

# Bangladesh's future in the shadow of gender violence



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Gender-based violence (GBV) remains prevalent and significant in Bangladesh, deeply rooted in our patriarchal norms, despite notable progress in overall economic and political participation over the decades since our liberation. Addressing this violence and achieving genuine gender equality are critical for the nation's future aspirations of inclusive, sustainable growth and development.

This brings us to the paradox: despite decades of women holding the top positions of political power in the country, why have we not been able to ensure basic security for women? The answer lies in two separate arenas of our society: the social and normative sector and governance. The first can be traced to the deeper cultural structures that shape our society. Women are still perceived through a patriarchal lens, either as



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

and gender binaries, despite their long historical presence in our society, have, in recent decades, been cast out from citizenship rights. It is claimed that their very existence is 'Western'-influenced and anti-religion. They are relegated to the rank of a rightless marginalised group, and violence against such groups is even less likely to receive justice. This is why gender-based violence never

seems to decrease. Therefore, it has a great deal to do with how our society constructs gender roles and rights.

A 2024 survey by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and UNFPA found that three out of four ever-married women (76%) aged 15 and older have experienced some form of intimate partner violence in their lifetime. Nearly half (49%) experienced such violence in the past year.

Despite significant progress in economic and political empowerment—ranking 7th globally in political empowerment in 2016—the pervasive nature of discrimination and sexual and domestic violence continues to hinder the full potential of more than half of our population. The survey also shows that violence against women and girls is widespread in both public and private spheres,

including physical, sexual, emotional, and economic abuse, as well as controlling behaviours. Technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), such as cyber harassment and non-consensual image sharing, is also a significantly growing concern, especially among young women. Post-July, cyber harassment of politically active women has skyrocketed.

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