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Addressing sexual harassment in the public sphere

Summary

Sexual harassment has a significant economic cost for institutions and individuals. In addition to being a human rights violation, it can impact women and girls' social and political participation, including their access to the world of work and to economic opportunities. Sexual harassment must therefore be addressed by member States to increase women and girls' participation in all aspects of public life and to ensure their empowerment.

Building on research by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) on strengthening women's mobility and access to public spaces in the Arab region, the present document focuses on enhancing women's access to employment and economic empowerment by combating sexual harassment. It provides examples of good practices and of measures needed to implement positive change. It sets out recommendations for an approach that protects against all forms of sexual harassment in public life, and promotes women's access to the world of work. The Committee on Women is invited to review the recommendations and comment thereon.

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Introduction

1. The United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment states that eliminating, preventing and responding to all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual harassment, is key to advancing women's economic empowerment.¹
2. The economic costs of sexual harassment in the public sphere are extremely high, for individuals and the economy, ultimately affecting women's mobility and their access to education, health and employment, thus impeding women's economic empowerment.²
3. Research has quantified the economic costs associated with violence and harassment against women, and its impact on the world of work. Globally, the cost of violence against women (public, private and social) has been estimated at approximately \$1.5 trillion.³ Moreover, national studies have estimated the impact of sexual harassment in specific economic sectors. For example, sexual harassment in the Cambodian garment sector costs the country's economy \$89 million annually.⁴
4. The Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) of the International Labour Organization (ILO) is an important normative framework aimed at preventing, protecting and responding to sexual harassment and violence beyond the specific place of work, through its following definition of the "world of work":
 - (a) In the workplace, including public and private spaces when they are a place of work;
 - (b) In places where workers are paid, take a break or eat a meal, or use sanitary, washing and changing facilities;
 - (c) During work-related trips, travel, training, events or social activities;
 - (d) Through work-related communications, including those enabled by information and communication technologies (ICT);
 - (e) In employer-provided accommodation;
 - (f) When commuting to and from work.
5. The Convention defines violence and harassment as "a range of unacceptable behaviours and practices, or threats thereof, whether a single occurrence or repeated, that aim at, result in or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm, and includes gender-based violence and harassment." Gender-based violence and harassment is then defined as "violence and harassment directed at persons because of their sex or gender, or affecting persons of a particular sex or gender disproportionately, and includes sexual harassment".⁵
6. While violence and harassment in the world of work may affect all workers, they have a significant gender dimension that disproportionately impacts women. Sexual harassment has a detrimental effect on women's participation in the world of work, including the quality of work. It therefore needs to be confronted at all levels to ensure women's economic participation.⁶ Within the world of work, including the digital work environment, sexual harassment can take the form of a hostile work environment resulting from unwelcome

¹ United Nations, [Leave no one behind: a call to action for gender equality and women's economic empowerment](#), 2016.

² UN-Women and ILO, [Handbook: addressing violence and harassment against women in the world of work](#), 2019.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ ILO, [Sexual harassment in the world of work](#) (n.d.).

⁶ ILO, [A quantum leap for gender equality: for a better future of work for all](#), 2019.

and repeated sexual suggestions or propositions, or one shocking act of a sexual nature; or quid pro quo harassment where a professional opportunity is preconditioned on some kind of sexual performance in favour of the harasser or a third party.

7. If gender equality is to be achieved, both the public sphere and the world of work must be free from violence and harassment.⁷ Challenging and transforming social norms are integral to promoting a comprehensive approach to women's economic empowerment, and to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5 on gender equality.⁸

8. The present document sets out instances of sexual harassment in the Arab region, including its types, forms and prevalence, and examines sexual harassment laws and policies in the region. Moreover, it reviews the impact that sexual harassment laws and policies can have on women's economic empowerment, and outlines why more concrete action is needed to create an enabling environment that values women and girls' contributions to the public sphere, especially the world of work. The document concludes with a series of recommendations.

I. Sexual harassment in the Arab region: types, forms and prevalence

9. Since the political movements in the region that began in late 2010, sexual harassment in the public sphere has gained greater recognition, although documentation remains limited. The locations where harassment occurs include public transport, the street, the world of work, education institutions, and online. This lack of safety affects many women's ability to participate in all aspects of public life, particularly the world of work.

10. Comprehensive regional data on sexual harassment in the Arab region is limited. However, regional and small-scale surveys find that women in the region are worried about their security and safety when walking down the street or when using public transport, owing to the various forms of sexual harassment they face daily.⁹ In some cases, such harassment is anticipated by women and girls and normalized by society.¹⁰ Studies also show that young people in the region lack knowledge and awareness of acts that are defined as sexual harassment, or have adopted victim-blaming attitudes.¹¹

11. According to the Arab Barometer Wave V (2019), sexual harassment remains prevalent in 12 Arab countries that were under review, with verbal sexual harassment in public places more frequently reported than physical sexual harassment (29 and 18 per cent, respectively).¹² Data from the 2017 International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) for four Arab countries reveal that 31–64 per cent of men admitted to engaging in sexual harassment, while 40–60 per cent of women said that they had experienced it at some point.

12. At the national level, a 2017 study in Jordan found that 75.9 per cent of the research sample (comprising 86 per cent women and 14 per cent men) had been exposed to one or more acts of harassment (non-verbal, verbal, physical, cyber or psychological). Most of the victims were between 18–25 years old, and had

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ United Nations, [Leave no one behind: a call to action for gender equality and women's economic empowerment](#), 2016.

⁹ Aline Delatte and Rakesh Belwal, [Understanding the needs of MENA public transport customers: culture of service and gender responsive recommendations](#), 2018.

¹⁰ Habiba Chafai, [Everyday gendered violence: women's experiences of and discourses on street sexual harassment in Morocco](#), 2020.

¹¹ Mamdouh Kalam Zaki and others, [Knowledge, awareness, and attitude about sexual harassment among Saudi preparatory and secondary school students in Western Region, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia](#), 2019; Irena Bergenfeld and others, ["There is always an excuse to blame the girl": perspectives on sexual harassment at a Jordanian university](#), 2022.

¹² Donia Bouhlila, [Sexual harassment and domestic violence in the Middle East and North Africa](#), 2019.

experienced harassment in public places (38.2 per cent) and in education institutions and workplaces (43.8 per cent), while all ages had experienced cyber harassment (43.1 per cent).¹³

13. A 2022 study conducted in Lebanon found that only 37 cases of sexual harassment were reported to the Internal Security Forces that year, highlighting that many survivors choose not to report.¹⁴ Another study, conducted in Tripoli, Lebanon, found that two thirds (68 per cent) of respondents had experienced or witnessed some form of sexual harassment while using taxis, and that 46 per cent of those surveyed said that the fear of being harassed had prevented them from going somewhere.¹⁵

14. In the State of Palestine, the Palestinian Central Bureau for Statistics documented 179 cases of sexual harassment reported to the police in 2020.¹⁶ Given that many victims choose not to report, this number may be higher.

15. Research in Kuwait highlights how intersectional identities impact access to and experience of transport owing to harassment. Overall, non-Kuwaiti women experience verbal and physical harassment when using public transport because they are often unable to afford or access private transport. For both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti women, public areas and the transport system are perceived as male-dominated.¹⁷

16. Gender-based online harassment has become more visible since the COVID-19 pandemic. While online harassment in the Arab region is difficult to quantify, an increase in ICT-related and facilitated violence against women and girls was documented in 2020. According to UN-Women, online harassment was the most reported type of violence against women and girls in the Arab region during the pandemic.¹⁸ During the lockdowns, individuals became highly reliant on virtual spaces for social contact and services, and perpetrators took advantage of this online presence.¹⁹ Women and girls were subjected to various forms of online ICT-related and facilitated violence, including gender-based slurs, sexual harassment, cyberstalking, bullying, doxing, threats, so-called “Zoombombing”, blackmail and electronically enabled human trafficking.

17. More recent research indicates that 49 per cent of female Internet users in the Arab region reported feeling unsafe because of online harassment, with 16 per cent of women reporting having experienced online violence at least once in their lifetime. As a result, women and girls are more likely to self-censor online. Furthermore, those who experienced such harassment (27 per cent) deactivated or deleted their accounts, or missed school or work because of online harassment.²⁰ In the State of Palestine, research found that cyber harassment had become a serious problem, with 16 per cent of female respondents reporting that they had personally experienced some form of online harassment.²¹

¹³ Jordanian National Commission for Women, [Sexual harassment in Jordan: executive summary](#), 2017.

¹⁴ ABAAD, [دراسة حول العنف الجنسي ضد النساء في لبنان والتبليغ عنه](#), 2022.

¹⁵ UN-Women, [Women’s experiences of harassment in taxis: a case study of Tripoli, Lebanon](#), 2021.

¹⁶ Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, [Reported crimes against morality in Palestine by type of criminal offense and governorate](#), 2020.

¹⁷ Muhammad Adeel and Reem Alfahad, [Towards an equitable transport system in Kuwait: understanding the social and cultural context of transport accessibility](#), 2021.

¹⁸ UN-Women, [Rapid assessment: the effects of COVID-19 on violence against women and gendered social norms: results of web-based surveys from nine countries in the Arab States](#), 2021.

¹⁹ UN-Women, [Impact of COVID-19 on violence against women and girls in the Arab States through the lens of women's civil society organizations](#), 2020.

²⁰ UN-Women, [Violence against women in the online space: insights from a multi-country study in the Arab States: summary report](#), 2021.

²¹ Nijmeh Ali, [Violating network: gender-based violence against Palestinian women in the digital space](#), 2022.

II. Impact of sexual harassment on women's participation in the world of work

18. Sexual harassment has a detrimental impact on women's access to and participation in the world of work, including the quality of work they can access. Consequently, women's needs must be addressed at all levels to ensure their economic participation.²² The World Bank has stated that sexual harassment can be detrimental to the economy, as it creates a toxic work atmosphere that can lead to lower productivity, higher turnover rates, and absenteeism. For victims, it can also lead to low self-esteem, demotivation, anxiety and even depression.²³

19. In urban and rural areas, women and girls fear and experience sexual harassment in the public sphere, such as on public transport, in streets, parks and recreational areas, and in work and education spaces.²⁴ Despite growing evidence on the nature and scale of the problem, there is still limited local and national data to draw upon, and few policies and practices that offer a holistic response.²⁵

20. Few studies have been conducted in the Arab region that highlight the connection between sexual harassment in the public sphere and women's engagement with the world of work. A study by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) found that in Egypt, 69 per cent of women were reluctant to use the train to commute to work because of security concerns.²⁶

21. Another study examining the economic cost of gender-based violence in Egypt found that women and girls discontinued their education or left the labour market owing to sexual harassment or the threat of harassment. In some instances, male family members prohibited women from working outside the house due to fears of harassment either at work, on public transport, or in the street. Furthermore, the study estimated that in 2015, about 16,600 women aged 18–24 left their educational institution as a result of harassment, ultimately impacting their future economic prospects.²⁷

22. A survey in Jordan found that from a total of 497 female respondents, 234 (47.1 per cent) said that they had refused a job because of harassment on public transport.²⁸ Another study in Jordan found that harassment was a key barrier to women's participation in economic activity in the country, especially when such jobs required working or traveling to and from work after dark. The study found that 83 per cent of respondents agreed that workplace harassment hindered women's labour market participation.²⁹ Research in Jordan found that poor public transport options and the possibility of harassment caused women to end their studies or employment.³⁰

23. Technology can also be used to target women, particularly those in occupations or positions with a high public profile, such as politicians, journalists, human rights defenders, and women's rights campaigners.³¹ According to a UN-Women report, 49 per cent of women Internet users in the Arab region reported feeling

²² ILO, [A quantum leap for gender equality: for a better future of work for all](#), 2019.

²³ Rhea Jabbour and Angela Elzir, [Sexual harassment in the workplace in Lebanon – where are we headed?](#), 2022.

²⁴ For more details on safe transport, see document E/ESCWA/C.7/2023/7(Part II) submitted to the current session of the Committee on Women.

²⁵ UN-Women, [Towards an end to sexual harassment: the urgency and nature of change in the era of #MeToo](#), 2018.

²⁶ EBRD, [Safe transport for all: issues and operational lessons from the Egyptian National Railways](#), 2016.

²⁷ Nata Duvvury and others, [The Egypt Economic Cost of Gender-based Violence Survey](#), 2015.

²⁸ Sahar Aloul and others, [Gender in public transportation: a perspective of women users of public transportation](#), 2018.

²⁹ FICRI, [Perceptions and lived experiences in Jordanian communities: women and the world of work](#), 2021.

³⁰ Sahar Aloul and others, [Gender in public transportation: a perspective of women users of public transportation](#), 2018

³¹ UN-Women and ILO, [Handbook: addressing violence and harassment against women in the world of work](#), 2019.

unsafe owing to online harassment.³² One in five women who had experienced online violence deleted or deactivated their social media accounts, and one in four began to self-censor.³³ The pandemic resulted in greater telecommuting possibilities and online job opportunities. While this provides flexible work for women, it increases their exposure to possible harassment through online communication in the world of work. This is an area that is still under-researched and needs to be assessed to ensure a safe working environment for women within new contexts.

III. Addressing sexual harassment to encourage women's economic participation

24. Addressing sexual harassment effectively requires a comprehensive approach comprising gender-sensitive legal reform, gender-sensitive workplace policies, accountability measures, and wider awareness-raising. Practical policies, drafted and enacted through an intersectional lens, should be adopted and enforced to ensure women's access to and mobility within public spaces, free of harassment and violence so as to access the world of work. While sexual harassment occurs in public spaces, including on transport and online, there is a lack of robust legal frameworks and measures in the Arab region to holistically respond to such harms. This can be rectified through rights-based legislation, improved workplace policies on sexual harassment, training programmes, raising awareness of adverse social norms and discrimination, and providing services to support survivors.

25. According to ILO, effective action against sexual harassment in the workplace requires a combination of legal frameworks, stricter enforcement, adequately funded institutions, and a greater awareness of the issues.³⁴ Yet, even with laws in place, many women and girls do not report their experiences of sexual violence for fear of reprisal, a lack of confidence in authorities, a lack of legislation on sexual harassment in public spaces, and because of stigma or fear of having further restrictions placed on their mobility.³⁵ A comprehensive and holistic approach to addressing sexual harassment in the world of work entails the following four components: implementing gender-sensitive legislation and policy; developing an inclusive environment where the safety and needs of women and girls are taken seriously (in public spaces, including on public transport and in the street, parks and recreational spaces); providing survivor-centred services; and promoting awareness raising, including through education and by challenging discriminatory social norms.

26. At the legislative and policy levels, this requires either developing standalone sexual harassment laws or mainstreaming the prohibition/criminalization of sexual harassment into existing laws, such as labour laws. The enactment of laws and policies should go hand-in-hand with ensuring that workplaces and the policing and justice sectors uphold the legislation and ensure its implementation.

27. Inclusive environments are created when women and girls, and other marginalized populations, are consistently consulted in the design and creation of public spaces and infrastructure at all levels, including public services like public transport. In doing so, sexual harassment can be more easily tackled and eradicated, and the intersectional needs of women and girls better addressed.

28. Ensuring survivor-centred available, accessible, affordable and adequate essential services for those who have been sexually harassed (such as counselling, health services and legal aid) is a necessity, and promotes a clear message that there is support for survivors of sexual harassment, and that such forms of violence must not be tolerated.

³² UN-Women, [Violence against women in the online space: insights from a multi-country study in the Arab States – Summary report](#), 2021.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ ILO, [Sexual harassment at work](#), 2017.

³⁵ UN-Women, [COVID-19 and ensuring safe cities and safe public spaces for women and girls](#), 2020.

29. Awareness-raising should aim to create a culture of zero tolerance for sexual harassment, in all its forms. This should start at school by educating young people about gender equality, respect for bodily integrity, and bystander interventions. Such instruction should continue throughout individuals’ life course, and become standard policy within all education and work cultures in both the private and public sectors.

IV. Addressing sexual harassment in the Arab region




A. Legislative instruments

30. Several Arab countries have introduced sexual harassment laws, while others have criminalized and penalized such harassment through penal codes, labour laws and gender-based-violence law, among others. As of early 2023, ten Arab countries (Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates) are clearly addressing sexual harassment, broadly defined, through legislation. Nine Arab countries (Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) are clearly addressing sexual harassment within the world of work through legislation. Bahrain and Saudi Arabia also provide for civil remedies for sexual harassment in the workplace.

31. Arab countries have also enacted laws to combat cybercrime, including online violence against women and girls. For example, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia have adapted their penal codes and their sexual harassment and domestic violence legislation to outlaw such abuse. However, legislation is not enough when addressing sexual harassment in the public sphere. A more holistic approach is needed to examine access to transport, access to services, and awareness-raising as complements to legal reform.

Legislation addressing sexual harassment in the Arab region

	Algeria	Bahrain	Comoros	Djibouti	Egypt	Iraq	Jordan	Kuwait	Lebanon	Libya	Mauritania	Morocco	Oman	State of Palestine	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	Somalia	Sudan	Syrian Arab Republic	Tunisia	United Arab Emirates	Yemen	
Criminalizes sexual harassment																							
Criminalizes sexual harassment in the workplace																							
Civil remedies for sexual harassment offences																							

Fully compliant  Partially compliant  Not compliant 

Source: Compiled by ESCWA.

Note: The legislative reviews of Algeria, the Comoros, Djibouti, Libya and Mauritania were reviewed independently by ESCWA, and not as part of the national validation process of the Gender Justice and the Law Initiative. Further information on sexual harassment legislation in the Arab region and other gender-sensitive legislation and policy is available at <http://genderjustice.unescwa.org/>.

B. Good practices

32. Casablanca, Morocco, is an example of an Arab city that has worked to be inclusive and to develop gender-sensitive public transport, so as to enable women’s safe access to employment. In 2012, a tramway was built. Prior to that, women in Casablanca felt that the city’s lack of transport had reduced their ability to increase their income (60 per cent), that poor transport prevented them from reaching workplaces (52 per cent),

and that inadequate transport negatively impacted their careers (47 per cent).³⁶ By 2020, women were using the tramway more than men. Women said that they were pleased with the presence of transport personnel at tramway stops during the day and in the evening. Furthermore, 60 per cent of women said that they preferred to take the tramway to get home, because it was better lit and thus reduced the risk of being assaulted.³⁷

Box 1. Addressing sexual harassment in the world of work in Lebanon

ESCWA support to Lebanon is an example of good practice on how a sexual harassment law can be operationalized to benefit all employees, but especially women, in the workplace. The overall objective was to implement the new law by creating relevant policies and mechanisms to support employers and employees, and protect workers from sexual harassment by creating a safer workplace to ultimately promote women's economic empowerment and gender equality.

Recognizing that tackling sexual harassment is an integral component of women's economic empowerment, on 21 December 2020, the Lebanese Government passed a law to criminalize sexual harassment and rehabilitate its victims, which prohibits and punishes sexual harassment. Although the law was passed to tackle sexual harassment in the public sphere at large, it also addressed sexual harassment in the workplace.

ESCWA and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) supported the Ministry of Labour and the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) in operationalizing the new sexual harassment law, so as to create safer workplaces in Lebanon. This included the following:

- Building on law No. 205 of 2020 on sexual harassment, NCLW developed standard operating procedures (SOPs) on sexual harassment in the workplace, in consultation with the Ministry of Labour.
- Developing an online self-learning course for employees and supervisors in all sectors to ensure understanding of the law and its proper implementation through measures that address sexual harassment.
- Designing and implementing an advocacy and awareness-raising campaign urging employers to adopt the aforementioned SOPs and training course.

The target audience includes all employers in both the public and private sectors in Lebanon. A comprehensive approach was adopted to enable employers and employees in Lebanon to benefit from the law, create safer workplaces, address social norms, and promote women's economic empowerment. The ESCWA experience can be capitalized on to combat sexual harassment in the workplace and advance women's economic empowerment.

Source: Compiled by ESCWA.

33. In Greater Tunis, as part of the 2021 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence campaign, Transtu (the authority managing public mass transit in Greater Tunis) launched an awareness campaign entitled "Safe transport is a right!", aimed at drawing attention to harassment experienced by women and to ensure women's right to use safe and accessible transport.³⁸

34. Some Arab countries (Egypt, Oman and the United Arab Emirates) have opted to create women-only transit spaces, such as women-only metro or subway cars, women-only buses, reserved seats for women and children, and women-only (pink) taxis with female drivers. In Abu Dhabi, "pink" parking spaces are reserved

³⁶ World Bank, [Making transport work for women and men: challenges and opportunities in the Middle East and North Africa \(MENA\) region: lessons from case studies](#), 2012.

³⁷ Thomas Delahais and others, [Ex-post evaluation of the impacts of the tramway systems of Casablanca and Rabat-Salé – 2020](#), 2021.

³⁸ Agence Française de Développement, [Tunisie : lancement de la campagne de sensibilisation « Le transport sûr est un droit ! »](#), 2021.

for women.³⁹ These efforts, while initially beneficial, unfortunately do not address the root problems of violence, harassment and discrimination that lie at the origin of women's lack of safety, and may further marginalize women and other populations. This is why a holistic (legal, service provision, awareness-raising) and intersectional approach (addressing all workers regardless of age, nationality, status or gender) is needed to address all forms of harassment.

35. Elsewhere in the region, solutions are emerging to address online harassment and violence through service provision. Recent research highlights that a majority of Arab countries have introduced helplines for survivors of such violence, while others have set up online mechanisms (such as portals, forms and/or emails) for reporting violence. These efforts complement work by civil society organizations on awareness-raising, case management, psychosocial support, and the provision of legal aid to survivors.⁴⁰

36. As a larger number of Arab countries institute laws and policies against sexual harassment, particularly in the world of work and beyond, it is important to think of how to fully operationalize such laws and policies. Employers must be made aware of their responsibilities to ensure a workplace that is safe, equitable and productive for all, while making use of the necessary tools to support survivors and hold perpetrators to account.

Box 2. Ensuring a safe education environment for women and girls in Egypt

Ensuring access to a safe education environment serves as a means to opening the doors for women's economic empowerment. In 2017, the Supreme Council of Universities ruled that all universities in Egypt must set up units to combat harassment and violence against women, inspired by an anti-sexual harassment unit set up in Cairo University in June 2014. The National Council for Women (NCW) worked with UNFPA to install anti-violence against women units on government and private university campuses; as of 2022, there were 32 units. These units offer informative sessions, reporting processes and documentation of incidents of violence against women on campus, including instances of sexual harassment. The Ministry of Higher Education is also looking into developing a code of ethics to protect women against sexual harassment on university campuses.

Sources: Tarek Abd El-Galil, [Egypt studies code of ethics to combat harassment of women in universities](#), 2021; UNFPA, [UNFPA and the National Council for Women follow up on anti-sexual harassment units in public universities](#), 2021; Amal Hamada, [Networking on anti-sexual harassment efforts across Egyptian universities](#), 2021.

V. Conclusion and policy recommendations

37. Adopting a holistic (legal, service provision, awareness-raising) and intersectional approach (addressing all workers regardless of age, nationality, status or gender) to tackle all forms of harassment can ultimately lead to creating a conducive work environment for women, while also increasing their economic empowerment. This approach requires not only implementing gender-sensitive legal reform, but also adopting policies and accountability measures, and undertaking wider awareness-raising efforts that engage a variety of sectors, such as the transport sector. Doing so will contribute to a comprehensive approach to women's economic empowerment and to achieving the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs, particularly SDG 5 on gender equality.

38. Practical policies must be adopted and enforced to ensure women and girls' access to and mobility within the public sphere, so that they are able to engage in civic life to the fullest extent, particularly with regard to employment and education.

³⁹ United Arab Emirates, [Women](#), 2023.

⁴⁰ UN-Women, [Violence against women in the online space: insights from multi-country research in the Arab States](#), 2022.

39. Accordingly, the following recommendations are made to member States:

At the policy level:

- Ratify the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) and Recommendation No. 206.
- Develop or amend laws on preventing, addressing and redressing sexual harassment in the public sphere, including in the world of work, and align them with the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190).
- Empower national women's machineries to partner with ministries of labour, education and transport, national human rights institutes, and any other relevant government institutions, to develop frameworks and interventions for addressing sexual harassment in the public sphere.
- Consider gender-related safety concerns more seriously within policy planning, design and implementation processes, so as to facilitate a safer transit experience for all commuters.
- Collect national prevalence and attitudinal data on sexual harassment in the public sphere, including in the world of work. Ensure that data includes the voices and experiences of women and girls from diverse backgrounds.
- Draft a national action plan on transport to guide the development of a more sustainable, integrated and inclusive sector, which accounts for gender disparities, the needs of persons with disabilities, and equal access to other marginalized populations. This should include direct consultations with affected populations.
- Encourage the private and public sector to develop internal policies, such as standard operating procedures and inhouse training, on sexual harassment in the workplace to ensure a clear and comprehensive response.

At the service provision level:

- Partner with civil society organizations to fortify services for survivors of sexual harassment, and develop mechanisms for reporting and support.
- Organize awareness-raising and training activities to prevent sexual harassment and encourage help-seeking for individuals experiencing sexual harassment.
- Establish or design specialized units within the Government dedicated to cases of sexual harassment in the public sphere, and that engage with various relevant sectors such as the transport sector.
- Ensure that the public and private sectors in the world of work are able to refer survivors to appropriate services, if necessary.

At the inclusivity level:

- Consult regularly with women and girls and other marginalized populations to increase the availability, reliability and quality of public transport.
- Conduct a critical mapping of public spaces to assess their levels of inclusivity and safety, with the aim of developing relevant policy and taking substantive action.
- Work to ensure the employment of women within the transport sector, particularly as security officers.
- Increase women's access to and usability of safe public transport (such as buses, trains, taxis and trams) and surrounding environs, public spaces such as streets and parks, recreational spaces, and work and educational spaces, while also penalizing perpetrators.

At the awareness-raising level:

- Work to ensure that gender equality, respect for bodily integrity, and bystander interventions are taught to young people through school curriculums.
- Support awareness-raising of sexual harassment, including in the world of work, in partnership with civil society organizations and other relevant stakeholders, such as universities. This includes working to change discriminatory social attitudes and enhancing positive concepts of masculinity.
