

NEWSLETTER VOX POPULI

2025 EDITION

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QUEER CODED

BETWEEN PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

Students come to IIT Kanpur with many hopes and aspirations. While coming to their new home, it is expected that they get a community of people that provides them with fruitful interactions and an accepting environment. However, is this true for everyone?

According to the Freshers' Survey conducted by Vox Populi for the Y24 batch, for a question regarding their sexualities, approximately 12% of the batch does not identify as heterosexual. This means that a significant number of students fall under the queer umbrella, and their experiences deserve attention too. This article aims to shed light on the experiences of queer students on campus, questioning the inclusivity of our environment and what more needs to be done. We conducted a series of anonymous interviews of queer students, and talked to the managers of Unmukt of the 2024-25 tenure to understand the challenges faced by them and reflect on how we can make IITK a more inclusive space for everyone.

Arrival

"I had really high and positive expectations from college... especially when the apparent "brightest minds of the country" come here. And I had heard of Unmukt – the gender and sexual diversity club at IITK as well. But the reality was quite the opposite"

- Y23 UG student

These are some of the responses of the interviewees when asked about their expectations from the people of the campus in terms of acceptance towards the LGBTQIA+ community.

There was a stark difference between what people expected the community to be before they arrived here and how it is.

From seniors making casual homophobic jokes during early wing meets to outright derogatory comments about queer

"It's not easy to connect with other queer people on the campus, mostly because a lot of them are closeted for various reasons."

-Y20 UG Student

identities, initial interactions often leave queer students feeling alienated.

Post graduate queer students have also faced the brunt of the homophobia widely prevalent in the campus, with one 5th year PG student sharing how the initial conversations went. "The lab environment is largely heteronormative and the one time the conversation happened, one of our lab mates said they don't support the LGBTQIA+ due to religious reasons". However, he went on to say, "My initial friend group has always been supportive, or at least they did when I came out. Few of them are proud allies where we had meaningful discussions about various aspects covering gender and sexuality, whereas few don't know much but unconditionally extend their support".

Conversations

We now look at how the daily conversations and interactions with their peers look like for queer students. All of the interviewees reported witnessing instances of queerphobic from the people around them, with whom they regularly interacted. "I didn't think people would be openly and blatantly homophobic like they are here, I thought they would keep their homophobic views to themselves. But here everyone takes pride in being queerphobic and keeps saying queerphobic things either to sound 'cool' or just for fun," - PG Student.

Evidently such an unaccepting environment hinders the interaction queer people have with their peers. It also makes them conscious of themselves and the way they are perceived. [Prior to Orientation 2025, Cognizance was solely conducted by ICS] Cognizance, an event for freshers focusing on gender sensitivity and queer awareness, is the only compulsory queer-awareness event on campus, however that too has some drawbacks as the event is conducted by the CTM's who themselves aren't sensitized enough to take a session. Some queer people believe Unmukt should take a more active role. Unmukt is the gender and sexual diversity forum of IIT Kanpur. They raise issues and awareness on all topics related to gender and sexuality, and advocate for a more inclusive campus for queer people.



However, the body faces several challenges in the conduction of its events which include low participation and queerphobia, majorly stemming from the stigma that is attached to it.

Although IIT Kanpur often presents itself as a space of open-mindedness and academic excellence, the lived experiences of queer students paint a different picture. From casual homophobic jokes to violent rhetoric, these aren't isolated incidents. Nearly every queer student we spoke to recalled moments of discomfort, fear, or invisibility, whether it was feeling the need to police their mannerisms, or being unable to connect with others like them due to the enforced closet many are pushed into.

The result is a culture of silence and suppression. Queer students are not just struggling with acceptance they are often struggling alone. True change will only come when awareness is met with accountability from peers, from institutions, and from ourselves.

"There is no concept of "being an ally" thing. What I have heard in my case, since I went on to become a manager, probably I belong to the community."

-Auhona, Unmukt Manager(2024-25)

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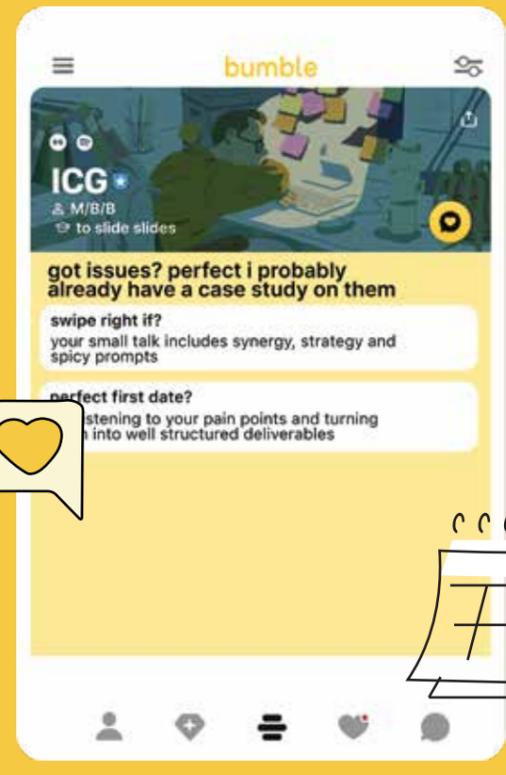
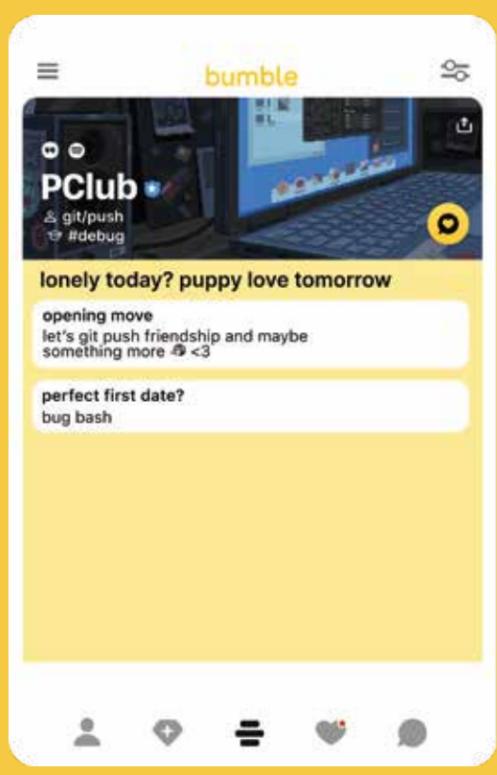
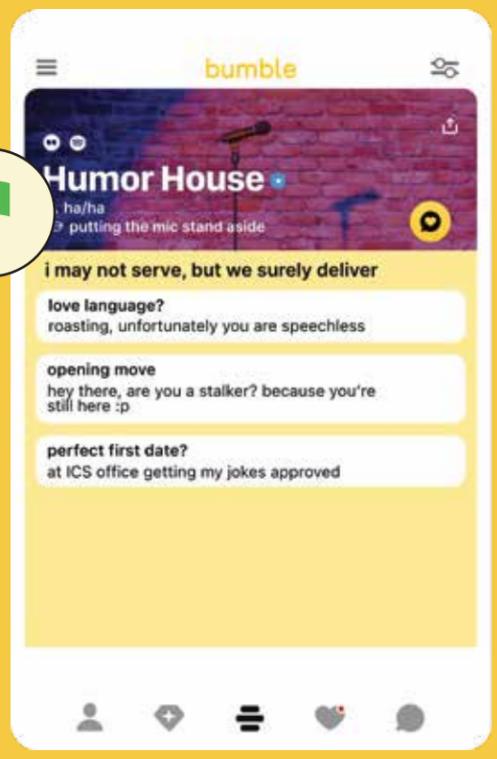
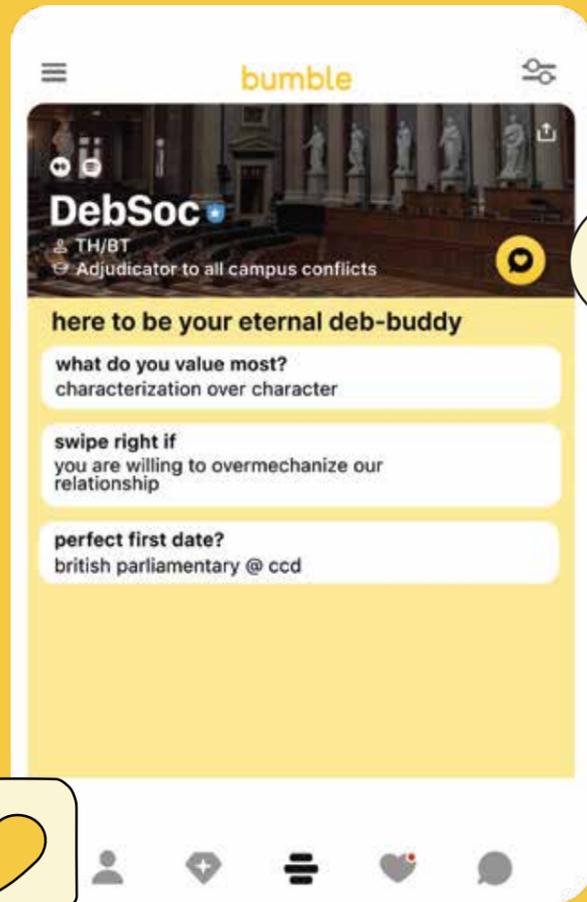
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VOX Populi VINTAGE VOX #3

The Days that shook GH1

- when the entire GH1 HEC stepped down in protest

In 2003, the GH1 HEC that had Karishma Jain as its president and Grishma Udani as its cultural secretary had been repeatedly clashing with the GH1 Wardens over various issues.

The issue of boys' entry to GH1 had always been a bone of contention. The final straw came when a security related incident having nothing to do with the entry of boys was seized as a reason to entirely prohibit boys from going anywhere in GH1 except the Visitor's Room, at all times of the day.

In a subsequent meeting of the HEC with the Wardens just a week before the Hall Day, the Wardens alleged that the girls "entertain" boys in their rooms, and asked anyone who can't live with the rules to vacate the hostel. In response, the entire GH1 HEC handed in their resignation and cancelled the Hall Day.

That night, a GBM was called. It was decided that while considerations of convenience such as getting help in studies were there, it would be more appropriate to fight the rule on the grounds of

Source: Vox Populi, Volume XIV, September 2009

VOX Populi VINTAGE VOX #1

भागो भूतनी आयी !!!

अंकित होडिंग
7 अक्टूबर 2005

लेने लगे तो सबके होश उड़ गये। गुरदा बड़ा दी गयी और छात्रावास में निकलने के सभी मार्ग बंद कर दिये गये।

ज्ञात हुआ कि उक्त कन्या फर्नी नाम और कश्च संख्या का प्रयोग करके आयी थी।

दो बार कमरों की तलाशी लेने के बाद भी उसका पता नहीं चला। अब फोन यह उठा कि वह आखिर गयी कहीं। इसके यहाँ के सभी छात्र छात्रावास के वास्तु को लेकर सशंकित लग रहे हैं।

इस रहस्य को सुलझाने के लिए छात्रों में चर्चा हुई और newsgroup पर घमासान भी हुआ। किन्तु उस भूतनी का पता आज तक नहीं चल सका।

Source: Vox Populi, Volume II, November 2005

HE SAID, SHE SAID, THEY SAID: UNPACKING INTERGENDER CONVERSATION

As you settle in, you'll find a community full of new faces, but also a social scene that can feel a bit complicated. You might just find yourself in a social situation, wanting to talk to someone, but feel held back by a mix of nerves and unspoken rules? This simple act of connecting with others can feel far from simple, especially when it comes to interacting across genders. To move beyond assumptions and to understand these dynamics on campus, we conducted a campus wide survey with 740 responses. Let's dive into the quirky (and sometimes awkward) side of interactions between genders on campus and see what we uncover!

Background matters.

Students from metropolitan cities report the highest comfort in mixed-gender spaces whereas those from smaller towns and rural areas often feel less at ease, mirroring their families' openness to inter-gender interaction.

First Impressions Matter, But Not How You Think

While many of us assume appearance is everything, the survey shows that personality, mannerisms, and body language are what people truly notice. Sure, 50% of men said they notice appearance first, but a whopping 77.5% of women prioritize mannerisms and 73.75% focus on personality. So, being genuinely yourself is far more impactful than trying to look a certain way.

Breaking the Ice

Most people don't start conversations with a single "hello." The majority of interactions begin through mutual friends, followed by lectures and clubs. Don't be afraid to join a club or ask a classmate about a lecture, it's the most natural way to meet new people

Connecting Online: A New Kind of Comfort

In an age of instant messaging and social media, how do we prefer to connect?. About a third of students (33.2%) feel more comfortable interacting with another gender online, while a slightly smaller group (21.9%) prefers face-to-face interactions. The largest group, 37.4%, is equally comfortable with both

Friendship Circles: The Gender Divide

When you think about your social circle, who are your closest friends? The survey uncovered a notable difference between how men and women build friendships. Women are more likely to have a balanced mix of friends across genders. For men, however, friend groups tend to be less balanced, with a large majority (19.75%) reporting they have no friends from another gender, compared to only 2.5% of women.

So, why does making friends feel so hard sometimes? The top reasons cited by students were fear of being judged and introversion. Many also mentioned feeling insecure about their appearance or struggling with preconceived notions about others. Interestingly, women are twice as likely as men to initiate conversations without hesitation, suggesting that men may face a unique set of barriers, or at least feel them more acutely.

As you begin your journey here, remember that everyone is navigating these same social complexities. Be open, be empathetic, and don't let a little awkwardness stop you from building genuine connections. After all, the best friendships often start with a simple, honest conversation.

LAUNDRY DRY CLEANING SHOE CLEANING

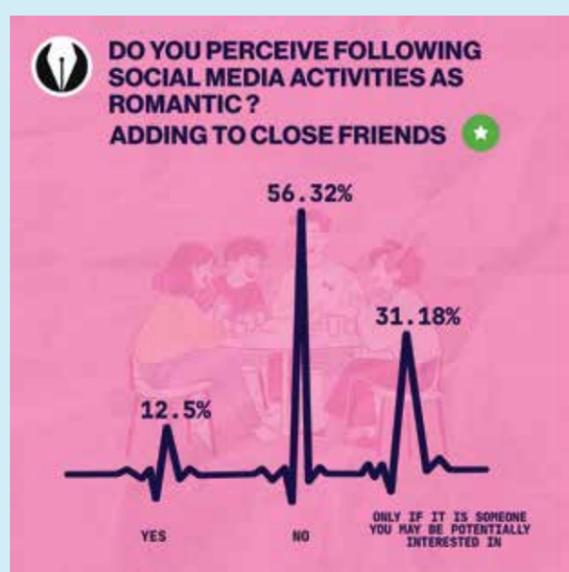
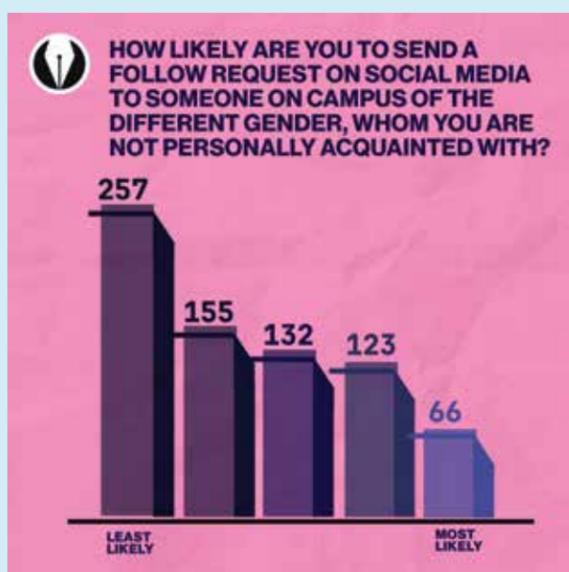
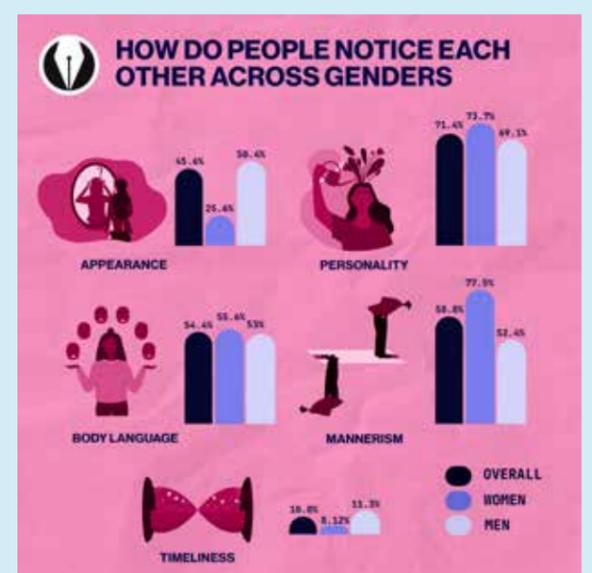
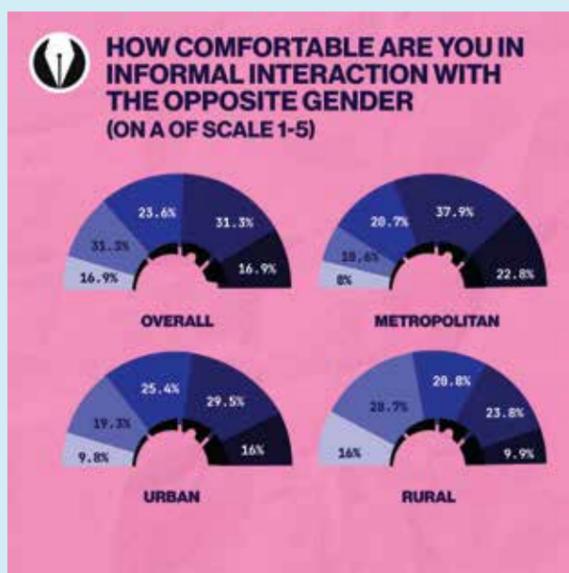
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CAMPUS FAUNA

EXPLORING NATURE'S PER



CANDID CONVERSATIONS

ARIJIT GANGULY
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS AND STATISTICS

Join us in this part of Candid Conversations, with Professor Arijit Ganguly from the Department of Mathematics and Statistics, we explore his love for T20 cricket matches, Hindustani Classical music, Captain Haddock from Tintin, and the airstrip. He is very passionate about teaching and always has the best interests of his students in mind.

Q: What would you rather be if you were not a professor?

A: Frankly, I developed a strong passion for mathematics during my board exams and continued through XI, XII, and graduation. I loved discussing mathematics—and explaining it to friends, juniors, and students. I see it more as a discussion rather than traditional teaching. I enjoyed reading, learning, and discussing mathematics with people; it became a strong inclination. Because of this, I never really thought about pursuing anything else as a career. That said, I was interested in unconventional things, like writing on social and cultural issues ...

Q: What's your favourite place on campus?

A: I have many. During summers, the heat here is tremendous and almost unbearable—a hostile climate. It's challenging for people from Bengal or other less extreme regions than northern India. And then there's the extreme cold in winter. I remember my first day here in 2019, on December 31, when the temperature dropped to 0C. I was attending a DPGC meeting while staying in VH, and I had to cycle to the office. The weather was so harsh that I couldn't cycle and had to walk that day.

In the summers, I used to love the airstrip. Although students are no longer allowed there, I fondly remember visiting it with PhD students. Another favourite spot is the area near Shivli Gate. However, due to a recent leopard sighting in that area, it's not advisable to go there anymore!

Q: What are some things students do that confuse you?

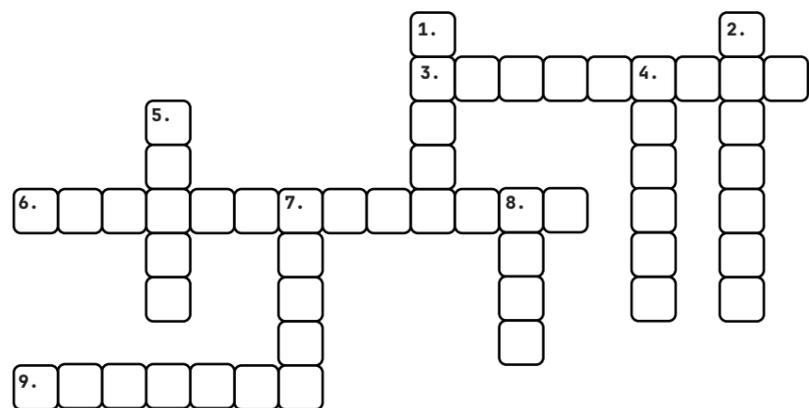
A: Ah, bunking classes—that one always gets me. It's become such a normalised thing. I've asked students why, and I get all kinds of excuses. One common one is: "Your class is in the morning; we can't wake up early." (Seriously?)

There was another instance where a course was divided into multiple batches. My batch attended my classes regularly but skipped others. When I asked why, they said, "We get the slides anyway, so what's the point?" I tried reasoning with them: "Class isn't just about slides; it's about discussion and interaction."

Then there's the classic excuse: "We missed a few classes, and now we don't understand anything, so we stopped coming." I mean, really? That's like saying, "I fell behind in a marathon, so I stopped running entirely." It's not rational!

The schedule is so jam-packed that rescheduling classes isn't feasible. And then you have those freezing January mornings when professors show up on time for morning classes, only to find half the class missing. It's frustrating but also a little funny.

VOXWORD

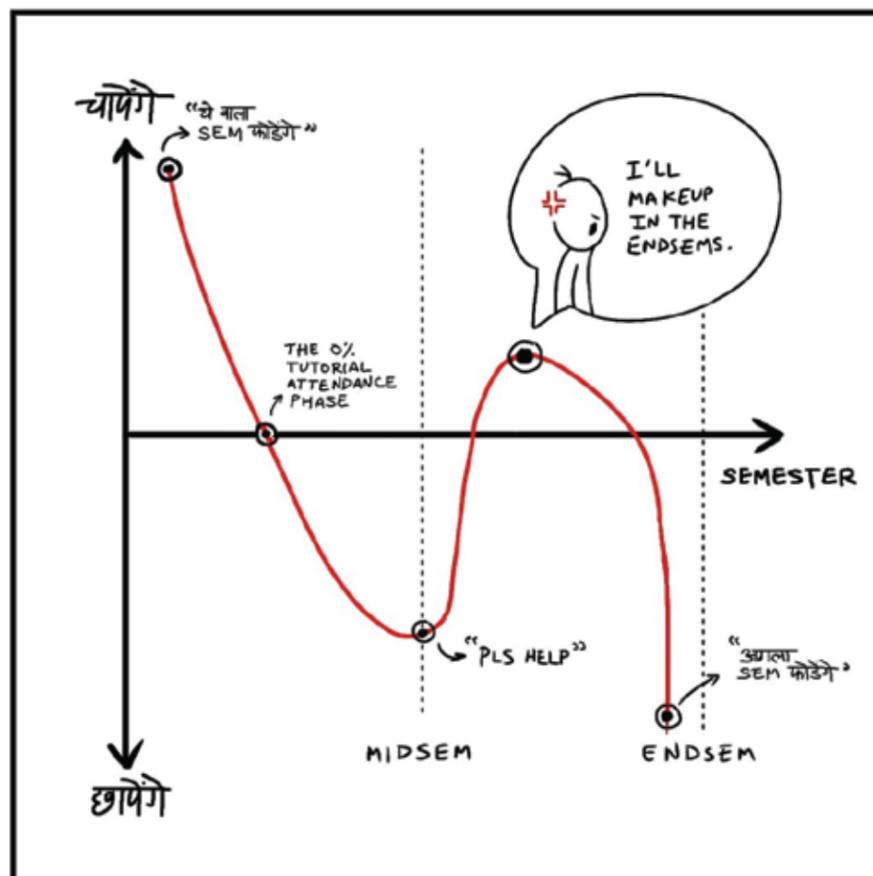


Across

- [3] Within Vedic flame
- [6] Once a campus stalker's paradise, now an urban legend
- [9] Italian cry from a hungry hostel crowd

Down

- [1] The perfect grades seen in dreams
- [2] Where bragging rights are forged in sweat and noise
- [4] Pride expressed in notes
- [5] He who must not be named
- [7] High hai!
- [8] Winged figure, flightless forever



SEXUAL HARASSMENT A CAMPUS WIDE SURVEY

During Orientation'22, conversations around safety began to ripple across campus. Reports of stalking and inappropriate touching surfaced among freshers, creating an undercurrent of unease. Later that year, a controversial restriction was imposed: girls were prohibited from entering Hall-13, officially presented as a "safety measure." These incidents highlighted an urgent need to examine the prevalence of sexual harassment at IITK more systematically.

Vox Populi conducted an anonymous survey which received 705 responses. The survey sought to understand the extent of harassment, its forms, who the perpetrators were, and how victims navigated reporting mechanisms.

Nearly one in four students reported personally experiencing sexual harassment, and about 35% said they knew someone who had been harassed. The spectrum of harassment ranged from "minor" but insidious acts like sexist remarks, persistent staring, or inappropriate jokes, coercion, and assault. Perhaps most unsettling was the revelation that 81% of perpetrators were people known to the victim. The remaining 19% were outsiders.

Despite these numbers, the silence around reporting remains deafening. An overwhelming 92% of victims admitted to not reporting their experiences. The reasons varied: many feared unnecessary drama or character assassination, while others had already faced trivialisation or outright victim-blaming in the past. A large proportion expressed distrust in institutional redressal bodies, particularly the Gender Cell and the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC), which some saw as inaccessible, biased, or opaque in their processes. For others, the fact that the harasser was a close acquaintance or a senior made speaking up nearly impossible.

Another critical insight was the lack of consensus on what actually constitutes harassment. For example, some students categorised repeated staring or physical closeness as harassment, while others dismissed such behaviour as harmless or even "normal." This inconsistency in perception leads to further isolation for survivors, many of whom begin to doubt or downplay their own experiences. Several respondents also raised concerns about how existing mechanisms seldom acknowledge or create space for male victims, further deepening the silence around their struggles.

Scan QR code to read full article



TO ATTEND OR TO NOT ATTEND

Attendance has long been a moot point of discussion amongst both Professors and Students. As the semester begins, a few FCHs manage to send shivers down one's spine with their attendance policies. In an attempt to understand the views of Campus Junta, we at Vox Populi conducted a survey on the "Effect of Attending Classes and Attendance Policies" and simultaneously met a few professors to gather their opinions on this topic.

From our survey of 457 respondents, 260 people claimed that they attend all or most of their classes; 108 people opined that they attend classes around quizzes and important topics; and 85 people said that they rarely attend classes.

Prof. Manindra Agrawal says that attendance does bother him. He recalled teaching a class of 350 students in the previous semester and noted that he never saw more than 100 students attend the class. He attributes the fall in attendance to the post-pandemic scenario, where students have more access to online resources, which might have affected their motivation to attend physical classes.

This sentiment is echoed in our survey as well, where 76 percent of respondents said they wouldn't attend the class offline if the same lecture were available online.

Among other factors deterring students from attending classes, early morning classes (opted by 314/421 people), very few classes or long intervals between classes on the same day (opted by 165 respondents) seemed to be the prominent factors. Scan QR code to read full article



LOST IN TRANSLATION LANGUAGE BARRIERS AT IITK

The IITK community is linguistically diverse, and this diversity often creates barriers to open communication. From orientation sessions in Hindi to professors' English being harder to grasp than the course itself, many students struggle to adapt. Vox conducted a survey in July 2023 with 343 respondents to understand how language impacts academic and social life.

Nearly 10% of students are uncomfortable with English, the official medium of instruction. About 19.8% struggle to interact with professors, and 9.3% find lectures difficult to follow. Many hesitate to participate in discussions due to lack of confidence. Even though ELC/ENG courses were introduced to address these issues, 57.2% found them of little help, while 72.09% called COM200 a waste of time. Professors acknowledge that courses alone are insufficient—peer support and an enabling environment are crucial.

Socially too, 16% of respondents felt excluded from clubs, and 18.1% struggled to make friends. Those unfamiliar with Hindi face added hurdles in messes, shops, and campus events, leading to further isolation. While initiatives like the Shivani Centre, ECC, and TTC exist, participation is low, and many helpful programs have been discontinued.

Language barriers at IITK remain real and pressing, demanding empathy, awareness, and genuine participation from both students and institutions. Scan QR code to read full article.



yawns for a little too long

The sun shines on my face, signalling the end of my beauty sleep. Being a dog here isn't easy, you know. The 24/7 chilling, free meals, unsolicited belly rubs really wears me down.

Anyway, it's six in the morning. I shake off the sleep, walk over to the DOAA canteen (rip, gone but never forgotten :()), and unleash my signature move: stare longingly with my eyes at some overworked, sleep-deprived human questioning their life choices over a cup of tea. Works like a charm. A lot of them have been showing up lately, midsems must be close.

After grabbing that hard-earned quick bite, I head to the LHC to begin my daily duties. You may ask, what duties do I have so early in the morning? Simple. Flaunt my life of leisure to the poor souls dragging themselves in for classes they already regret signing up for. I stretch, I yawn, I vibe and I absolutely love the way they look at me while I am chilling.

But alas, Kanpur summers aren't kind to anyone, least of all to me. And so I migrate straight to the chilled lecture halls. Now you must be wondering, how do I enter one after the lecture has already started, and there's no one to push the door open? Easy. There's always that one squad of latecomers, no matter when the class begins. These kids need a course on punctuality. But hey, who am I to judge?

Every time I enter, I'm met with wide, confused eyes, as if they've never seen such a handsome four legged being before. Some even dare to pet me, call me cute, and take my pictures. Did it not occur to you, even once, to hesitate before treating me like a child? But, as much as I hate it, I must admit, I also kinda enjoy the attention. Which is exactly why I cannot stand that one person hogging the spotlight: The professor. Always stealing the show with their convoluted words that these kids barely understand.

And just when I think I can steal some attention—bam three guys march in with those boxes of menace, stealing even the

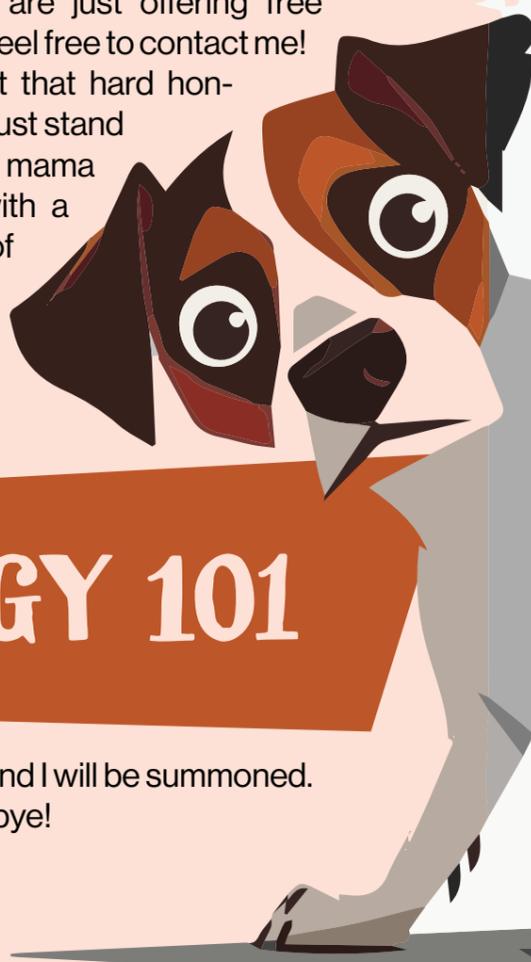
professor's thunder. Around here, those boxes matter more to the kids than the lecture itself. The way they leap over each other to snatch those biometric machines is insane.

Classroom life is entertaining. Some kids gossip (prime content for the OAT nightly dog meet-up—trust me, we know who's dating who before you do). Others find classroom chairs more comfortable than their beds.

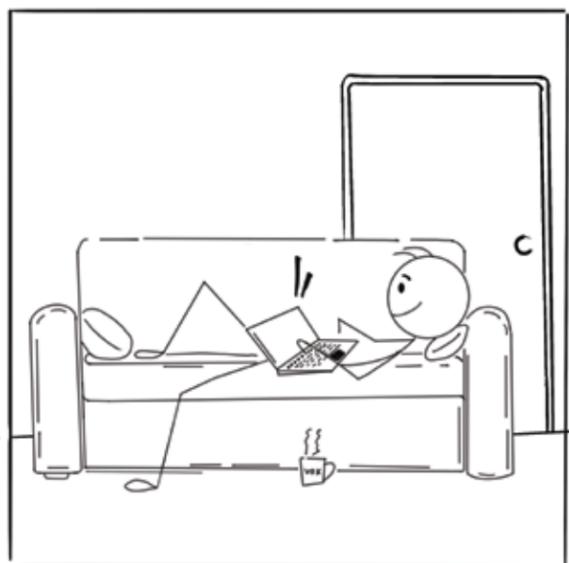
Anyway, enough yapping. The bell rings, meaning it's time for me to end my nap and go around looking for pats and treats, But, don't worry, if you have any concerns, if you need someone to talk to, or are just offering free food, feel free to contact me!

It's not that hard honestly, just stand near mama mio with a plate of

food and I will be summoned. Goodbye!



DROOLOGY 101





[MASALA ICE TEA, BUTTER SWEET CORN, PERI-PERI MAGGI AND A FRAPPE MOCHA]

PURRFECT THIRD DATE

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[KANJIVARAM IDLI] NOT YOUR REGULAR IDLI, THIS ONE COMES DRESSED UP WITH SPICES AND ATTITUDE!



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BECAUSE FRIED DREAMS TASTE THIS GOOD



HALL 10

WHEN DOSA DREAMS OF BEING A PIZZA, YOU HAVE HERE A [PIZZA DOSA !]



MAMA MIO

[BUBBLEGUM SHAKE]

BUUBLE-LICIOUS BLISS IN EVERY SIP



ZING

[QUESADILLA]

NO QUESTION IT'S SIMPLY DILLA-CIOUS

AROUND THE CAMPUS IN X PLACES



Dear Y25s,

Time flies in the blink of an eye. Just a few months ago you were scratching your heads with calculus questions, and now you've almost completed the first half of your very first semester. As you catch your breath, we hope that you are enjoying this surprise - this newsletter Vox has curated especially for you!

Vox Populi, which you might remember from your orientation (the ones who conducted the Freshers' Survey), is the student journalism body of IIT Kanpur. Now, you might think, why? Which is an obvious question, so here we are to answer it. As you have made your way into campus over the last month, you would have realized this campus is a city in itself, with its own infrastructure, rules, citizens, and justice. And not everything here is a fairy tale. How, then, do you make sense of it all—the 10,000 students and 1,000 acres that now surround you? That's where we come in.

At its core, journalism works as a medium to present and seek truth among the people it concerns. Vox has always strived to be there for everyone on campus be it students, workers, a building, or even the wildlife. We publish investigative pieces delving into issues and current concerns, reports about major happenings on campus, and satire and comics.

It is important to remember that we are as much a part of this campus as this campus is ours, and our voice matters here—each one of us. While students and the administration often work in synergy, it is by asking questions that we pave the way for a better tomorrow. After all, what we have today is the result of such questions.

IITK will give you wonderful opportunities and the freedom to exercise and make use of them. In this world, information is power and students have as much right to it as anyone else, for it is they who are most directly affected by it. As the old adage goes, Vox Populi, Vox Dei, the voice of the people is the voice of God. And here on this campus, your voice matters

Looking forward to see you soon!
Mayur Agrawal
Kushagra Srivastava
Chief Editors, Vox Populi