

Alone in the City: A Study of Challenges Faced by Single Women in Delhi



Conducted by



HUMAN DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY
New Delhi

Supported by



THE ASIA FOUNDATION
New Delhi

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About HDS

Human Development Society is a non-profit development organisation that aims at building a just and humane society by creating enabling conditions for total realisation of human potential through implementation of multi-disciplinary research, action and advocacy programmes. Our activities target the marginalized and disempowered population namely women, children, elderly, farmers, drug users, unemployed youth and others at the bottom of society. Besides exploratory development research and implementation of action projects at the grassroots; we also monitor, evaluate and document development projects, and conduct baseline studies on issues like education, health, gender justice and sustainable livelihood.

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Preface

The decision to study the challenges faced by women who are living alone in the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi has its genesis in the activities conducted by Human Development Society (HDS) as the monitor of Mahila Panchayat programme of Delhi Commission for Women, Government of NCT of Delhi. Over a period of three years of monitoring (2010-2014), we came across many women living alone in various unauthorized colonies and slums of the city. Our observation of the vulnerable conditions in which these women live piqued our interest to better understand the challenges they face. Considering the conditions of women living alone in the city and the gap in literature, HDS decided to conduct a research on the issue in order to generate inputs for further action. The study began in April 2014 and this report marks the culmination of our efforts.

HDS collected data in all the 11 districts of the National Capital Territory. In order to encourage the respondents to share their views candidly, only women researchers were employed for data collection. Despite difficulties in locating women living alone, especially those from marginalized groups, the researchers could successfully conduct all the interviews that were planned. The report covers different aspects of challenges faced by the targeted population and the analyses are complemented by illustrative case studies, tables, charts, graphs and infographics. We are confident that the findings and recommendations of the study serve the desired purpose of illuminating the conditions of women living alone in cities.

HDS is immensely thankful to The Asia Foundation for supporting the study with a grant, without which the research would not have been possible. The researchers who collected data in the peak of summer and on occasional rainy days deserve praise for visiting all the districts of the NCT and talking to the respondents.

Our special appreciation, however, goes to all the women who enthusiastically shared their views during interviews. Many of them were grateful that such a study was being conducted at all.

29 December 2015

Anil Kumar Das
Director
Human Development Society

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CNN-IBN	Cable News Network–Indian Broadcasting Network
Contd...	Continued
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CSDS	Centre for the Study of Developing Societies
E.g.	For example
FLFP	Female Labour Force Participation
Govt.	Government
GRC	Gender Resource Centre
HDS	Human Development Society
NCR	National Capital Region
NCT	National Capital Territory
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OBC	Other Backward Castes
Prof.	Professional
SC	Scheduled Castes
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
ST	Scheduled Tribes
UN	United Nations

Executive Summary

The study titled “Alone in the City: A Study of Challenges Faced by Women in Delhi” is an effort to analyse the challenges faced by women who are living alone in the city due to various factors such as education, employment and circumstantial necessities arising due to death of family members, abandonment and other domestic issues. In recent decades, India has witnessed significant social change attributable to globalization, science and technology based innovations, urbanization, education and increased economic opportunities for realizing individual aspirations. Like their male counterparts, the lives of many women have also changed under the influence of the above factors. Notwithstanding the conditions of subjugation and discrimination of women manifested in the forms of multiple social evils, Indian women have demonstrated considerable progress in the fields of education, professional achievement and contributions to greater societal goal. More women, especially those with financial means or independence, now prefer to live independently in cities in order to pursue their goals. There are also elderly, divorced and women without families living alone with no or little social security. Living alone either by choice or by circumstantial necessity or compulsions comes with a set of challenges for women in cities across India.

However, these challenges have not yet been studied adequately. The available literature deals with issues concerning women in general and only rare references are available to women living alone in the cities, which is insufficient to draw substantive conclusions. This study is expected to fill the existing gap in knowledge and to generate inputs for interventions at the level of policies and programmes. The sections below contain key aspects of the study including its findings and recommendations.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are to understand the nature of challenges faced by women living alone in the city and to establish a correlation between reasons for living alone and the challenges. It also looks into the causes behind the challenges and the nature of responses/reactions of women to the challenges. By analyzing these inputs, the study suggests suitable measures to address the challenges faced by women living alone in the city.

■ Methodology

This being an exploratory research study, the views of women living alone in the city occupy the central position in data collection exercise. Since this is a largely unexplored area of research, the scope for gaining insights from past literature is very limited. Nevertheless, available literature on women's empowerment, safety and security of women in general, and welfare programmes available for women were reviewed by the research team. The field work involved interviews of 555 women living alone in the city, interviews of 55 men and five in-depth interviews for developing case studies. In view of vastness of universe of study as it covered the entire NCT of Delhi and lack of data on numerical strength of targeted population, the above sample size was considered appropriate for an exploratory study of this kind.

To identify the potential respondents, the research team contacted working women's hostels, paying guest facilities, residents' welfare associations and NGOs working on women's issues with grassroots presence. It also applied the snowball sampling method for locating respondents at the grassroots.

■ Salient Findings

Profile of Women

Most of the women living alone in the city are young, falling in the age group of 18 to 45 years. Although majority of them hold Graduation or higher educational degrees, they are not high earners. Their occupations reflect their diverse professional interests and economic positions, with the sample covering students, private sector employees, wage earners, self-employed women, as well as sex workers and beggars. Living alone is more of a trend for unmarried women as the sample has good number of students and working young professionals. However, there are many women who live alone because they have no one to live with, are destitute or victims of violence, and for whom living alone is a circumstantial compulsion.

Reasons for Living Alone

While education and professional training, engagement in various services, and permanent residencies are the principal reasons for living alone; reasons may not always have a bearing on occupation as reasons cited by some are different from their occupations (e.g. begging is termed as self-employed, while sex work is termed as service). Living alone in the city is not a preferred option for majority of women. While non-preference is conditioned by one's external environment such as a lack of safety and security, difficulty in finding accommodation, and high costs of living; preference is linked to scope for independent and confident living in the city, education and career, and differences with family members. Although women do maintain relationship with families, many of them live almost on their own without any familial support, which is indicative of their ability to look after their own affairs in case of some and compulsions of circumstances in case of others.

Types and Nature of Challenges

Most of the women face multiple challenges while dealing with domestic as well as external circumstances. While safety and security concerns can be termed as the most ubiquitous challenges; financial hardship, illness and emotional stress are equally important, especially for young, elderly and destitute women. Some distressful manifestations of challenges are linked to women who are suffering from chronic or terminal illness, facing professional insecurity and hazards and countering livelihood challenges.

Responses to Challenges

Responses to challenges can be termed as preventive or proactive and reactionary or accommodative. While some face challenges with the support of their family and friends; others do so by avoiding or remaining aware of bad elements and circumstances or reporting/ threatening to report the matters to police and law enforcement agencies. However, position of destitute, sick, elderly and women in vulnerable circumstances is pitiable as they are incapable of responding to the challenges on their own.

Causes of Challenges

Challenges are primarily due to systemic deficiencies that are observed in society, system of education, system of administration and in the mindset of people. Illiteracy and ignorance of women, patriarchal mindsets of men, poor governance, and inadequate enforcement of laws that protect the rights of women are the principal reasons behind the challenges. Women are often doubly disadvantaged due to their gender and their status as individuals living alone in a city. These factors, coupled with critical issues such as violence, poverty, lack of access to grievance redressal mechanisms, illiteracy and poor health, make the lives of women living alone traumatic.

Correlations between Challenges and Some Key Variables

The following are the conclusions arrived at by establishing correlations between challenges and some key variables of study.

- ◆ **Age:** Challenges faced by single women are to a certain extent age-specific in nature, as some challenges are faced more by some age groups, unlike others.
- ◆ **Education:** Education is to some extent a determinant of the nature of challenges. For example, safety and security challenges are faced mostly by respondents with high educational backgrounds due to their interactions with people and public places than those with lower levels of education, who interact less in public spaces.
- ◆ **Income:** While women with low incomes are the most disadvantaged, the magnitude of challenges decreases as income goes up. Challenges like emotional stress and financial hardship do not even exist for respondents earning higher incomes.
- ◆ **Occupation:** Nature of occupations, especially their potential for income and public interface, determines the nature of challenges. For example, students and salaried employees face more safety and security challenges than daily wagers.

- ◆ **Social Categories:** Social categories namely SC, ST, OBC and General do not have any bearing on the nature of challenges faced by women living alone.
- ◆ **Marital Status:** Unmarried women are more vulnerable to most of the challenges, except financial hardship and healthcare challenges, which are faced more by widows than other women.
- ◆ **Reasons for Living Alone:** Reasons for living alone have a bearing on the nature of challenges, as for example, security and safety challenges are faced mostly by women who are living alone for purposes of education, training, and services in view of their high level of public interface.

Present State of Happiness and Reasons

State of happiness is conditioned by the challenges and opportunities that life in the city offers for the women living alone. While living alone helps them face the challenges of city life in a better way thereby contributing to their happiness; inadequate emotional support and problems of safety, health, career and finance lead to state of unhappiness.

Initiatives of Government to Address the Challenges

Presently, the government has no programme that specifically addresses the challenges faced by women living alone in the city. These women are not recognized as a vulnerable population category that is worthy of programmatic intervention.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following measures for addressing the challenges noted above:

- ◆ **Recognition as a population category:** In view of the unique nature of challenges and their increasing number, women living alone in cities should be recognized by government and development sector as a population category worthy of programmatic intervention.
- ◆ **Intervention for the empowerment of poor women living alone:** There is a strong need to design and implement projects with action and advocacy components, with special focus on destitute and vulnerable women who are living alone in the city.
- ◆ **Reorientation of existing programmes on women's empowerment:** The Government of NCT of Delhi should reorient its existing programmes on women's empowerment like Gender Resource Centres, Mahila Panchayats etc., in order to add women living alone as a population category for special attention and outreach.
- ◆ **Proactive policing:** There is a need for proactive policing for creating safe environment in neighbourhood with focus on vulnerable women living alone, like the existing system of Delhi Police for elderly population of the city.
- ◆ **A roadmap for action:** The study recommends a roadmap for action that should focus on following measures:
 - Sharing of research findings with government, civil society organizations (CSOs) and NGOs;
 - Formulation of policies and programmes by the Ministry of Women and Child Development and other organizations of the Government of India; and
 - Implementation of projects by NGOs and CSOs for empowerment of women living alone in Indian cities.



Introduction

Background

In recent years, the process of social change has gained immense momentum in many countries including India under the impact of globalization of economies, increasing assertion of hitherto oppressed population in matters concerning their rights, scientific and technological innovations and advancement that allow easy exchange of information and knowledge, urbanization, educational development and availability of opportunities for fulfilling individual aspirations. It is not uncommon to witness upward socio-economic mobility of people and the qualitative changes in their social and personal life conditions. The situation has impacted lives of both men and women, although the conditions of subjugation and discrimination of the latter continue to persist. This is especially true in case of India due to the country's patriarchal social system, women's lack of economic independence and falling female labour force participation (FLFP),¹ and emphasis on traditions, customs and superstitions that allow discrimination of women in the family and in society. Persistence of evils like abortion due to preference for son, female infanticide, child marriage, killing and exploitation in the name of prohibiting same *gotra*² marriage, trafficking of women, domestic violence etc., indicate the nature of discrimination and oppression that women are subjected to in the country.

¹ According to the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) data, FLFP fell from over 40% in mid-1990s to 29% in 2004-05 and 22.5% in 2011-12.

² 'Gotra' refers to a social system followed by believers of Hinduism, wherein they establish their lineage with a common ancestor, mostly males. The origin of the system is traced back to the ancient Vedic times. People of the same gotra generally do not enter into marital relationship. Gotra is different from the system of caste practiced by Hindus. Caste is an endogamous and hereditary social group whose members follow a common traditional occupation, customs and rituals.

Notwithstanding the paradox of opportunities and discrimination, Indian women have, in recent years, demonstrated great deal of progress in terms of educational achievement, professional accomplishment and ability to face challenges of life by turning adversities into opportunities and aspirations into actions. According to the Census of India 2011, the number of women with teachers' training graduate degrees went up by 122% and those with nursing/medicine degrees rose by 157% between 2001 and 2011. While the number of women engineers grew by 326%, from about 4.8 lakh in 2001 to over 20 lakh after 10 years, the number of women with technological and engineering degrees as a whole increased by 182% during the decade. The Census data also demonstrates an increase in the number of girls at mid-school level, secondary level and senior secondary level by 64%, 50% and 146% respectively. Reports also indicate women's achievement in competitive examinations like the ones conducted for civil services and armed forces,³ and success in their chosen professions. The contributions of women to the process of the country's development are increasingly attaining salience in view of their excellence in diverse fields like management, academics, sports, culture and so on.

Women are increasingly becoming goal-oriented and are joining a variety of professional domains. This is a change from the past, where women were mostly relegated to the confined space of the family home. Like never before, more women, especially those with financial means or financial independence, are now living independently in cities away from families in order to pursue opportunities related to education, career and independent living. Cities like Delhi have many women living independently as paying guests, women living alone in apartments and working women's hostels, and many others living on their own terms while pursuing life and career goals.

However, on the other side of the spectrum, there is also a population of elderly women, divorced women, and women without families living alone with no or little social security. The conditions of single poor and homeless women are especially dehumanizing as they are vulnerable to severe forms of physical violence and mental torture. Living alone either by choice or by circumstantial necessity or compulsions comes with a set of challenges for women in cities across India. While some challenges are especially faced by certain categories of single women like single working women facing difficulty in getting independent accommodation, elderly women finding it hard to manage household support services (electricity, plumbing, telephone etc.) and marginalized single women facing financial hardships; more ubiquitous challenges, faced by single women in general, fall in the domain of safety and security.

Justification and Relevance

The decision to cover Delhi for studying the challenges faced by women who are living alone is based on the perceived numerical strength of the targeted population and the nature of challenges that women in general face in the city. The metropolitan city with its burgeoning

³ Following intervention by court, women officers are now awarded permanent commission in Indian armed forces and till now 340 women officers have been granted the status, as the latest data shows. *Times of India* (New Delhi), 1 August 2015. Although not a big share, entry of increasing number of women into armed forces is certainly a positive sign.

population and vast educational, employment and other opportunities, has hundreds of women living alone. Although data on number of women who live alone in the city is not available, census data and other statistics indicate growth of this population category. The 2011 census indicates that the total population of Delhi was 16.7 million, out of which 46.47% were females. The female population of the city grew at a rate of 24.9% during 2001-2011, which was more than the growth rate of males (i.e. 18.1%). A recent report titled 'World Urbanisation Prospects' of the United Nations released in July 2014 terms Delhi, which has more than doubled its population since 1990, as the world's second most populous city next to Tokyo. Frequent media reports highlighting conditions of women living alone in the city only add credence to their numerical strength and the nature of challenges they face.

The city has in recent years witnessed a high incidence of crime against women. Statistics and studies support many of the arguments put forward about lack of safety and security plaguing Delhi's women. According to data released by the National Crime Records Bureau, Delhi's crime rate at 169.1 in 2014 was nearly three times higher than the national rate at 56.3.⁴ With an average daily registration of 40 cases of crime against women in Delhi, the year 2014 witnessed 15.25% rise in such crimes in comparison to 2013.⁵ While a woman is kidnapped or abducted in the city every two hours on average, a rape case is registered by the police every four hours. There has been an increase of 31.6% in reporting of rape cases and 25% increase in cases of molestation.⁶ Many women hesitate to approach the police to file complaints for a variety of reasons, and many crimes therefore remain unreported. In addition, there are also challenges associated with the city's infrastructure (lack of on-road security, poor lighting in public places and ineffective policing), places of work and neighbourhood that make women's safety and security a cause for concern. An online survey conducted by the Thomson Reuters Foundation in 2014 ranks Delhi as the fourth most dangerous city for women to take public transport. It was rated the second-worst on safety at night and for verbal harassment experienced while using public transportation.⁷

According to the Indian Express-CNN-IBN-CSDS 'State of the Nation Survey' – 2008, 'single working women feel much more insecure than the average.'⁸ Although data on incidence of crime against women living alone in the city specifically is not available, their low level of safety and security can be gauged in a city like Delhi where crimes against women in general are high. This is exacerbated when women are living alone with inadequate or no familial and social support in their immediate surroundings. Despite the enormity of the issue, the challenges faced by women living alone in a crime-prone city like Delhi has not yet been studied adequately.

⁴ *Crime in India- 2014*, p.83

⁵ According to a press release by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India on 3 December 2014, a total of 13230 cases of crime against women were registered in Delhi up to 15 November 2014 as against 11479 cases during the corresponding period of 2013. Retrieved from <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=112494>

⁶ The number of rape cases in the city rose from 1571 in 2013 to 2069 in 2014 and cases of molestation grew from 3345 to 4179 during the corresponding period. Retrieved from <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/crime-in-delhi-rapes-gangrapes-street-crimes-murder-cases-commissioner-bs-bassi/1/411153.html>

⁷ The survey covered the world's 15 largest capital cities, as defined by the United Nations. New York was included for the purpose of comparative analysis, as it is the most populous city in the United States with 8.4 million people. Retrieved from <http://www.trust.org/spotlight/most-dangerous-transport-systems-for-women/>

⁸ The State of the Nation Survey focused entirely on Indian women. It covered 4000 women in 160 rural and urban locations across 20 Indian States. Retrieved from http://www.lokniti.org/pdfs_dataunit/NE5%20Series/outside_home_Indian_womanunsafe_inside_she_needs_luck-Indian Express.pdf

There is hardly any literature available on the topic except some newspaper articles, blog posts and studies on elderly women which deal, only partially, with the issue of women living alone. The studies conducted by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) like Jagori and the ones noted above deal with safety and security of women in general, but do not categorize women as per their residential circumstances.⁹

Any programmatic intervention to tackle the challenges highlighted above can be possible only when qualitative and quantitative data are collected and analysed and the existing knowledge gap is effectively bridged. By focusing exclusively on the challenges of women living alone in Delhi, this study is the first of its kind filling this knowledge gap. Needless to say, analysis of inputs from the women who are living alone is the best way to understand their challenges, as there cannot be any substitute to a first person's account of an issue.

In view of the demographic and societal context and the gap in literature noted above, this is a contextually relevant and justified study. It is expected to enhance our understanding of the challenges faced by women living alone in the city. Although the study covers only the National Capital Territory of Delhi, its findings can also contribute to our understanding of the challenges faced by women living alone elsewhere in the country, and there is certainly room for scaling up such a study in other Indian cities.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are to:

- ◆ Understand the nature of challenges faced by women living alone in the city
- ◆ Establish a correlation between the reasons for living alone and the type and nature of challenges
- ◆ Analyse the causes that lead to the problems faced by the target group, and find out, with specific emphasis, correlation between the challenges faced by single women and their familial, social, economic and cultural identities and conditions
- ◆ Understand the challenges faced by the target group keeping in view the perception of men on such women
- ◆ Analyse the nature of responses/reactions of women to the challenges
- ◆ Identify the existing as well as proposed, if any, steps taken/to be taken by governmental agencies for addressing the problems faced by the target group
- ◆ Suggest measures that would address the challenges faced by women living alone, so that they lead a safe, secure and stable life in the city

⁹ The following are some of the important studies conducted by NGOs that deal with safety and security of women in cities. *Safe Cities free of Violence against Women Initiative: A Draft Strategic Framework for Women's Safety in Delhi 2010*, Jagori (New Delhi: 2011); *Understanding Women's Safety: Towards a Gender Inclusive City- Research Findings, Delhi 2009-10*, Jagori (New Delhi: 2010); *Comprehensive Study on Status of Older Persons: Delhi & NCR*, Agewell Foundation (New Delhi, September-October 2012)

Hypotheses

The study examined the following hypotheses:

- ◆ Reasons for living alone has a bearing on the nature of challenges faced by single women in the city. In other words, the problems faced by a student may not be the same as that of a professional living alone.
- ◆ Women, especially the elderly and poor, living alone are vulnerable to both emotional and physical stress due to inadequate social security mechanisms.
- ◆ Vulnerability of women living alone gets accentuated due to not-so-friendly physical infrastructure of the city like roads, transport system and security apparatus.
- ◆ Patriarchal mindset threatens the safety and security of single women in the city.
- ◆ Women living alone possess strong life skills that help them face challenges of city life.

Methodology

This is an exploratory research study that draws heavily on the views and experiences of the targeted population namely women who are living alone in the city. As past studies on the topic of research are not available; the scope for gaining insights from review of literature is limited, except the study of existing literature on women's empowerment, challenges faced by women in general, personal accounts of women on how to tackle these challenges, policies and programmatic interventions for women's welfare and challenges of city life in general. The above situation signifies the importance of inputs received from the targeted population. While deciding the methods for data collection, due emphasis was also given to the fact that the targeted population is thinly spread across the city. The sections below deal with the methods followed for collection and analysis of data separately.

Methods for Data Collection

The methods followed for data collection have been noted and elaborated below.

- ◆ Review of literature
- ◆ Interviews of women living alone
- ◆ Interviews of men
- ◆ In-depth interviews for case studies

Review of Literature

The research team reviewed available literature on the topic of research which included, articles, newspaper clippings, reports on conditions of elderly women, blog posts and documents related to programmatic interventions of government. Some of the relevant literature which the research team consulted during the course of research are *Status of Women in Cities 2012-2013: Gender and the Prosperities of Cities*, United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat), (Nairobi, 2013); *A Draft Strategic Framework for Women's Safety in Delhi, 2010*, Jagori and

UN-Habitat (New Delhi, 2011); *Report of Safety Audits, Delhi*, Jagori and Safetipin (New Delhi, 16 December 2014); and "Passages to India: Literary and Socio-Political Perspectives on Gender Concepts in India", *Gender Forum* (Germany), Issue 38, 2012. The reviewed literature provided insights into the challenges faced by women in general, which in turn helped in developing a perspective on the topic and in designing the research tools for data collection.

Interviews of Women Living Alone

Categories of Respondents

- ◆ Students living in hostels, as paying guests and in other rented accommodation
- ◆ Working women
- ◆ Elderly women
- ◆ Disabled women
- ◆ Divorced women
- ◆ Women in difficult circumstances (widow, destitute, minority women, economically poor and others)

Sample Design

Although NCT of Delhi has been considered as a single unit of study, data collection covered all 11 revenue districts of the city viz. New Delhi, North, North West, West, South West, South, South East, Central, North East, Shahdara and East in order to make the sample geographically representative. In each district, interviews of women living alone were conducted, as specified in the sample size below. While making the selection, respondents belonging to different categories, as stated in earlier section, were covered purposively to maintain representative nature of the sample.

For the purpose of identifying the respondents, the research team contacted working women's hostels, paying guest facilities, residents' welfare associations and NGOs working on women's issues with grassroots presence. It also applied the snowball sampling method, according to which the field researchers first collected data on some women who could be located, and obtained from them contact particulars of others in their known circles.

Sampling Method

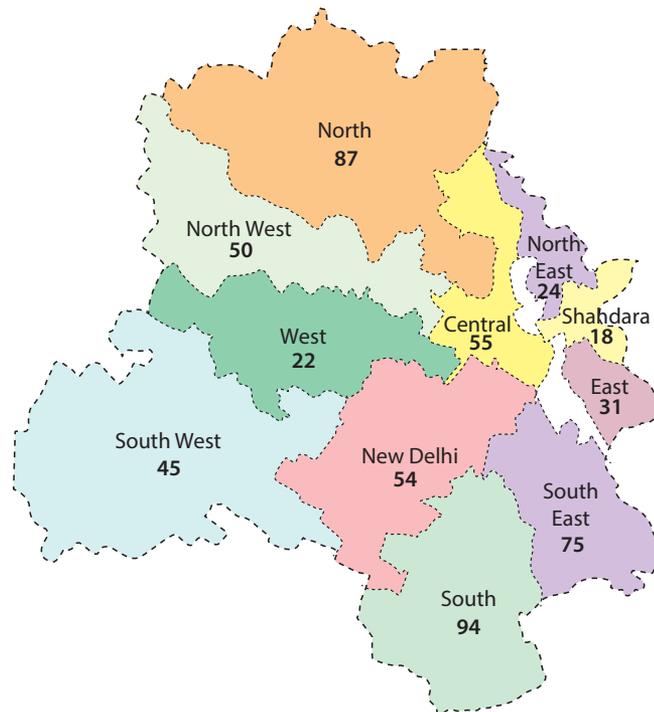
The respondents were selected randomly for interviews, with an element of purposiveness as stated above, from different categories of respondents noted in earlier section.

Sample Size

The study covered a total of 555 women who have attained 18 years of age. The district-wise break up of coverage is given in the Chart 1.1. Although the plan was to cover 50 respondents in each district, final coverage became either less or more depending on availability of respondents and the state of willingness to share their views. In view of the vastness of the universe of study

(i.e. the entire NCT) and lack of data on numerical strength of targeted population, the total sample size was considered appropriate for an exploratory study like the present one.

Chart 1.1: District-wise Coverage of Sample Size



Research Tool

A structured interview schedule with both close and open-ended questions was used for interviewing the targeted women. The schedule was pilot-tested and suitably modified before its final administration. This helped generate both quantitative data and focused and analytical replies. Key aspects of study like nature of challenges, the ways women address the challenges and their views in regard to remedial measures could be captured with the help of open-ended questions.

Interviews of Men

Interviews of men were considered appropriate for capturing their perceptions on challenges faced by single women, and more specifically, on rights of women, types and nature of challenges faced by them and the way men view women who stay alone in the city. The research team obtained views of 55 men on the above aspects of study with help of a semi-structured interview schedule.

In-depth Interviews for Case Studies

In-depth interviews were conducted for developing five case studies that highlight challenges, courage and determination of targeted women in face of adversities. These interviews were flexible and less structured in nature. Only a format containing key aspects to be covered during conversation was prepared for the purpose. The case study format allowed the respondents to share their views freely without being guided by any pre-defined options.

Methods for Data Analysis

Maintenance of quality of data and the richness of analysis were the key concerns that guided the methods followed for data analysis, as noted below. It is also important to note that Delhi has been considered as a single unit for analysis as the purpose is to understand the challenges faced by single women in the city as a whole. In other words, except for the purpose of arriving at the sample size, as noted in earlier section, districts bear no analytical relevance for the study.

Data Cleaning

Each completed interview schedule went through the process of data cleaning during which inaccuracies, inconsistencies and omissions were identified by the research team and rectified in conversation with the interviewers or respondents or both. The process of data cleaning made the interview schedules fit for coding, data entry and analysis.

Analysis of Quantitative Data

Quantitative data was analysed with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and MS Excel software. The process involved typing of data in MS Excel and transfer of data to SPSS for calculation of frequencies and percentages. Cross tabulation was also done for some variables keeping in view the objectives of study. The process ended with finalization of tables, charts and graphs.

Analysis of Qualitative Data

Interpretation and analysis of qualitative data were made in light of the objectives and hypotheses of study. Wherever possible, qualitative replies were also converted into codes and their frequencies and percentages were arrived at with the help of SPSS.



Profile of Women Living Alone in the City

The profile of women living alone in the city has been analysed below with regard to their age, educational status, social status, occupation, level of income, religious background, state of origin and some other related aspects.

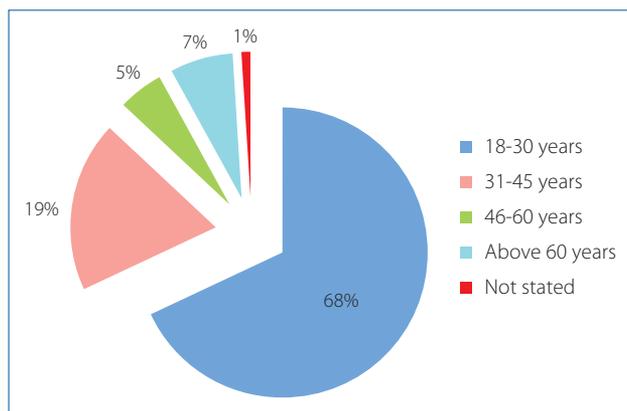
Age

The study found that out of total sample size of 555 respondents, 68% are in the age group of 18 to 30 years. While 19% are 31 to 45 years old; only 5% of them belong to the age groups of 46 to 60 years and 7% are above 60 years old. In other words, 87% women who are living alone are in the age group of 18 to 45 years.

Table 2.1: Age of Women Living Alone

Age (years)	Percent
18-30	68
31-45	19
46-60	5
Above 60	7
Not stated	1
Total	100

Chart 2.1: Age of Women Living Alone



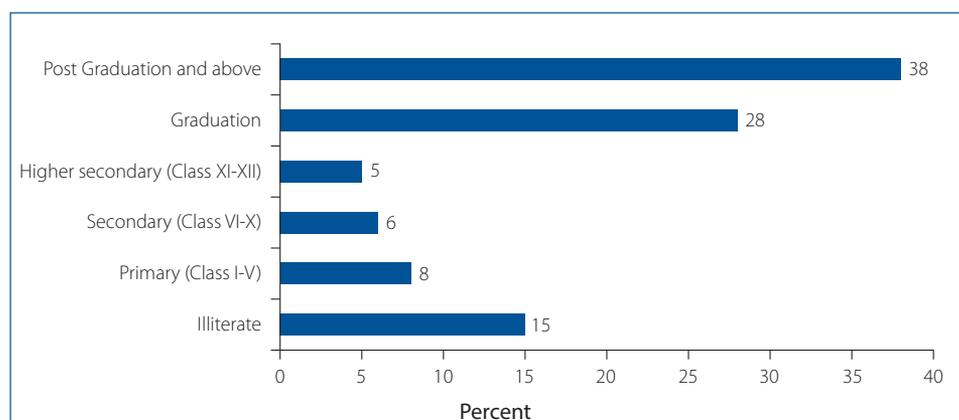
Education

Women with Post Graduation and above qualification occupy top position, as 38% of the total sample fall in this category. While Graduates constitute 28%; illiterate single women occupy third position (15%) among all the education categories under which respondents have been categorized. Those with school-level education are less in number, as shares of women with primary, secondary and high secondary education are 8%, 6% and 5% respectively. It is clear from the data that women with high educational attainment (i.e. Graduation and above) are in majority (66%).

Table 2.2: Level of Education of Women

Level of Education	Percent
Illiterate	15
Primary (Class I-V)	8
Secondary (Class VI-X)	6
Higher secondary (Class XI-XII)	5
Graduation	28
Post Graduation and above	38
Total	100

Chart 2.2: Level of Education of Women



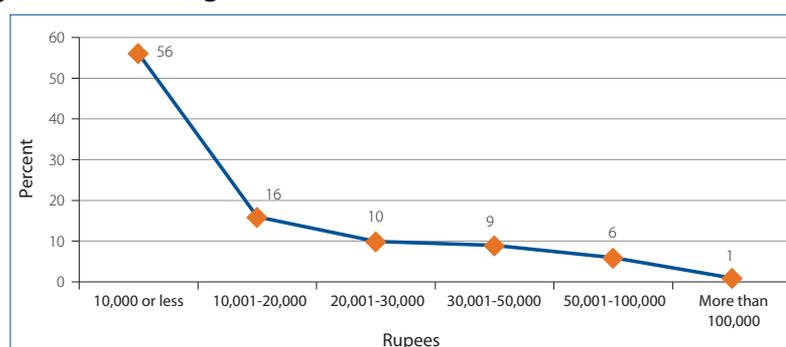
Income

Majority of respondents (56%) earn a monthly income of Rs. 10,000 or less. While this category includes many students who are beneficiaries of scholarships or continue to depend financially on their families; it also covers destitute, aged, and vulnerable women with very limited sources of income and ownership of productive assets. Respondents earning a monthly income of Rs. 10,001-20,000 occupy the second position (16%), followed by those with a monthly income of Rs. 20,001-30,000 (10%) and Rs. 30,001-50,000 (9%) in descending order. Only 6% respondents earn Rs. 50,001-100,000 and 1% earn more than Rs. 100,000 per month, an indication that women with high incomes of over Rs. 50,000 per month are generally not living alone.

Table 2.3: Monthly Income of Single Women

Income (Rs.)	Percent
10,000 or less	56
10,001-20,000	16
20,001-30,000	10
30,001-50,000	9
50,001-100,000	6
More than 100,000	1
Total	100

Chart 2.3: Monthly Income of Single Women



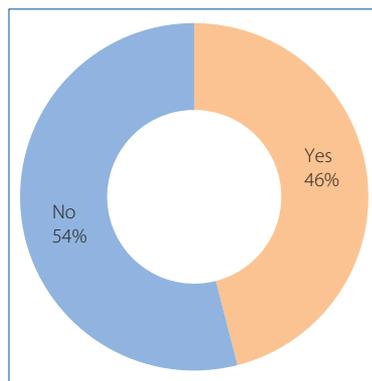
Vocational and Professional Qualification

Single women with vocational/professional qualifications constitute 46% of total sample. In other words, majority of them (54%) do not possess any vocational/professional qualifications.

Table 2.4: Women with Vocational/Professional Qualification

Status	Percent
Yes	46
No	54
Total	100

Chart 2.4: Women with Vocational/Professional Qualification

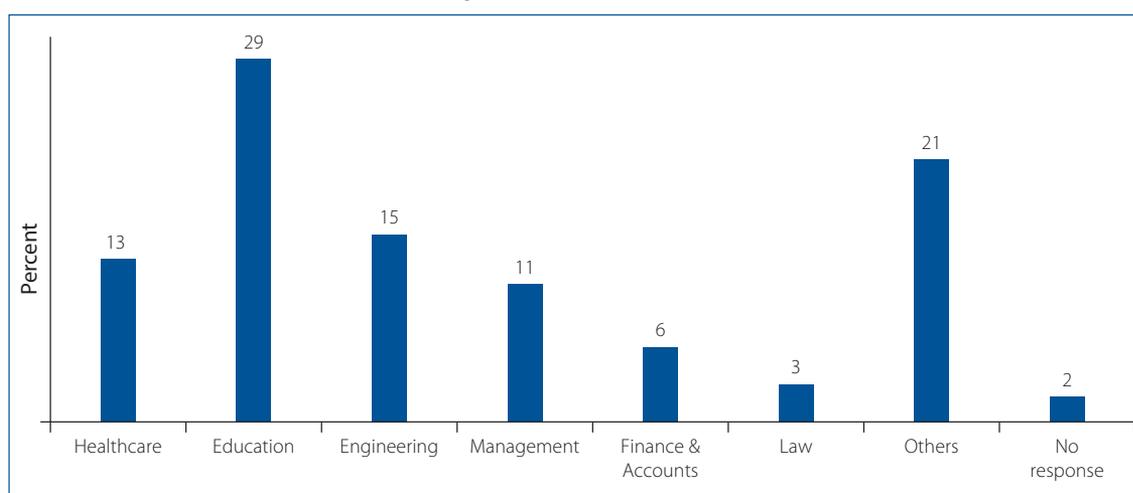


The discipline in which majority of professionally qualified single women have studied is education (29%). Three other disciplines that have a large number of respondents are engineering (15%), healthcare (13%) and management (11%). While only 6% and 3% respondents have studied finance and accounts, and law respectively; 21% of the total professionally qualified respondents have studied in disciplines like journalism, social work, beauty care, stitching, architecture, public relation, music, painting and embroidery.

Table 2.5: Vocational/Professional Disciplines

Discipline	Percent
Healthcare	13
Education	29
Engineering	15
Management	11
Finance and Accounts	6
Law	3
Others	21
No response	2
Total	100

Chart 2.5: Vocational/Professional Disciplines

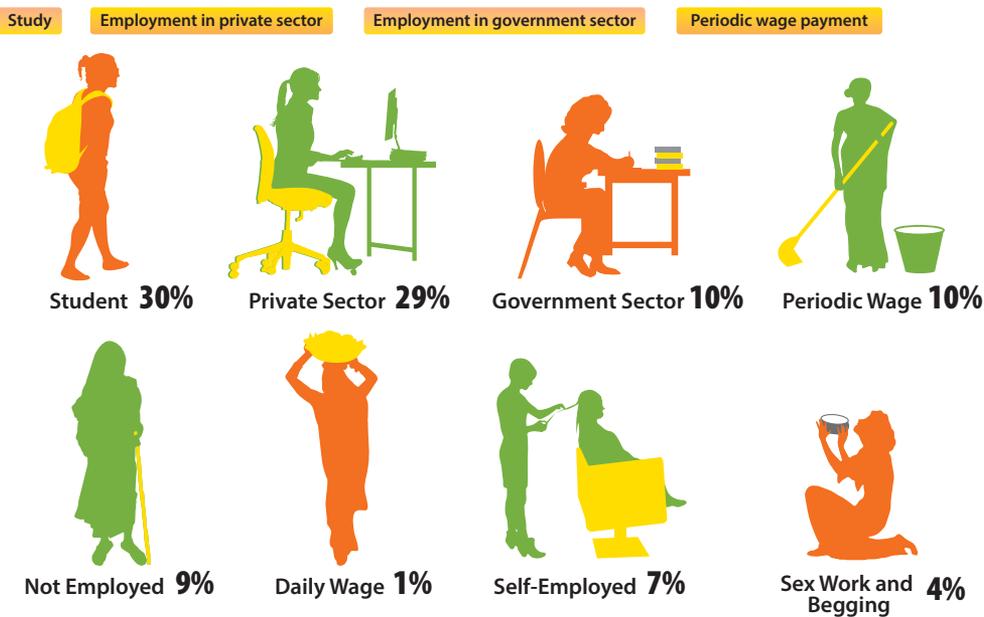


Occupation

The study reached out to respondents from a variety of social and economic groups. While students constitute 30% of the total sample; 29% are employed in private sector which includes both for profit and non-profit enterprises, and 10% are in government services. Representing the lower strata of society are 10% of respondents who are engaged in activities for which wages are paid periodically (domestic helpers or employees in small shops for example), and daily wage labourers who constitute 1% of the sample. The sample also includes self-employed women who are into business, tuition and rag picking (7%), and those engaged in sex work and begging (4%).

Occupational Backgrounds of Women

Four Important Occupations in terms of Percentage Values



Occupations with Less Earning Potential



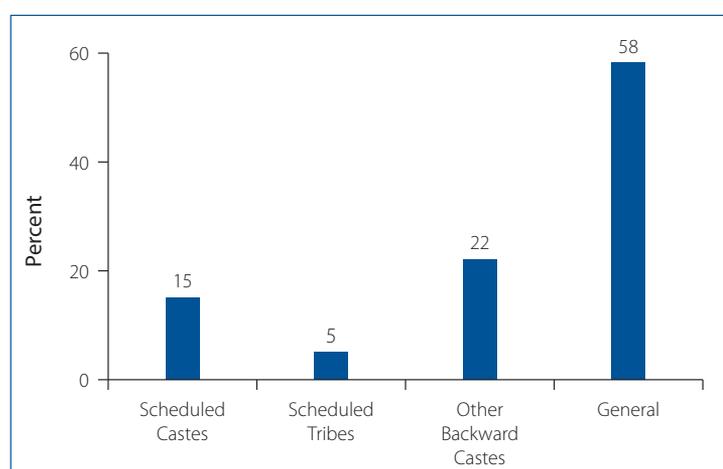
Social Category

The sample size included women of four major social categories namely Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Castes (OBC) and the general population. While the general category women occupy top position with 58% share, they are followed by OBC (22%), SC (15%) and ST (5%) respondents in descending order.

Table 2.6: Social Category of Respondents

Social Category	Percent
Scheduled Castes	15
Scheduled Tribes	5
Other Backward Castes	22
General	58
Total	100

Chart 2.6: Social Category of Respondents



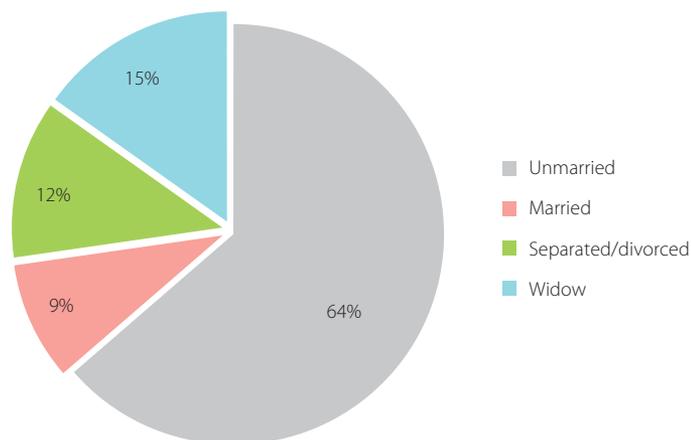
Marital Status

Unmarried respondents constitute the majority of sample (63%). While widows living alone occupy second position (15%) and the third position goes to separated or divorced women (12%); 9% of the sample are married women living alone in the city.

Table 2.7: Marital Status of Respondents

Status	Percent
Unmarried	63
Married	9
Separated/divorced	12
Widow	15
Total	100

Chart 2.7: Marital Status of Respondents



Family Status

The status of families of respondents indicates increasing salience of nuclear family in the society, as a total of 83% women belong to such families. While 12% respondents come from joint families, the remaining 5% do not have any family at all.

Table 2.8: Type of Families

Type	Percent
Nuclear family	83
Joint family	12
No family, as living alone	5
Total	100

Religious Background

Hindus constitute the majority of total sample (80%). The second and third positions are occupied by Muslims (10%) and Christians (6%) respectively. There are 4% respondents belonging to other religions like Sikhism and Jainism.

Table 2.9: Religious Background of Respondents

Religion	Percent
Hindu	80
Muslim	10
Christian	6
Others	4
Total	100

State of Origin

The sample indicates that Delhi is home to people from diverse culture and states. Majority of respondents are originally from Uttar Pradesh (23.4%), followed by those belonging to Delhi (over 20%). Respondents hailing from Bihar and Haryana are almost equal in numerical strength- little over 8% and nearly 8% respectively.

Other states with sizeable share in the sample are Uttarakhand (5.4%), West Bengal (4.9%), Punjab (4.7%), Rajasthan (3.8%), and Kerala and Madhya Pradesh (3.1% each). As Table 2.10 below shows, the sample covers women from most of the Indian States and Union Territories except Chandigarh, Sikkim, Pondicherry, Telangana and Tripura.

Table 2.10: Respondent's State of Origin

State	Percent	State	Percent
Andhra Pradesh	0.4	Meghalaya	0.2
Arunachal Pradesh	0.7	Mizoram	0.7
Assam	2.0	Nagaland	0.2
Bihar	8.1	Odisha	0.7
Chandigarh	0	Pondicherry	0
Chhattisgarh	0.5	Punjab	4.7
Delhi	20.2	Rajasthan	3.8
Goa	0.2	Sikkim	0
Gujarat	0.5	Tamil Nadu	0.9
Haryana	7.9	Telangana	0
Himachal Pradesh	1.1	Tripura	0
Jammu & Kashmir	1.3	Uttar Pradesh	23.4
Jharkhand	1.6	Uttarakhand	5.4
Karnataka	0.2	West Bengal	4.9
Kerala	3.1	Others (nationals of Nepal, Afghanistan and other countries)	2.2
Madhya Pradesh	3.1	Uttar Pradesh	0.4
Maharashtra	0.6	Total	100
Manipur	0.2		



Reasons for Living Alone

Understanding the reasons why women live alone in the city is imperative to the analysis of the challenges they face. This chapter outlines these reasons, and also addresses other issues related to it such as the amount of time spent living alone, whether or not there is a preference for living alone, proximity with immediate family and level of interaction with neighbours and the community. The multi-dimensional analysis undertaken by this study sets it apart from other studies conducted on women, because it focuses on a population category which has not yet been researched and remains largely invisible. It is also important to note that the reasons and preference for living alone are partly conditioned by the increasing economic independence of women which is manifested in their entry into the workforce. For such women, cities like Delhi not only provide diverse career opportunities but also space for independent living. On the other hand, there are women whose circumstances are such that they are forced to live alone as they are victims of violence and poverty, or simply have no one to live with.

■ Duration of Living Alone

Nearly half (48%) of the women surveyed have been living in the city for the past 1-5 years. Those living alone for more than 5 to 10 years constitute 30% of the sample size. Together, 78% of the respondents have been living in the city for the past 1-10 years. While the shares of women living alone since past more than 10 to 20 years and more than 20 years are 7% and 1% respectively; it is less than a year in case of 13% respondents.

Table 3.1: Duration of Time Living Alone in the City

Duration	Percent
Less than one year	13
1-5 years	48
More than 5 to 10 years	30
More than 10 to 20 years	7
More than 20 years	1
Total	100

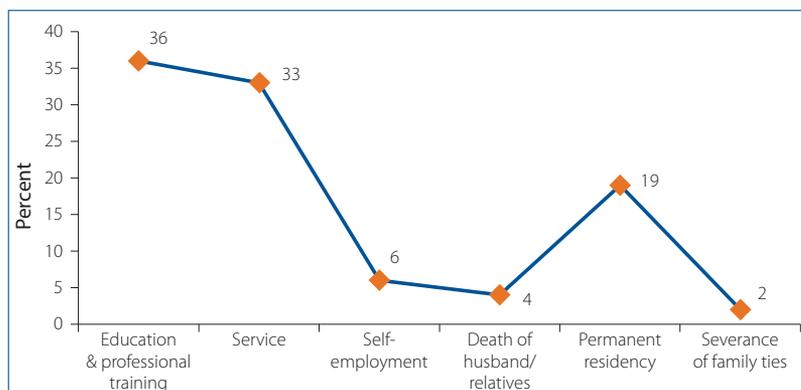
Reasons for Living Alone

Education and professional training is cited by majority of respondents (36%) as the reason for living alone in the city. The second most cited reason is the engagement of women in different services (33%) and the third is permanent residencies (19%). While 6% respondents are living alone as they are self-employed; death of husband/relatives and severance of family ties are cited as reasons by 4% and 2% respondents respectively.

It is important to note that reasons for living alone may not always have a bearing on occupation. For example, sex workers and beggars cited self-employment and service¹⁰ as their reasons for living alone. Similarly, some of the respondents employed in different services cited educational and professional training as the reason for living alone as they are primarily engaged in studies.

Table 3.2: Reasons for Living Alone in the City

Reasons	Percent
Education and professional training	36
Service	33
Self-employment	6
Death of husband and/or relatives	4
Permanent residency	19
Severance of family ties	2
Total	100

Chart 3.1: Reasons for Living Alone in the City

¹⁰ Since some of the women engaged in sex work operate through middlemen, which is akin to working under someone just as it happens in case of salaried persons who work under someone's supervision, they opted for service as the reason.

Preference for Living Alone

The study found that majority of women (54%) do not prefer living alone in the city. However, the remaining 46% of the total sample of 555 expressed preference for their decision to live alone.

Table 3.3: Respondents' Preference for Living Alone

Preference	Percent
Yes	46
No	54
Total	100

Reasons for Preference

The respondents who expressed their preference for living alone cited different reasons to substantiate their replies. Majority of women (42%) are of the view that independent living makes them bold and confident. While 35% respondents cited education and career as the reason; 10% cited disputes and differences with family members, manifested in the form of domestic violence or maltreatment by parents and family members for instance, as the reason behind their wanting to live alone. There are also 4% respondents who prefer living alone as it allows them to indulge in otherwise socially unacceptable behaviour such as drug addiction, alcoholism, or sex work. Finally, another 4% are drawn to Delhi's infrastructure and ambience.

Why Do Women Prefer to Live Alone?



35% for education and career



42% feel living alone makes them bold and confident



10% due to domestic violence and family disputes



4% due to involvement in socially unacceptable behavior like drug addiction, alcoholism, sex work etc.

Table 3.4: Reasons for Preference for Living Alone

Reasons	Percent
Independent living makes them feel bold and confident	42
Disputes and differences with family members	10
For the sake of education and career	35
Involvement in socially unacceptable behaviour	4
Others	4
No response	5
Total	100

Reasons for Non-Preference

With regard to reasons for non-preference for living alone, the women cited many reasons, which are also indicative of the concerns associated with their present life. While some of the reasons are linked to external environment like concern for safety and security (31%) which also tops the list of reasons, difficulty in finding accommodation and managing other needs (10%) and high cost of living in the city (3%); some are linked to personal and family conditions like emotional attachment with family and friends (27%), circumstantial constraints like lack of family support, involvement in sex work, old age and no living family member (13%), and difficulty in handling health and finance issues (8%).

Reasons Why Women Do Not Prefer Living Alone?

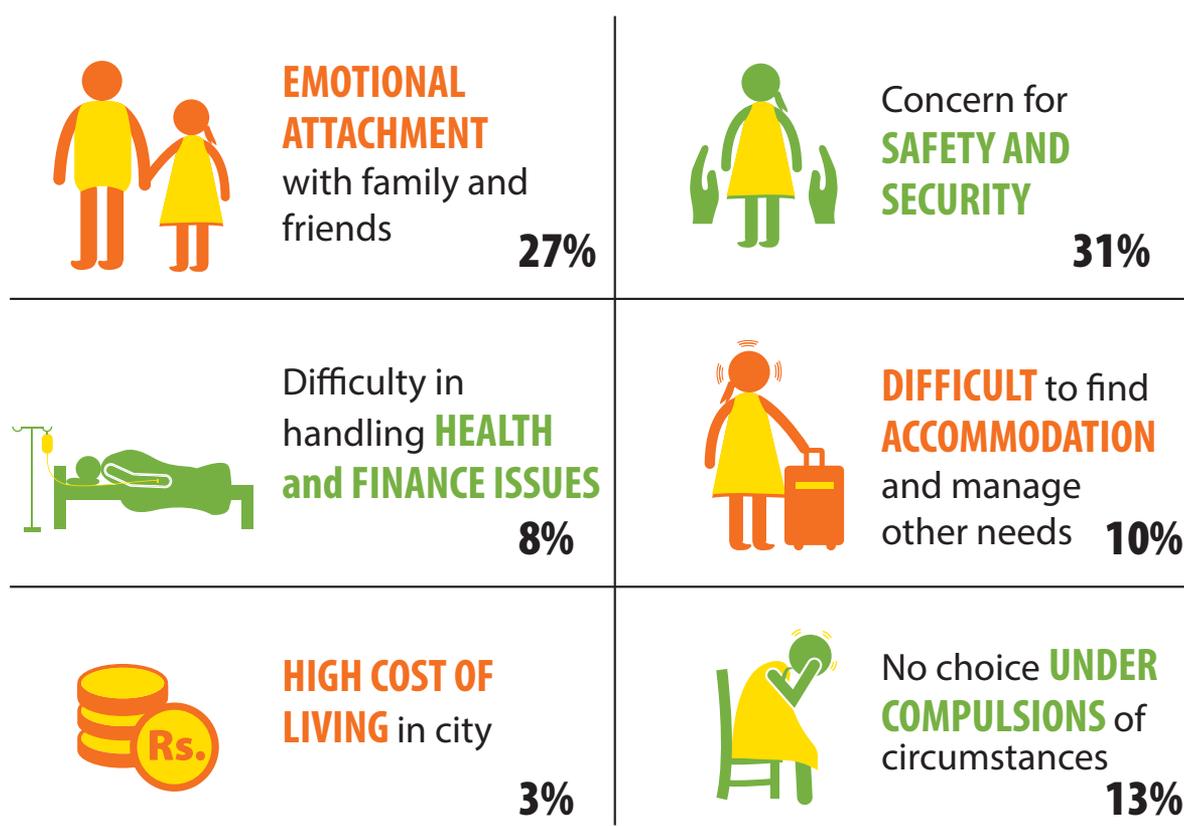


Table 3.5: Reasons for Non-preference for Living Alone

Reasons	Percent
Emotional attachment with family and friends	27
Concern for safety and security	31
Difficulty in handling issues concerning health and finance	8
Difficulty in finding accommodation and managing other needs	10
High cost of living in city	3
No choice under compulsions of circumstances	13
Others	2
No response	10

Proximity with Immediate Family

Proximity of respondents with immediate families will help us determine the extent of closeness they have with their families and the likelihood of availability of families in times of need. As Table 3.6 indicates, only 35% women have their immediate families living in the NCT of Delhi. While 5% respondents have no family, families of remaining 60% women live outside the NCT.

Table 3.6: Whereabouts of Immediate Family

Status	Percent
Living in Delhi	35
Living outside Delhi	60
No family	5
Total	100

Data on frequency at which respondents visit their families reveals that 29% (the highest) visit their families once in every month, 20% visit once in three months and 22% do so once in six months. While 11% women visit their families once in a year; visits are rare in case of 10% respondents and 5% never visit their families. If figures of 'rarely', 'never' and 'others' who do not follow any regular frequency are considered together, 18% respondents seem to have either no or little closeness with their families. In other words, these women live almost on their own with little or no support of families.

Table 3.7: Frequency of Meeting with Family

Frequency	Percent
Once in a month	29
Once in three months	20
Once in six months	22
Once in a year	11
Rarely	10
Never	5
Others	3
Total	100

Table 3.8: Correlation between Family Living in NCT and Visit to Families

Frequency of Visit to Families	Family Living in NCT		
	Yes	No	Total
Once in a month	61 (94)	39 (61)	100 (155)
Once in three months	27 (28)	73 (77)	100 (105)
Once in six months	14 (16)	86 (100)	100 (116)
Once in a year	10 (6)	90 (55)	100 (61)
Rarely	56 (31)	44 (24)	100 (55)
Never	39 (7)	61 (11)	100 (18)
Others	71 (12)	29 (5)	100 (17)

Note: Figures in parentheses are frequencies of families living in NCT and the others are percentages.

The correlation analysis of the two variables namely status in regard to family living in NCT and frequency of visits to families, as shown in Table 3.8, indicates that 61% respondents, out of those who visit their families once in every month, have their families living in the NCT. The data also shows that 56%, of those who rarely visit their families, have their families living in the NCT. It can be concluded that the women whose families live in the NCT visit their families more often and vice versa.

Level of Interaction with Neighbours and Community People

The study also captured the level of interaction the respondents have with their neighbours and community people. Nearly half of respondents (47%) interact with their neighbours and people from community frequently, almost on daily or weekly basis. This is followed by those with occasional interaction (28%), only in time of need. While interaction is a rarity for 20% women; there are 5% respondents who never interact with their neighbours and people in nearby communities. The above findings clearly indicate that there is no or low level of interaction with neighbours and community members in case of majority of women (53%) who are living alone in the city.

Table 3.9: Interaction with Neighbours and Community Members

Frequency	Percent
Frequently, almost on daily/weekly basis	47
Occasionally, in times of need	28
Rarely	20
Never	5
Total	100



Dynamics of Challenges Faced by Women Living Alone

Historically, women in India have generally lived with family or other kin, but in recent decades they have started living alone, especially in cities like Delhi, either by design or by default. No matter what the reason behind women living alone, doing so presents its own set of challenges. Understanding the nature of these challenges is imperative, while also taking into account the coping mechanisms adopted by the respondents. The sections below address these issues.

Types and Nature of Challenges

Women living alone in the city face many challenges, as indicated in infographic and Table 4.1 below. Inadequate safety and security during travelling on roads is a major challenge for 44% of the respondents, especially those who commute late at night or start their days early. For others, challenges present themselves in the form of financial hardship (43%), emotional stress (42%), poor health (37%) and inadequate safety and security in public spaces like markets (35%). Other challenges mentioned by the respondents are inadequate safety and security at residence (32%), hostile neighbours and community (17%), difficulty in dealing with offices that provide utilities such as electricity and telephone services (10%), and inadequate safety and security in offices (8%). It is important to note that most the respondents cited more than one challenge. The study also found that 6% women do not face any challenges.

Challenges Faced by Women Living Alone

Safety and security on road and during travel is a major challenge

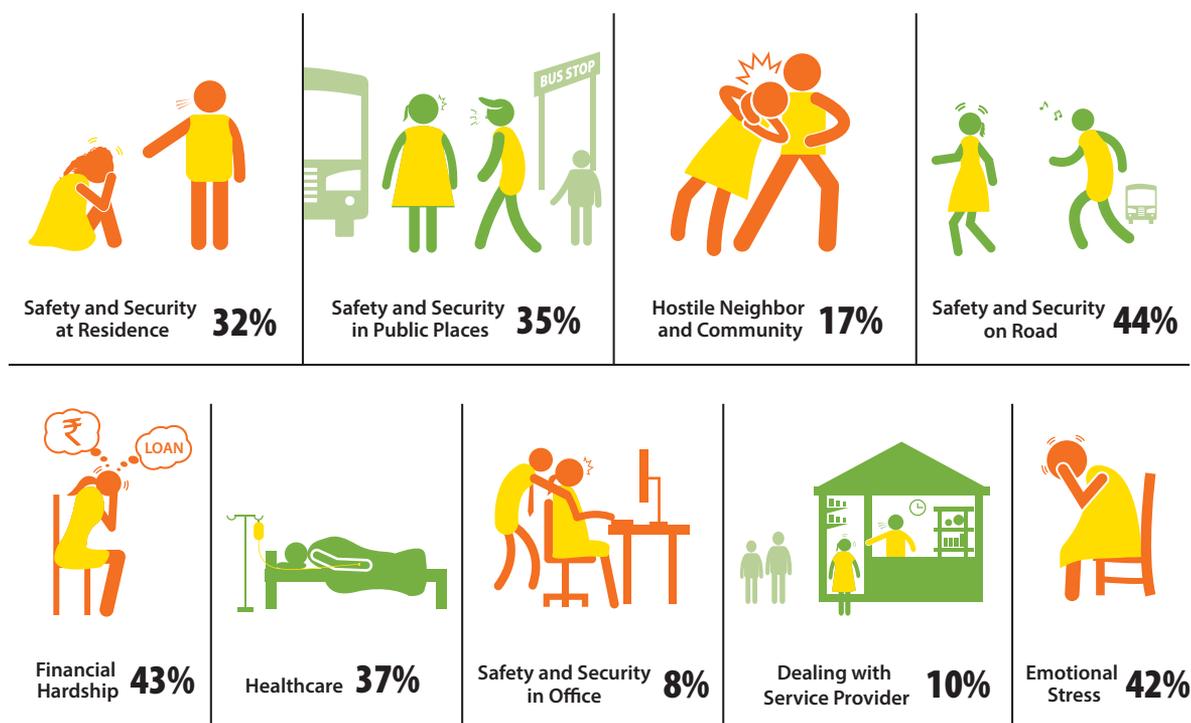


Table 4.1: Types of Challenges

Challenges	Percent
Inadequate safety and security at residence	32
Inadequate safety and security on road/during travel	44
Inadequate safety and security in office	8
Inadequate safety and security in public spaces	35
Financial hardship	43
Dealing with service providing offices	10
Hostile neighbours and communities	17
Healthcare issues	37
Emotional stress	42
None	6

In order to understand the challenges further, the respondents were asked to elaborate their nature by citing real life examples for the challenges. Table 4.2 contains summarized versions of real life situations shared by the women.

Table 4.2: Nature of Challenges Elaborated with Real Life Examples

Challenges	Real Life Examples
Financial hardship	Inadequate income affects single women's capability to meet livelihood and other needs. There are also poverty stricken women who are dependent on NGOs, relatives, and neighbours for food and other needs.
Poor health	Women living alone face difficulties in self-care during times of illness or disability. This is exacerbated for those who suffer from chronic and terminal illnesses, drug users, and physically and visually disabled women.
Women's safety and security	Women who live alone face threats to their safety and security in many private and public spaces. Real life examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Lewd comments and harassment by neighbours, community members and colleagues ◆ Theft and insecurity at residence and at workplaces ◆ Physical violence like beating and sexual assault ◆ Insecurity due to nature of professions like call centre job, sex work, healthcare sector, police etc.
Emotional stress	Emotionally stressful situations, as shared by respondents, are results of multiple factors like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Absence of parents and relatives ◆ No living members in family ◆ Lack of job satisfaction ◆ Health-related issues especially those of a chronic and terminal nature ◆ Exposure to physical violence and the inability to share this trauma with family and friends ◆ Financial hardships faced by those who are unemployed and have no family whatsoever
Dealing with service providers	The problems are mainly due to procedural issues while dealing with offices like electricity, transport etc., that consume more time and make them face hassles.

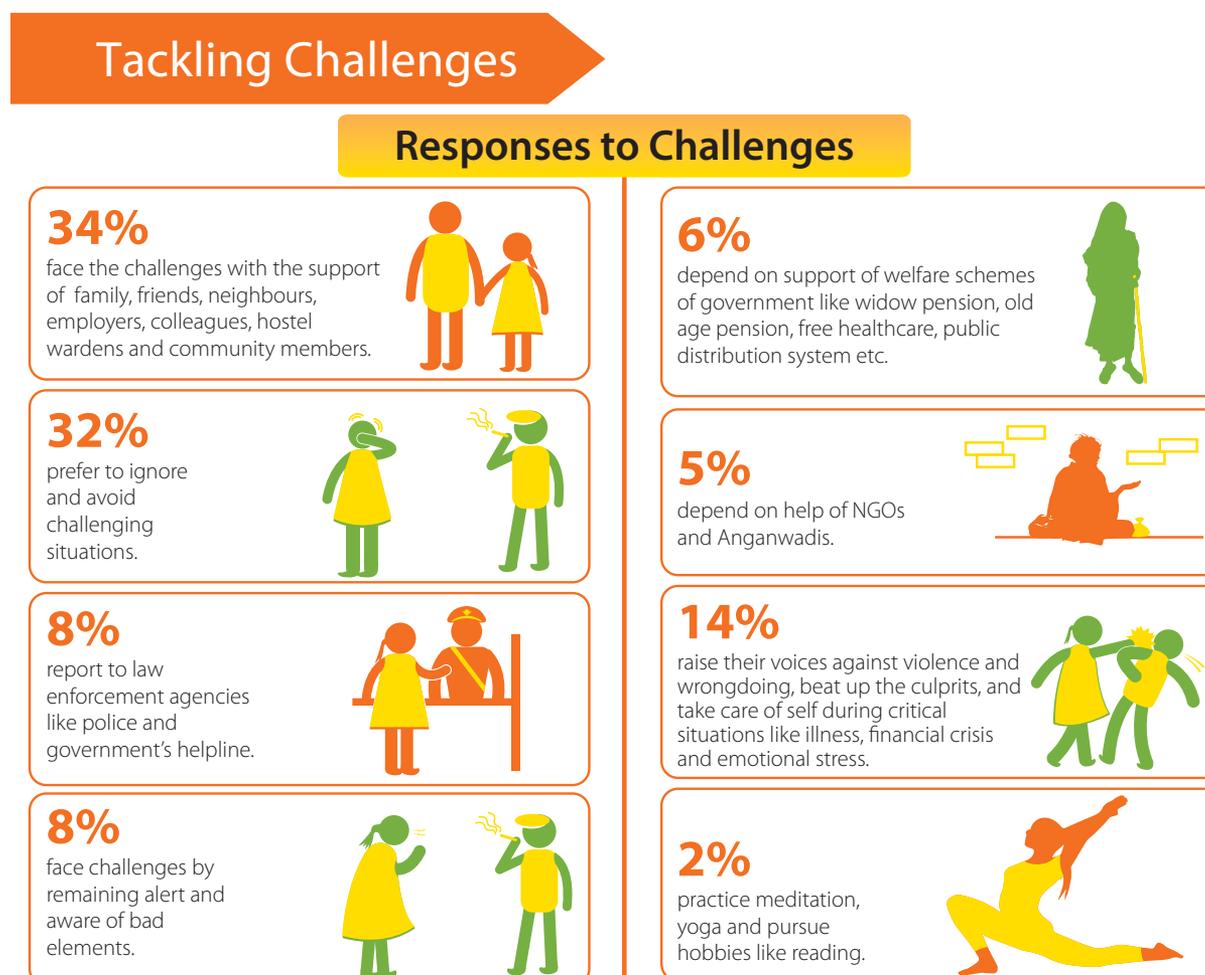
■ Responses to Challenges

The respondents addressed these challenges in a variety of ways. While some responses can be categorized as preventive or proactive in nature, others are reactionary or accommodative. Majority of them (34%) depend on the support of family, friends, community, employers, colleagues and hostel wardens in dealing with the challenges of living alone. Nearly the same number of respondents (32%) prefer to avoid facing these challenges altogether by avoiding areas or situations where safety and security are threatened. This means avoiding crowded areas, late night travel, and hostile family and work environments. Significantly, responses to challenges are also dependent on the nature of challenges. Widows, the elderly, and poor and destitute women, whose challenges are mainly concerned with lack of shelter and food, financial hardship and emotional stress, either seek help of NGOs and *anganwadi* workers (5%) or depend on support of government's welfare schemes (6%).

When it comes to ensuring their safety and security, 8% responded saying that they address the challenges by remaining alert and aware of potential threats. There are others who report or threaten to report misconduct to the police or use one of the government's telephone helpline numbers (8%). Some of the women (14%), categorized as 'others' in Table 4.3 below, respond to challenges by raising their voices against violence and misconduct, beating up the culprits and taking care of themselves during critical situations like illnesses, financial crisis and emotional stress. Interestingly, 2% women practice meditation and yoga and remain involved in creative pursuits like reading and painting in order to overcome challenges of life and avoid stress.

Table 4.3: Women's Responses to Challenges

Responses to challenges	Percent
Support of family, friends, neighbours, employers, colleagues, hostel wardens and community members	34
Remaining alert and aware of threats to safety and security	8
Ignoring street harassment and avoiding places and situations like crowded places, late night travel, hostile family and office environment etc., that are difficult to face singlehandedly	32
Reporting/threatening to report to law enforcement agencies like police and government's helpline	8
Seeking help of NGOs and <i>anganwadi</i> workers	5
Support of government's welfare schemes	6
Practicing meditation and yoga, reading and pursuing hobbies	2
Others	14
No response	12



Causes of Challenges

The reasons behind the challenges noted above are rooted in systemic deficiencies that one can notice at multiple levels viz. the society, system of education, administration of welfare and development measures and the mindset of people. Societal framework that considers single women as helpless, patriarchal mindset that goes against gender equality, poor governance that often deprives people of their rightful entitlements, illiteracy and ignorance of women that act as barriers to delivery of entitlements and justice, and inadequate social security mechanism for the needy reinforce the nature and causes of challenges faced by women living alone in the city. It is pertinent to note that these women are often doubly disadvantaged due to their gender and their status as individuals living alone in a city. These two components coupled with other critical real life situations, especially the ones faced by those at the bottom of society, like financial hardship, illness, physical violence, mental and emotional trauma, lack of knowledge and access to grievance redressal mechanisms make conditions of women living alone extremely difficult and traumatic.

Nearly one third of the respondents (32%) cited a lack of awareness among men about the rights of women as a cause behind the challenges faced by single women. This view was also echoed by most of the men interviewed. Low levels of literacy in women and the resultant lack of awareness of their rights was also stated by respondents (14%) as one of the reasons behind these challenges. Challenges faced by women, in the opinion of 10% respondents, are due to male illiteracy and their acquaintance with socially deviant people. The above views not only reflect prevalence of patriarchal mindset in society but also inadequate awareness about gender equality.

Poor governance was another contributing factor to the challenges faced by women living alone. One in ten respondents cited inadequate enforcement of laws protecting women as a reason, followed by delays in the release of entitlements such as widow and old age pensions (7%). While 11% respondents were of the view that challenges faced by them are due to the prevailing impression in society that single women are weak and helpless; 5% reported that they faced challenges because of inadequate avenues for counseling, lack of access to healthcare, financial hardship, and a lack of emotional support. The respondents who did not share their views on the causes of challenges constitute 27% of the sample.

Table 4.4: Causes of Challenges Faced by Women

Causes	Percent
Single women are considered weak and helpless	11
Lack of awareness among men about rights of women	32
Female Illiteracy and ignorance of rights	14
Inadequate avenues for counseling, healthcare, financial and emotional support for single women	5
Male Illiteracy and acquaintance with bad elements	10
Inadequate enforcement of laws concerning rights of women	10
Others (delay in release of widow and old age pensions)	7
No response	27

Reasons behind Challenges Faced by Single Women



11% Single women are considered **WEAK and HELPLESS**

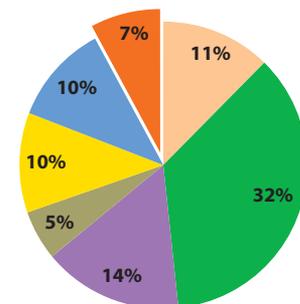
14% **FEMALE ILLITERACY AND IGNORANCE** of rights

10% **MALE ILLITERACY** and acquaintance with bad elements

32% **LACK OF AWARENESS** among men about rights of

5% **INADEQUATE AVENUES** for support for single women

10% **INADEQUATE ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS** concerning rights



Others (delay in release of widow and old age pensions)

The views of men on causes behind the challenges, as briefly noted above, are highlighted further in view of their relevance to the analysis. According to men, the key reasons are the following:

- ◆ Orthodox male mindset and patriarchal social order are at odds with women living alone in the city.
- ◆ Peer pressure for youthful adventurism results in men, especially the youth, committing crime against women. Women living alone are considered a soft target.
- ◆ The status of living alone increases vulnerability of women in view of absence of immediate support system that is traditionally provided by family.
- ◆ Inadequate enforcement of laws and measures for prevention of crimes against women exacerbate their vulnerability.

The views of women and men also prove the hypothesis that patriarchal social order results in men discriminating and targeting single women in city.

Correlation between Challenges and Age

Correlation between challenges faced by women living alone in the city and their age establishes the following trends:

- ◆ Safety and security in public and private spaces is a challenge mostly for women in the age groups 18-30 years and 31-45 years.
- ◆ Although financial hardship is faced by all age groups, the problem is most acute for elderly respondents (i.e. above 60 years age).

- ◆ Hostile behavior from neighbours and the community is an issue faced only by respondents of younger age groups (i.e. 18-30 years and 31-45 years).
- ◆ Health problems are faced by both the elderly (60+ years) and younger respondents (18-30 years) indicating the underlying challenges associated with both age-related problems and stressful lifestyles associated with youth.
- ◆ The elderly experience financial hardship and poor health, demonstrating the need for a social security mechanism.
- ◆ Emotional stress is a challenge for the younger generation as 73% of those who shared this challenge are in the age group of 18-30 years and the remaining 27% are in 31-45 years.
- ◆ Among the women who do not face any challenge, the share of 18-30 year old respondents is the highest (85%).

Table 4.5: Correlation between Challenges Faced by Respondents and their Age

Challenges	18-30 years	31-45 years	46-60 years	Above 60 years	Not stated	Total
Inadequate safety and security at residence	77 (139)	21 (38)	1 (2)	1 (2)	0	100 (181)
Inadequate safety and security on road/ during travel	82 (121)	15 (22)	3 (5)	0	0	100 (148)
Inadequate safety and security in office	43 (6)	57 (8)	0	0	0	100 (14)
Inadequate safety and security in public spaces	81 (29)	19 (7)	0	0	0	100 (36)
Financial hardship	27 (28)	18 (18)	19 (19)	34 (34)	2 (2)	100 (101)
Dealing with service providing offices	67 (4)	17 (1)	17 (1)	0	0	100 (6)
Hostile neighbours and communities	82 (9)	18 (2)	0	0	0	100 (11)
Healthcare issues	42 (5)	8 (1)	8 (1)	42 (5)	0	100 (12)
Emotional stress	73 (8)	27 (3)	0	0	0	100 (11)
None	85 (28)	12 (4)	3 (1)	0	0	100 (33)

Note: Figures in parentheses are frequencies of age and the others are percentages.

Correlation between Challenges and Age

Safety and security related challenges are mostly faced by women in the age groups **18-30 years** and **31-45 years**



Health problems are mostly faced by **elderly and young respondents (18-30 years)** indicating challenges of age-related ailments and stressful living of the youth

Financial hardship is most acute for **elderly respondents** (i.e. above **60 years age**)



Vulnerability of **elderly** to **Financial hardship and health** woes indicates inadequacy of social security mechanism in the city

Emotional stress is a major challenge for **younger generation**



Correlation between Challenges and Education

The following trends emerge as a result of correlation between challenges and level of education of respondents:

- ◆ Safety and security related challenges are faced mostly by respondents with high level of education (i.e. Graduates and Post Graduates).
- ◆ Financial hardship, on the other hand, is a challenge mostly faced by illiterates and women who are less educated.
- ◆ Emotional stress is a challenge faced mostly by educated professionals.
- ◆ Problems relating to dealing with service providers, hostile neighbours, and healthcare issues are faced by respondents from all educational backgrounds but in varying degrees.

Table 4.6: Correlation between Challenges and Education of Respondents

Challenges	Illiterate	Primary	Secondary	Higher Secondary	Graduation	Post-Graduation	Total
Inadequate safety and security at residence	7 (12)	9 (17)	10 (18)	4 (7)	24 (44)	46 (83)	100 (181)
Inadequate safety and security on road/ during travel	1 (1)	1 (1)	3 (4)	4 (6)	40 (59)	52 (77)	100 (148)
Inadequate safety and security in office	7 (1)	21 (3)	7 (1)	14 (2)	21 (3)	29 (4)	100 (14)
Inadequate safety and security in public spaces	0	0	0	11 (4)	56 (20)	33 (12)	100 (36)
Financial hardship	55 (56)	14 (14)	8 (8)	3 (3)	9 (9)	11 (11)	100 (101)
Dealing with service providing offices	17 (1)	17 (1)	0	0	50 (3)	17 (1)	100 (6)
Hostile neighbours and communities	18 (2)	27 (3)	18 (2)	9 (1)	27 (3)	0	100 (11)
Healthcare issues	50 (6)	17 (2)	0	0	8 (1)	25 (3)	100 (12)
Emotional stress	0	9 (1)	9 (1)	0	45 (5)	36 (4)	100 (11)
None	12 (4)	0	0	15 (5)	18 (6)	55 (18)	100 (33)

Note: Figures in parentheses are frequencies of education and the others are percentages.

Correlation between Challenges and Education

Safety and security challenges are faced more by respondents with **high level of education** than illiterates and those with low level of education



Financial hardship is a challenge mostly faced by **illiterates** and **less educated**



Emotional stress is a challenge faced mostly by **qualified respondents**



Correlation between Challenges and Income

The correlation between the challenges faced by women living alone and the level of income clearly indicates that women from low income categories (earning less than Rs. 10,000 per month) are the most disadvantaged among all income categories noted in table below. Also, the magnitude of challenges decreases with an increase in income in most of the cases; and in some cases like emotional stress, financial hardship and safety and security in the workplace, the challenges do not even exist for respondents earning higher incomes.

Table 4.7: Correlation between Challenges and Respondents' Income

Challenges	Rs. 10,000 or less	Rs. 10,001-20,000	Rs. 20,001-30,000	Rs. 30,001-50,000	Rs. 50,001-100,000	More than Rs. 100,000	Total
Inadequate safety and security at residence	50 (90)	19 (35)	12 (21)	10 (19)	8 (15)	1 (1)	100 (181)
Inadequate safety and security on road/during travel	41 (61)	22 (33)	16 (24)	9 (14)	9 (13)	2 (3)	100 (148)
Inadequate safety and security in office	64 (9)	7 (1)	7 (1)	14 (2)	7 (1)	0	100 (14)
Inadequate safety and security in public spaces	63 (22)	11 (4)	6 (2)	14 (5)	3 (1)	3 (1)	100 (35)
Financial hardship	86 (87)	9 (9)	0	3 (3)	1 (1)	0	100 (101)
Dealing with service providing offices	83 (5)	17 (1)	0	0	0	0	100 (6)
Hostile neighbours and communities	72 (8)	18 (2)	9 (1)	0	0	0	100 (11)
Healthcare issues	58 (7)	17 (2)	17 (2)	8 (1)	0	0	100 (12)
Emotional stress	46 (5)	18 (2)	18 (2)	18 (2)	0	0	100 (11)
None	55 (18)	0	9 (3)	15 (5)	12 (4)	9 (3)	100 (33)

Note: Figures in parentheses are frequencies of income and the others are percentages.

Correlation between Challenges and Occupation

The results of correlation between challenges and occupation of respondents are the following:

- ◆ Safety and security challenges are faced mostly by students and those employed in the private sector.
- ◆ Financial hardship is faced mostly by those who are unemployed or engaged in daily wage labour. Other respondents reported facing this issue but to a lesser extent.
- ◆ The problem of troublesome neighbours and community is faced mostly by students, periodic wage earners, and those engaged in sex work and begging.
- ◆ While health problems are mostly faced by the unemployed, emotional stress bothers mostly the students and those employed in private sector.

Table 4.8: Correlation between Challenges and Occupation

Challenges	Daily wage labour	Periodic wage payment	Emp. in private sector	Emp. in Govt. sector	Self employed	Prostitution and begging	Study	Not employed	Total
Inadequate safety and security at residence	1 (2)	14 (25)	30 (54)	14 (25)	7 (12)	2 (4)	29 (52)	3 (6)	100 (180)
Inadequate safety and security on road/during travel	0	0	39 (57)	13 (19)	7 (10)	1 (2)	40 (59)	1 (1)	100 (148)
Inadequate safety and security in office	7 (1)	7 (1)	50 (7)	0	21 (3)	0	14 (2)	0	100 (14)
Inadequate safety and security in public spaces	0	0	31 (11)	8 (3)	6 (2)	0	53 (19)	3 (1)	100 (36)
Financial hardship	4 (4)	21 (21)	15 (15)	2 (2)	9 (9)	4 (4)	7 (7)	38 (38)	100 (100)
Dealing with service providing offices	17 (1)	17 (1)	33 (2)	0	0	0	33 (2)	0	100 (6)
Hostile neighbours and communities	0	27 (3)	9 (1)	0	0	27 (3)	27 (3)	9 (1)	100 (11)

Contd...

Challenges	Daily wage labour	Periodic wage payment	Emp. in private sector	Emp. in Govt. sector	Self employed	Prostitution and begging	Study	Not employed	Total
Healthcare issues	0	0	8 (1)	8 (1)	8 (1)	17 (2)	17 (2)	42 (5)	100 (12)
Emotional stress	0	0	27 (3)	18 (2)	0	9 (1)	45 (5)	0	100 (11)
None	0	6 (2)	33 (11)	9 (3)	0	9 (3)	42 (14)	0	100 (33)

Note: Figures in parentheses are frequencies of occupation and the others are percentages.

Correlation between Challenges and Social Categories

Out of the four social categories, respondents under the General category occupy top positions in regard to all the challenges listed in Table 4.9 below, except financial hardship and hostile neighbour and community, which have OBC as majority; and the challenge of dealing with service providing offices that has SC and General categories in equal number.

Table 4.9: Correlation between Challenges and Social Categories

Challenges	SC	ST	OBC	General	Total
Inadequate safety and security at residence	10 (19)	3 (6)	19 (35)	66 (120)	100 (181)
Inadequate safety and security on road/during travel	8 (12)	5 (7)	18 (26)	70 (103)	100 (148)
Inadequate safety and security in office	21 (3)	7 (1)	21 (3)	50 (7)	100 (14)
Inadequate safety and security in public spaces	8 (3)	3 (1)	6 (2)	83 (30)	100 (36)
Financial hardship	31 (31)	6 (6)	35 (35)	29 (29)	100 (101)
Dealing with service providing offices	33 (2)	17 (1)	17 (1)	33 (2)	100 (6)
Hostile neighbours and communities	18 (2)	0	55 (6)	27 (3)	100 (11)
Healthcare issues	25 (3)	17 (2)	8 (1)	50 (6)	100 (12)
Emotional stress	18 (2)	18 (2)	27 (3)	37 (4)	100 (11)
None	21 (7)	0	21 (7)	58 (19)	100 (33)

Note: Figures in parentheses are frequencies of social categories and the others are percentages.

The study also found that the second position is occupied either by SC or OBC respondents in case of other challenges. The analysis of correlation is a reflection of numerical positions of the four social categories in the sample, which has General category respondents at the top, followed by the OBC, SC and ST respectively. However, the responses indicate that the challenges faced by women cannot be attributed to the social categories they belong to, unlike other variables like education, occupation, income etc., that affect the nature of challenges faced by them.

Correlation between Challenges and Marital Status

The unmarried women occupy top position in regard to all the challenges except financial hardship and healthcare issues which have widows in majority. In other words, married and separated or divorced women are relatively less vulnerable to challenges. However, the important challenges that married and separated or divorced women face are safety and security at residence, safety and security on road/during travel and financial hardship. Keeping in view the frequencies of respondents under each marital status category as given in parentheses in the table below, the following observations can be made:

- ◆ Most unmarried respondents face safety and security challenges while traveling, at home, in public places and in the workplace.
- ◆ The key challenges faced by married women living alone are inadequate safety and security at residence and on road/during travel.
- ◆ For the separated and divorced respondents, safety and security at residence and financial hardship are two key challenges.
- ◆ For the widows, financial hardship is a major problem. This indicates not only non-availability productive assets and sources of income but also inadequacy of welfare measures like widow pension and old age pension.
- ◆ The responses also clearly indicate the primacy of safety and security challenges among all the challenges, as, except the widows who face less of it, most of the unmarried, married and separated/divorced respondents face these challenges.

Table 4.10: Correlation between Challenges and Marital Status

Challenges	Unmarried	Married	Separated/divorced	Widow	Total
Inadequate safety and security at residence	63 (114)	10 (19)	22 (40)	4 (7)	100 (180)
Inadequate safety and security on road/during travel	82 (122)	9 (14)	5 (7)	3 (5)	100 (148)
Inadequate safety and security in office	58 (8)	14 (2)	14 (2)	14 (2)	100 (14)
Inadequate safety and security in public spaces	91 (33)	3 (1)	3 (1)	3 (1)	100 (36)

Contd...

Challenges	Unmarried	Married	Separated/divorced	Widow	Total
Financial hardship	20 (20)	4 (4)	16 (16)	60 (61)	100 (101)
Dealing with service providing offices	67 (4)	0	0	33 (2)	100 (6)
Hostile neighbours and communities	64 (7)	9 (1)	18 (2)	9 (1)	100 (11)
Healthcare issues	33 (4)	17 (2)	8 (1)	42 (5)	100 (12)
Emotional stress	73 (8)	18 (2)	0	9 (1)	100 (11)
None	91 (30)	9 (3)	0	0	100 (33)

Note: Figures in parentheses are frequencies of marital status and the others are percentages.

Correlation between Challenges and Reasons for Living Alone

Correlation between challenges and reasons for living alone has the following trends:

- ◆ The safety and security challenges are mostly faced by women who are living alone either for the purpose of educational and professional training or for their engagement in different services. This is indicative of their high level of interface with people in offices, public places and in localities they live in.
- ◆ Majority of respondents (55%) having permanent residency in the city face financial hardship. They are the ones with limited or no sources of income.
- ◆ The key problems faced by women living alone in the city due to death of husbands or relatives are financial hardship and healthcare.
- ◆ Most of the respondents facing emotional stress are either students undergoing educational or professional training, or those living in the city due to their engagement in services.
- ◆ Keeping in view the trends noted above in light of responses of majority of women, it can be said that the reasons for living alone in the city have a bearing on the kind of challenges these people face.

Table 4.11: Correlation between Challenges and Reasons for Living Alone

Challenges	Education/ professional training	Service	Self- employ- ment	Death of husband/ relatives	Permanent residency	Severance of family ties	Total
Inadequate safety and security at residence	35 (63)	39 (71)	7 (12)	1 (2)	17 (31)	1 (2)	100 (181)

Contd...

Challenges	Education/ professional training	Service	Self- employ- ment	Death of husband/ relatives	Permanent residency	Severance of family ties	Total
Inadequate safety and security on road/ during travel	49 (72)	43 (64)	4 (6)	1 (1)	3 (4)	1 (1)	100 (148)
Inadequate safety and security in office	14 (2)	43 (6)	14 (2)	7 (1)	21 (3)	0	100 (14)
Inadequate safety and security in public spaces	67 (24)	25 (9)	6 (2)	0	3 (1)	0	100 (36)
Financial hardship	10 (10)	11 (11)	5 (5)	12 (12)	55 (56)	7 (7)	100 (101)
Dealing with service providing offices	33 (2)	33 (2)	0	0	33 (2)	0	100 (6)
Hostile neighbours and communities	27 (3)	18 (2)	9 (1)	0	27 (3)	9 (1)	100 (11)
Healthcare issues	17 (2)	25 (3)	0	25 (3)	33 (4)	0	100
Emotional stress	55 (6)	36 (4)	9 (1)	0	0	0	100 (11)
None	55 (18)	39 (13)	0	0	6 (2)	0	100 (33)

Note: Figures in parentheses are frequencies of reasons and the others are percentages.

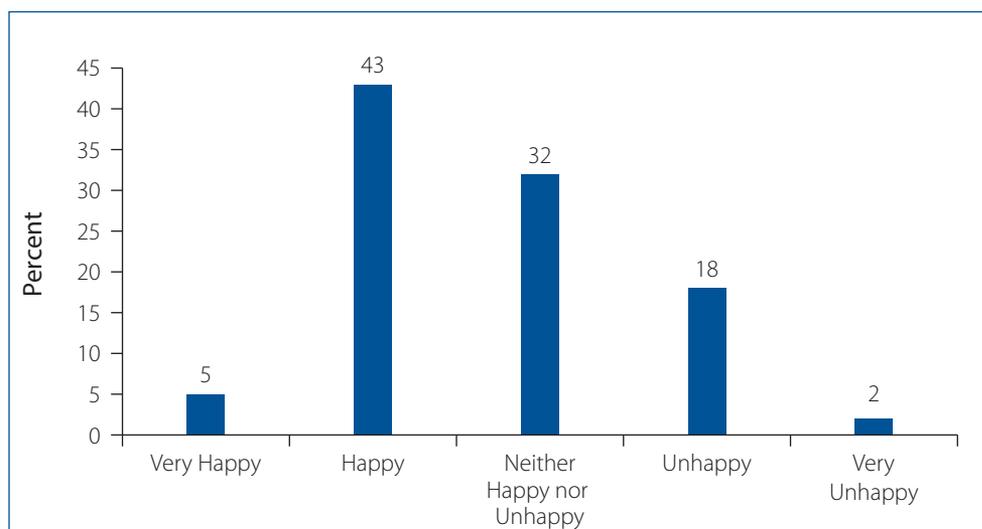
Present State of Happiness and Reasons

Women living alone in the city face multiple challenges as noted in the foregoing sections. Therefore, it is useful to make observations regarding their state of happiness in view of the challenges and their overall living conditions. Out of total sample of 555 women, only 5% are 'very happy'. While 43% rated their state of happiness as 'happy', 32% opted for the neutral position i.e. 'neither happy nor unhappy'. Out of the remaining, 18% termed their state of happiness as 'unhappy' and 2% rated it as 'very unhappy'. In other words, shares of 'happy' and 'unhappy' respondents are 48% and 20% respectively, excluding those who opted for the neutral position. The state of happiness leaves enough space for actions and systemic changes.

Table 4.12: Present State of Happiness

Rating of Happiness	Percent
Very Happy	5
Happy	43
Neither happy nor unhappy	32
Unhappy	18
Very Unhappy	2
Total	100

Chart 4.1: Present State of Happiness



The respondents shared different reasons for their present state of happiness. While some of the reasons are indicative of positive state of happiness, others fall in the category of negative state.

The following reasons fall under the first category:

- ◆ Facing challenges and solving them brings happiness
- ◆ Living life on own terms and conditions
- ◆ Support of family, relatives, colleagues, friends and community
- ◆ Better career, infrastructure and facilities offered in the city

The reasons that indicate negative state of happiness are:

- ◆ Inadequate emotional support
- ◆ Problems associated with health, safety, career and finance
- ◆ Lack of support from family and relatives

The above reasons highlight two sides of the reality – the challenges of living alone in a city and the benefits and opportunities that life in the city offers. Some of the women clearly think that living alone helps them face challenges of city life in a better way, which is a reason for their state of happiness.

Table 4.13: Reasons for Present State of Happiness

Reasons	Percent
Facing challenges and solving them bring happiness	15
Living life on own terms and conditions	8
Inadequate emotional support	8
Problems associated with health, safety, career and finance	10
Lack of support from family and relatives	6
Support of family, relatives, colleagues, friends and community	13
Others (for better career, infrastructure and facilities of metro city)	12
No response	30

Present State of Happiness and Reasons

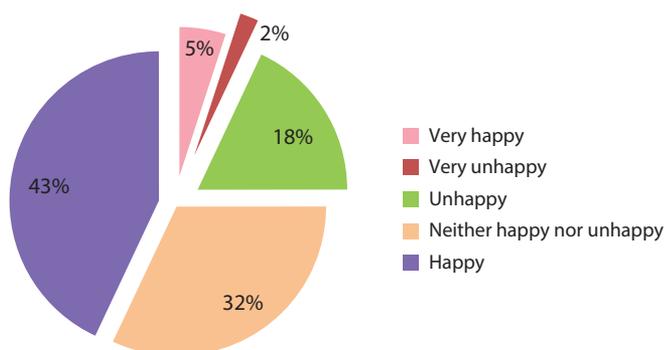
48% women are happy, 20% are unhappy and 32% are in a neutral position



- Support of family, relatives etc.
- Facing challenges and solving them
- Living life on own terms and conditions
- Better career, infrastructure etc.



- Lack of support from family and relatives
- Problems associated with health and safety
- Problems associated with career and finance
- Inadequate emotional support



Case Studies

During the course of data collection, the research team interacted with women who counter multiple challenges while living alone in the city- some face them bravely and some continue to suffer. The case studies presented below capture conditions of some of these women.

Ram Kali – A Lonely Septuagenarian’s Hope for Peace and Love of Dear Ones

Ram Kali is a 70-year-old illiterate widow living alone in Sultanpuri area of northwest Delhi. Although she has three sons and three daughters, none of them supports her at present. Her only source of income is the old age pension of Rs.1,500 per month which she receives from the government. But irregularity in disbursement of the pension only compounds her challenges. At the time of the interview, she had not received any payments for six months. Her ordeal is not limited to her abandonment by her children and limited income. She also suffers from serious health concerns such as poor vision, and a fractured hip that affects her mobility. She is unable to afford hip surgery.

To make ends meet, Ram Kali depends on the daily support of the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) located in nearby Mongulpuri for a complimentary breakfast, lunch and refreshment. Although Sultanpuri and Mongulpuri are

neighbouring areas, it takes her about one hour to commute the distance, without public transport, due to her hip pain. Given her extreme financial circumstances, on most days, Ram Kali is unable to afford an evening meal.

The only other source of relief for Ram Kali is that she has a roof over her head- a one room house that her husband had purchased and which now belongs to her. Unfortunately, her children have since filed a civil case against her disputing her ownership right to this property. Despite all these, she still hopes for peace in life and love of her children.

Addiction and Destitution – Seema’s Pathetic Journey to Oblivion

Seema is a native of Rajasthan. She is 24 years old, illiterate, homeless, and has no source of income. She remains on the street, generally found under the Ashram Flyover bridge in Delhi, where she begs. After fleeing her native home about four years ago because she did not like living with her stepfather, she encountered some drug addicts in Delhi, who fueled her already existing drug addiction. The longer she stayed in Delhi under the influence of a male companion who was also an addict, her dependence on drugs worsened. She continues to be an injecting drug user. The addiction has led to her physical exploitation and mental torture. People would promise her drugs, torture her, and leave her without drugs. At times she would disappear from the Ashram flyover in search of drugs. With no source of income and a debilitating drug habit, Seema leads a difficult and directionless life.

Najma – The Case of a Shattered Woman

Najma is a 32 year old illiterate woman. She was orphaned early in life, and then married off at the age of 14 to a man who was 21 years her senior. Marriage was a tragedy for Najma, as her husband abused her by drugging her food, and then allowed others to physically exploit her for money. Najma slowly gave in to the demands of her husband, as she started losing control on her mind and actions under the influence of drugs.

As her health deteriorated due to the continuous consumption of drugs and physical torture, her ability to meet the demands of her husband started decreasing. This soon resulted in her husband abandoning her, making her a homeless lonely destitute.

She now lives alone in a lane of Sultanpuri in Delhi where the house of her parents was located. Years of physical torture have shattered Najma, causing her to develop a sense of fear for people. She has difficulty in communicating with others and she

hardly speaks. When the research team approached her for a conversation, she started shivering in fear under the impression that she would be physically tortured again. She is presently being counseled by a non-governmental organisation working in the area. As a result, her mental condition is showing some signs of improvement. But her traumatic past has left her without a source of income, a house to stay and mentally and physically shattered.

From Life with Family to Living Alone – A Painful Journey of Sangeeta

Sangeeta, now aged 34, had married a Muslim man at the age of 24 against the wishes of her Hindu family. She spent the initial years after marriage in relative happiness, and has two children. However, she was subsequently abandoned by her husband and thrown out of the house, leaving behind her children. Her parental family also rejected her, refusing her entry into the house. Although her brother is sympathetic, others in family have barred her reentry into the family because of her marriage to a Muslim man and the false impression that she too had become a Muslim. Sangeeta has been socially ostracized by her family, and is now forced to live alone.

Her only regular source of support today is her brother who is financing a vocational training course for her in computers. An aunt occasionally lends some support also. As she has studied up to senior secondary level, the computer training that she is undergoing now may help her in getting some employment. Until then, she is dependent on her brother for sustenance. Despite these setbacks, Sangeeta is hopeful that she will ultimately lead a normal life with the passage of time, but she is unhappy with circumstances of her living alone without her children and family.

Tanu Singh – A Case of Fighting Odds with Hard Work and Determination

Tanu Singh left her home in Uttar Pradesh eight years ago at the age of 14 following the divorce of her parents. With her mother marrying another man, and her father under excessive influence of alcohol, Tanu decided to leave for Delhi in search of a better life. Soon she came in contact with Bachpan Bachao Andolan – an NGO providing institutional care to children and stayed under its care. The NGO trained her as a beautician, but she lacked the finances to start a beauty parlour of her own. Determined to become financially independent, Tanu took the relatively unusual decision of joining a training programme on driving. On successful completion of training, she was offered the job of a driver with a monthly salary of Rs. 10,000.

With financial independence, Tanu continues to support her family in Uttar Pradesh and sends Rs. 2,500 to an aunt every month to provide for the care of her younger brother. She also sends Rs. 2,000 every month to her grandmother in the village with whom her second brother lives. Tanu shared with the researchers some of her personal challenges associated with living alone in the city, especially during times of illness. She receives help from neighbour during difficult times.

As Tanu expects an increase in her salary, she plans to bring her two brothers and grandmother to Delhi. She has become successful in fighting odds of life due to hard work and determination.

Initiative of Government to Address Challenges

The study reveals the extent and nature of challenges faced by women living alone in the NCT of Delhi. In this context, it also highlights the absence of government initiatives to address them. The available literature indicates that there is no government programme specifically designed to benefit women living alone in the city. The Government of NCT of Delhi implements many schemes and programmes for welfare of women,¹¹ but none are tailored by design to address the issues faced by women living alone. The situation is also same in case of Government of India.

This is primarily due to non-recognition of 'women living alone' as a population category in need of help or worthy of programmatic intervention. Even the development discourse does not even consider women living alone as a separate population category, and it is rarely a source of debate or discussion. While it is true that some of the women living alone benefit from existing welfare programmes like widow pension, old age pension etc.; their non-recognition as a population category and consequent absence of target-specific welfare programmes leave the challenges faced by them unaddressed.

Suggestions of Respondents to Address Challenges

The respondents made a few suggestions which in their view would improve the lot of women living alone in Delhi if they are implemented. Some of these suggestions call for better governance, while others speak for the need for self-improvement on a more personal level. They are as follows:

- ◆ Effective implementation of the existing laws which protect and promote the safety and security of women

¹¹ The schemes presently in operation are the scheme for implementation of Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005; scheme for Working Women's Hostel; and scheme for Delhi Commission for Women. The Department of Women and Child Development, Government of NCT of Delhi runs one statutory institution under the Immoral Trafficking (Prevention) Act, 1956 and three non-statutory institutions viz. Widow Home, After Care Home and Short Stay Home for destitute women. Besides managing Delhi Pension Scheme for Women in Distress (Widow Pension) and old age pension; the Department also implements Mission Convergence or Samajik Suvidha Sangam – a flagship programme of the government for empowerment of women, under which Gender Resource Centres (GRC) are functioning across the city for economic, social and psychological empowerment of women. The Delhi Commission for Women also implements many programmes namely Sahyogini, Mahila Panchayats, Rape Crisis Cell, Mobile Help Line and Pre Marital Counselling Cell which target women in distress and vulnerable women at the grassroots.

- ◆ Proper implementation of government welfare schemes like widow pension, old age pension, healthcare support, education, working women's hostel, women's helpline etc.
- ◆ Women living alone should remain alert and be extra careful about their surroundings
- ◆ Women should take lessons on self-defense and life skills which may ensure their safety when needed
- ◆ Being financially independent and finding employment is essential
- ◆ Women living alone should be mentally strong and confident

How Can Challenges Faced by Single Women be Addressed?



Table 4.14: Suggestions by Women to Address Challenges

Suggestions	Percent
Proper implementation of laws protecting and promoting rights of women	26
Proper implementation of welfare schemes of the government	19
Women living alone should be extra careful about their surroundings	8
Lessons on self-defense and life skills	6
Financial independence and employment opportunities	13
Women living alone should be mentally strong and confident	14
Others	5
No response	26

Men, on the other hand, suggested the following to address the challenges faced by women living alone:

- ◆ Members of the public (both men and women) should be familiar with the rights of women
- ◆ Qualitative improvement in policing and a community policing programme geared specifically towards women living alone
- ◆ Welfare services meant for women should be accessible to all, especially the vulnerable and destitute women living alone



Conclusions

Keeping in view the context of research, the experiences and views of women and the analyses made in the foregoing chapters; the following conclusions have been arrived at on different components of the study.

Profile of Women

Women living alone in the city are mostly youth in the age group of 18 to 45 years. Although majority of them hold Graduation or higher educational degrees, their monthly incomes are low, with 72% earning Rs. 20,000 or less in a month. Forty-six percent of those surveyed possess vocational/professional qualifications and work in diverse domains like education, healthcare, engineering, management, finance, and accounts. The occupations of the women surveyed reflect their diverse professional interests and economic positions, with the sample covering students, private sector employees, wage earners, self-employed, and even sex workers and beggars. Living alone is more of a trend for unmarried women as the sample included a large number of students and professionals. However, many women are living alone because of some circumstantial compulsion rather than a personal choice. They have no one to live with, or are poverty stricken, or are victims of violence. The study is also indicative of the social and religious diversities of women living in Delhi, which is a reflection of the society they belong to. With women from most of the Indian States and Union Territories as respondents, the study could also establish the fact that Delhi is a microcosm of India.

Reasons for Living Alone

Education and professional training, engagement in various services, and permanent residencies are the principal reasons for living alone in the city. However, these reasons do not necessarily have a bearing on occupation as

reasons cited by some are different from their occupations (e.g. begging is termed as self-employed, while sex work is termed as service). Notwithstanding the reasons, majority of respondents do not prefer to live alone in the city. While non-preference is conditioned by concerns regarding one's external environment such as a lack of safety and security, difficulty in finding accommodation, and high cost of living; preference is linked to scope for independent and confident living in the city, education and career advancement, and differences with family members. Although living alone, majority of women tend not to interact with their neighbours. While meeting family is linked to geographical proximity of families with the city, many of them live almost on their own without any familial support, which is indicative of their ability to look after their own affairs in case of some and compulsions of circumstances in case of others.

Types and Nature of Challenges

Most of the women face multiple challenges while dealing with domestic as well as external issues and circumstances. While safety and security based challenges can be termed as the most ubiquitous challenges; financial hardship, illness and emotional stress are equally important, especially for young, elderly, or destitute women. Some of the distressful manifestations of challenges could be noticed in cases of women suffering from chronic or terminal diseases, facing professional insecurity and hazards and countering livelihood challenges due to poverty and destitution.

Responses to Challenges

Responses of women to challenges are in the nature of preventive or proactive and reactionary or accommodative. While some face challenges with the support of their near and dear ones including family and friends; others do so by avoiding or remaining aware of bad elements and circumstances or reporting/threatening to report the matters to police and law enforcement agencies. However, position of destitute, sick, elderly and women in vulnerable circumstances is pitiable as they are incapable of responding to the challenges on their own, forcing them to seek help from NGOs or government.

Causes of Challenges

Challenges are primarily linked to systemic deficiencies observed in society, system of education, system of administration and in the mindset of people. Illiteracy and inadequate awareness on the part of women regarding rights and entitlements, the patriarchal mindset of men, crisis of governance, and inadequate enforcement of laws geared to protecting women are the principal reasons behind the challenges. Women are often doubly disadvantaged due to their gender and their status as someone living alone in a city. These two components coupled with critical real life situations like violence, poverty, lack of access to grievance redressal mechanisms, illiteracy and illness make conditions of women living alone extremely traumatic.

Correlations between Challenges and Some Key Variables

The following conclusions have been reached by establishing correlations between challenges and some key variables of the study namely age, education, income, occupation, social categories,

marital status and reasons for living alone. The conclusions have been substantiated with some examples.

- ♦ **Age:** Challenges faced by single women are to a certain extent age-specific in nature, as some challenges are faced more by respondents of some age groups, unlike others. For example, financial hardship and health problems are acute for elderly women and those in 18-30 years age group, while emotional stress is a major problem for the younger generation.
- ♦ **Education:** Education is to some extent a determinant of the nature of challenges. For example, safety and security challenges are faced mostly by respondents with high levels of education, which is attributable to their increased interactions with people and public places. Comparatively, those who are less educated or illiterate do not face these problems because they rarely interact in public spaces. While financial hardship is a challenge for illiterate and less educated respondents, emotional stress is a challenge for educated professionals.
- ♦ **Income:** While women with lower incomes are the most disadvantaged, the magnitude of challenges faced by women living alone decreases with increase in income. Challenges such as emotional stress, financial hardship and inadequate safety and security in the workplace do not even apply to respondents earning higher incomes.
- ♦ **Occupation:** Nature of occupations, especially their potential for income and public interface, determines the nature of challenges. For example, students and employees of private and government sectors face more safety and security challenges than daily wagers. Emotional stress is more a challenge for students than those employed in private and government organizations.
- ♦ **Social Categories:** Social categories namely SC, ST, OBC and General do not have any bearing on the nature of challenges faced by women.
- ♦ **Marital Status:** Unmarried women are more vulnerable to most of the challenges, except financial hardship and healthcare related challenges, which are faced much more by widows than others.
- ♦ **Reasons for Living Alone:** Reasons for living alone have a bearing on the nature of challenges. For example, safety and security challenges are faced mostly by women who are living alone for the purpose of education, training and service in view of their high level public interface.

Present State of Happiness and Reasons

State of happiness is conditioned by the challenges and opportunities that life in the city offers for the women living alone. While living alone helps women face challenges of city life in a better way thereby contributing to their happiness; inadequate emotional support and problems of safety, health, career and finance result in unhappiness.

Initiatives of Government to Address the Challenges

The government has no programme that specifically addresses the challenges faced by women living alone in the city. These women are not recognized as a vulnerable population category that is worthy of programmatic intervention.



Recommendations

The study recommends the following measures to address the challenges faced by women living alone in the NCT of Delhi, and other similarly placed women in the cities of India.

Recognition as a Population Category

Given the unique nature of challenges faced by women living alone in Delhi and other cities of India, and with the population increasing, it is crucial that the government and the development sector recognize this population as one worthy of programmatic intervention. Recognition as a category of women in need of special attention will open up opportunities for consideration and implementation of suitable action plans for their welfare and empowerment.

Intervention for the Empowerment of Poor Women Living Alone

There is a strong need to design and implement projects with action and advocacy components focusing on women in dire poverty living alone in the NCT of Delhi. The interventions should be of targeted nature with emphasis on strengthening of livelihood capability, facilitating healthcare support, counseling and self-defense. The focus should also be on collaboration with a variety of stakeholders such as healthcare service providers, CSOs, financial institutions, the local police, local leaders and active community members.

Reorientation of existing Programmes on Women's Empowerment

The Government of NCT of Delhi should reorient its existing programmes on women's empowerment such as the GRC, Mahila Panchayats etc. in order to add women living alone as a population category for special attention and outreach. NGOs and CSOs working on women's issues should be made aware of this study and the conditions of women living alone. These organisations may also find it useful to develop databases of women living alone in their areas of operation for targeted planning and intervention.

Proactive Policing

Every locality in Delhi houses certain number of women who are living alone. In light of the challenges faced by all women in Delhi regarding safety and security, the Delhi Police must take a proactive role in ensuring safety and security of women living alone as they need more attention due to their vulnerability. The Special Police Unit for Women & Children of Delhi Police may reorient its existing programmes keeping in view the challenges faced by these women. Creating a safe environment in the neighbourhood is more important than just responding to situations once they have already occurred. Just as the city police acts proactively for elderly population, it should do so for women living alone, especially for the destitute and vulnerable.

It is important to note that the Delhi Police has a Senior Citizen Cell that coordinates actions for safety and security of senior citizens, monitors registered senior citizens, conducts field visits, encourages their social interaction in the neighbourhood and implements other measures for addressing challenges faced by them. Actions similar to the ones stated above should be taken up for vulnerable and destitute women living alone in the city.

A Roadmap for Action

A roadmap for action will act as a tool for translating the findings of this research into actions for empowerment of women living alone in the urban areas of India. The study recommends the following measures in this regard:

- ◆ The findings of the study should be shared with agencies of the government, CSOs, and Indian and international NGOs working in the domain of gender justice.
- ◆ The Ministry of Women and Child Development and other organizations of the Government of India dealing with development of women should formulate suitable policies and programmes for women living alone in cities keeping in view the challenges faced by them.
- ◆ NGOs and CSOs should take up projects for empowerment of women living alone in urban areas, especially in Indian cities.

3.2. Please elaborate the nature of each of the challenges shared above by citing real life examples.

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3.3. How do you face the challenges? Please share your responses/reactions to challenges noted above.

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3.4. What in your view are the causes behind the challenges faced by women living alone?

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3.5. Keeping in view the challenges faced by you and your overall life conditions, please rate the state of your 'happiness'.

- | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Very happy | 2. Happy | 3. Neither happy nor sad |
| 4. Unhappy | 5. Very unhappy | |

3.6. Please share reasons for the rating stated in q. no. 3.5.

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3.7. Does your immediate family live in the National Capital Territory of Delhi? 1. Yes 2. No

3.8. How often do you meet your family?

- | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Once in a month | 2. Once in three months | 3. Once in six months |
| 4. Once in a year | 5. Rarely | 6. Never |
| 7. Others (specify) | | |

3.9. Please suggest measures that would address the challenges faced by women living alone in the city.

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(Signature of interviewer)

Interview Schedule for Men

A STUDY OF CHALLENGES FACED BY SINGLE WOMEN IN DELHI

Conducted by HUMAN DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY, Delhi

Supported by
THE ASIA FOUNDATION

Respondent No.:

Survey Data

District:

Area in District:

Name of respondent: Address:

(The above data will be kept confidential and will be used only for the purpose of quality control measures like verification of replies, filling up of incomplete schedules etc.)

1. Are you aware of the challenges faced by women who are living alone in the city?

1. Yes 2. No

2. Please elaborate the type and nature of challenges that you perceive.

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.....
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3. What in your view are the causes behind the challenges faced by women living alone?

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4. Please suggest measures that would address the challenges faced by women living alone in the city.

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(Signature of interviewer)

Format for Case Studies

A STUDY OF CHALLENGES FACED BY SINGLE WOMEN IN DELHI

Conducted by HUMAN DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY, Delhi

Supported by

THE ASIA FOUNDATION

General particulars about respondent with focus on social, economic and educational aspects

Reasons for living alone with focus on past life conditions

Opportunities and challenges

Unique aspects of the case study based on real life stories



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