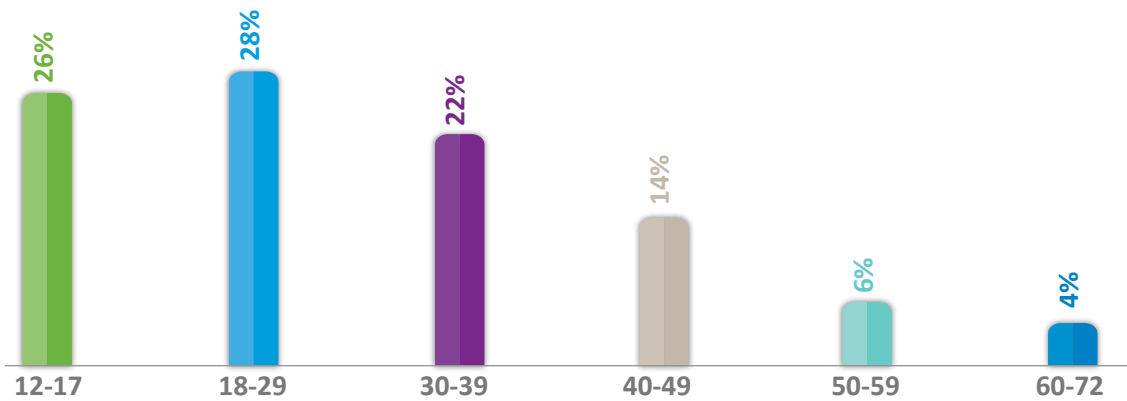
Age-wise, younger respondents were more susceptible to social media harassment. Specifically, 26 per cent of individuals aged 12-17 reported increased online harassment and 28 per cent of those aged 18-29. In contrast, older age groups experienced significantly lower levels of harassment, with only 4 per cent of respondents aged 60-72 reporting increased harassment. This trend highlights that younger individual, particularly those active on social media platforms, are more likely to encounter online abuse.

These findings call for urgent action to mitigate online harassment, especially for marginalised and vulnerable groups. Implementing robust support systems, effective reporting mechanisms, and targeted awareness-raising initiatives are essential steps in addressing the pervasive issue of social media harassment. Ensuring that these measures are inclusive and responsive to the unique challenges faced by women and gender-diverse individuals will help create safer online environments and promote digital equity during and beyond periods of unrest.

6.6 Marginalised groups and women bear disproportionate mental health burdens amidst the civil unrest

The civil unrest caused significant mental health challenges across all genders, with gender-diverse individuals and women being disproportionately affected. Fear of self-expression was a prominent issue, particularly for gender-diverse individuals, with 37 per cent reporting concerns about expressing their identities during the civil unrest. This rate was higher than for women (17 per cent) and men (2 per cent), highlighting the constraints faced by marginalised groups. Feelings of depression was another major concern, with gender-diverse individuals experiencing the highest levels (38 per cent), followed by women (30 per cent) and men (17 per cent). These findings emphasise the disproportionate emotional toll on gender-diverse individuals and women, reflecting the compounded effects of societal pressures and marginalisation.

FIGURE 14

Impact on mental health by gender groups
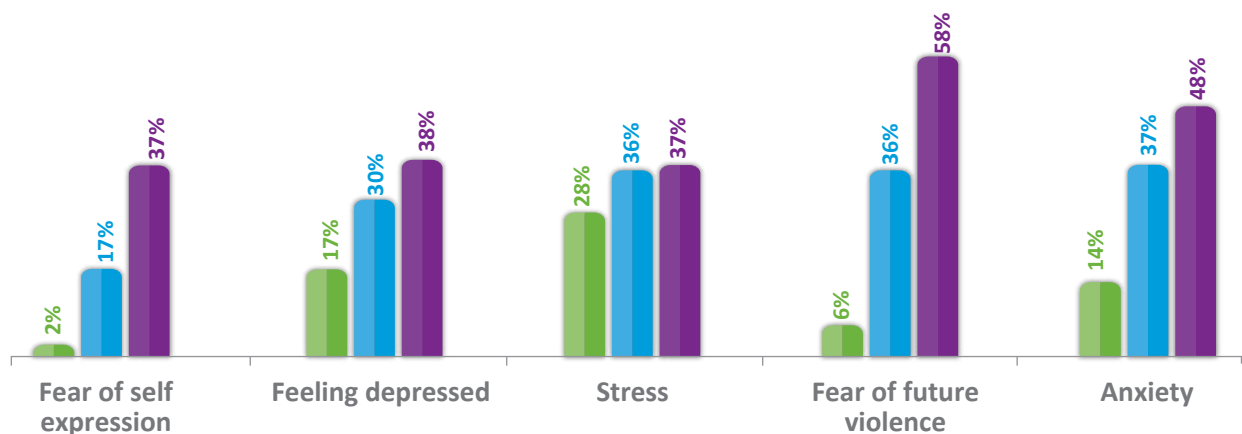
Stress affected a large portion of the population, with women and gender-diverse individuals experiencing nearly identical high levels (36% and 37%), while men reported slightly lower stress levels at 28%.

The universality of stress across genders highlights the pervasive psychological impact of the situation. However, 58 per cent of gender-diverse individuals reported feeling fear of future violence, compared to 36 per cent of women and just 6 per cent of men. This data reflects the heightened safety concerns faced by marginalised groups, particularly in a climate of instability and targeted discrimination.

Anxiety levels followed a similar pattern, with gender-diverse individuals (48%) and women (37%) reporting higher levels compared to men (14%).

A FGD participant from the gender-diverse community shared their struggle with the ongoing mental toll of discrimination:

> *I cannot even remember the last time I had a proper night's sleep. When I see hateful comments on social media, it feels as though I am being stripped of my humanity. What will happen to us? What if a mob targeting the gender diverse community finds me? Who would protect me on the street?*

FIGURE 15

Correlation between mental health issues and gender groups (higher equals greater correlation)

	Male	Female Gender	Gender-diverse
Fear of self expression	0.02	0.17	0.37
Feeling depressed	0.17	0.3	0.38
Stress	0.28	0.36	0.37
Fear of future violence	0.06	0.36	0.58
Anxiety	0.14	0.37	0.48
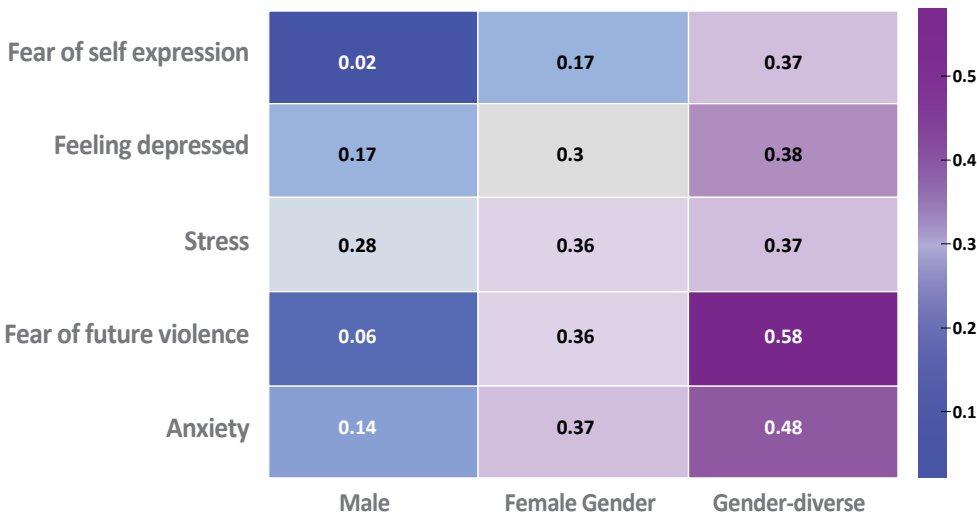
The correlation matrix provides further clarity, with fear of future violence showing the strongest correlation with the gender-diverse population (0.58). This statistic underscores the acute vulnerability of this group to perceived and actual threats. Feelings of depression and anxiety were moderately correlated with gender-diverse and female identities, indicating shared emotional burdens across these groups. The experience of stress showed moderate correlations across all genders, reflecting its broad impact during crises.

The intersecting vulnerabilities faced by gender-diverse individuals are visible across nearly all mental health indicators. Their experiences of fear, feelings of depression, and anxiety reflect the compounded challenges of identity-based discrimination and marginalisation. Women also faced significant mental health challenges, with elevated levels of fear, stress, and anxiety compared to men. These gender-specific impacts call for tailored mental health interventions that address the unique needs of these groups.

Stress emerged as a universal experience, affecting individuals across all gender identities. This finding underscores the necessity of broad-based mental health support programmes to mitigate the psychological toll

of the unrest. Fear of future violence was particularly pronounced among gender-diverse individuals and women, highlighting the urgent need for targeted safety measures and psychosocial interventions to address these concerns.

6.7 Threats against marginalised ethnic and religious minorities

FIGURE 16

Threats received by ethnic and religious minority.

The data reveal an increase in threats against ethnic and religious minorities during the period of civil unrest in Bangladesh. Among the respondents, 33 per cent of individuals belonging to religious groups other than Islam reported experiencing threats, as well as 18 per cent of those belonging to ethnic groups other than Bengali. A similar reporting is also indicated in the

findings of the survey under the title "কেমন করছে অন্তর্বর্তী সরকার"[3] (roughly translating into "How is the interim government faring") that was conducted by Voice of America Bangla in association with ORGQuest, where 33.9 per cent of the non-muslims indicated that they have security concerns. The same survey also suggests that the situation became worse before it got better.

This alarming trend is further upheld by qualitative accounts from those directly affected. In a KII with an official from an INGO working with marginalised groups such as female sex workers, the resurgence of religiously motivated harassment was highlighted:

> *Back in 2008, we worked with religious leaders to reduce the stigma around marginalised female sex workers. But now, from listening to their current experiences, it seems they are continuously harassed and threatened by religious groups. It feels like we're back to square one and must start from scratch.*

Similarly, a young university leader shared their personal experience of being targeted within an academic setting:

> *Today in our university, there was a surge of hujurs [religious figures]. I, along with some of my friends, felt stared at. They were questioning why so many women were in the university. Even a friend of mine who wears a hijab said she was probably scanned by 200 eyes.*

These accounts emphasise the intersection of conservative religious beliefs with gender and identity-based harassment, revealing a multifaceted pattern of discrimination that affects multiple aspects of individuals' lives.

The findings highlight how social instability undermines social cohesion, exacerbating tensions and increasing the vulnerability of marginalised communities. Ethnic and religious minorities, along with women and gender-diverse individuals, are disproportionately affected during periods of unrest, reflecting broader systemic inequities. While conservative religious ideologies contribute to the targeting of religious minorities, the interplay between instability, exclusion, and deep-seated social divisions must also be considered. These dynamics create a volatile environment where those who diverge from dominant cultural, religious, or social norms are marginalised. A comparative analysis of these trends before and after the unrest is presented in Figure 4, illustrating the incidence of violence faced by men, women and marginalised groups.

Religious minorities reported the highest rates of threats, reflecting how social disintegration amplifies pre-existing vulnerabilities. Although ethnic minorities reported fewer incidents, they remain at risk of exclusion and systemic inequities, illustrating the complex and intersecting nature of discrimination. Addressing these challenges requires intersectional approaches that consider how overlapping systems of oppression—based on religion, ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic status—interact and reinforce one another.

A respondent from a FGD, a young professional from an ethnic minority group, articulated the lingering uncertainties and fears:

> *After the recent conflict in the CHT [Chittagong Hill Tracts] region, we went and talked to the DC [Deputy Commissioner]. He promptly arrested the perpetrator, but what will happen now? How will we understand that actions are being taken against this person?*

This sentiment highlights the pervasive insecurity and the lack of trust in institutional responses among marginalised communities, further complicating their ability to seek protection and justice.

Moreover, qualitative accounts illustrate the intensifying scrutiny faced by women and marginalised groups in public spaces, further compounding their sense of insecurity. The persistent targeting and harassment not only threaten their physical safety

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[3]Methodology of the Survey: Voice of America. (2024a, November 23). ভিওএ বাংলা জরিপ কী পদ্ধতিতে জরিপ করা হয়েছে. VOA বাংলা https://www.voabangla.com/a/7873543.html
Report on Minority: Voice of America. (2024b, November 29). ভিওএ জরিপ সংখ্যালঘু সম্প্রদায় "আগের তুলনায় বেশি নিরাপত্তা পাচ্ছে" VOA বাংলা https://www.voabangla.com/a/7876311.html

but also undermine their ability to participate fully in public and economic life.

The mainstream religious beliefs also undermine prior progress in addressing societal stigmas and taboos. The experiences of marginalised groups such as female sex workers illustrate how societal regression can erase years of advocacy and progress. This regression demands renewed and intensified efforts to combat extreme ideologies and support marginalised communities. It is imperative to re-establish and strengthen initiatives aimed at reducing stigma, promoting inclusivity, and ensuring that progress towards equality and social justice is not only maintained but also advanced in the face of renewed challenges.

The OHCHR (2025) FFM reports the longstanding history of attacks on places of worship, particularly temples and shrines, in Bangladesh. After the 5th of August, when the previous government collapsed, media and local sources reported targeted assaults on places of worship associated with Hindu, Ahmadiyya, Buddhist, and Christian communities across multiple regions. According to submissions received by OHCHR, three temples in Burashardubi, Hatibandha, (historically, these communities have faced systemic discrimination and periodic violence in Bangladesh, indicating that these attacks are part of a broader pattern of socio-political and religious tensions rather than isolated incidents.)

and Lalmonirhat were set ablaze, with approximately 20 houses looted, reflecting significant community unrest. In Meherpur, an arson attack targeted a temple of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). However, certain incidents underscore the complexities surrounding these attacks; for instance, the Kali temple in Nandipara, which was damaged on August 7, was later found to have been attacked due to a local land dispute rather than religious intolerance (OHCHR, 2025, p.57).

6.8 Trends in female participation and leadership

The data illustrates a concerning decline in women's active participation and leadership engagement following the student led anti discrimination movement. Among female respondents, 14 per cent reported completely disengaging from political roles post-unrest, highlighting the impact of systemic challenges that discourage sustained involvement. Additionally, 5 per cent indicated plans to step away from student politics in the near future and 38 per cent expressed a gradual decrease in their involvement, reflecting a broader withdrawal of women from leadership and decision-making spaces in politics over time.

FIGURE 17

Female participation and leadership

- Completely stopped participation: 14%
- I am planning to step away: 5%
- I am getting less involved: 38%
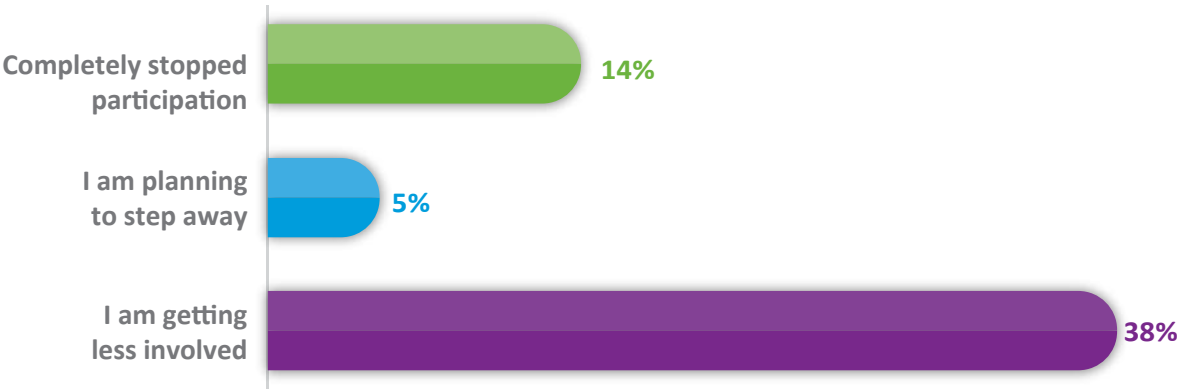
These trends are mirrored in personal accounts. A young female leader who actively participated in the movement shared how societal and familial pressures influenced her decision to reduce her involvement:

> ❝
> *I was very active in the protest, and my family supported me. But after returning home, they told me that the movement was gaining a political tag, and being associated with it might harm my future. Many of my female friends who participated feel the same way and are withdrawing to avoid any such label.* ❞

Another young female leader highlighted the structural barriers women face in political spheres:

> ❝
> *In our patriarchal society, building social capital is essential to becoming a leader, but women like me can't simply go out whenever we want to establish strong networks. Even political parties are patriarchal, and female leaders often rely on male advisors. This is why women struggle to gain strong representation in leadership.* ❞

Barriers such as safety concerns, societal expectations, and institutional biases discourage women from sustaining their leadership roles. Cultural and familial pressures, as evidenced by personal narratives, further exacerbate these challenges, pushing women away from public spaces after their active roles during the unrest.

The structural nature of these challenges points to the need for systemic reforms that prioritise long-term strategies to institutionalise women's leadership. Without such measures, the momentum gained during the movement may be lost, leaving women further underrepresented in decision-making processes. The OHCHR (2025) FFM report also refers to the persistent gendered barriers that hinder women's participation in political and public life. While women's formal engagement in decision-making spaces has seen gradual improvements, deep-rooted gender stereotyping and discrimination continue to shape their experiences in public and political spheres.

These barriers became particularly evident during the suppression of the protests, where female students and women activists were disproportionately subjected to sexual and gender-based violence, including sexual harassment by the then student wing of the party in government. The report underscores that some perpetrators may have been emboldened by the fact that such violence remains socially entrenched and has not yet been fully criminalised under national law.

6.9 Challenges of the street-based female sex workers

The unrest had a multifaceted impact on SBFSWs, leaving them highly vulnerable to violence, threats, and displacement. An overwhelming 95 per cent of respondents from this group reported a reduced sense of security, illustrating the extreme vulnerability they faced during and after the unrest. The threat to their safety and livelihood was a widespread issue, with 90 per cent of respondents experiencing direct threats. Displacement was also a significant challenge, affecting 62 per cent of respondents. Alarmingly, 88 per cent reported being victims of violence.

FIGURE 18

Challenges faced by female street-based sex workers

These statistics are backed by qualitative accounts. A KII with an official from a leading INGO revealed the extent of the unrest:

> *Our organisation has been working with female sex workers since 2008, but I have never before witnessed so many incidents of violence occurring within such a short period. Many of these women have lost hope entirely, resigning themselves to silence rather than reporting to law enforcement—if the authorities are even present or willing to listen.*

The challenges SBFSWs face are deeply intersectional, arising from their gender, socio-economic status, and the stigmatized nature of their profession. Displacement disrupts access to essential services (including HIV services), social networks, and livelihood opportunities, pushing them further into cycles of poverty and insecurity.

According to the data gathered by the UNAIDS from the Sex Workers Network during the study, access to WASH services severely compromised their ability to maintain basic hygiene. With 67 per cent reporting reduced access to family planning, antenatal care, and treatment for sexually transmitted infections and 43 per cent reporting reduced access to general health services; it is evident how stigma, displacement, and systemic neglect left these women without basic healthcare during a time of acute need.

The same data also revealed that the crisis resulted in a marked increase in violence against SBSFWs, further exacerbating their already precarious situation. The reported incidence of violence rose significantly after the crisis, with 62 per cent of respondents experiencing such incidents, compared to 32 per cent during and 28 per cent before the unrest. The psychosocial impact of these experiences cannot be understated. This neglect reflects broader societal and systemic failures to address the mental health support needs of marginalised groups. A striking 76 per cent of respondents reported a fear of future violence, illustrating the lasting psychological toll of their experiences. Stress and feelings of depression were also prevalent, affecting 58 per cent and 46 per cent of respondents, respectively, while anxiety impacted 44 per cent. Alarmingly, 32 per cent of respondents reported suicidal thoughts, and 35 per cent experienced fear of self-expression, reflecting the deep emotional scars caused by ongoing threats, violence, and stigma.

FIGURE 19

Challenges faced by FSWs compared with other groups (data courtesy: UNAIDS)

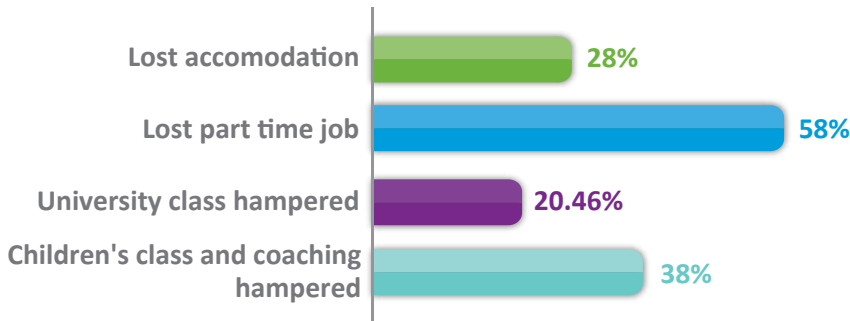- Reduced sense of security
- Threat
- Victim of violence
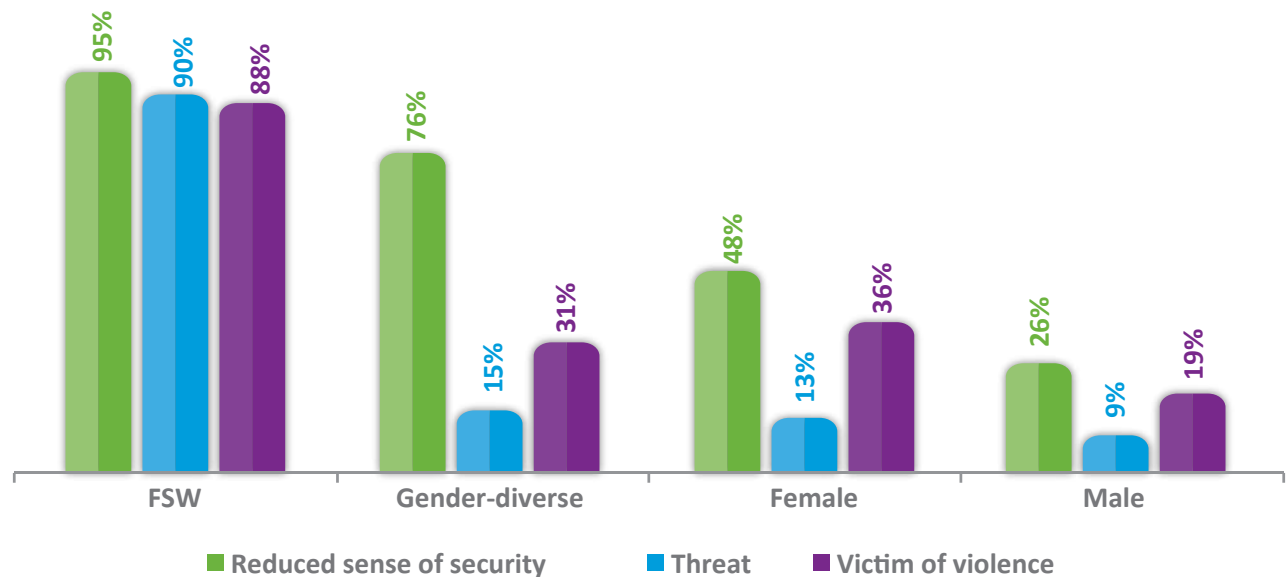
If challenges of SBFSWs are considered in comparison with other respondent groups, Figure 19 clearly outlines that the SBFSW are more vulnerable to increased threats and violence than any other group surveyed in this study, thus making them more prone to a reduced sense of insecurity.

6.10 Children[4], youth and young adults

FIGURE 20

Most common problems as stated by youth and young adults

Lost accomodation	28%
Lost part time job	58%
University class hampered	20.46%
Children's class and coaching hampered	38%

The recent civil unrest in Bangladesh has profoundly affected youth and young adults, manifesting in significant disruptions across educational, economic, and mental health domains. A notable 38 per cent of respondents surveyed reported that children's classes and coaching sessions were impeded, indicating widespread interruptions in both formal education and extracurricular activities. These disruptions likely resulted from school closures, the sudden shift to online learning platforms, and limitations imposed by the ongoing unrest, all of which have hindered the continuity of essential educational and developmental opportunities for children.

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[4]Only data from children under the age of 17, for whom parental assent was obtained by the enumerators in the field, are included in this analysis. Data from participants without documented parental assent have been excluded to ensure ethical compliance and the protection of minors.

Students from Higher education institutions faced similar challenges, approximately 20 per cent of respondents indicated that their university classes were adversely affected. This suggests that university students encountered substantial obstacles, potentially due to the abrupt transition to online learning environments, reduced access to campus resources, and other institutional changes necessitated by the unrest. For instance, a 23-year-old male university student shared his distress in an in-depth interview, stating:

> *I have been supporting my family by doing several tuitions and teaching at coaching classes. During the protest, I was injured and have been unable to attend the coaching classes and tuitions since then. How am I supposed to live now? What will happen to my family?*

This testimony underscores the precarious balance many young adults maintain between their educational pursuits and economic responsibilities, highlighting the severe personal and familial impacts of the unrest.

Economic instability has had a pronounced effect on this demographic, with a striking 58 per cent of individuals reporting the loss of part-time employment. This high percentage underscores the severe economic challenges faced by young people, exacerbated by job market disruptions remaining from the COVID-19 pandemic. The loss of part-time jobs not only diminishes immediate income but also threatens the financial stability of young adults who rely on these positions to support themselves and their families. Additionally, 28 per cent of individuals experienced loss of accommodation, indicating widespread housing instability and potential eviction issues during the civil unrest. A 27-year-old male university student articulated his housing insecurity in an in-depth interview:
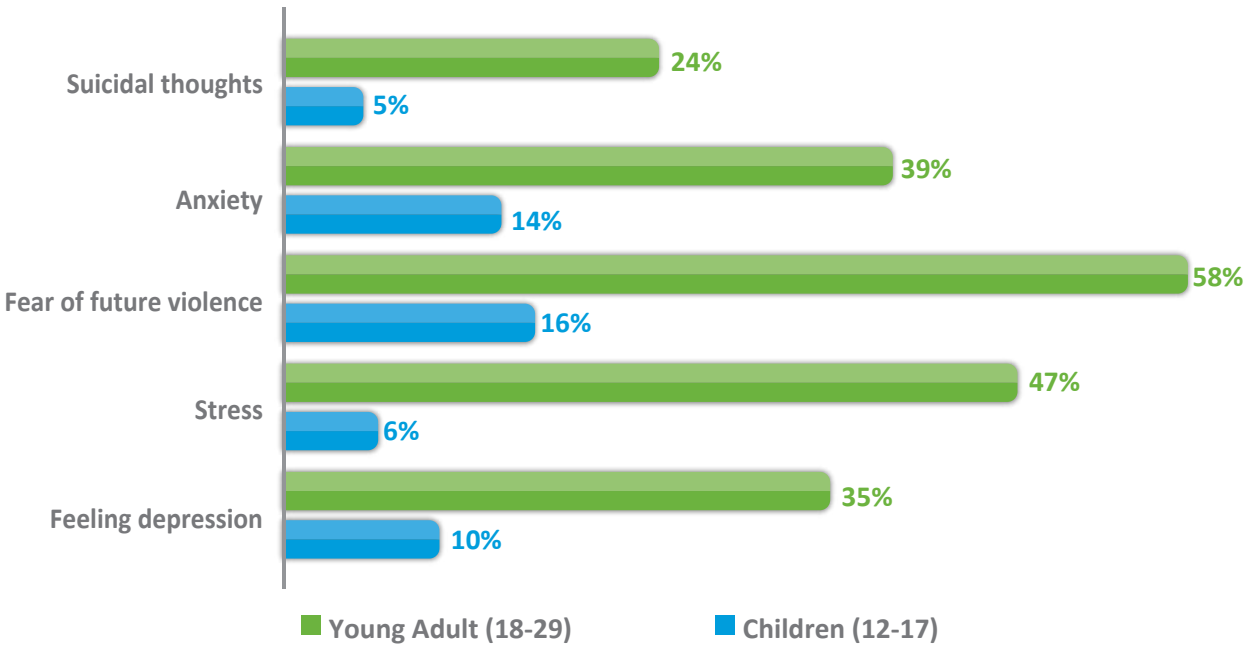
> *I do not have any relatives in Dhaka, and since my first day I have stayed at the University Hall. Now that I am preparing for government services exams, I was staying at the University Hall, but I will have to leave since I have graduated. I do not know where I will go and find a place that will be helpful for me to continue my studies. As the private hostels that are cheap are not that good, and the ones that are expensive are beyond my reach. I am unsure about my future with no employment and good accommodation.*

His narrative highlights the intersection of educational aspirations and housing insecurity, painting a vivid picture of the uncertainties facing young adults.

In addition to that, youth unemployment in Bangladesh remains a pressing issue, particularly due to a mismatch between aspirations and labour market realities. While the demographic dividend presents an opportunity for economic growth, it also brings significant challenges in job creation for the expanding youth population. According to Labour Force Survey (LFS) data, the youth unemployment rate (15-29 years) stands at 8 per cent, notably higher than the national unemployment rate of 3 per cent. This rate has fluctuated between 5 and 11 per cent over the past few decades, with a notable increase from 5 per cent in 2010 (Bhattacharya et al., 2024). The prolonged job search period has led to growing frustration among graduates, as evidenced by graduate tracer studies, which indicate that the average duration of job searches has increased. This trend is exacerbated by the fact that labour market expansion has not kept pace with the rising aspirations of young people. Many educated youths find themselves either underemployed or working in jobs that do not match their qualifications, leading to disillusionment and economic insecurity. The situation has been further aggravated by recent civil unrest, which has significantly disrupted education, employment, and housing stability.

FIGURE 21
Mental health of young adults and children

Chart legend: ■ Young Adult (18-29) ■ Children (12-17)

Category	Young Adult (18-29)	Children (12-17)
Suicidal thoughts	24%	5%
Anxiety	39%	14%
Fear of future violence	58%	16%
Stress	47%	6%
Feeling depression	35%	10%

Mental health issues are markedly prevalent among youth and young adults, with distinct differences between these age groups. Among children, 10 per cent reported feeling depressed, whereas a concerning 35 per cent of young adults face the same issue, indicating a significantly higher prevalence of feelings of depression within the young adult population. This disparity may be driven by increased responsibilities and pressures associated with adulthood, including academic expectations, employment challenges, and social dynamics. Similarly, only 6 per cent of children reported experiencing stress, compared to an alarming 47 per cent of young adults. This sharp escalation in stress is largely attributed to academic demands, social pressures, and financial burdens that intensify with age.

The recent civil unrest and government crackdown on protests have exacerbated mental health challenges among students. Md. Faruk (2024) highlighted in The Lancet that law enforcement personnel have been widely alleged to have used unlawful force, arbitrarily arresting protesting students from their homes. Fear of arrest, trauma from witnessing violence, and uncertainty about personal safety have contributed to increased anxiety, feelings of depression, and post-traumatic stress symptoms among affected individuals.

Moreover, the treatment gap for children exceeds 90 per cent in Bangladesh (Faruk, 2024), meaning that the vast majority of children struggling with mental health issues receive no professional support. This lack of access to mental health care has serious consequences, particularly for children affected by the curfew and political unrest.

Fear of future violence presents another critical area of concern. While 16 per cent of children express fear of future violence, a substantial 58 per cent of young adults share this worry. The elevated fear among young adults may be linked to broader issues such as political instability or personal safety concerns, which disproportionately affect older adolescents and young adults who are more engaged with the world around them. Anxiety follows a similar pattern, with 14 per cent of children and 39 per cent of young adults reporting significant experiences. This increase underscores the heightened mental health challenges faced by young adults as they navigate the complexities of the changing context around them, combined with the pressures of adulthood, including career decisions and life planning.

Moreover, suicidal thoughts are alarmingly more prevalent among young adults, with 24 per cent

reporting such thoughts compared to 5 per cent of children. This significant difference highlights a more substantial mental health burden on young adults, emphasizing the urgent need for targeted mental health support and interventions within this demographic. The compounded effects of economic instability, educational disruptions, and heightened mental health issues create a challenging environment for youth and young adults, necessitating comprehensive support systems to foster resilience and ensure their well-being.

The OHCHR (2025) FFM report documents serious human rights violations against children during the unrest and civil unrest, including arbitrary detention, torture, and extrajudicial killings. Children were detained alongside adults, subjected to inhumane conditions, and, in some cases, tortured or otherwise ill-treated while in custody. In Rangpur, a 16-year-old boy was arbitrarily detained for 13 days, highlighting systemic abuses within the law enforcement system. This case is part of a broader pattern of mass arrests, with official figures from Bangladesh Police indicating that 10,525 men, 25 women, and 63 children were detained between 1 July and 4 August 2024 (OHCHR, 2025).

Beyond unlawful detentions, children were also among the casualties of state violence. Some were killed while attending protests with their parents, while others were fatally shot as bystanders. One of the most tragic cases occurred in Narayanganj, where a six-year-old girl was shot in the head and killed while standing on the roof of her home, watching the protest unfold below (OHCHR, 2025). This incident underscores the indiscriminate use of force by security forces, resulting in the loss of innocent lives.

These documented violations highlight grave concerns regarding the treatment of children during political crises. The use of arbitrary detention, excessive force, and extrajudicial violence against minors not only constitutes severe human rights violations but also violates Bangladesh's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The targeting and victimisation of children in this context emphasise the urgent need for accountability, legal reforms, and stronger protective mechanisms to prevent such abuses from recurring in the future.

The findings of this section reveal that youth and young adults in Bangladesh are navigating a multifaceted landscape of educational disruptions, economic hardships, and escalating mental health challenges. Addressing these interconnected issues is crucial to fostering resilience and ensuring the well-being of young populations during and beyond periods of unrest and civil unrest.

6.11 Challenges and exclusions faced by persons with disabilities

Persons with disabilities in Bangladesh face persistent barriers due to systemic exclusion, exacerbated by crises that disrupt access to essential services. Women and gender-diverse individuals with disabilities are particularly marginalised, facing overlapping vulnerabilities due to intersecting forms of discrimination. Despite the enactment of progressive legislation, such as the Persons with Disabilities Rights and Protection Act (2013), which guarantees rights to political participation and equitable treatment, the lived experiences of persons with disabilities often remain far removed from these legal ideals.

A female key informant from an OPD in Dhaka highlighted this gap:

> *Despite the formation of the Persons with Disabilities Rights and Protection Act 11 years ago, which explicitly recognises the political rights of persons with disabilities in its 16th clause, the disabled community in Bangladesh continues to face numerous challenges. As the recent crisis has exacerbated the situation, it is imperative to address their needs and ensure the effective implementation of the law, particularly regarding their political rights.*

Systemic barriers extend to access to healthcare, education, and social support systems. Women with disabilities face compounded barriers, often viewed as burdens within their families and communities. According to Sarker (2023), cultural stigmas around disability, compounded by patriarchal norms, perpetuate isolation and economic dependency

among women with disabilities. For instance, women with disabilities are often deprived of property rights and excluded from educational and employment opportunities, limiting their autonomy and ability to participate in society meaningfully.

The challenges become even more acute during crises, where disruptions in service delivery disproportionately impact women caregivers of children with disabilities. As one participant, a young mother and caregiver from Barishal, explained:

> *During the movement, I could not even take my child to the doctor. I missed an opportunity to apply for financial support for my child. I know what I am going through; only I know this pain.*

This unrest highlighted gaps in inclusive service delivery and accessible infrastructure, revealing the limited capacity of government mechanisms to meet the needs of marginalised groups, despite existing policies on disability inclusion. Women and gender-diverse individuals with disabilities are also disproportionately impacted by GBV and systemic neglect. The stigma around disability often silences survivors, further isolating them from support systems. According to the *UNPRPD Situational Analysis -* Bangladesh, social norms and misconceptions about disability exacerbate these barriers, highlighting an urgent need for capacity building among service providers to address the complex needs of women and girls with disabilities.

In light of these findings, a multi-pronged approach is essential to address the intersectional vulnerabilities faced by persons with disabilities in Bangladesh. This includes the effective enforcement of disability rights laws, capacity building among service providers, and inclusive policy design that recognises and prioritises the needs of marginalised groups. The voices of women with disabilities must guide these efforts to create a more inclusive and equitable society.

FIGURE 22

Common challanges faced by PWDs

Challenge	Percentage
Anxiety	71%
Feeling depressed	67%
Economic impact	48%
Health (general)	52%
percieved sense of security	75%

Data obtained from the quantitative part of this GA identified several key challenges that PWDs (n=43) face, with significant impacts on mental health, economic stability, and security. As shown in Figure 22, the perceived sense of security was the most commonly reported challenge, affecting 75 per cent of respondents. This was followed by anxiety (71 per cent) and feeling depressed (67 per cent), reflecting the heightened psychosocial distress among persons with disabilities. Additionally, economic hardship (48 per cent) and general health concerns (52 per cent) were also prominent issues, underscoring the intersection of disability, economic vulnerability, and inadequate healthcare access.

7. Recommendations

The findings from the RGA highlight the multifaceted impact of civil unrest on women, gender-diverse individuals, and other vulnerable groups. These challenges span issues of safety, economic stability, mental health, access to essential services, education, and leadership participation. The recommendations are categorised into short-term, mid-term, and long-term actions to provide a structured approach for addressing immediate needs, medium-term goals, and sustainable solutions. An elaborate description is given in the following section after the table.

TABLE:

Recommendations Categorised by Short-Term, Mid-Term, and Long-Term Actions

Area	Short-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term
Strengthening Normative Frameworks	• Develop a roadmap to strengthen gender equality and women's empowerment related legal and policy frameworks in line with international human rights standards.	• Undertake a consultative process to revise and strengthen the Anti-Discrimination Bill to reflect the perspectives of diverse groups.	• Ensure full ratification of CEDAW.
Strengthening Justice and Accountability Structures	• Ensure independent and impartial investigation of violation, including sexual and gender-based violence, with emphasis on supporting accountability and preventing the recurrence of violence. • Ensure perpetrators, including of SGBV, are held accountable according to law and that laws are consistent to international standards, and that victims/survivors have access to immediate protection, rehabilitation and means of redress, including compensation.	• Take proactive measures to promote diversity, communal harmony, and social cohesion.	• In line with CEDAW committee concluding observations 2016, adopt legislation criminalising all forms of violence against women and girls, including marital rape, irrespective of the age of the victim/survivor, domestic violence, and all forms of sexual abuse.
Enhancing Safety and Security	• Amend the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2010 to include and criminalise domestic	• Strengthen enforcement of legal safeguards under the National Human Rights Commission Act, 2009 to ensure protection	• Strengthen legal and policy frameworks to protect and promote the human rights of

Area	Short-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term
	violence, extending the definition of domestic violence so that widows, children, or people who are cohabiting or living together get legal protection and remedies, and ensuring legal safeguards and remedies for children, including child-marriage survivors. • Strengthen the implementation of the Prevention of Oppression Against Women and Children Act, 2000, ensuring strict enforcement and accountability mechanisms. • Expand the coverage of One-Stop Crisis Centres (OCCs) with adequate funding across all districts, ensuring adequate shelter, psychological support, and legal aid for survivors of GBV. • Formulate a comprehensive sexual harassment law to include broader coverage of workplace harassment and harassment in the public space, with clear reporting mechanisms and legal recourse.	for human rights defenders, particularly women's rights activists. • Strengthen capacities of service providers across sectors to provide gender-responsive and survivor centres' services from an intersectional perspective.	individuals engaged in sex work, including for safer livelihoods.
	• Institutionalise mandatory human rights and gender equality training for law enforcement officials, including modules on GBV response, trauma-	• Conduct national awareness campaigns integrating digital media, community dialogues, and school curricula to address GBV-related stigma.	• Implement the CEDAW committee's recommendations to eliminate gender-based stereotypes and harmful practices.

Area	Short-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term
	informed policing, and engagement with marginalised communities. • Take appropriate measures including affirmative actions to increase the representation of women in the law enforcement and justice sector to provide gender-responsive support for victims/ survivors. • Amend the National Human Rights Commission Act of 2009 to bring the Commission into full compliance with the Paris Principles and strengthen its independence and public confidence. • Establish a constitutionally mandated national women's rights commission for the advancement of women with the necessary human, technical, and financial resources to effectively promote women's rights and gender equality.		This should include gender-transformative awareness building initiatives on women's rights and gender equality among young people and adults, and work with the education system, both formal and informal, as well as with the media, to enhance positive and non-stereotypical images of women.
Combating Social Media Harassment	• Enforce the Cyber Protection Ordinance 2024, ensuring compliance with international human rights standards, and introduce a dedicated Social Media Harassment Prevention Policy with clear accountability for tech platforms.	• Expand digital literacy initiatives under the ICT Master Plan, integrating modules on online safety, privacy protection, and cyberbullying for women, youth, and gender-diverse groups.	

Area	Short-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term
		Revise the Cyber Protection Ordinance 2024 to ensure that the definition of "cyberbullying" is not arbitrarily applied to criminalise legitimate criticism. The ordinance should adopt a gender lens to clearly define online harassment, safeguarding against misuse while ensuring protection from gender-based cyber violence, and should be properly implemented with accountability mechanisms. • Refine the existing Cyber Protection Ordinance 2024, ensuring alignment with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and protecting individuals from online gender-based violence while safeguarding freedom of expression.	
	• Mandate social media companies to establish transparent and efficient reporting mechanisms locally with legally enforceable timelines for action under the Right to Information Act, 2009.	• Provide legal and counselling support for victims of online harassment. • Strengthen partnerships between civil society organisations, women's rights groups, and tech firms to advocate for policy changes and enhance digital safety initiatives.	• Implement the Data Protection Act, 2023, ensuring user data privacy, particularly for women and marginalised communities, and regulating social media data collection practices. • Introduce regulatory oversight for social media and digital platforms under the Bangladesh Telecommunication

Area	Short-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term
	• Ensure content related to online misogyny, bullying, and harassment is accurately reported by users and removed by social media platforms; major online platforms should add 'online misogyny' as a dedicated category of prohibited content.	• Organise offline support groups where women who have faced online hate speech could come together to talk about their experiences in a safe space, share helpful resources and provide survivor-centred and trauma-informed support services. These groups can be based on locality, or educational institutions like universities.	Regulatory Commission Act, 2001, ensuring platforms proactively mitigate and respond to gender-based cyber violence. • Pre-bunking or teaching social media users how to recognise common online manipulation techniques in order to build resilience to mis/disinformation.
Promoting Mental Health and Well-Being	• Strengthen implementation of the National Mental Health Act, 2018, expanding trauma-informed and gender-responsive mental health services, particularly for survivors of GBV.	• Develop targeted mental health programs to address specific needs of women, gender-diverse population and marginalised groups.	• Launch nationwide campaigns under the Mental Health Strategy, 2020-30, addressing stigma, promoting help-seeking behaviour, and integrating mental health into primary healthcare.
	• Recruit and deploy clinical psychologists and counsellors at Union Health and Family Welfare Centres (UHFWCs) in underserved areas, ensuring accessibility.	• Establish a 24/7 nationwide mental health helpline under the Ministry of Social Welfare, ensuring crisis intervention, referral services, and professional counselling.	• Integrate mental health care into primary healthcare systems nationwide.
Ensuring Access to Essential Services	• Ensure uninterrupted access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) services under the National Health Policy, 2011, with specific provisions for emergency response.	• Deploy mobile health clinics under the Community-Based Healthcare Program to provide SRHR and general health services in underserved and unrest-affected regions.	• Strengthen healthcare infrastructure for marginalised populations, including indigenous people and individuals engaged in sex work.

Area	Short-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term
	• Implement the National Health Protection Act 2014, ensuring access to legal aid and healthcare for marginalised communities, including refugees and internally displaced persons. • Recruit and deploy three midwives in each of the 3,500 Union Health and Family Welfare Centres to offer normal delivery services and SRHR support.	• Invest in long-term accessible WASH infrastructure, focusing on hygiene during menstruation and pregnancy.	• Develop policies for uninterrupted access to essential services during future crises.
Enhancing Educational Continuity and Support	• Implement blended learning models (online and offline) to ensure continued education. • Provide digital devices and internet access to marginalised students.	• Strengthen implementation of the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2013, integrating disability-inclusive education policies at all levels.	• Institutional reforms to support the leadership of women and gender-diverse individuals without discrimination.
	• Form local and national education monitoring committees under the Ministry of Education, ensuring compliance with gender-responsive and inclusive education standards.	• Introduce gender-sensitive and disability inclusive curricula and flexible learning methods.	• Implement the Safe Schools and Learning Environment Guidelines, ensuring uninterrupted learning and protection for children in conflict-affected or disaster-prone areas.
Addressing Economic Vulnerabilities	• Expand access to low-interest loans under the SME Foundation and the Bangladesh Bank's Refinancing Scheme, prioritising women and gender-diverse entrepreneurs from marginalised communities.	• Integrate gender-responsive business training and mentorship initiatives under the National Women Development Policy, 2011, focusing on capacity-building and market access.	• Establish gender-inclusive hiring policies and strengthen social safety nets for the informal sector.

Area	Short-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term
	• Promote cooperative business models under the Cooperative Societies Act, 2001, enhancing collective economic resilience among marginalised groups.	• Amend the National Industrial Policy to incorporate gender-inclusive employment incentives, encouraging private sector participation in diverse workforce hiring. • Expand access to markets for marginalised business owners.	• Develop comprehensive social security systems, including unemployment benefits and health insurance.
Promoting Gender-Inclusive Leadership and Participation	• Enforce the Representation of the People (Amendment) Act, 2009, ensuring 33% representation of women in political party committees and leadership roles. • Mandate at least 30% female representation in student union bodies under the University Grants Commission guidelines, ensuring women's participation in decision-making. • In line with the OHCHR FFM report, ensure a safe and enabling environment for free and fair elections including by respecting fundamental freedoms. • Strengthen oversight mechanisms to monitor violence against women in politics.	• Establish national leadership development programs under the National Women Development Policy, 2011, prioritizing capacity-building for marginalised women and gender-diverse individuals. • In line with the OHCHR FFM report, effectively implement laws and regulations providing for substantive equality between men and women in political and public life including through temporary special measures. • Develop and implement a national roadmap on CEDAW General Recommendation 40 to ensure equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems.	• Amend the Local Government Act to ensure gender-sensitive governance structures and strengthen the role of women in Union Parishads and other local government bodies.

Area	Short-Term	Mid-Term	Long-Term
	• Launch campaigns to challenge patriarchal norms, stigma and discrimination, and promote inclusive leadership. Create supportive networks and safe and accessible spaces for emerging leaders.	• Create supportive networks and safe spaces for emerging leaders.	• Integrate unpaid care work into GDP calculations and establish subsidised childcare centres under the National Social Security Strategy to support working women.
Ensuring Resource Mobilization	• Targeted investments focused on the key areas identified in this report, prioritising interventions that address the most pressing needs and gaps in response to the identified challenges. • Ensure gender-responsive budgeting under the Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting (GRPB) framework, with targeted investments in GBV services, education, SRHR, and economic empowerment.	• Advocate for increased public and private sector funding under the National Social Security Strategy to sustain long-term investments in essential services for women and marginalised communities. • Establish multi-sectoral public-private partnerships under the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) to mobilise resources for gender-equitable economic and social programs.	• Institutionalise gender audits and social accountability mechanisms under the National Integrity Strategy to track resource allocation and impact on marginalised groups. • Introduce gender bonds and social impact investments under the Sustainable Finance Policy to diversify funding sources for women-led enterprises and community programs.

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9. Annexes

Annex 1: Scope of Analysis

This analysis examined the gendered impacts of the civil unrest in July-August 2024. It studied disruptions to essential services, such as healthcare, sexual and reproductive health, WASH, food, nutrition, and education. It also explored the increased protection concerns, including access to services for gender-based violence survivors, psychosocial counselling, and other critical referrals. The analysis delved into the mental health challenges faced by women, girls, and gender-diverse groups.

Additionally, it investigates the civil unrest's effects on social cohesion, women's leadership, participation, shedding light on the shifting dynamics. Finally, the analysis explores the persisting gender gaps, barriers, instances of hate speech, and the critical need for inclusiveness. This comprehensive approach ensures that the analysis provides nuanced insights into the impacts of the unrest, paving the way for actionable, gender-responsive strategies to support Bangladesh's recovery and resilience-building efforts.

Annex 2: Methodology

A mixed-method approach was used to ensure comprehensive data with both quantitative insights and qualitative in-depth information. This approach ensured a holistic understanding of the impacts of the unrest on different gender groups, allowing the study to provide actionable, intersectional recommendations for addressing the needs of the most vulnerable. The framework for the GA is illustrated in **Figure A-1**, providing an overview of the study's components and structure.

FIGURE A-1
Framework for GA
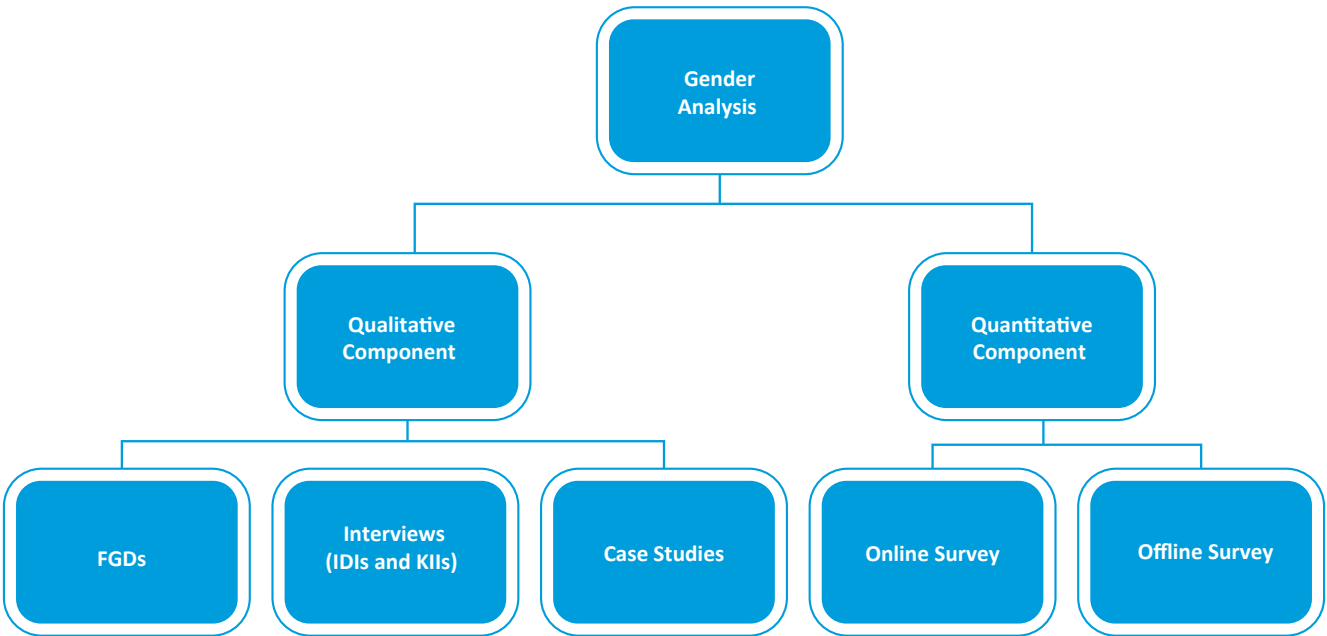
Qualitative component

The survey was initially administered online to reach respondents with internet access. To ensure inclusivity and representation, the survey was later rolled out offline in Barishal, Khulna, and Sylhet division, targeting populations without online access. This dual approach allowed the study to capture a broader range of experiences and perspectives.

Qualitative component

For qualitative data collection, the study utilised FGDs, IDIs, and KIIs to gather rich, contextual insights. A particular focus was placed on engaging marginalised groups, such as female street-based sex workers. To facilitate their participation, a facilitator and co-facilitator were separately trained, and two dedicated FGDs were conducted with this group. These discussions provided a platform to better understand the intersectional challenges faced by this vulnerable population during the unrest.

Implementation process

The step-by-step process for conducting the GA is detailed in **Figure A-2**, illustrating the systematic approach undertaken for data collection and analysis.

FIGURE A-2

Step-by-step process for conducting the gender analysis
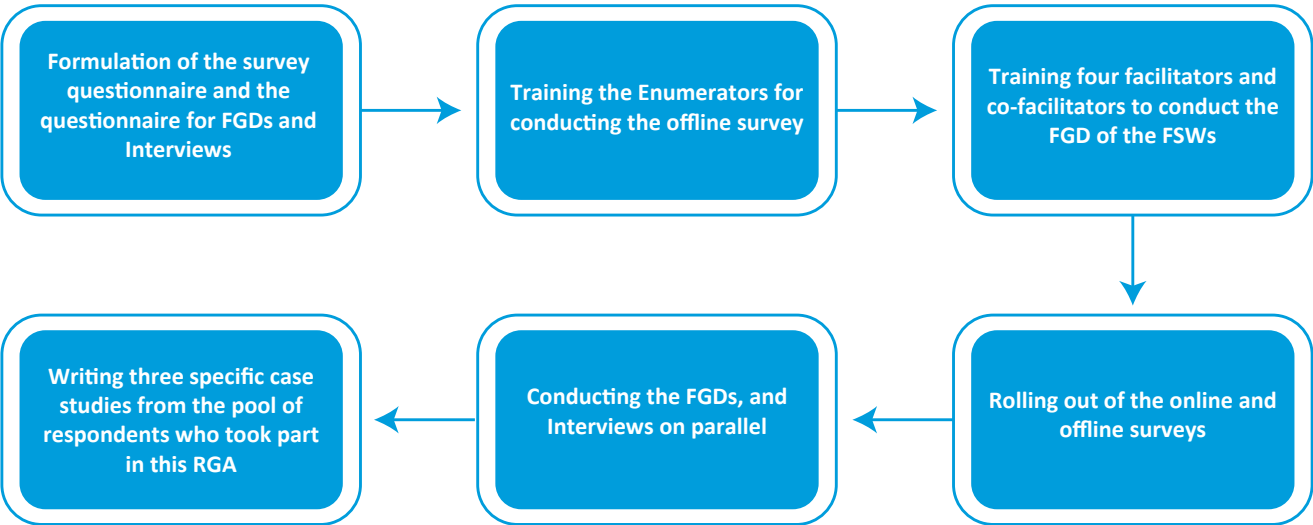
Key steps:

1. **Formulation of Survey Questionnaires**: The survey tool and questionnaires were designed for both FGDs/interviews and quantitative surveys, ensuring alignment with the study's objectives.

2. **Enumerator and Facilitator Training**: 24 Enumerators from Khulna, Sylhet, Dhaka, and Barishal were trained for the offline survey, while four facilitators and co-facilitators from the Mirpur and Syedabad DIC were prepared to conduct FGDs with female sex workers.

3. **Parallel Data Collection**: The survey, FGDs and interviews were conducted simultaneously with the online and offline survey rollouts to optimise efficiency.

4. **Case Study Development**: Five specific case studies were created from the pool of respondents, capturing the lived experiences of individuals who participated in this analysis.

Annex 3: Demographic profile of respondents

The demographic profile of the respondents provides critical insights into the diversity of perspectives captured in this Gender Analysis. The study encompassed a total of 2,938 survey respondents across eight divisions and 24 districts, supplemented by 62 FGD participants and 19 individuals who participated in IDIs and Key Informant Interviews KIIs.

Gender representation

The survey data reveals a near-balanced gender distribution, with women constituting the largest group at 49 per cent, followed by men at 46 per cent. A smaller but sizeable proportion of respondents (4%) identified as gender-diverse, reflecting an inclusive approach to capturing diverse gender identities. A marginal 1 per cent of respondents did not disclose their gender. This composition highlights the importance of incorporating diverse gender perspectives in the analysis, particularly as women represented a majority and played a prominent role in recent student led anti discriminatory movements.

FIGURE A-3

Gender representation of respondents in the study

Ethnic composition

A majority (92%) of respondents identified as Bengali, the dominant ethnic group in Bangladesh. However, 4 per cent of participants belonged to indigenous communities, and another 4 per cent either chose not to disclose their ethnicity or identified differently. While the findings largely reflect the experiences of the ethnic majority, the inclusion of indigenous voices offers valuable insights into the intersectionality of ethnicity and vulnerability. The experiences of indigenous communities, although underrepresented, are crucial in understanding how ethnic minorities navigate overlapping systemic challenges during crises.

Step-by-step process for conducting the gender analysis

Category	Percentage
Did not answer	4%
Indigenous community	4%
Bengali	92%

Religious affiliation

The religious composition of respondents aligns with Bangladesh's demographic landscape, with the vast majority identifying as Muslim. Smaller proportions of participants identified as Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, or affiliated with other religions. This diversity in religious affiliation underscores the need to account for the role of religious practices, norms, and cultural contexts in shaping access to resources, safety, and recovery during periods of civil unrest.

FIGURE A-5

Religious affiliation of study respondents

Category	Percentage
Others	1%
Christianity	1%
Buddhism	2%
Hinduism	14%
Islam	82%
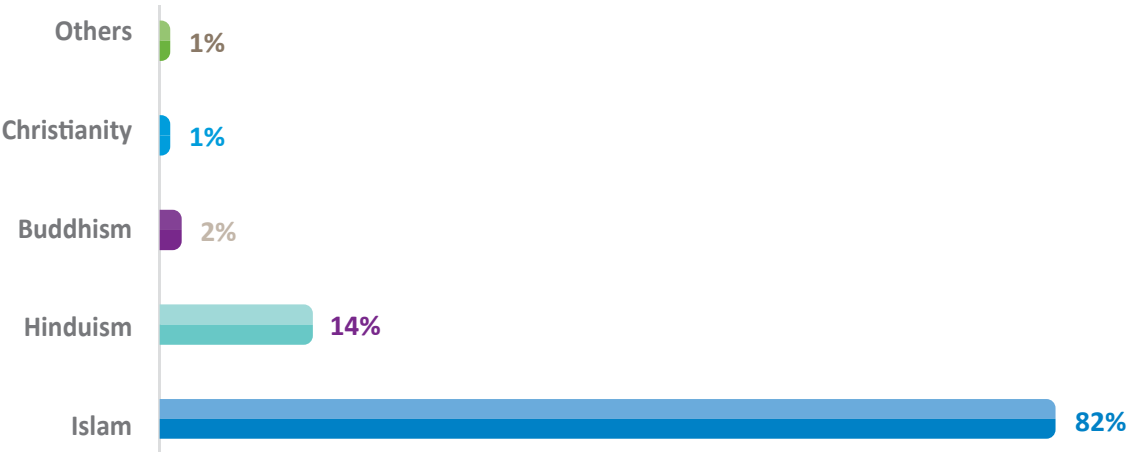
Key metrics

Total Survey Respondents	N= 2938
Divisions Covered	8
Districts Covered	24
Respondents of the FGD	62
Respondents of the IDIs and KIIs	19

FIGURE A-6
Geographical coverage of the GA

The demographic profile of the respondents reflects a diverse, yet predominantly Bengali and Muslim participant base, which is representative of the country's demographic composition. However, the inclusion of gender-diverse individuals, indigenous voices, and religious minorities enriches the analysis, offering a more nuanced understanding of how gender, ethnicity, and religion intersect to shape vulnerabilities and resilience during crises. This demographic breakdown will inform the development of gender-responsive recommendations tailored to the socio-cultural realities of Bangladesh.

10. Glossary[6]

Gender-based violence (GBV)

Gender-based violence refers to harmful acts directed at individuals based on their gender. It includes any act of violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering. This can involve threats, coercion, or the arbitrary deprivation of liberty, and occurs in both public and private spaces (Heise et al., 2002). GBV encompasses various forms, such as domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking, and is rooted in gender inequality and power imbalances between genders (Russo & Pirlott, 2006).

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature that can include verbal or physical conduct. This may involve unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other conduct that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. Examples of sexual harassment include unwanted touching, sexually charged comments, or demands for sexual favours in the workplace, educational settings, or other environments (Sbraga & O'donohue, 2000).

Children

A child is typically defined as any individual under the age of 18 years. This definition emphasises the special protection and care children require due to their vulnerability. In accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989, children have the right to special protection from exploitation and abuse, requiring particular care to ensure their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Children also have rights to education, healthcare, and protection from economic exploitation, sexual abuse, and all forms of maltreatment. These rights are further recognised in international legal frameworks, including the CRC, which outlines the obligation of states to uphold these protections and ensure that children can grow up in an environment of equality and opportunity (UNICEF, 1990).

Young adult

The term "young adult" refers to individuals aged 18 to 29 years. This period marks the transition from adolescence to adulthood, characterised by significant social, emotional, and educational development. Young adults are often the focus of discussions around access to education, employment opportunities, and participation in civic life (UNDESA, 2012b).

Minority

Minorities are groups that are numerically smaller than the dominant group within a society and may experience discrimination or marginalisation. These groups may include ethnic, religious, linguistic minorities, and others who do not belong to the majority population. As outlined in Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), individuals belonging to ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities "shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language" (United Nations, 1966). Additionally, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious, and Linguistic Minorities (1992) underscores that states should take "measures to ensure that minorities can participate fully in economic progress and development" and emphasises the need to "protect and promote their identity" (United Nations, 1992). Protecting the rights of minority groups ensures their participation in cultural life, decision-making processes, and society at large. This particular group of people is often termed as less widely recognised group as they live in relative social disadvantage compared to the dominant group (Mylonas, 2013).

## *Street based female sex workers*

A street-based sex worker is defined as anyone who is over the age of 18 and receives money or goods in exchange for sexual services, whether regularly or

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[6]The definitions used in the RGA have been drawn from a range of scholarly sources and prior reports, all of which have been appropriately cited and referenced. Furthermore, these definitions have been carefully tailored and contextualised to align with the specific objectives and thematic scope of this study, ensuring their relevance and applicability within this framework.

occasionally, in floating setting and not in any specified set permanent institutional platform. This includes female, male, and transgender adults, and also include people whom the state or authority does not self-identify as sex workers (Hussain & Saha, 2022; UNAIDS, 2000).

Persons with disabilities

Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (UNDESA, 2012a).
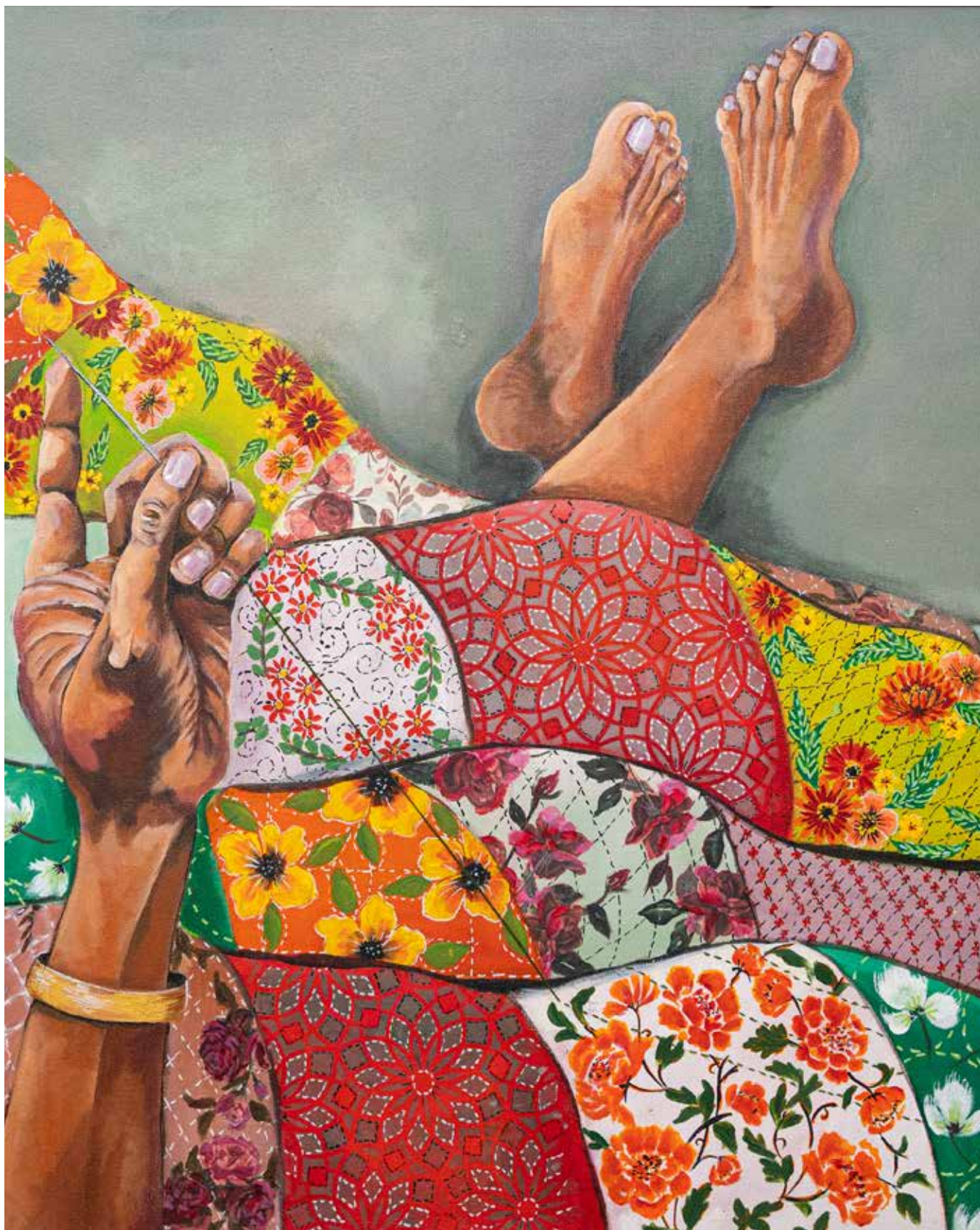
[7]The artwork featured in this report were created by participants of the Art Exhibition for International Women's Day 2024, supported by UN Women, co-organised by the Fine Arts Faculty, University of Dhaka, and PlatForms.

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