



SAFETY OF WOMEN ACROSS THE GLOBE: AWARENESS, SECURITY, AND SELF-DEFENCE — DEVELOPING UZBEKISTAN’S FIRST SAFETY APP

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Abstract

Issues of women’s safety remain a pressing concern across the world. Regardless of geographical, cultural, or social boundaries, women continue to experience threats ranging from street harassment to gender-based violence. These issues often extend into daily activities such as walking alone at night, commuting, or even attending public events. In Uzbekistan, as in many other contexts, conversations around women’s safety are limited, yet young women frequently report feelings of vulnerability in public spaces.

Scholarly discussions on safety have frequently emphasized legal frameworks, social reforms, and educational initiatives (UNESCO, 2024 and Elsevier, 2024). While these approaches are crucial, there is also a need to consider the role of individual preparedness and the use of digital tools in strengthening women’s sense of security. Recent studies suggest that technological solutions, such as mobile applications, have the capacity to create new forms of empowerment by offering immediate access to resources, knowledge, and networks (University of Zurich, 2024).

The present study aims to contribute to this discussion by examining women’s perceptions of safety, their knowledge of self-defence, and the ways in which technology can support them. Specifically, the objectives were:

1. To assess women’s awareness and practice of self-defence techniques
2. To investigate their feelings of safety during the night
3. To design and test a mobile application, the first of its kind in Uzbekistan, that provides safety features and free self-defence tutorials.



Methodology

A total of 101 female participants took part in the study. Their ages ranged between 14 and 28 years old, representing mostly students and young adults. The majority of respondents were from Uzbekistan, with a small number from other countries, which provided insights into both local and global perspectives on women's safety.

The participants were selected through convenience sampling. The survey was distributed via social media platforms (Telegram and Instagram) and personal contacts, allowing for quick and voluntary participation. While not fully representative of all women, this method was effective in gathering honest perspectives from young women willing to share their experiences.

The survey was developed in Google Forms and consisted of seven main questions. These included both closed-ended questions and open-ended questions. The topics covered:

1. Awareness or training in self-defence techniques.
2. Feelings of safety on streets/public transport during the day.
3. Feelings of safety when returning home at night.
4. Experiences of being followed.
5. Emotional responses in unsafe situations (open-ended).
6. Witnessing or knowing of violence or kidnapping cases.
7. Perceptions of whether society takes women's safety seriously.

The survey remained open for two weeks. Responses were collected automatically, then analyzed using a mixed-methods approach: quantitative analysis (percentages, frequencies) for closed-ended questions, and qualitative thematic coding for open-ended responses.

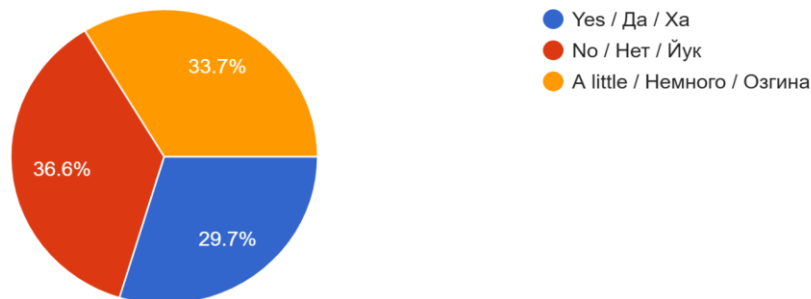
Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and gave consent before beginning the survey. No personal information was collected, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. Respondents were free to withdraw at any time, and their participation was entirely voluntary.



Results

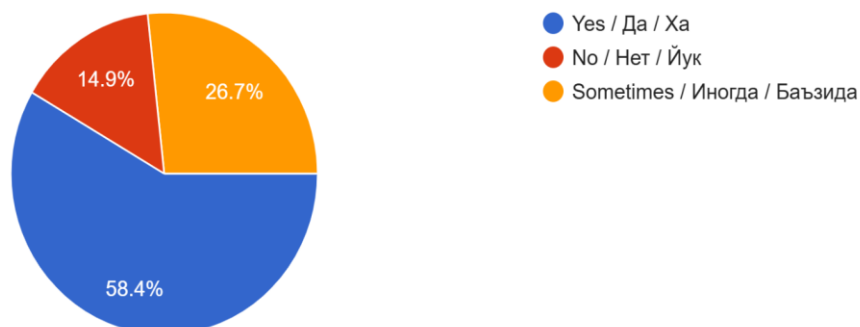
The survey results give a clear picture of how women experience safety in public spaces. A total of 101 people participated, and their responses highlight strong patterns.

Are you trained/aware of self-defence techniques? Вы обучались/знаете методы
самозащиты? Сиз урганганмисиз/биласизми узингизни химоя килиш усулларини?
101 responses



Only 29.7% of the participants reported that they had ever received training or awareness in self-defence, while the remaining 70.3% had no such preparation.

Do you feel safe on the streets or public transport during the day? Чувствуете ли вы себя
безопасно на улицах или на публичных трансп...ласизми кучада йоки транспорт воситаларида?
101 responses

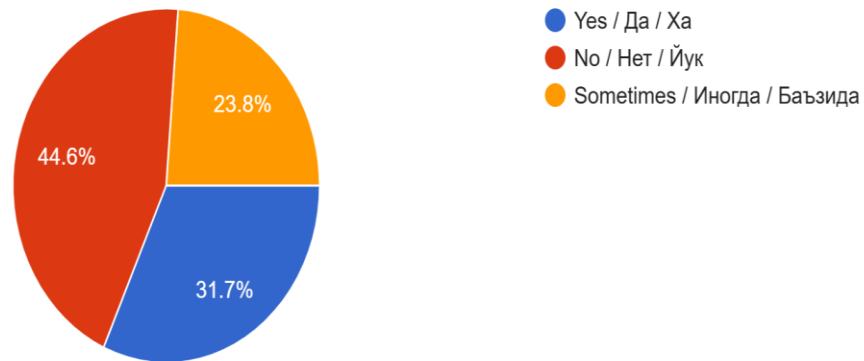


When asked about safety during the daytime, 58.4% said they felt relatively safe on the streets or public transport, but the other 14.9% admitted they did not feel comfortable even in daylight.



Do you feel safe on your way back home at night? Чувствуете ли вы себя безопасно ночью по дороге домой? Кечаси уйга кайтайотганингизда узингизни хавфсиз хис киласизми?

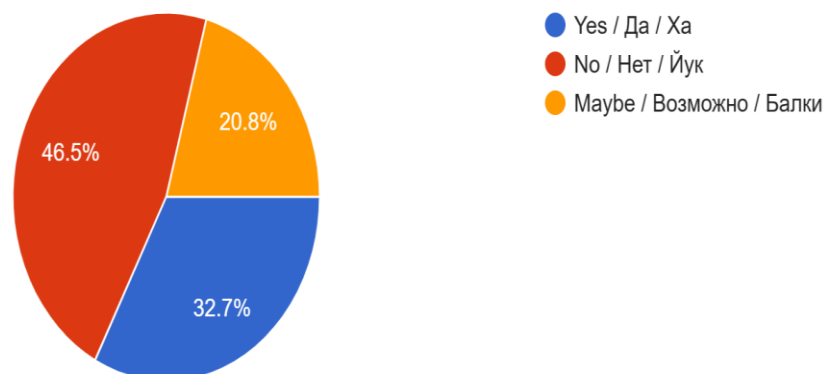
101 responses



At night, however, the sense of security dropped sharply. Only 31.7% of respondents stated that they felt safe when returning home in the evening, while 68.3% expressed fear or discomfort in these situations.

Have you been followed by anyone? Вы были отслежены кем-либо когда-то? Качондир кимдир сизни ортингиздан кузатганми?

101 responses



Nearly half of the participants, 46.5%, said that they had been followed by someone at least once in their life.



How do you feel/felt in such situations? (please describe your emotions in short)

Как вы себя чувствуете/чувствовали в таких случаях? (пожалуйста, кратко опишите ваши эмоции)

Сиз узингизни кандай хис киласиз/киласиз шу каби холатларда? (илтимос, киска тасвириб беринг хисларингизни)

93 responses

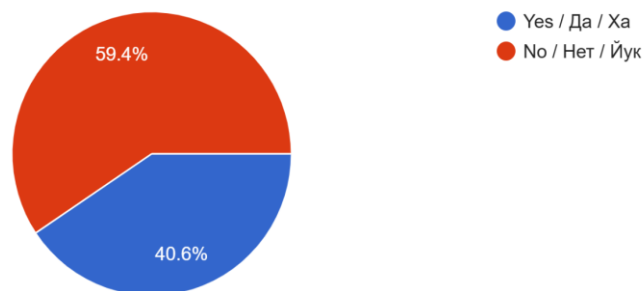


When asked to describe how they felt in such moments, many used words such as fear, panic, anxiety, stress, and helplessness. Some also explained that they avoid certain places or change their daily routines to reduce the chances of danger.

Have you witnessed violence or kidnapping, or do you know about such cases? Вы были

свидетелем насилия или похищения, или знает...анмисиз, йоки шу каби вокеаларни биласизми?

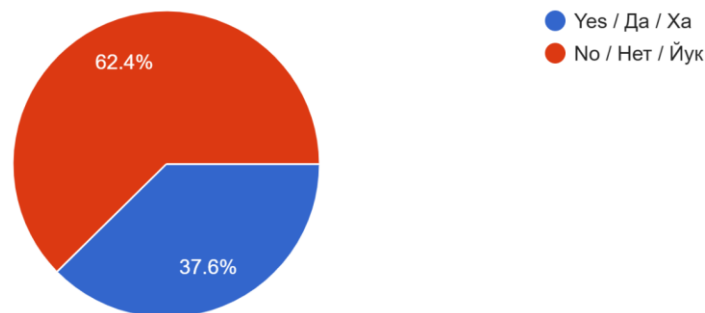
101 responses



The results also revealed that 40.6% of participants had either witnessed or personally known about cases of violence or kidnapping involving women.



Do you think this problem is currently being taken seriously? Как вы думаете, серьезно ли
относится в настоящее время этой проблеме? ...у муаммо жиддий караляптими хозирги кунда?
101 responses



Finally, when asked whether they believed this problem is being taken seriously, only 37.6% answered yes, while the remaining 62.4% believed the issue is either ignored or not given enough attention by society and authorities.

Together, these findings show that while women may feel somewhat secure during the day, the majority do not feel safe at night, many lack self-defence training, and most believe the problem is not being addressed properly.

Discussion

The findings of this survey show a clear gap between women's safety needs and the support systems available to them. The fact that less than one-third of participants have been trained in self-defence demonstrates that most women are not equipped with even the basic skills to protect themselves in threatening situations. This mirrors earlier global studies which found that women remain disproportionately vulnerable to harassment and violence in public spaces.

The contrast between daytime and nighttime safety is especially striking. While a majority of women feel safe during the day, only 15 percent report the same sense of security at night. This suggests that darkness multiplies fear and significantly limits women's freedom of movement, a pattern that is consistent with global trends but appears to be particularly severe in the local context.



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Another important outcome of the study is that nearly half of respondents have personally been followed by someone, which shows that harassment is not rare but rather common. The emotional responses collected in the survey, ranging from fear and panic to helplessness, illustrate the psychological burden of such experiences. Similarly, more than one-third of respondents reported witnessing or knowing about incidents of violence or kidnapping, showing that safety concerns are not simply personal fears but part of a wider social reality.

The most concerning aspect is the lack of trust in authorities or systems meant to provide protection. Almost four out of five respondents believe that the issue of women's safety is not being taken seriously. This perception not only reflects dissatisfaction with the current system but also forces women to create their own strategies, such as avoiding certain places, traveling only in groups, or changing their routines.

These results highlight the urgent need for new interventions. The development of a mobile safety app "Asra", the first of its kind in Uzbekistan, offers a practical solution to these concerns. Such a tool could empower women with emergency assistance, awareness, and protective measures. Still, the study has its limitations. The sample size is relatively small, and most respondents were students or young women, which means the findings may not represent older women or those living in rural areas. Nevertheless, the survey provides strong evidence that safety remains a serious and under-addressed issue for women.

Conclusion

This study examined women's safety by exploring their awareness of self-defence, their sense of security in public spaces, and their personal experiences of harassment and violence. The findings revealed that while some women feel safe during the day, the majority experience fear and vulnerability at night. Many respondents reported being followed or knowing cases of violence, and more than 60% believed that the issue of women's safety is not being taken seriously by society or authorities. Importantly, the study also found that only a small portion of women had received any training in self-defence, leaving most unequipped to deal with unsafe situations.



The implications of these findings are significant. Women's restricted freedom of movement, constant anxiety, and lack of protective skills demonstrate that safety concerns are not only a personal matter but a broader social issue. The creation of "Asra," the first women's safety app in Uzbekistan, represents a step toward addressing these challenges by offering emergency tools and educational resources.

Future research should expand the sample size to include women from different age groups, regions, and professions, and should also compare experiences across countries. Further studies could also evaluate the real-world effectiveness of technological interventions like safety apps in improving women's autonomy and protection.

References

1. Elsevier. (2024). Gender in the global research landscape. Elsevier.
2. UNESCO. (2024). Education and gender equality global report. Paris: UNESCO.
3. University of Zurich. (2024). Women, technology, and empowerment: Global survey report. Zurich: University of Zurich.

Appendices

Appendix A: Development of the "Asra" Safety App

As a direct outcome of the research, a mobile application called "Asra" was developed to address the safety challenges highlighted by participants. "Asra" is the first women's safety app created in Uzbekistan and serves as both a protective tool and an educational resource.

Key features of the app include an Emergency SOS system that sends instant alerts with the user's live location to trusted contacts, location sharing mode that allows family or friends to track the user's journey in real time, free self-defence tutorials designed for beginners, empowering women with basic protective techniques, awareness and safety resources offering guidance on how to respond in unsafe situations and where to seek help.



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The app represents the practical application of research findings, showing how technology can contribute to reducing fear, increasing preparedness, and strengthening women's sense of autonomy in public spaces.