

# People calls for harsher sexual harassment penalties

The Chinese public has called for harsher punishment for those found guilty of sexual harassment, according to a recent survey.

The China Youth Daily research showed that of 2,023 people surveyed, 71.5 percent wanted harsher punishment for people committing sexual harassment.

Over 53 percent of women said that they or someone they knew had been sexually harassed on the subway.

Beijing police launched recently a crackdown on sexual harassment on the subway and arrested more than 20 suspects over two weeks.

“Despite the current achievement, a single crackdown far from tackles the root cause of the problem. More laws and regulations are needed and law enforcement should be intensified,” said Zhang Lingxiao, a lawyer with Jingsh Law Firm.

Under Article 44 of the law on public security administration, a person who molests another person or intentionally exposes their body in public shall be detained for at least five but no more than ten days.

Article 237 of the criminal law states that those who act indecently or threaten woman with violence or coercion shall be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of up to five years.

Zhang said the current laws dealing with sexual harassment were not specific enough in terms of definition or punishment.

Interviewees were also concerned about the difficulty of judging if sexual harassment had actually been committed, with 68.7 percent worried that the common physical contact on the subway during peak hours could be used an excuse for sexual harassment.

A total of 63.2 percent of those surveyed pointed out that it was difficult for subway cameras to record harassment; 41.1 percent said the reluctance of victims to call the police or provide evidence posed difficulties in fighting sexual harassment; 29.6 percent said victims might be unsafe if they overreacted.

Zhang called for more subway supervision, quicker police response and punishment, as well as better education on sexual harassment.