

EXCLUSIVE ANNUAL SEX SURVEY

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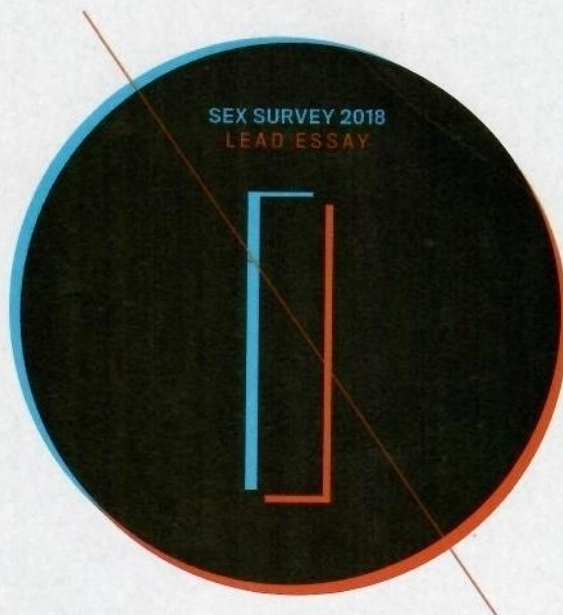
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INDIA
TODAY

SEX AT WORK

BREAKING THE SILENCE ON
SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS IN
THE OFFICE: WHO'S DOING IT
AND WHY IT IS A PROBLEM



In the soft glow of muted lamps, he took slow sips from his glass of single malt and studied her face. She fidgeted with her files as she waited. He was the boss, she a fresher. In perspective, she was a nubile young thing and he a weathered old man—old enough to be her father. Outside, the trim lawns of the luxury resort spread out to her gaze, tinged by the sunset. Everything was perfect, except... she jumped, as he moved his hand to touch the side of her breast. "I can have any woman I want," he rasped. "And I want you." He was yet another Harvey Weinstein, she his millionth Scheherazade.

Stories of sexual abuse are coming thick and fast. Women are emerging out of the woodwork with triumphant battle cries: "Me too." Men who considered themselves above the law are falling by the wayside. Hashtags are taking the conversation on workplace misconduct to a new level. And the bells are tolling: "Time's Up." As an explosion of rage unfurls across the world, the curtain goes up on the 2018 **INDIA TODAY-MDRA sex** survey at the workplace, held across 19 cities.

INFORMAL AND INTIMATE

On the face of it, workplaces are all about responsibilities, deadlines, targets, meetings—and, yes, performance reviews. But workplaces are also about people: we spend the largest chunk of our time in office, interact, gossip, elbow each other, forge strategic alliances, develop life-long enemies or friends. "There is growing informality and a trend of finding intimacy at work," says sociologist Anagha Sarpotdar, an expert in sexual harassment from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. "With the rise of the internet, boundaries are blurring. Work has percolated into private spaces, while private spaces have turned into work," she points out. Sexual harassment at the workplace may have become a big issue, but do we acknowledge

1. Women respondents are emphatically disapproving: **62%** say sex with colleagues is a bad idea; **78%** have not been involved in any sexual encounter at work

2. It's not the youngest age group at the workplace (18-25) that faces sexual advances the most from colleagues, but the **26-45 year-olds**



10 HIGHLIGHTS

3. **38%** of the women surveyed had no quarrel with colleagues at the workplace having sex

5. More than one-fourth, **28%** men and women have had sex with co-workers; **51%** of these say the relationship led to a career boost

7. **37%** of those in the age-band of 46-60 years claim to have had sexual encounters during work hours, yet **73%** of them say HR should be alerted

9. Almost half the respondents say they know people who have been sexually harassed at work; the most in Delhi (**69%**) and Mumbai (**68%**)

4. But **10 out of the 19** cities surveyed—led by Pune where **70%** are okay with it—show almost an inversion of the trend

6. **71%** men and women say no to sex between bosses and subordinates, yet **61%** of women, who have had office affairs, have had sex with bosses

8. **1 in 3** men admits to sexting colleagues and making sexual advances; **1 in 3** also claims to have faced inappropriate advances

10. The **46-60** age group seems happiest about having an affair; over **60%** say they became more productive, it boosted their career

the reality of consensual sex at work? How prevalent is it? What do people think about it?

So let's break the silence behind the modern workplace, check out how the numbers stack up. "Do you think it's alright for co-workers to engage in sexual relations?" "No," say the majority, but it's not a simple majority: 1 in every 2 people surveyed (or 56%) says "no", led primarily by women (62%). But men seem to be foundering: as many men say colleagues should be allowed to have sex (50%) as those who oppose it. And here's where it gets really interesting. Most people (58%) think that just 10 per cent of their colleagues have had sex with a colleague. But, in fact, three times more (or 28%) have had flings with colleagues. In an answer that will probably cause some disquiet to human resource professionals, sex between bosses and subordinates seems to be the norm: of the 33 per cent men who have had sex with colleagues, 57 per cent had an affair with subordinates. Of the 22 per cent women who have had sex, 61 per cent got involved with the boss. At least, that's the message thrown up by the **INDIA TODAY-MDRA sex survey** at the workplace.



**WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF THE
WORKPLACE IF WE DON'T
UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN CONSENT AND
CONFLICT? WHERE DOES ONE
END AND THE OTHER BEGIN?**

WHIFF OF CHANGE

It's not as if **INDIA TODAY** has not probed the workplace before in the course of the expansive nationally representative studies of sexual behaviours of modern Indians it has been conducting for the past 16 years. The first such question was asked in 2003, the very first year the survey was instituted: "Would you exchange sexual favours for a raise or a promotion?" The answers were predictable: just 3 per cent women said "yes". What wasn't so predictable was that when the same question was asked again in 2005 to single women, they seemed more open to the idea of exchanging sexual favours to scale the success ladder; 17 per cent women said, "yes," they would grant a sexual favour in return for a big career break. More women in the 26-30 age bracket seemed open to the idea than their counterparts in the 18-25 age bracket. They were also asked, "Has a man ever asked you for sexual favours in return for a job, an assignment or a promotion?" About 10 per cent women said "yes". In Mumbai and Chennai,

a higher percentage of women had been propositioned at work and more often (more than three times).

The rules of engagement in the workplace were clearly changing. A whiff of the change seeped out when 50 per cent respondents in the 2007 **INDIA TODAY** Sex Survey affirmed that extramarital affairs were increasing because more married women were joining the workforce. "The massive entry of women into new professions, greater acceptance of premarital sex and unwed motherhood are all transforming the man-woman relationship at the workplace," points out Nanda Majumdar, who leads intellectual capital and professional development at the international law firm Nishith Desai Associates, Mumbai. With the boom in personal technology, gadgets and cameras allowing us to be intimate wherever and whenever, it has become less and less acceptable to evaluate what is shameful and what is not, what needs to be kept



● MEN ● WOMEN

Have you ever had sex with a colleague/s?



How many colleagues have you had sex with?*



Do you often have sex with a colleague?*



Have you ever had sex with your boss?*



Have you ever had sex with a subordinate?*



Did your relationship affect your career? *



Have you ever had sex at the workplace?*



*These questions were asked to a subset of the respondents who claimed they had had sex at the workplace

indoors or talked about, what should be reined in and punished, what should not.

LAW IS THE PRISM

But the more we open up, the more we encounter conflicts over our sexual values and erotic conduct. They acquire immense symbolic weight, especially at the workplace, because the law is now the new prism, disciplining and punishing deviance from the norm. Yet with hectic changes taking place in the domain of sexuality in India, it is no longer possible to ignore issues of justice, especially at the workplace. Although the Supreme Court formulated the Vishakha guidelines in 1997 against sexual harassment of women at the workplace (*Vishakha vs State of Rajasthan*), sexual abuse and aberrations at the workplace have returned to the spotlight time and again (see *From Silence to Rage*). Infamous cases of famous men—K.P.S. Gill, Phaneesh Murthy, David Davidar, Tarun Tejpal to R.K. Pachauri—have rocked the nation.

And the courts, always chary of regulating intimacy, have had to come forward: in 2013, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, was instituted; in 2017, the Delhi High Court ruled that mere physical contact without sexual overtones would not amount to sexual harassment at the workplace; this year, the Supreme Court has rejected a PIL to make rape and sexual harassment cases gender-neutral. Disputes over the right to work with dignity at the workplace have become the new battlefield. “I do notice that more and more young women are becoming less and less tolerant of any kind of sexual harassment,” says senior advocate Rebecca John. “A wonderful thing, because this is not something women should bear silently, as women of our generation did.”

MARS AND VENUS

The straitjacket of human resources (HR) may look at employees as quantifiable entities, but our survey reveals a gender gap inside the cubicles, where men and women perceive everything differently. If most men are open to office romance and flings, most women are not; if more men have fantasised about a colleague, few women have. In response to, “Have you ever made sexual advances on a coworker?”, one-third of men (37%) said “yes”, compared to 1 out of 5 (19%) women. But in the US, according to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), complaints by men for being sexually harassed at work are also rising. There are no exact statistics, but most alleged harassers of men are typically male, the EEOC reports. Our survey throws up surprising numbers that deserve further investigation: 34 per cent men, like 34 per cent women, say they have faced sexual harassment. It’s hard to believe that 21 per cent men have changed jobs or departments, like 20 per cent women, because of sexual tension.

Can this difference be explained by the intrinsic ones

a wide range of behaviours like flirting, bantering, sexual jokes, touching, watching pornography, dating, having affairs, live-in relationships to marriage. Where does consent end and coercion begin? How pervasive is consensual sexual activity in the workplace? How do workers and organisations distinguish between wanted and unwanted sexual behaviour? Neither pundits nor activists have paid much attention to workplace attraction, romance or consensual sex, focusing instead on sexual harassment. What is the future of the workplace if we do not understand the difference between consent and conflict?

Can we ever figure out why certain cities throw up numbers that cannot be ignored, yet can hardly be processed? For instance, why does Delhi exhibit such sexual anxiety at the workplace? Over 60 per cent respondents in Delhi know of people who've been charged with sexual harassment at the workplace, double the national number. Are employees in Pune engaging in more sex or are the organisations more vigilant? Over 83 per cent in Pune say they know people who were caught for having sex in office, double the national number. Is Jaipur hiding behind numbers? The city tops in sex at work—compared to 28 per cent nationally, 47 per cent in Jaipur claim to have had affairs at work—the highest among all the cities surveyed. But just delve deeper into who is having sex with whom: 12.5 per cent say they have had sex with the boss and 58 per cent with a subordinate. Yet just 18 per cent say that they have made sexual advances on a colleague, while 46 per cent have faced it.

In a plural country of 1.2 billion people, no sample can ever perfectly represent the population. Nor can anyone ever fully trust what men and women reveal on sex surveys. But the present survey gives us rare glimpses of intimate human contact at the workplace and highlights the danger of downplaying the ubiquity of consensual sex. We hope scholars will begin to investigate in systematic fashion the many points of convergence and divergence, to draw the full picture of Indian sexuality at the workplace.

ALL ABOUT #METOO

The Scheherazade is now busy tweeting #MeToo. Married and living in a different city, she is in solidarity with millions across the world who are speaking out, ever since American actor Alyssa Milano tweeted, "If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet," on October 15, 2017. As testimonies emerge, from entertainment to politics, via academia, sport and fashion, she too has found her voice. To exorcise the memory of a man, filed away deep within her psyche, who once considered himself above the law and broke her, but perhaps not beyond repair. ■

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is the first time the INDIA TODAY annual sex survey has been conducted in two parts. This is also the first time a separate survey has been commissioned on the prevalence, perception and practice of sex at the modern workplace. The reasons are not hard to find: 2017 has seen an explosion of rage worldwide about sexual harassment at the workplace, triggering a new social media movement to name and shame the abusers. Hence, the first part of our survey is sex at the workplace, in which 25 purposive questions have been asked to 2,500 people, an equal number of them men and women.

At the same time, we did not wish to lose track of the sexual preferences and habits of Indians, something INDIA TODAY was the first to uncover, and which it has captured on its pages for the past 15 years. The second survey also involves 25 questions and 2,500 people, equal number of them men and women. Sex Survey 2018 has been done in association with **MDRA** (Marketing & Development Research Associates), New Delhi. The survey covered aspects of sexual expectation and behaviour of urban working professionals, both men and women, across 19 cities and in four age groups: 18-25, 26-35, 36-45 and 46-60 years.

Stringent sampling: Using the '3 S' sampling design, the respondents were selected randomly to avoid any bias. **Trained and experienced MDRA** investigators administered structured questionnaires to the respondents through quantitative interviews, using face-to-face (self-administered) mode. The respondents were approached by same gender investigators i.e. male investigators for male respondents and female ones for female respondents. After completion of each questionnaire, respondents were asked to drop completely filled-in questionnaires into a sealed drop box to ensure anonymity. The field survey was conducted between January 18, 2018, and February 2, 2018.

Sample details: Sixty-five per cent were married and living with spouse, 26% had never married, 6% were married but not living with spouse, 2% were divorced and 1% widowed. About 80% were graduates and 80% were also working in the private sector.

Statistical significance: A multi-stage sampling was followed wherein, at the first stage, any major factors that could cause sampling errors were controlled via appropriate selection process (among males, females, geographical distribution etc.). At the second stage, the contact points with the respondents included a mix of office complexes, corporate parks, community centres, outside large call centres, KPOs, MNCs, government offices, malls, multiplexes, parks, restaurants and coffee shops. The respondents were randomly chosen.

Note: Total sample size for each survey was 2,561—a number sufficiently high to ensure the overall sampling error was low. In view of the above, the confidence level is 95% with $\pm 1.94\%$ error of margin. All percentages in output tables have been rounded off to one decimal place, which may result in rounding off errors while adding the total percentage.