

OSCE-LED SURVEY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

# WELL-BEING AND SAFETY OF WOMEN



EXPERIENCES OF  
DISADVANTAGED WOMEN  
THEMATIC REPORT

# OSCE-led survey on violence against women: Experiences of disadvantaged women



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# Background

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the world's largest regional security organization, deals with a broad range of security-related challenges, including the protection of human rights and promotion of gender equality. Among the Organization's main areas of focus are fostering regional security co-operation, as well as conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict management. The OSCE comprises 57 participating States, covering a region that spans across all of Europe and includes the United States, Canada and Central Asia, as well as Mongolia. Through the work of the Secretariat, three specialized institutions and 16 field operations, the OSCE works to address numerous security challenges and assists participating States with the implementation of their comprehensive political commitments.

The OSCE recognizes violence against women and girls (VAWG)<sup>1</sup> as both a threat to individuals and a broader security concern, and it therefore sees preventing and combating VAWG as one of its priorities. VAWG is a persistent human rights violation that threatens the security and safety of countless women and girls all around the world. It affects not only their lives, hindering their full and equal participation in society, but also the lives of those who are close to them; it ultimately has a lasting impact on their health and well-being as well as on their children, communities and society at large.

Gender inequality lies at the root of gender-based violence against women and girls. The OSCE plays a key role in working with national stakeholders to build their capacity to prevent gender-based violence and to protect survivors.<sup>2</sup> Under the slogan "Bringing Security Home", the OSCE has stressed that women and girls need to be safe both in public and at home, so that they can reach their full potential and contribute to political, economic and social development.

Violence against women and girls also occurs in times of conflict, and certain groups of women may be at a heightened risk of violence. The OSCE has commissioned this qualitative and quantitative study in order to shed light on the prevalence of different forms of VAWG in non-conflict and in conflict-affected settings, and among different sociodemographic groups, in selected OSCE participating States: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Moldova and Ukraine. The research was also conducted in Kosovo.<sup>3</sup> The [main results of the study](#), which should be read alongside this report, were published in March 2019.

This study, the first such representative survey conducted in South-Eastern Europe or Eastern Europe, also encompasses data on gender attitudes and experiences of women from minority groups and other disadvantaged groups.<sup>4</sup> It aims to provide robust data in order to develop more comprehensive and evidence-based policies, strategies, programmes and activities that are accessible and beneficial to all women and that prevent and combat VAW. The ultimate goal of this research is to provide evidence for informed decision-making and advocacy at different levels and thereby contribute to achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to a reduction of VAWG in the target regions, improved services for survivors and greater security for women.

<sup>1</sup> The terms "violence against women" (VAW) and "violence against women and girls" (VAWG), which are used interchangeably in this report, include physical, sexual and psychological violence by intimate partners and non-partners, as well as stalking and sexual harassment.

<sup>2</sup> This report uses the terms "survivor" and "victim" interchangeably.

<sup>3</sup> All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text should be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244.

<sup>4</sup> The questionnaire used in this study is based on, and comparable with, the questionnaire used by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights in the 28 EU member states in 2012.



# Executive summary

## What is this report about?

This report focuses on the findings of the OSCE-led survey on the Well-being and Safety of Women and their implications for disadvantaged women. The OSCE-led survey was conducted in 2018 in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Moldova<sup>5</sup> and Ukraine.<sup>6</sup> The survey was also conducted in Kosovo. This report should be read alongside individual reports for each of the eight settings, a regional report for the whole area and one other thematic report concerned with the impact of conflict on violence against women.

The OSCE-led survey included a quantitative and qualitative component and was undertaken with the goal of providing comparable data on different forms of violence women experience in their childhood and throughout the course of their lives. The research examined violence that women experience in conflict and non-conflict settings, as well as the impact violence has on women, including its lasting consequences. Questions on norms and attitudes connected to violence against women were asked to better understand the underlying causes of violence.

The area covered by the research is diverse and has different historical, social and economic contexts. Rather than focusing on the findings from particular locations, this report focuses on the broader trends that emerged around the experiences of different demographic groups of women across the region.

This report explores how disadvantaged groups of women are affected by violence compared with women generally.

## Leaving no one behind: which women are disadvantaged?

Disadvantaged groups of women and girls are those that experience a higher risk of poverty, social exclusion, discrimination and violence than the general population, including, but not limited to, ethnic minorities, migrants, people with disabilities, isolated elderly people and children.

This vulnerability to discrimination and marginalization is a consequence of social, cultural, economic and political conditions and not a quality inherent to certain groups of people.

Women and girls belonging to disadvantaged groups are often subjected to multiple forms of discrimination and violence. However, they have limited access to protection, support and redress when their rights are violated.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The Transdniestrian region has not been covered by the survey. However, one focus group discussion was held with women from this region.

<sup>6</sup> The sample in Ukraine does not cover the Autonomous Republic of Crimea or non-government-controlled areas in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The survey was carried out on a sample representative of the adult population of women (2,048 women aged 18–74), including 298 women living close to the contact line in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, in an effort to better understand how conflict affects violence against women.

<sup>7</sup> “Disadvantaged groups”, European Institute for Gender Equality accessed 18 August 2019, <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1083>.

## OSCE-led survey on violence against women: Experiences of disadvantaged women

The disadvantaged groups discussed in this report and the proportions they represent of the weighted sample are as follows<sup>8</sup>:

- **Education level:** Four per cent of women across the survey have only primary education or less.
- **Poverty:** Across the survey, 11% of women say they are “finding it very difficult on their present income”. They are referred to throughout the report as “poor.”
- **Employment status:** Eleven per cent of women are unemployed, 1% are doing unpaid work in a family business, 1% are not working due to illness or disability and 13% are fulfilling domestic care duties or responsibilities.
- **Rurality:** Thirty-eight per cent of women across the survey area live in rural areas.
- **Disability:** Five per cent of women say they were “severely limited” in carrying out ordinary activities because of a health problem in the six months prior to the survey. They are referred to throughout the report as being “disabled”.
- **Women who had no choice in their marriage:** Of those women who are married or are in a civil partnership, 12% say their partner demanded that they marry, 4% say their parents decided, and 1% say their partner’s parents decided.
- **Women who were married in childhood:** Of those women who are married or in a civil partnership, 6% were first married before they reached 18 years of age.
- **Older women:** Twenty-three per cent of women were 60 years or older at the time of the survey.
- **Ethnic/religious minority status:** Five per cent of women consider themselves to belong to an ethnic or religious minority.
- **Refugees/displaced people:** One per cent of women consider themselves to be refugees or displaced.
- **Returnees/former displaced person:** Only 0.4% of women say they are a returnee (former displaced person or refugee).

Due to the intersectional nature of disadvantage, women can fall under multiple categories. For a detailed breakdown of the sociodemographic characteristics and related disadvantage of each group of respondents, see Annex 5.

### **Other at-risk groups:**

In analysing the data, some forms of sexual harassment and violence are found to be more prevalent among groups of women who would not traditionally be considered disadvantaged. These include younger women (aged 18–29), those in paid employment, students and women who have tertiary education. This may be due to their greater willingness to disclose their experiences in an interview, their attitudes towards violence and harassment or their increased exposure to potential perpetrators. Throughout the report, a distinction will be made between at-risk groups and disadvantaged groups.

<sup>8</sup> The numbers of women indicating having same sex partner(s) was too low to provide any meaningful findings.

### Why is it important to focus on the experiences of disadvantaged women?

While all women and girls can be at risk of violence, they are not a homogenous group, and the risks and experiences of distinct groups of women and girls can be very different. Discrimination and violence against women and girls are inextricably linked to other factors that affect their lives. Because women and girls experience varying and intersecting forms of discrimination that have an aggravating impact, gender-based violence may affect some women to different degrees or in different ways. Legal and policy responses need to take into account these different realities.<sup>9</sup>

### What are the major findings?

The survey clearly finds that **some groups of women are at a greater risk of experiencing violence and that women from disadvantaged groups often face specific challenges.** Many of the discriminatory factors impacting women are interrelated. Poverty, low education levels and early and forced marriage are major factors contributing to the likelihood of women and girls' exposure to violence and also to its aggravated physical and psychological impact. Belonging to a minority group, being disabled or being a refugee or displaced—all factors that are often linked to poverty and discrimination—also bring increased risks and differential experiences of violence.

Furthermore, **underlying social norms and attitudes, which are more common among some disadvantaged groups and often perpetuated by poverty, contribute to gender inequality and violence against women.** Norms and attitudes that subscribe to women's subservience, victim blaming and that view violence as a private matter are prominent among former refugees/displaced women, women with primary education or less and women who belong to ethnic/religious minorities. While such views do not necessarily correspond to a higher reported prevalence, violence is still common, and it is likely that social norms and attitudes are a contributing factor. The pervasiveness of such norms may also contribute to a wider environment of gender inequality, tolerance of abuse and fear of speaking out across society.

**Women from disadvantaged groups face additional barriers to accessing support services.** In some cases, these barriers exist due to fear of institutional discrimination at the hands of the services and authorities that should help women. The qualitative research showed this to be especially true for women from certain ethnic-minority groups, including Roma women. Many disadvantaged women also say that they are unable to access services due to economic dependence. This highlights the need to ensure that a financial safety net is available for all women.

<sup>9</sup> "General recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19", Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 14 July 2017.

### Specific conclusions and action points:

#### Responding to all forms of violence against women and girls belonging to disadvantaged groups

##### ***Prevalence, nature and scale of physical and sexual violence***

As the prevalence of physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15 is higher among certain disadvantaged groups, all efforts to implement legislation and improve or develop action plans need to take into account the reality of each group.

While almost one in four women overall (23%) say they have been subjected to intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15, women from some disadvantaged groups reported an even bleaker situation:

- Forty per cent of poor women have experienced intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15, compared with 23% of women overall.
- This high prevalence may be linked to men's perceived roles as breadwinners. The qualitative research found that many women noticed increased acts of aggression and abuse at the hands of their partners in times of financial difficulty.
- Women who had no choice in their marriage (26%) are also more likely to say they have experienced intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence than women who chose their spouse themselves (19%) and women overall (23%).
- Women who are refugees or displaced (26%) are slightly more likely than average (23%) to have experienced intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence.

Some groups of women are at a greater risk of experiencing physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of someone other than a partner:

- Thirty-six per cent of poor women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of a non-partner, compared with 19% of women overall. These women (12%) are more likely than those living comfortably (6%) to experience non-partner violence at the hands of their partner's relatives or family members.
- Refugees and displaced women (28%) are also more likely than average (19%) to have experienced physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of a non-partner since the age of 15.

The relationship between attitudes and disclosing abuse is not clear-cut. Violence against women appears to be less common, or is disclosed less frequently, among some groups who hold more traditional views.

- For instance, women from ethnic or religious minorities (27%) are more likely than average (17%) to agree that "it is a woman's obligation to have sex with her husband even if she doesn't feel like it".
- Women from ethnic/religious minorities (19%) are less likely than average (23%) to say they have experienced intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15.



Such findings should not be taken at face value, however, as women from ethnic/religious minorities are also more likely to agree that “domestic violence is a private matter” (45% compared to 30% on average) and may therefore be less willing to disclose their experiences of violence. Furthermore, while prevalence among ethnic/religious minorities is lower than the regional average, it still remains high – with almost one in five women from an ethnic or religious minority having experienced violence – and traditional norms and attitudes may be a contributing factor.

### ***Sexual violence***

The prevalence of sexual violence is higher among some disadvantaged groups, and, worryingly, some groups are more likely to be subjected to severe abuse.

- Women who had no say in their marriage are more likely to experience sexual violence at the hands of an intimate partner (11%) than those who had a choice in their marriage (4%).
- Women who are refugees or displaced are almost twice as likely (12%) as women overall (7%) to have experienced intimate partner sexual violence since the age of 15.
- Almost one in ten women who are refugees or displaced say they have been raped by an intimate partner (9%) or made to take part in sexual activity against their will (10%) – more than double the number of women overall who have experienced such violence (4% and 3%, respectively).
- Women who are doing unpaid work in a family business are more than three times as likely (10%) as women in general (3%) to have survived attempted rape at the hands of an intimate partner.

### ***Physical violence***

Some groups are also more likely to experience physical violence, and some are particularly vulnerable to experiencing more brutal forms of violence. Those who are at a greater risk of physical violence are not necessarily the same groups that are at a greater risk of sexual violence:

- Of those women who married when they were children, 27% have experienced intimate partner physical violence since the age of 15 compared with 22% of those who married as adults. In the 12 months prior to the survey, 11% of women who married as children experienced this form of violence (compared with 6% of those who married as adults).
- Women who married when they were children were also more likely to experience psychological violence in the 12 months prior to the survey, but less likely to experience sexual violence during this period.
- Disabled women also seem to be particularly at risk of experiencing physical violence, at the hands of both intimate partners and non-partners, despite being no more likely than women overall to experience sexual violence. According to the survey data, 24% of women with a disability have experienced physical violence at the hands of an intimate partner since the age of 15 (compared with 21% of women overall), and 35% have experienced such violence at the hands of a partner or non-partner (compared with 29% of women overall).
- Disabled women are also among the most likely groups to have been punched or beaten with a hard object or kicked by an intimate partner (10%), compared with 6% of women overall. Only poor women are more likely to have experienced this severe type of violence (11%). Similarly, poor women (6%), those with only primary education or less (6%) and disabled women (5%) are most likely to say they have had their head beaten against something.

### ***Sexual harassment and stalking***

A number of groups that would not usually be considered disadvantaged, including younger women, working women, women in urban areas and those with higher levels of education, are much more likely to experience harassment and stalking than women overall.

### **Action points**

#### ***Participating States***

- Ensure that national legal and policy frameworks are updated and implemented in compliance with the key international conventions on violence against women and girls (CEDAW, Istanbul Convention) and also with other non-discrimination decisions and conventions. This includes the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which has been ratified by all countries covered by the survey.
- Improve the collection of disaggregated data, which enables more in-depth analysis and can be used for evidence-based policy-making to address violence against women and girls. Using internationally agreed comparable data disaggregated by sex, age, rural/urban place of residence and other relevant categories based on the local context enables participating States to monitor the progress of SDG 5 and SDG 16 and to review their progress and challenges in leaving no one behind when implementing their international commitments for ending violence against women and girls.
- Enhance efforts to increase access to quality education for girls from disadvantaged groups as a means of addressing the root causes of violence stemming from subordinate and victim-blaming attitudes and of decreasing women and girls' vulnerability to experiencing violence throughout their lifetime. Special attention should be paid to improving access to education for girls from minority groups, including Roma, and girls with a disability.
- Ensure the active engagement of civil society organizations representing disadvantaged groups of women in the development, implementation and review of laws and policies on combating violence against women and girls.
- Make available information on relevant laws and policies in minority languages and to persons with disabilities, including by making relevant governmental webpages more accessible.

#### ***OSCE executive structures***

- Carry out further research and analysis on the situation of disadvantaged women in the OSCE region and on how different and intersecting forms of discrimination impact their safety and well-being.
- Develop tailor-made approaches to accommodate the needs and challenges of disadvantaged groups of women in OSCE projects and activities.
- Research, document and share good practices on addressing the needs and challenges of disadvantaged groups of women in the OSCE, with full involvement of women from these groups themselves.

### Other *at-risk* groups

Groups of women who are not considered disadvantaged can also be at a heightened risk of other kinds of violence in addition to those discussed above.

- Women in the 18–29 age group are the most likely to have experienced stalking (15%) and are also the most likely to say that they experienced intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence in the 12 months prior to the survey (10% compared with 7% on average and 4% among those aged 50–59). This may in part be explained by the fact that younger women are better able and more willing to identify and discuss violent behaviour.
- Women with tertiary education are also more likely than those with only primary education to have experienced both intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence (24% versus 20%, respectively) and non-partner physical and/or sexual violence (24% versus 13%, respectively). Women with tertiary education are also more likely to say they suffered from a psychological consequence as a result of their most serious incident of partner or non-partner violence, which could be because they are better able to recognize mental health issues.
- Despite their higher likelihood to experience violence and despite the fact that women with tertiary education are better informed than other groups of women about what to do if they experience violence, women with tertiary education (16%) are less likely to report their experiences to the police than women with lower levels of education (22%).
- Women in urban areas (20%) are more likely to say they have experienced non-partner physical and/or sexual violence than women in rural areas (17%). Again, this could be related to the fact that women in urban areas have greater exposure to, and interaction with, potential perpetrators, including workplace perpetrators due to their better employment opportunities.

### Consequences of violence on the well-being of disadvantaged women

The impact of violence can be severe and long-lasting for women who experience it. There is a link between the severity of violence and the longevity and gravity of its physical and psychological impact, and the survey data shows that women from specific disadvantaged groups can face more severe forms of violence. However, it also appears that, for some groups of disadvantaged women, the discrimination or exclusion they face exacerbates the emotional and psychological impact regardless of the severity of the violence. Resilience to, and recovery from, trauma relies on many factors, including one's financial situation, self-confidence and support from friends, family and people in the community. While many women face difficulties in overcoming trauma, doing so can be even more challenging for women from disadvantaged groups.

## OSCE-led survey on violence against women: Experiences of disadvantaged women

Some women are more likely to suffer from physical consequences as a result of violence, including more serious, long-lasting consequences, which appears to be linked to the severity of the violence experienced.

- Disabled women were more likely than women from other groups to suffer from almost every type of physical consequence. In particular, disabled women are far more likely than average to say they suffered bruises or scratches (58% versus 44% on average) and slightly more likely to suffer more serious consequences such as broken bones or broken teeth (8% versus 6% overall) or internal injuries (5% versus 3% overall) as a result of their most serious incident of partner or non-partner physical violence.
- Women with only primary education or less are also more likely to say they have experienced serious physical consequences. Eighteen per cent of women with only primary education or less suffered broken bones or broken teeth as a result of their most serious incident of partner or non-partner violence (compared with 6% overall), and 18% said they experienced internal injuries (compared with 2% overall). Again, this is likely related to their higher propensity to experience more severe forms of physical violence.
- While half of women who are living comfortably on their present income (49%) suffered from a physical consequence of violence, this figure rises to 61% among poor women. This is likely due to the fact that poor women are more likely to have experienced some of the more severe forms of violence.

With regard to the psychological impact of violence against women, some disadvantaged groups face specific challenges:

- Women who are poor (87%) are significantly more likely to suffer from a psychological consequence following their most serious incident of partner or non-partner physical and/or sexual violence than women who are living comfortably (65%) and women overall (81%). This may be related to their higher likelihood of experiencing the most severe forms of violence. In particular, poor women (47%) are more likely to suffer from anxiety than those who are living comfortably (19%) and women overall (39%).<sup>10</sup>
- Displaced women/refugees are also more likely to suffer from some of the longer-lasting psychological consequences of violence, such as depression (35% versus 28% overall) or panic attacks (32% versus 22% overall), as a result of their most serious incident of partner or non-partner violence.<sup>11</sup> This, too, could be related to their higher propensity to experience more severe forms of sexual violence and to their limited emotional resilience due to their situation.

<sup>10</sup> Only former refugees or displaced women are more likely to suffer from anxiety as a result of their most serious incident; however, the base size (n=30) is too low to allow for any meaningful analysis.

<sup>11</sup> Former refugees or displaced women are also the most likely group to experience depression or panic attacks as a result of their most serious incident; however, the base size (n=30) remains low.

### Reporting to the police and other institutions and access to support services

While disadvantaged women generally shared similarly low rates of reporting their most serious incident of violence to the police or other institutions, findings from the qualitative research provide insights into their reporting behaviours and to the barriers women face in accessing support services, including accounts of discriminatory attitudes and inaction by police and other service providers. The support needs of women from disadvantaged groups can be different and more complicated than those of women who are less disadvantaged.

- Women from ethnic/religious minority groups and women who are financially disadvantaged cited fear of discrimination as a common reason for not contacting medical services or calling the police following an incident of violence. Women from Roma communities were particularly concerned that the authorities would not help due to the deeply held belief that violence is normal within Roma communities.
- Economic dependence was also linked to a reluctance to seek help and to some victims' refusal to leave the perpetrator. For women who are financially dependent, the consequences of seeking support or reporting violence to the police could be losing their partner and, subsequently, any access to land, property, inheritance or income. Again, women who took part in the qualitative research expressed the belief that Roma women were particularly vulnerable due to the prejudice they face in society and difficulties they have in finding employment.
- Women from a number of disadvantaged groups are far less likely than women in general to have their own bank account – a key indicator of financial independence. Findings from the survey data showed that women from an ethnic/religious minority (68%), women who are unemployed (75%), poor women (74%) and women with only primary education or less (75%) are less likely to have their own bank account compared with women overall (55% do not have a bank account).

## Action points

### *Participating States*

- Establish criteria and guidelines for making specialized multisectoral response mechanisms accessible to disadvantaged groups in consultation with representatives of those groups. This includes the following:
  - providing information and services in minority languages;
  - establishing services (stationary or mobile) in rural and remote locations;
  - improving accessibility of information and services for women and girls with disabilities; and
  - ensuring that all services are provided free of charge and that additional costs for women from disadvantaged groups are minimized (costs related to transportation, childcare or doctor's fees, for example).
- Inform women and girls about available services through various media, both online and offline, that are tailored to specific disadvantaged groups in terms of language, terminology, communication strategy and messaging.
- Prioritize the provision of financial support to survivors of violence, and make available financial literacy, education and vocational training programmes for women who have experienced violence.
- Integrate the specific needs and challenges of women from disadvantaged groups into all training for the police and the judiciary on how to protect and support victims, apply a victim-centred approach and improve reporting systems. Work together with representatives of disadvantaged groups to raise awareness among the police and the judiciary of the specific needs of disadvantaged women, with an additional aim of countering stereotypes about these women.
- Support specialist psychosocial services and economic empowerment initiatives for women from disadvantaged groups, in particular displaced and refugee women, women with low education levels and women from minority groups, including Roma women.
- Review discriminatory legislation in the area of property and inheritance rights.

### *OSCE executive structures*

- Integrate the importance of addressing the specific needs and challenges of disadvantaged groups of women into all support activities to multisectoral support services and approaches to respond to violence against women and girls.
- Support OSCE participating States in addressing low reporting rates to the police, including by women from disadvantaged groups, by sharing and reviewing different models and good practices in the OSCE region on non-discriminatory approaches and inclusion of different groups.
- Improve existing OSCE training manuals for security sector actors, and include the data and findings from the OSCE-led survey and this thematic report to better inform future projects and activities concerning all forms of violence against all women and girls.

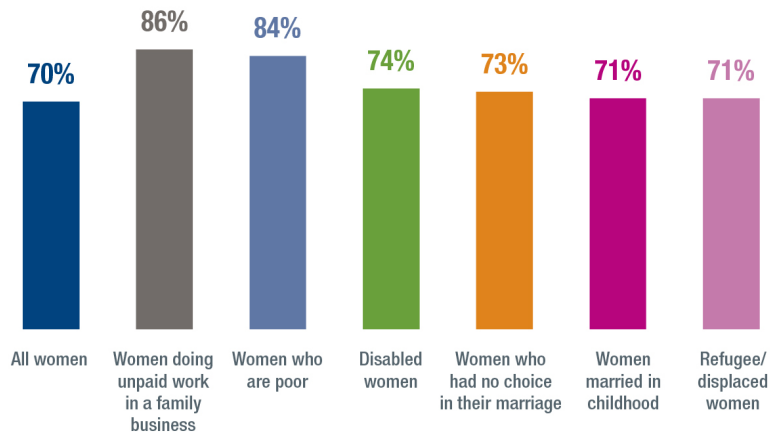




A quantitative survey was conducted among a representative sample of women aged 18 to 74 living in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Moldova and Ukraine. The survey was also conducted in Kosovo.<sup>1</sup> A total of 15,179 interviews were conducted face-to-face between April and September 2018. Data has been weighted to the known population profile.

## HIGH PREVALENCE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN FROM CERTAIN DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

PROPORTION OF WOMEN WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED INTIMATE PARTNER OR NON-PARTNER VIOLENCE, SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND/OR STALKING SINCE THE AGE OF 15

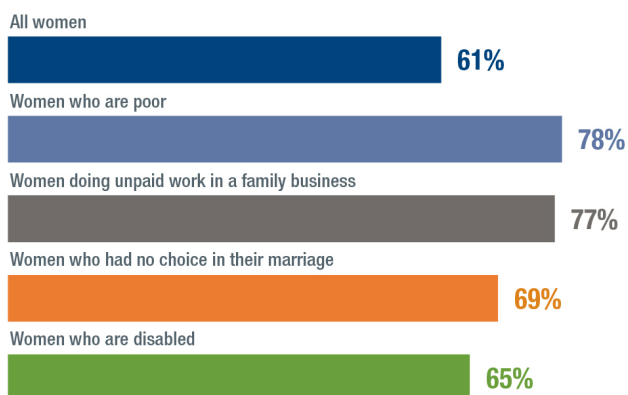


NUMBER OF WOMEN FROM DISADVANTAGED GROUPS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED INTIMATE PARTNER OR NON-PARTNER PHYSICAL AND/OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE SINCE THE AGE OF 15

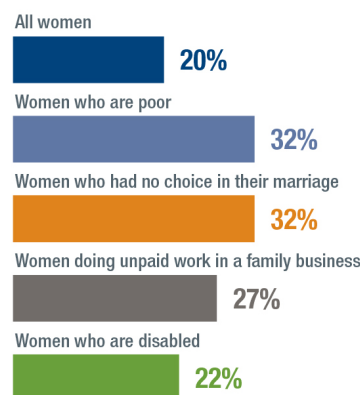


\*Approximate figures

PREVALENCE OF INTIMATE PARTNER PHYSICAL, SEXUAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE SINCE THE AGE OF 15 IS HIGHER AMONG CERTAIN DISADVANTAGED GROUPS



SDG 5.2.1: INTIMATE PARTNER PHYSICAL, SEXUAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE IN THE 12 MONTHS PRIOR TO THE SURVEY

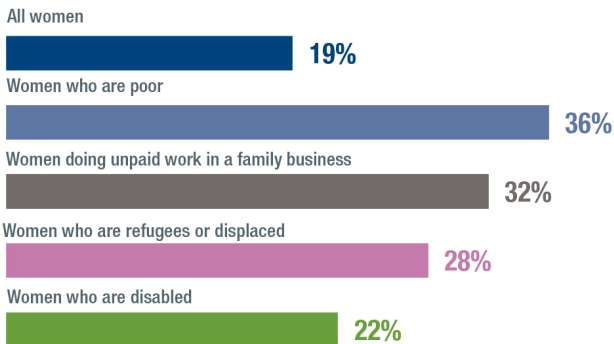


<sup>1</sup> All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text should be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244.

Base for prevalence of intimate partner violence- All women (14,085); women who are poor (1,376); women doing unpaid work in a family business (170); women who had no choice in their marriage (2,807); women who are refugees/displaced (239); women who are disabled (1,021); women educated to primary level or lower (1,817)



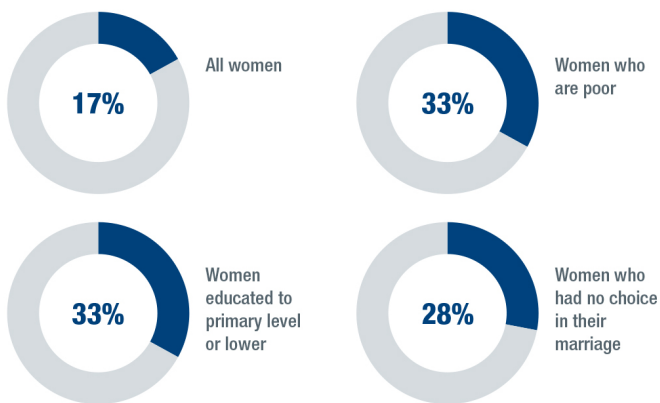
### PREVALENCE OF NON-PARTNER PHYSICAL AND/OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE SINCE THE AGE OF 15 IS ALSO HIGHER AMONG CERTAIN DISADVANTAGED GROUPS



### SILENCING AND VICTIM-BLAMING ATTITUDES

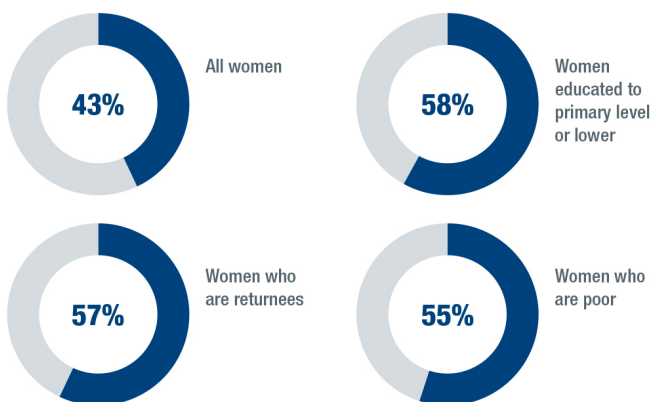
Q: Would your friends generally agree or disagree with the following statements? [Strongly agree/ tend to agree]

It is a wife's obligation to have sex with her husband even if she doesn't feel like it

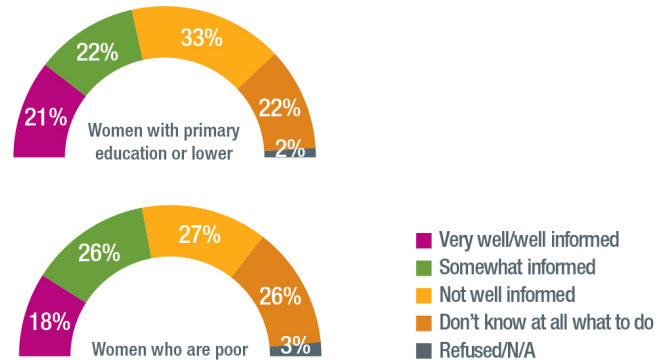


Q: To what extent would you agree or disagree with the following statements?

It is important for a man to show his wife/partner who is the boss



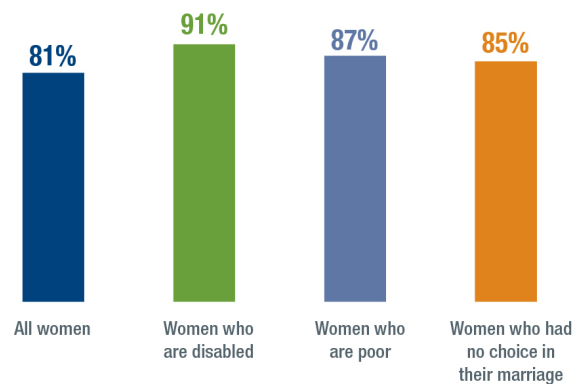
### WOMEN WITH LOW EDUCATION AND LOW INCOME ARE LEAST AWARE OF WHAT TO DO IF THEY EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE



### IMPACT OF THE MOST SERIOUS INCIDENTS

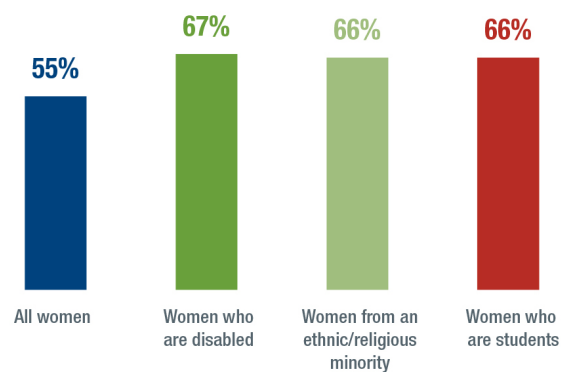
#### VIOLENCE CAUSES PSYCHOLOGICAL SUFFERING

% who experienced one or more psychological consequences due to the most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner violence



#### VIOLENCE CAUSES PHYSICAL SUFFERING

% who suffered one or more physical consequences due to the most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner violence



Base for prevalence of any violence, non-partner violence, attitudes, and how well aware women feel: All women (15,179); women who are poor (1,479); women doing unpaid work in a family business (180); disabled women (1,095); women who had no choice in their marriage (2,885); women married in childhood (1,273); refugees/displaced women (247); women educated to primary level or lower (1,954); returnees (186)

Base for psychological and physical consequences of intimate partner or non-partner violence: All women (2,763); disabled women (275); women who are poor (470); women who had no choice in their marriage (518); women from an ethnic/religious minority (259); students (76)

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# 1. Introduction to the OSCE-led survey

Preventing and combating violence against women is a core area of the OSCE's work. The participating States have adopted three Ministerial Council decisions on preventing and combating violence against women, including most recently in December 2018 in Milan. The OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality from 2004 and other decisions also refer to combating violence against women. The OSCE recognizes the importance of combating violence against women to achieve comprehensive security and fulfil the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. At the same time, gender-based violence is one of the most pervasive impediments to women's full, equal and effective participation in political, economic and public life.<sup>12</sup>

The lack of comparative insights into the prevalence and characteristics of violence against women limits the possibility of exchanging experiences and developing cross-regional initiatives to improve policies and measures related to preventing and protecting women from violence.

## **OSCE Ministerial Council decisions on preventing and combating violence against women and on disadvantaged groups**

MC.DEC 3/03: Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area

- Underlines that Roma and Sinti women should be systematically mainstreamed in all relevant Roma policies and be able to participate on equal basis with men.

MC.DEC 14/04: Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality

- Identifies combating violence against women as a priority area of work for the OSCE

MC.DEC 15/05: Preventing and combating violence against women

- Recognizes violence as a threat to human security and urges participating States to provide full access to justice, medical and social assistance, confidential counselling and shelter. It also calls on participating States to criminalize gender-based violence and highlights the importance of prevention.

MC.DEC 7/14: Preventing and combating violence against women

- Calls for action on legal frameworks, prevention, protection, prosecution and partnerships. It addresses reliable data collection and calls on participating States to speed up efforts to bring legislation into line with relevant international standards, including the Istanbul Convention.

MC.DEC 4/18: Preventing and combating violence against women

- Recognizes that inequality is a root cause of violence against women and calls for measures to address this, including by engaging men and boys in combating violence. It also notes that special measures should be taken to address specific forms of violence such as sexual harassment and online violence.

<sup>12</sup> See Decision 4/18, "Preventing and Combating Violence against Women", OSCE Ministerial Council, 7 December 2018, accessed 18 August 2019, <https://www.osce.org/chairmanship/406019?download=true>.

### Prior research

Research on the experiences of women from disadvantaged groups is even less readily available than overall surveys on the scale and nature of violence against women and girls. Limited insights are available only on the situation of some groups, including Roma women, women living with disabilities, older women (65 and older) and migrant women.

A regional survey on the socio-economic position of marginalized Roma, conducted in 2017 in the western Balkans by the UNDP, the European Commission and the World Bank<sup>13</sup>, found that Roma women and men face limited access to opportunities in every aspect of human development.<sup>14</sup> Due to prominent gender inequalities, Roma women are in an even more disadvantaged position than Roma men: nine in 10 young Roma women are neither employed nor enrolled in a formal education or training programme, and one in three Roma women married when they were children. With regard to attitudes, the survey indicates that Roma women tend to agree more than other women with the statement that it is “acceptable for a husband to slap his wife”. A large proportion of both Roma women and men agree that it is acceptable for parents to arrange the marriage of boys and girls.<sup>15</sup> Qualitative research on domestic violence against Roma women in Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia<sup>16</sup> demonstrated that Roma women experience multiple types of violence: physical, psychological, sexual and economic.

Regarding women with disabilities, USAID published a regional study on persons with disabilities in 18 countries in the Europe and Eurasia region, including the locations where the OSCE-led survey was conducted.<sup>17</sup> The study found that women with disabilities were particularly disadvantaged in several areas, including rights to sexuality, marriage, motherhood, social integration and employment. Most of the participants in Serbia pointed to violence as one of the most serious and frequent problems faced by girls and women with disabilities. In Montenegro, research participants reported experiences of serious verbal violence from peers from an early age. In Kosovo and Ukraine, participants explained that women and girls with disabilities were at a higher risk of violence due to the prevalent tolerance of such violence. In all locations, those who took part in the research reported verbal, emotional, financial, physical and sexual abuse against women and girls with disabilities. However, these forms of abuse are severely underreported.

Little research exists on the gendered experiences of the older population (65 and older). A survey conducted in 2014 in Moldova among a sample of 1,096 people over 60 found that 29% of respondents had experienced acts of violence and abuse, two-thirds of whom were women.<sup>18</sup> A survey conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina revealed that around 43% of older people disclosed that they experienced violence at some point in their lives.<sup>19</sup> A telephone survey conducted in Serbia implemented by the Red Cross found that 20% of respondents had been exposed to some form of abuse and violence in old age, but data was not disaggregated by sex.<sup>20</sup>

Regarding migrant and displaced women, several studies indicate that the risks of gender-based violence are high among migrant and refugee women and girls, both while on the move and in host countries.<sup>21</sup>

Keeping in mind the paucity, partiality or complete lack of data on violence against women from different disadvantaged groups in the region, the OSCE-led survey is a significant

13 “Regional Roma Survey 2017 Technical Report”, UNDP in Europe and Central Asia, accessed 18 August 2019, <http://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/regional-roma-survey-2017-technical-report.html>. The survey covers Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.

14 Jelena Tadžić, “Regional Roma Survey 2017: Selected survey results through the gender lens”, UNDP.

15 Ibid.

16 N. Milenković, *Nowhere to turn: Gender-based violence against Roma women* (Istanbul: UNDP, 2018), accessed 18 August 2019, <http://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/nowhere-to-turn-gbv-against-roma-women.html>.

17 “Women with Disabilities in the Europe & Eurasia Region: Final Report”, USAID, August 2012, accessed 18 August 2019, <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/Women-with-Disabilities-EE-Region-FINAL-2012.pdf>.

18 *Breaking the silence: Elder abuse in the Republic of Moldova* (Chisinau: HelpAge International and National Centre for Demographic Research, 2015).

19 Nusreta Kepes, “Identifikacija i etiologija trenutnog stanja i položaja osoba treće životne dobi u BiH (Gračanica: Osmijeh, 2012).

20 Brankica Janković, Nataša Todorović and Milutin Vračević, *Dobro cuvana porodična tajna – zlostavljanje starijih osoba* (Beograd: Crveni krst Srbije, 2015).

21 “Initial assessment report: Protection Risks for Women and Girls in the European Refugee and Migrant Crisis”, UNHCR, UNFPA and Women’s Refugee Commission, 2016, accessed 18 August 2019, <https://fra.europa.eu/en/theme/asylum-migration-borders/overviews/focus-gender-based-violence>.

breakthrough in addressing violence against women in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, including those from disadvantaged groups, as it provides robust, comparable and comprehensive evidence of VAWG within and beyond intimate partner relations and the domestic context. The survey results should enable exchanges of experiences, shared initiatives and joint policy actions that may facilitate the development of more effective systems for preventing violence and protecting women, particularly in the framework of the implementation of the Istanbul Convention.

### **Responding to the need for comparable data**

There is a need to collect and learn from good practices within the area covered by the survey, as well as within the entire OSCE region. With its comparable data, the OSCE-led survey makes it possible to examine the situation in participating States and on a cross-regional level. It also makes it possible to take a closer look at the reporting of violence and the reasons why women choose not to report abuse to the police or other services. This comparable data will enable regional initiatives and actions.

This research is based on the methodology used by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) for its 2012 survey on violence against women in 28 European Union member states.<sup>22</sup> The OSCE-led survey is therefore comparable to the FRA survey. The OSCE added several questions on norms, attitudes and behaviour related to violence and reporting experiences of abuse to ensure, in particular, the comparability of its data with the EU's data on gender attitudes and norms (Eurobarometer No. 449). The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) uses the FRA's data in its current work and plans to use the findings of the OSCE-led survey in the future.

### **Data to inform and support policy-making and implementation**

The aim of this survey is to provide robust data in order to develop more comprehensive and evidence-based policies, strategies, programmes and activities to prevent and combat VAW. The ultimate goal is therefore to provide evidence for informed decision-making and advocacy at different levels and thereby contribute to a reduction of VAW in the target area, improved services for survivors and greater security for women. This is also key for achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The OSCE-led survey provides data that is of direct policy relevance, as the data was collected for the 12-month period prior to the survey. Thus, data on reporting and official responses to victims, as well as the current prevalence of VAWG, is available for policy-making purposes.

The survey is the first cross-regional survey ever conducted that captures the prevalence of violence against women in the target area.

<sup>22</sup> For more about the FRA survey and methodology, see *Violence against women: an EU-wide survey. Main results* (Vienna: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2015), accessed 18 August 2019, <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2014/violence-against-women-eu-wide-survey-main-results-report>.

## OSCE-led survey on violence against women: Experiences of disadvantaged women

### Overview of the study

The OSCE-led survey included:

- 114 key expert interviews from the area covered by the survey, providing an overview of issues related to VAW and of conflict-related acts of violence;
- a survey of a representative sample of 15,179 women aged 18–74 living in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Moldova and Ukraine in order to establish the prevalence and consequences of violence by using a multistage, stratified, random probability sample design. The sample also included women living in Kosovo;
- 63 focus groups with women from various demographic backgrounds on their attitudes towards the subject;
- 35 in-depth interviews with women who had experienced violence, including women with a disability, in an effort to understand, in more detail, the impact this had on them.

### Main research goals

In total, 15,179 women aged 18–74 were interviewed face-to-face using a multistage, random probability approach. The data is weighted to the known population profile within each country. An additional weight (population weight) was calculated to enable reporting for the entire sample of the selected OSCE participating States or for a subgroup thereof.<sup>23</sup> This weight reflects the distribution of the survey population across the area covered.

The main goals of the study are to provide evidence of the prevalence of violence against women and girls and its consequences on women's health and well-being for the purposes of policy-making. The main research questions were:

- What are the attitudes and norms towards gender roles and violence against women?
- What is the extent of violence experienced by women in the regions covered by the survey?
- Which forms of violence do women experience?
- Who are the perpetrators of violence against women?
- What are the consequences of violence for women's health and well-being?
- Do women report their experiences to the police or other authorities or organizations? If not, why not?
- Are there differences between women's experiences of violence depending on their age, education, professional status, income or whether they are disabled, from a minority group or a rural area?

<sup>23</sup> The same was done for Kosovo.



### Overview of the qualitative research

The 114 key experts shared their views on the current state of how governmental institutions and NGOs are working to prevent VAWG, what support is available to women who have experienced VAWG and what improvements they recommend. These experts included representatives of international organizations as well as governmental and non-governmental institutions.

In total, 63 focus group discussions were conducted with women from different age groups, women living in urban and rural areas, women from different minority groups and women who have experienced conflict. The aims of these discussions were:

- to understand societal attitudes towards women generally and to understand VAWG and the perpetrators of such violence;
- to explore how attitudes towards VAWG have changed over time, including in periods of conflict;
- to explore the degree to which women are aware of existing support measures, their views on those measures and any barriers that might prevent them from accessing support; and
- to identify how prevention and support could be improved.

The sample for the general focus group discussions (FGDs) was designed to ensure that women from a range of age groups and geographical areas were included, with additional quotas requested so that women from various other socio-economic demographics were represented. Across all groups, the quotas specified that the FGDs should include a mix of:

- single, married and separated women;
- women with and without children;
- women who were employed (either self-employed or employed by somebody else) and women who were not in formal employment, i.e., women who were unemployed, studying or in training, carrying out domestic work in the family home, unable to work due to illness or disability, or retired;
- women with various levels of education;
- women with and without a disability; and
- women from a range of ethnic backgrounds.

## OSCE-led survey on violence against women: Experiences of disadvantaged women

For more detail on the composition of the focus groups, please refer to the [Well-being and Safety of Women technical report](#).

Overall, 35 in-depth interviews were conducted with survivors of violence, including women with a disability. The aims of these interviews were:

- to explore the forms of violence that women have experienced throughout their lifetime and the impact of conflict;
- to identify barriers to disclosing experiences and to seeking support, and to explore reasons why some women choose to disclose their experiences and others do not;
- to understand the support received, to identify gaps in service provision and to identify the unmet needs of women from specific minority groups (e.g., women from an ethnic minority); and
- for women who have gained access to support (formal or informal), to understand how they were able to access such support and the impact this had on them.

As far as possible, the sample of the in-depth interviews was designed to include women belonging to ethnic or other minority groups, as well as those with disabilities. In total, six in-depth interviews were carried out with women who had a medical condition or disability.

### Identifying disadvantaged women

This report presents an analysis of the survey data concerning four of the five factors used by the UNDP framework that is part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the pledge to leave no one behind:<sup>24</sup>

1. **Discrimination:** What biases, exclusion or mistreatment do people face based on one or more aspects of their identity (ascribed or assumed), including gender, ethnicity, age, class, disability, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, indigenous status, migratory status, etc.?<sup>25</sup>
2. **Geography:** Who endures isolation, vulnerability, missing or inferior public services, a lack of transportation, poor or non-existent Internet access or other infrastructure gaps due to their place of residence?
3. **Socio-economic status:** Who faces deprivation or disadvantage in terms of income, life expectancy and educational attainment? Who has less chance to stay healthy, to get proper nourishment and to receive an education? Who is less able to compete in the labour market? Who has less chance to acquire wealth and/or benefit from quality healthcare, clean water, sanitation, energy, social protection and financial services?
4. **Shocks and fragility:** Who is more exposed and/or vulnerable to setbacks due to the impacts of climate change, natural disasters, violence, conflict, displacement, health emergencies, economic downturns and price or other shocks?

<sup>24</sup> "What Does It Mean to Leave No One Behind: A UNDP discussion paper and framework for implementation", UNDP, July 2018, accessed 19 August 2019, <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/poverty-reduction/what-does-it-mean-to-leave-no-one-behind-.html>; "Leaving No One Behind: A UNSDG Operational Guide for UN Country Teams", interim draft, UN Sustainable Development Group, March 2019, accessed 18 August 2019, <https://undg.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Interim-Draft-Operational-Guide-on-LNOB-for-UNCTs.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> While data was collected on those who defined themselves as having had same-sex partners, base sizes were too low to provide any meaningful analysis.

The UNDP framework also includes the issue of governance, which is not covered in this survey.

While this report uses a number of relevant indicators to define geographical, socio-economic and identity-based disadvantage, not all of the indicators used by the UNDP are analysed in this report. The impact of shocks and fragility on women's risk of experiencing violence is explored in more detail in the OSCE's "Well-being and Safety of Women: Armed Conflict and Violence against Women" thematic report.<sup>26</sup> The present report, which focuses specifically on disadvantaged groups of women, explores the situations of women who are displaced, refugees or returnees.

Some women will be subject to more than one form of disadvantage. This report identifies which group or groups are affected by each of the key issues explored in the research compared with women generally. In relation to quantitative findings, this means that findings are for groups of at least 50 women where the findings are, statistically, significantly different from those of women generally.<sup>27</sup>

Based on the data collected through the survey questionnaire, the following factors of disadvantage can be distilled and are used throughout the report:

- **Education level:** Women who are considered disadvantaged in terms of educational attainment are those who have completed only primary education or less. Those who have completed secondary or tertiary education are not considered disadvantaged.
- **Income status:** Women were asked whether they were finding it very difficult on their current income, finding it difficult on their current income, coping on their current income or living comfortably on their current income. Only those who said they were finding it very difficult on their current income are considered poor in this report. It should be noted that this is a subjective indicator, which does not take into consideration variation in spending habits or living standards.
- **Employment status:** Women who are doing unpaid work in a family business, who are unemployed or who are not working due to illness or disability are considered disadvantaged.
- **Residential area:** Women were identified as living in rural or urban areas. Those living in rural areas are considered disadvantaged in terms of their access to services and relative isolation in comparison with those living in urban areas.
- **Disability:** Those who said that they had been "severely limited" in "carrying out the activities that people usually do" for at least the six months prior to the survey are considered disadvantaged due to disability in this report.
- **Age:** Women who are 60 or older are considered disadvantaged in terms of age.
- **Choice in marriage:** Women were asked who decided that they should get married or engaged. Those who said that their partner demanded that they marry him, who said that their parents decided for them or who said that their partner's parents decided for them are categorized as having had no choice in marriage and are considered disadvantaged in this report.

<sup>26</sup> This report will be published in the second half of 2019 and available on the OSCE website.

<sup>27</sup> While data was collected on those who defined themselves as immigrant minorities and those who identified as a sexual minority, base sizes were too low to provide for any meaningful analysis.

## OSCE-led survey on violence against women: Experiences of disadvantaged women

- **Age at the time of marriage:** Women who were under the age of 18 when they were first married are considered disadvantaged.
- **Ethnic/religious minority status:** Women who identified as being part of an ethnic or religious minority are considered disadvantaged.
- **Refugees/displaced people:** Women who defined themselves as a refugee or displaced person are considered disadvantaged.
- **Returnees/former displaced person:** Women who defined themselves as a former displaced person or a returnee are considered disadvantaged.

### *How to read the data*

#### **Reluctance to share**

In order to better understand the prevalence of VAW, context is very important. The OSCE included several questions in its survey on norms and the attitudes and behaviour of both women and men in relation to violence and reporting experiences of abuse. The results illustrate women's strong reluctance to share their experience of violence and suggest that the real prevalence of VAWG is probably higher than what this study was able to measure.

The qualitative and quantitative research confirms this and illustrates that taboo and shame linked to sexual violence remain particularly prevalent.

#### **A guide to interpreting survey data**

Where the percentages provided do not add up to, or exceed, 100, this may be due to rounding, the exclusion of "don't know" responses or the fact that respondents were able to provide multiple answers to certain questions.

#### **Privacy and anonymity**

The interviews were conducted face-to-face by experienced and trained female interviewers, using a tablet. Interviews were conducted in private and used the principles of informed consent. The women interviewed were informed that all data collected would be confidential and anonymized.

### **Forms of violence covered**

The findings presented in this report are based on a set of questions asked in the OSCE survey concerning violence against women perpetrated by a non-partner or an intimate partner, as well as instances of sexual harassment, stalking, childhood violence and the impact of conflict on gender-based violence. The questionnaire was based on the definitions established in the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention).

To measure the (reported) prevalence of each type of violence, women were asked if they had experienced a range of different forms of violence in various reference periods as detailed in **Chapters 3 and 4 of this report**.

Regarding physical and sexual violence, a list of questions that were asked in the research can be found in **Chapter 3 on page 29**.

Regarding psychological violence, a list of questions that were asked in the research can be found in **Chapter 3 on page 39**.

In terms of sexual harassment, women in the survey were asked questions listed in **Chapter 3 on page 50**.

For stalking, women in the survey were asked questions listed in **Chapter 3 on page 54**.

Partners include individuals to whom the respondents were married, with whom they were cohabiting or with whom they were involved in a relationship without cohabiting. Non-partners include all perpetrators other than women's current or previous partners.

The most serious incident is defined as the incident that had the biggest impact on the surveyed women, either physically or psychologically.



33%

One-third of poor women believe that their friends would agree that “it is a wife’s obligation to have sex with her husband even if she doesn’t feel like it”.



45%

Almost half of women from ethnic/religious minorities believe that domestic violence is a private matter and should be handled within the family.



74%

Almost three-quarters of refugees or displaced women think that, in general, violence against women at the hands of partners, acquaintances or strangers is very or fairly common.

## 2. Attitudes towards gender roles and violence against women among disadvantaged groups

### 2.1: Norms and attitudes around gender roles

The overall picture that emerges from both the qualitative and quantitative research is one of a strong association between disadvantage and attitudes towards gender roles. In the quantitative research, there is a pattern of various disadvantaged groups being more likely than women overall to hold (and to believe that their friends hold) attitudes which promote gender inequality, female subservience, spousal obedience and silence surrounding VAWG. Age and education are particularly clear discriminators: older women and those with less education are most likely to hold such views. But this is also evident among other disadvantaged groups, such as minority groups including ethnic and religious minorities, those who had no choice in their marriage, and poor women. However, the diversity of types of disadvantage and the complexity of people's attitudes mean that the relationship between them is highly nuanced.

### Norms, attitudes and behaviours towards gender roles among disadvantaged groups

Women reported in the qualitative research that men and women are regarded by many as occupying clearly defined and segregated roles in both the public and private spheres: with women as homemakers and men as breadwinners. There are, for example, expectations of how women should look and behave. Participants related how women are expected to be well-groomed and act submissively. Their primary responsibility was described as that of mother, wife and homemaker. They are seen to have less freedom than men to socialise and enjoy leisure time because of gender norms (for instance, socialising with other men can be frowned upon) and their responsibilities at home.

Roma women and Albanian minorities in particular discussed how they are expected to seek permission from men before making any plans, and that their partners would often control who they could and could not see, as well as telling them what they should wear.

Men, on the other hand, were considered across all groups to be the breadwinners, who are expected to provide for their families. They were seen as having more leisure time because they have less responsibility at home and are believed to enjoy more freedom and advantages than women.

**“A man has one obligation, his job. He goes to work, comes back home, and that’s the end of his obligations. A woman works for 24 hours, children, household, husband. Everything.”**

Female, aged 35–55, urban, minority group (Bosniak), Serbia

**“In families which have both male and female children, sons are usually protected. [The father] doesn’t have to do anything and daughters have to do all the work. As early as in this childhood period this misbalance is made.”**

Female, aged 51+, urban, Montenegro

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Women in rural communities often said that gender roles differed somewhat between urban and rural areas, with women in rural areas expected to partake in extensive agricultural work – including jobs that women considered to be men’s responsibility – on top of their domestic duties, without earning any additional income. Rural women were also expected to take on additional familial responsibilities, such as educating their children, to compensate for a lack of public services.

**“It is like we are men, working with a pickaxe, a shovel, etc. We do the watering, the pumping and everything. We take care of the cows, load and unload vehicles. We have to do all the work.”**

**Female, aged 50+, rural, Albania**

Particularly in the case of Roma women, participants explained that they were often forced to marry early and give up their education (though this is not limited to Roma communities).

**“[Ukrainian] women are still trying to live up to the old medieval image of a woman, when a woman had to be well groomed and good-looking. To be pleasing to the eye is probably considered one of a woman’s key tasks.”**

**Female, aged 36–55, urban, IDP, Ukraine**

**“You should always obey your husband’s orders, do what your husband says, stay inside, and this is what your parents tell you: ‘What do you need school for? You are going to get married, and you just need to be good for your husband, your children. You don’t need school for that. What are you going to be, a member of parliament?!’”**

**Female, aged 19–40, Roma, Albania**

### Changing patterns

Most participants from the qualitative research thought that things were starting to change for the better, with women having more opportunities to work, establish careers and enjoy more freedom outside the home, while men were more likely to be involved in childcare and housework than they were previously. Some participants also said that women today were more independent and were challenging traditional gender norms. They expressed the belief that divorce rates seemed higher today than in the past, because women were more likely to take the initiative to leave an unhealthy relationship.

Changing attitudes were particularly evident among younger participants of the qualitative research, but such attitudes were also expressed by older participants, some of whom were better able to engage with such changes than others.

**“Look at my son and daughter-in-law. He is getting much more involved in taking care of the baby and everything else.”**

**Female, aged 38–55, urban, IDP, Bosnia and Herzegovina (RS)**

**“Today, it’s very different. Young women are given too much freedom. They even make advances towards men, instead of being courted, which is not very good. OK, I like the fact that they are strong and not suffering and that they have their place, but maybe it’s too much.”**

**Female, aged 51+, urban, Montenegro**



## 2. Attitudes towards gender roles and violence against women among disadvantaged groups

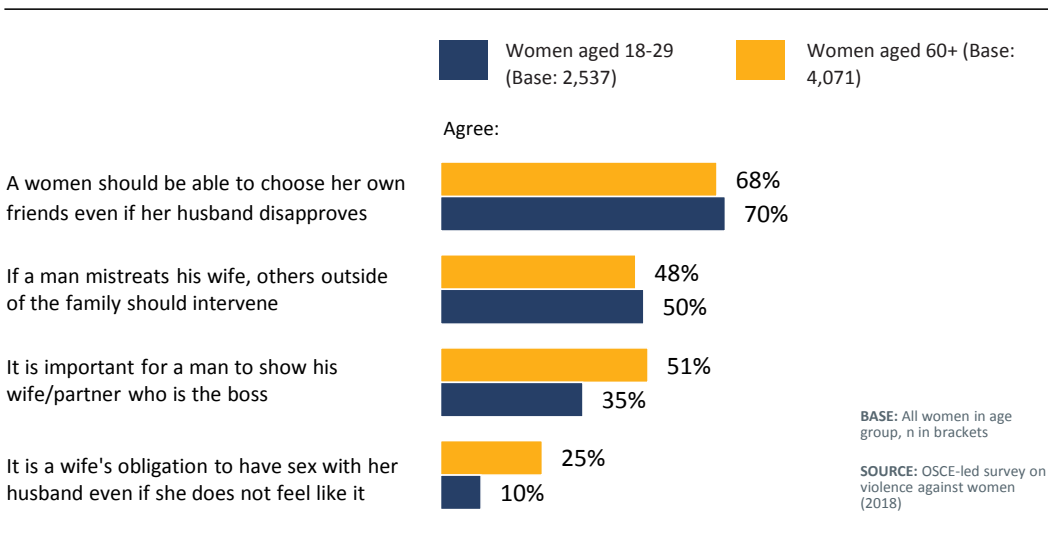
### Quantitative findings on attitudes towards gender roles

Older women and those with less education are more likely to hold views that accept female subservience.

Figure 2.1 illustrates that, across a number of the attitudinal statements tested, young women’s views differ significantly from those of older women, reinforcing the evidence from the qualitative research that younger women are less likely to agree with still-prevalent assumptions about the role of women and their subservience to men. For example, the proportion of young women who think their friends would agree that “it is a wife’s obligation to have sex with her husband even if she doesn’t feel like it” drops from one-quarter of those aged 60 or over (25%) to one in ten of those aged 18–29 (10%).

### Figure 2.1: Contrasting attitudes between older and younger women

People have different ideas about families and what is acceptable behaviour for men and women in the home. Please tell me whether your friends would generally agree or disagree with the following statements.



However, the fact that views may be changing among the younger generation does not necessarily mean that older women are benefitting from such a shift in norms, as suggested by this woman from North Macedonia:

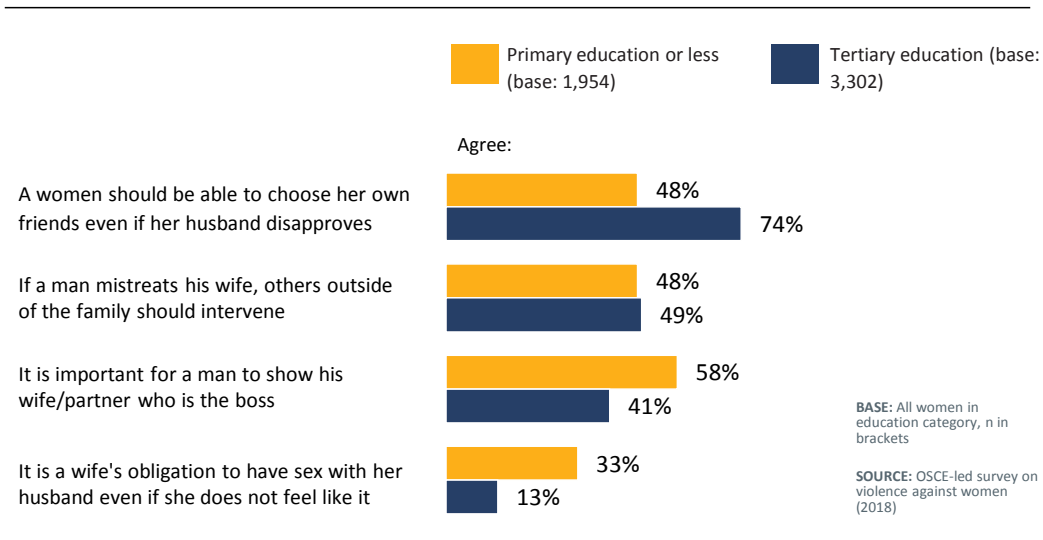
**“If you go to a café on your own, let’s say people could forgive you for that ... but if you decide to hang out with solely male company, then you will immediately be labelled ... What a catastrophe ...”**

**Female, aged 55–74, urban, North Macedonia**

Figure 2.2 illustrates a similarly significant difference between the views of those with tertiary education and those with primary education or less. This may well indicate that, as women are receiving more education than in the past, their views overall are changing towards supporting greater equality between men and women.

**Figure 2.2: Contrasting attitudes between women with up to primary education and those with tertiary education**

People have different ideas about families and what is acceptable behaviour for men and women in the home. Please tell me whether your friends would generally agree or disagree with the following statements.



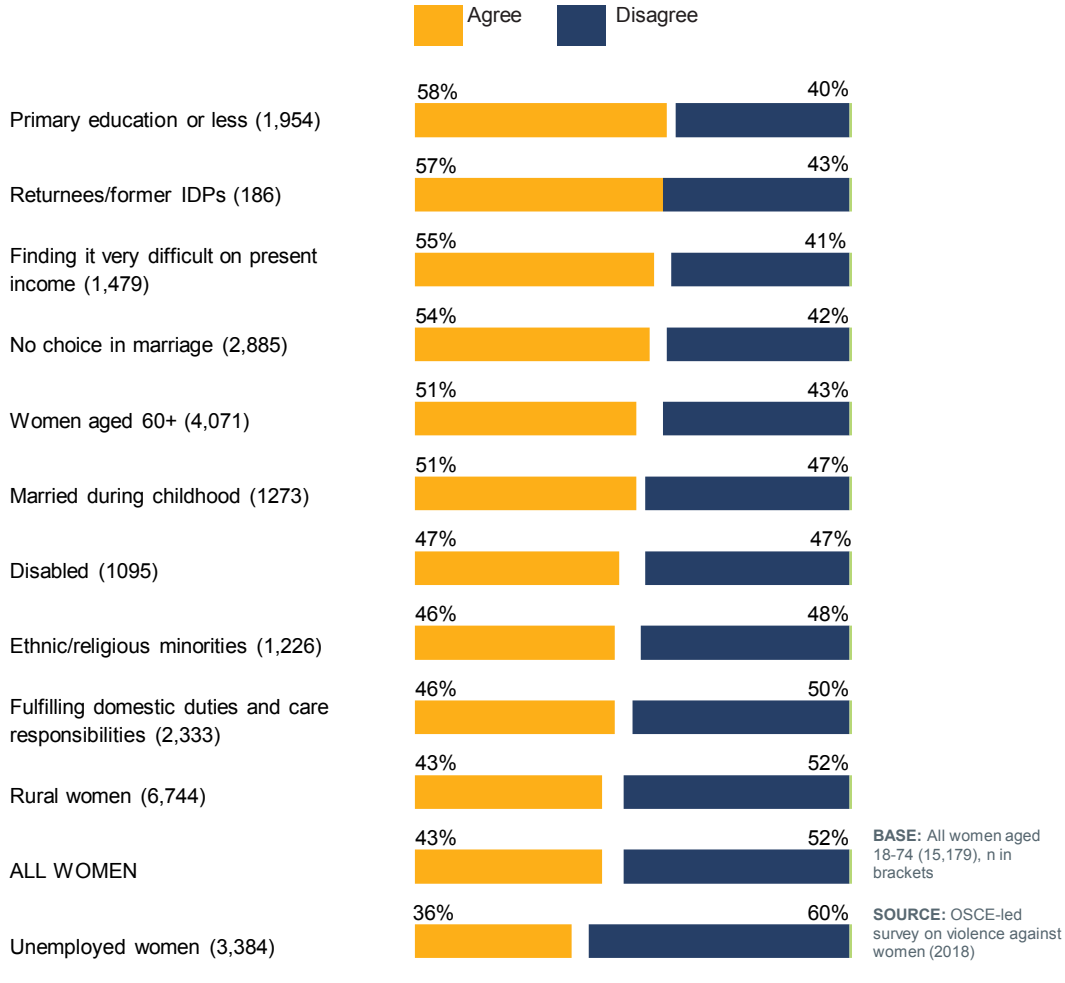
**Traditional attitudes towards gender roles are more prevalent among certain disadvantaged groups**

Certain groups of women are more likely to subscribe to traditional views on the roles of women in society and the household. For instance, over half of poor women (55%) and of women who had no say in their marriage (54%) agree that “it is important for a man to show his wife who the boss is”, while only two in five women agree overall (43%). Nevertheless, it should be noted that not all groups of women considered disadvantaged are more likely to hold such views. In the example above, the views of women who are refugees or displaced are in fact lower than the average (42%).

## 2. Attitudes towards gender roles and violence against women among disadvantaged groups

**Figure 2.3: Attitudes to what friend’s regard as acceptable behaviour**

People have different ideas about families and what is acceptable behaviour for men and women in the home. Please tell me whether your friends would generally agree or disagree with the following statement: “It is important for a man to show his wife/partner who the boss is”.



Findings from the qualitative research provide further background to these attitudes. Women from some minority groups face particular restrictions in their life choices, such as when to get married, or around family planning decisions, which fall to their husbands and their families. Ethnic Hungarian women living in Serbia, for example, explained that society expected them to be married by the age of 30, because it is their duty to prioritize childrearing and family obligations before their career and personal aspirations. They explained that men would think negatively of a woman who was unmarried by 30 and would think that there was something wrong with her. This was also mentioned by Bosniak women living in Serbia.

**“For a woman, marrying at 30 is too late; questions are asked.”**

**Female, aged 35–55, Bosniak, Serbia**

## OSCE-led survey on violence against women: Experiences of disadvantaged women

Roma women said that many of their choices around marriage were decided by their family, including whom to marry and when to have children. Some women got married at an early age and were also informed by their families of when they had to finish their education. Roma women emphasized their responsibility to raise their children so as to shape their children's behaviour and character. Such attitudes were not exclusive to Roma communities, however, but were also evident among other minority groups.

**“We Roma women marry at a very early age. For example, I married when I was 12 years old, and I don't want my daughter to do the same. I want my daughter to go to university. I want her to be someone in life.”**

**Female, aged 19–40, Roma, Albania**

**“The good side and the advantage of women in Serbia is that they have children; they are in a better position than women in Europe because they have more children.”**

**Female, aged 35–55, urban, minority Bosniak, Serbia**

### Norms, attitudes and behaviours towards violence against women and girls

A similar pattern is found in relation to women's attitudes towards sex without consent – with women from a range of disadvantaged groups more likely to find sex without consent acceptable than women generally. Respondents were given nine scenarios and asked if sexual intercourse without consent could, in their view, be justified in any of them: such as within a marriage or partnership, if either the woman or assailant had been drinking, or if the woman was wearing provocative clothing. On average, less than a fifth of women agree that sexual intercourse without consent is permissible in any of the scenarios, with at least half strongly disagreeing.

Education is a particularly significant discriminator in the case of each of the nine scenarios. Women with only primary education or less are much more likely than those with tertiary education to feel that sex without consent is permissible. Most notably, over a quarter of women with primary education or less feel that sex without consent would be justified in a marriage or between partners living together (27%). This compares to a lesser, but still significant, minority of women overall (17%) who believe that sexual intercourse without consent would be justified in such a relationship. A fifth of women with only primary education or less agree that sex without consent would be justified if the woman was flirting beforehand (23% versus 14% overall), went home with someone voluntarily (22% versus 14% overall), or did not say no or physically resist (20% versus 14% overall) or if she was wearing revealing, provocative or sexy clothing (20% versus 12% overall).

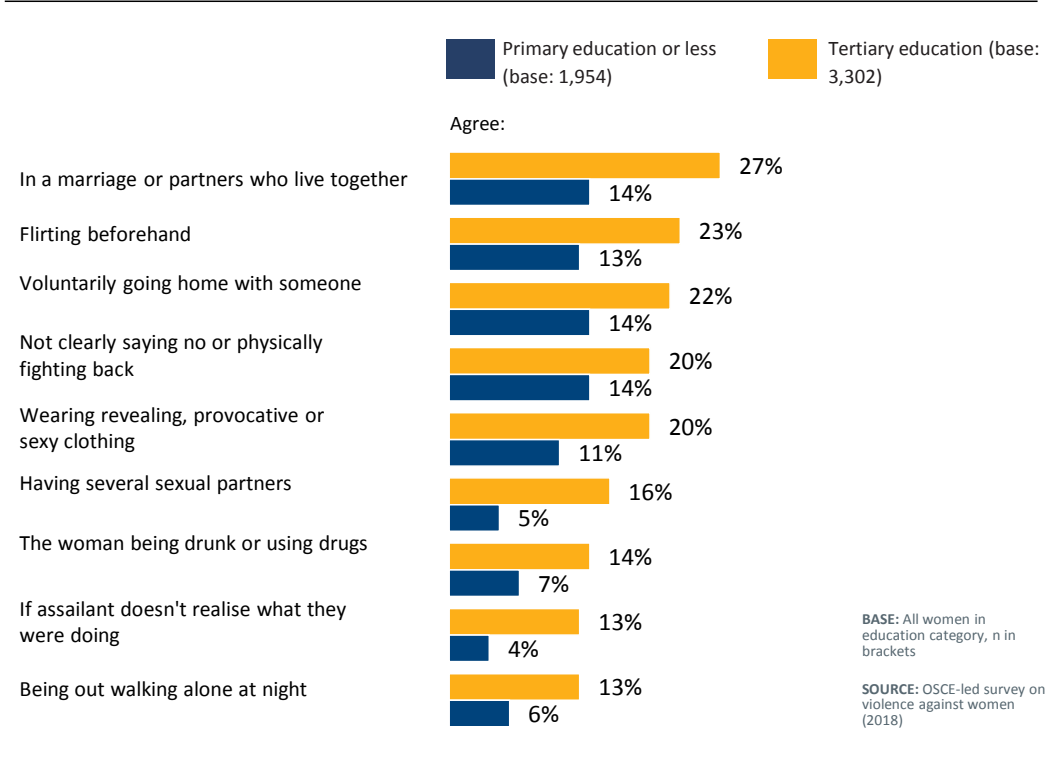
**“Some women are provocative, I would say, or as they say, ‘If the bitch didn't raise her tail, the dogs wouldn't get behind her.’ These women go to the mayor's office, wear miniskirts, and they are [encouraging it].”**

**Female, aged 18–30, minority group (Kosovo Albanian), urban, Kosovo**

## 2. Attitudes towards gender roles and violence against women among disadvantaged groups

**Figure 2.4: Women's attitudes towards sex without consent, by education**

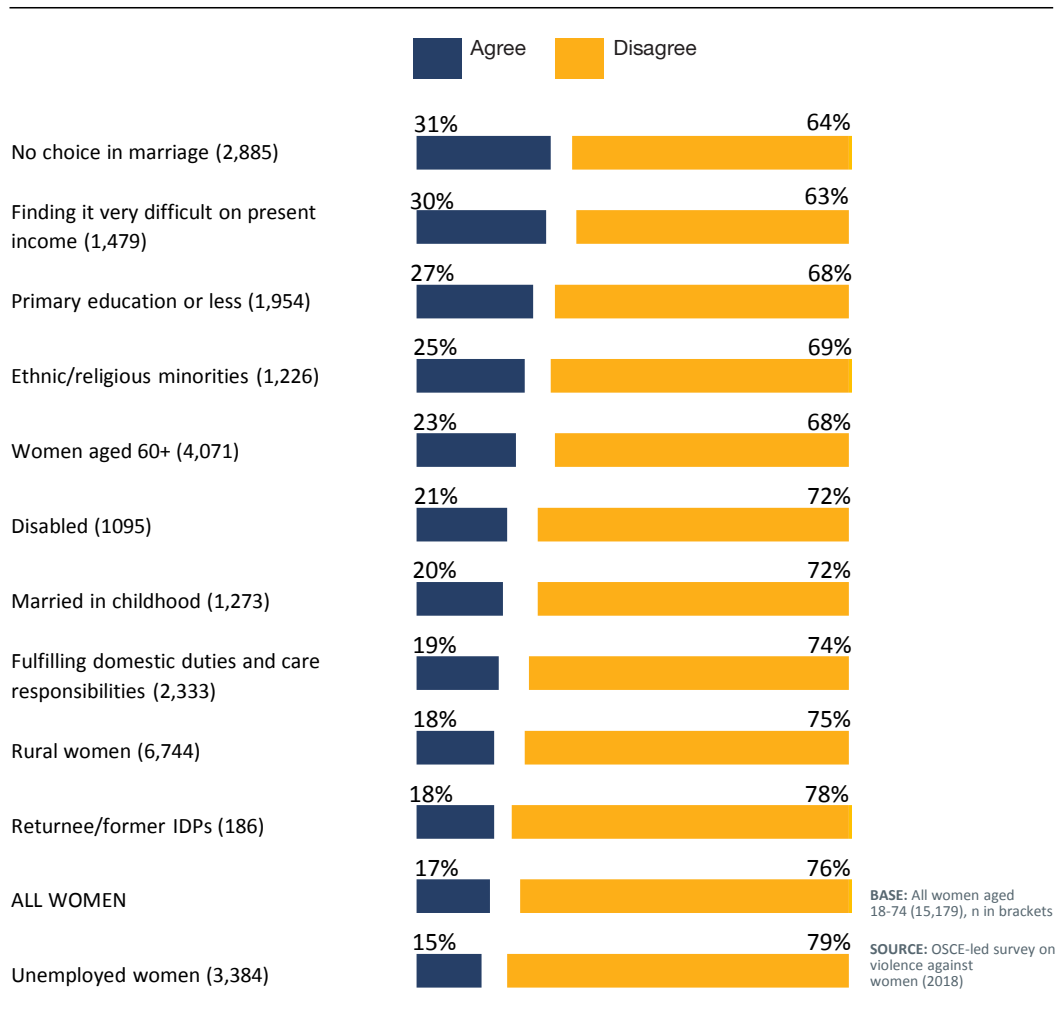
Do you personally agree or disagree that sex without consent could be justified ... ?



Agreement that sex without consent could be justified in a marriage or between partners living together is also higher among those who had no choice in their marriage (31% compared with 15% of those who made their own decision) and among poor women (30% compared with 14% of those who are managing comfortably). Although there are certain exceptions, the overall picture is that disadvantaged women are more likely than women overall to agree that sex without consent can be acceptable (Figure 2.5).

**Figure 2.5: Agreement that sex without consent in a marriage or among partners living together can be justified, by demographic group**

Do you personally agree or disagree that sex without consent could be justified ... in a marriage or among partners who live together?



In the qualitative research, women discussed how the accepted view in society was that sexual violence could not happen between spouses. They explained that society sees sex as a marital duty, and that refusing to have sex would lead a husband to assume that his wife was cheating on him. Some women said that it was widely accepted that a woman should submit to her husband even if she does not want to, and that there is no such thing as marital rape.

## 2. Attitudes towards gender roles and violence against women among disadvantaged groups

**“I think that many women in [Bosnia and Herzegovina] have a problem with their husbands, because a woman suffers a lot at work and at home. She is accused of not wanting to make love to [her husband], and he immediately thinks that she has found some other man.”**

Female, aged 18–37, rural, minority group (Kosovo Albanian), urban, Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH)

**“Yes, that is her obligation and duty: to sleep with her husband whenever he feels like it.”**

Female, aged 18–30, minority group (Kosovo Albanian), urban, Kosovo

**“Sexual violence is also possible, but women—wives—usually don’t talk about it, because society doesn’t understand this type of violence. The victim is questioned intensely by everyone: ‘How [is this possible]? You’re married.’”**

Female, aged 30–50, Transdnistrian, urban, conflict-affected, Moldova

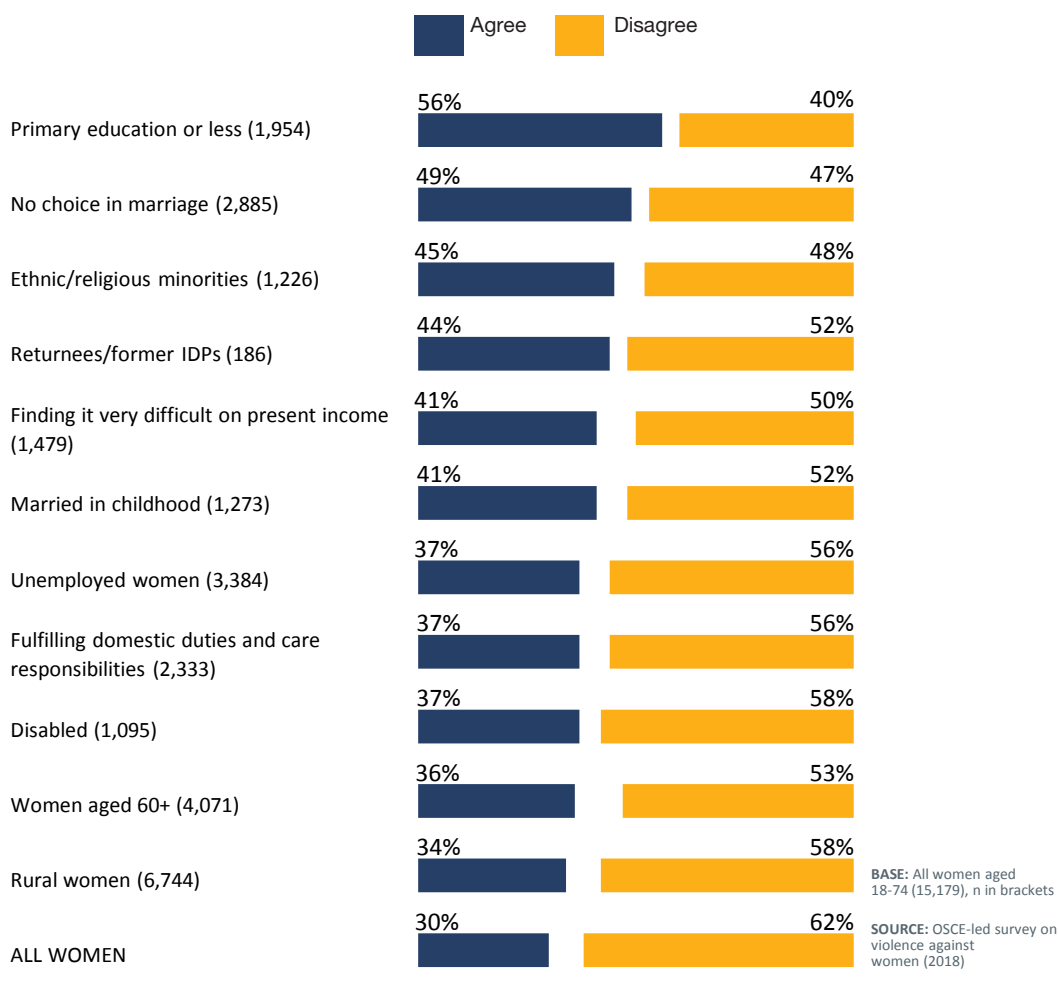
However, the fact that attitudes are changing can be seen in Figures 2.4 and 2.5, which show that older women and those with little or no education are much more likely to believe that non-consensual sex in a marriage or partnership can be acceptable, while younger and better-educated women are less likely to hold this belief.

### **More women from disadvantaged groups feel that intimate partner violence is a private matter**

Almost a third of women overall feel that domestic violence is a private matter (30%, more than double the EU average of 14%), with women from disadvantaged groups more likely to hold this opinion. Indeed, as seen in Figure 2.5, the main disadvantaged groups are all more likely than average to share this opinion. Education level in particular is an important factor: this view is held by 56% of those with only primary education or less compared with 21% of those with tertiary education.

**Figure 2.6: Agreement that domestic violence is a private matter and should be handled within the family, by demographic group**

Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree that domestic violence is a private matter and should be handled within the family?



**Victim-blaming attitudes**

A significant minority of women across the region covered by the OSCE-led survey hold victim-blaming attitudes and doubt the credibility of victims of violence, with women from certain disadvantaged groups more likely to hold such views. In particular, those with primary education or less and those who had no choice in their marriage are much more likely to blame the victim than on average (42% and 39%, respectively, compared with 25% of women overall). Poor women and women from an ethnic or religious minority are also more likely to hold these views (34% and 32%, respectively).

A similar pattern can be observed regarding the belief that “women who say they were abused often make up or exaggerate claims of abuse or rape”, whereby 29% of those from an ethnic or religious minority, 28% of those who are finding it difficult on their current income and 34% of those who had no choice in marriage held such a view. Again, this is high compared with around one in four women overall (23%) who believe that “women who say they were abused often make up or exaggerate claims of abuse or rape”.

**“There are some women who are asking for it. They are crazy, and men have no other choice but to beat them. For example, [a woman’s] husband says something, and she says something else ... or she is mad at someone else but [takes it out on] her husband.”**

**Female, aged 34–55, minority Albanian, urban, Kosovo**



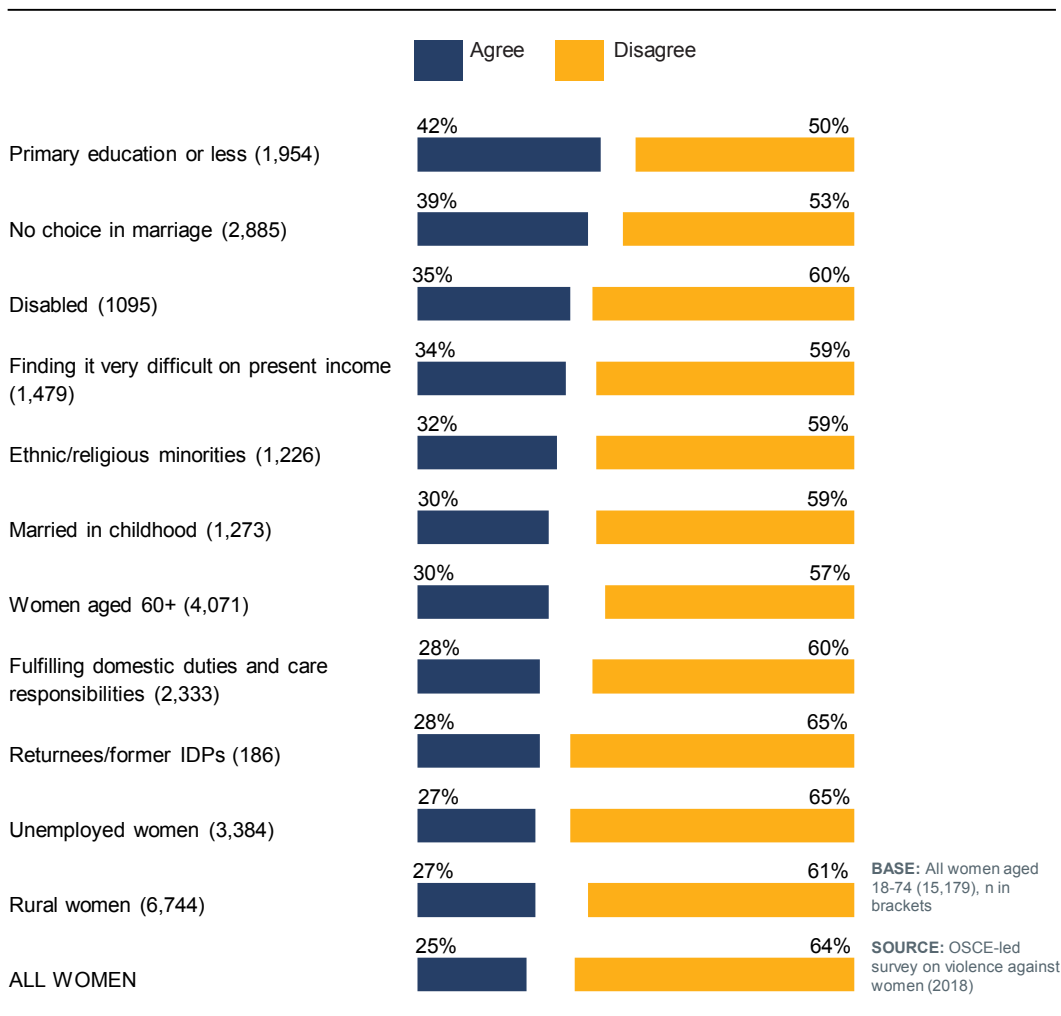
## 2. Attitudes towards gender roles and violence against women among disadvantaged groups

**“There was a time when my husband was drunk and he slapped me. But I think that I was to blame, because I provoked him by talking too much.”**

**Survivor of non-conflict-related violence, religious minority, Moldova**

**Figure 2.7: Agreement that violence against women is often provoked by the victim, by demographic group**

Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree that violence against women is often provoked by the victim?



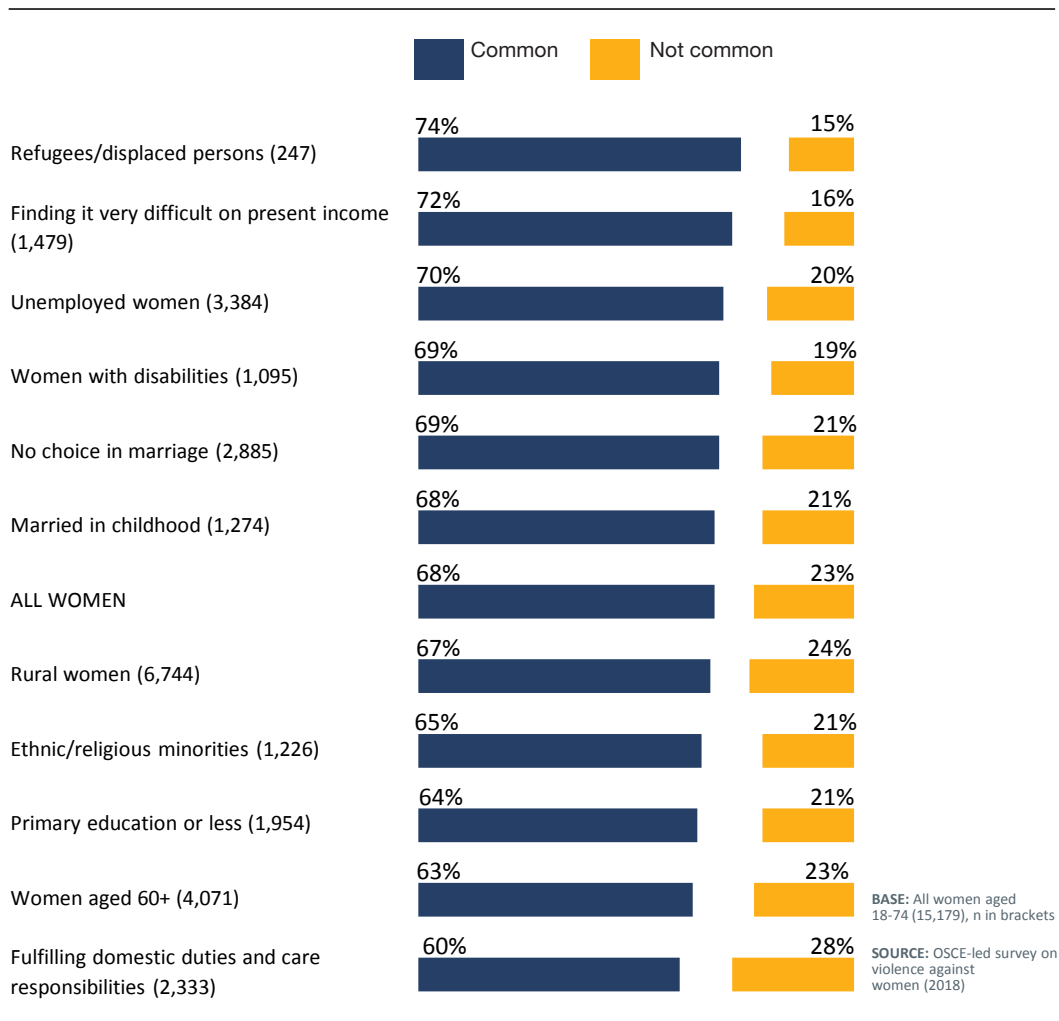
### 2.2 Perceptions of the pervasiveness of violence and underlying causes

#### How common is violence against women?

More than two-thirds of women in the region covered by the OSCE-led survey think that violence against women at the hands of partners, acquaintances or strangers is common (68%), and over a fifth consider it to be very common (22%). This perception, however, does not follow a clear trend among disadvantaged groups. For example, women with only primary education or less are less likely than women on average to consider violence against women to be common (64%), while women who are poor are more likely to hold this opinion (72%).

**Figure 2.8: Perceptions of pervasiveness of violence, by demographic group**

In general, how common do you think violence against women at the hands of partners, acquaintances or strangers is in your country?



Although no clear pattern emerges in terms of how disadvantage affects perceptions of the pervasiveness of violence, the qualitative research sheds some light into how these groups of women experience violence and to what they attribute its causes and exacerbating factors.

In Moldova, for instance, women who took part in the in-depth interviews who were economically disadvantaged and who had experienced both physical and psychological abuse linked violence to the financial pressures their husbands and families were experiencing.

Some respondents blamed themselves for provoking their husbands and also linked violence to their husbands' alcohol consumption. Women with low incomes in particular often blamed themselves or used alcohol consumption as an excuse for men's behaviour. Such women tried to avoid saying anything to their partners when their partners came home after drinking alcohol, as they thought this was the best way to avoid provoking them.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Serbia, women in the qualitative research said that unemployment rates were very high, and they expressed the belief that this led to financial tensions within families. War had made them less financially independent, as many never found jobs following the armed conflicts that affected them or were not entitled to their pension because they had not worked enough years as a result of the conflict.

## “A woman who is not beaten is like a house that is not swept”

**“We were all employed [before the war]. We all had jobs, and life was different; people were happier in general. I also think ... there was less violence. Then the war happened, and everything fell apart ... Now, after the war, although many years have passed, we still haven’t reached the level we had before the war: [there are] no jobs, people are becoming poor, [there is no] economic stability, and this leads to violence.”**

**Female, aged 38+, internally displaced person, Bosnia and Herzegovina (RS)**

Some women attributed violence to the breakup of former Yugoslavia: the job losses that followed privatization affected some men’s self-esteem, and the weakening of institutions meant that men possibly became less fearful of the consequences of violence. The negative impact of the economic situation on the prevalence of violence was mentioned in almost all of the focus groups and interviews regardless of ethnicity.

Some women taking part in the qualitative research expressed the belief that women from ethnic and religious minorities faced specific risks. In particular, this emerged from the qualitative research with Roma women throughout the region covered by the survey. Many expressed the belief that intimate partner violence was especially common in their community. They said that most forms of violence, including physical violence, were part of the everyday life of a Roma woman. A survivor of violence said that this has been a normal part of life for generations and that most women simply hide what happens to them, as they could not imagine things being any different.

**“With us, it’s like, ‘Good morning’, ‘Good afternoon’. He’ll curse you, kick you. You’ll get up, serve him everything, and that’s it. And nobody asks you how you feel.”**

**Female, aged 20–40, Roma, urban, North Macedonia**

While the qualitative research generally found that physical violence was less acceptable than sexual harassment, women in the focus groups with Roma expressed the belief that physical violence was seen as one of the most normal types of violence experienced by women. In Moldova, Roma participants mentioned a phrase that was used to justify physical violence against women: “A woman who is not beaten is like a house that is not swept.” Roma women said sexual violence was the least acceptable form of violence within their community.

### **Knowing victims of intimate partner violence**

Over a fifth of women know of other women who have experienced some form of domestic violence in their neighbourhood (24%) or among their friends and family (22%). Poor women were more likely to know people in their neighbourhood or among their family and friends who had experienced such violence (32% in each case), compared with less than a fifth of women who are comfortable on their income (17% and 19%, respectively). Women whose partner’s parents made the decision about their marriage were more likely to know women who had experienced violence in their neighbourhood (33%). This may be a reflection of the fact that women who are at higher risk of experiencing violence are also likely to be in environments where other women have had such experiences.



40%

Two in five poor women who have ever had a partner say they have experienced physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of an intimate partner since the age of 15.



63%

Nearly two-thirds of disabled women who have ever had a partner say they have experienced psychological violence at the hands of an intimate partner since the age of 15.



62%

Almost two-thirds of women who are students say they have been subjected to sexual harassment since the age of 15.



28%

Over a quarter of refugees or displaced women say they have experienced physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of a non-partner since the age of 15.

## 3. Violence against women among disadvantaged groups

### 3.1: Intimate partner and non-partner violence

#### 3.1.1: Intimate partner physical and sexual violence

Almost one in four women (23%) say they have been subjected to intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15.<sup>28</sup> Physical violence at the hands of an intimate partner is indicated by 21% of women surveyed, while 7% indicate experiences of sexual violence at the hands of this type of perpetrator. Seven per cent of women say they experienced physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of an intimate partner in the 12 months prior to the survey.

While not consistent across all disadvantaged groups, the prevalence of intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence is higher among some groups than on average (Figure 3.1). In particular, women who are poor, who are unable to work due to illness or disability or who are doing unpaid work in a family business are substantially more likely to say they have experienced this type of violence, both since the age of 15 and in the 12 months prior to the survey. Conversely, women with only primary education or less indicate slightly lower levels of intimate partner violence than average, both since the age of 15 and in the 12 months prior to the survey, which is on a par with the average. Although the prevalence of intimate partner violence since the age of 15 is higher among women who are refugees or displaced, minority groups on the whole do not indicate experiencing this type of violence more often, either since the age of 15 or in the 12 months prior to the survey.

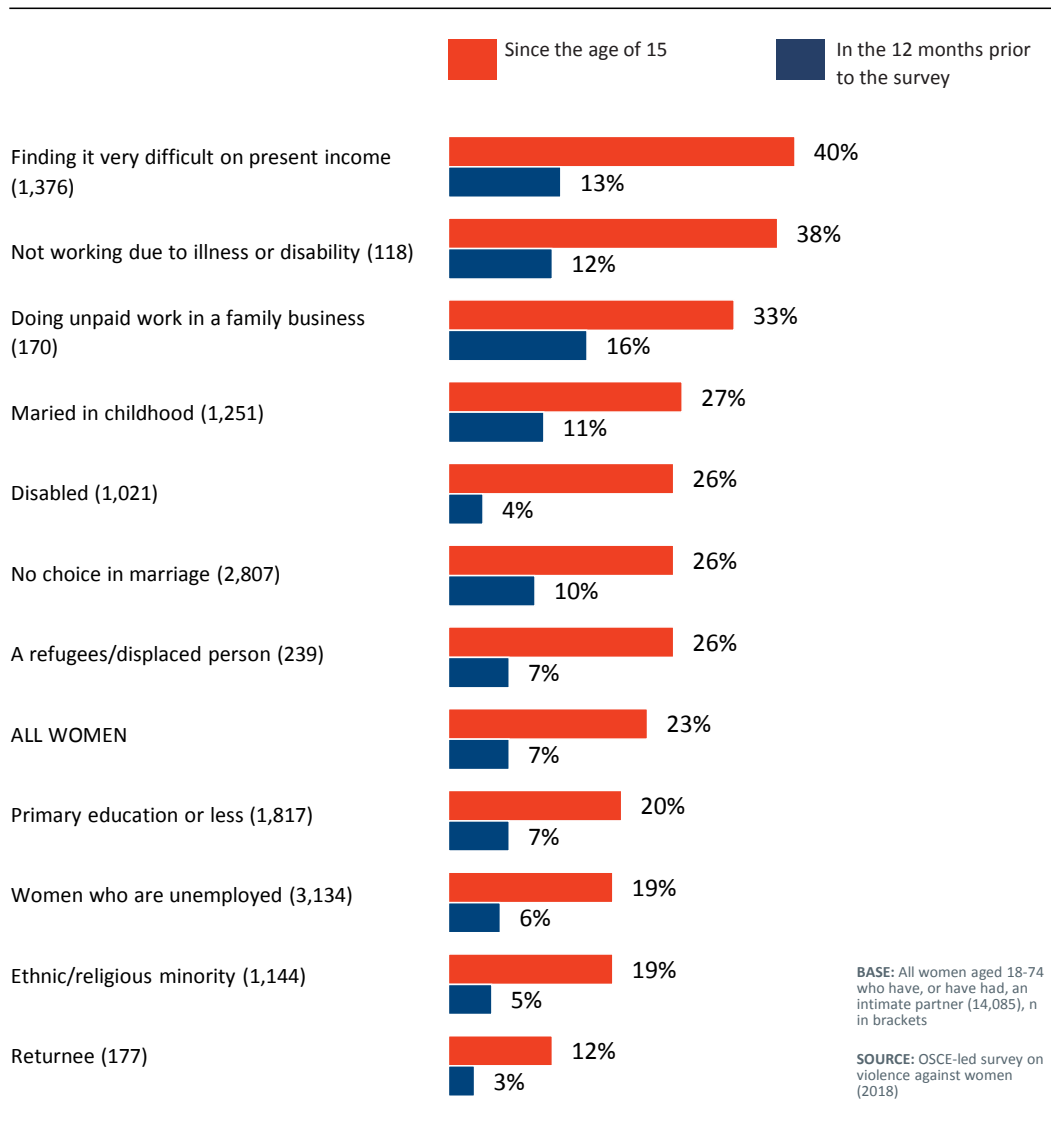
In the qualitative research, women from a range of disadvantaged groups said they had experienced physical and sexual intimate partner violence, and for most of these women the violence went on for a number of years. This violence sometimes escalated over the years and only when it culminated in a very serious incident did the women finally take some action against their partners. For example, one IDP disclosed that she suffered a brain injury before she reported the violence to the police. A Bosniak woman shared that she was strangled in front of her daughter before she sought help.

While it follows that groups of women who have experienced physical and/or sexual violence more often than on average will have experienced more of the various forms of violence, the data suggests that women in some disadvantaged groups are more likely to have experienced some of the most severe forms of intimate partner violence in particular.

<sup>28</sup> With regard to physical violence, women in the survey were asked the following questions: has someone/a current partner/previous partner ever 1) pushed you or shoved you? 2) slapped you? 3) thrown a hard object at you? 4) grabbed you or pulled your hair? 5) punched you or beaten you with a hard object or kicked you? 6) burned you? 7) tried to suffocate or strangle you? 8) cut or stabbed you or shot at you? 9) beat your head against something? In this report, the prevalence of physical violence is based on respondents who report having experienced at least one of these forms of violence on at least one occasion. The prevalence of physical violence is provided for current partners, previous partners, any intimate partner (either current or previous) and non-partners. The reference period for non-partner violence was since the age of 15/in the 12 months prior to the survey, and for partner violence it was whether this had ever happened during their relationship or in the 12 months prior to the survey.

Concerning sexual violence, women were asked: Since you were 15 years old and in the past 12 months, how often has someone 1) forced you to have sexual intercourse by holding you down or hurting you in some way? 2) Apart from this, how often has someone attempted to force you to have sexual intercourse by holding you down or hurting you in some way? 3) Apart from this, how often has someone made you take part in any form of sexual activity when you did not want to or were unable to refuse? 4) Or have you consented to sexual activity because you were afraid of what might happen if you refused? The prevalence of sexual violence is based on respondents who reported having experienced at least one of these forms of violence on at least one occasion. The prevalence of sexual violence is provided for current partners, previous partners, any intimate partners (either current or previous) and non-partners. The reference periods are as above.

**Figure 3.1: Prevalence of intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence, by demographic group**



***Prevalence and severity of intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence among disadvantaged groups***

**Income status:** Women who are poor are much more likely to indicate having experienced violence at the hands of an intimate partner, both since the age of 15 and in the 12 months prior to the survey. Indeed, while 13% of women who are living comfortably on their present income indicate having experienced physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of their partner since the age of 15, this figure rises to 40% among poor women. A similar pattern is observed in terms of the prevalence in the 12 months prior to the survey: 5% of those living comfortably on their household income say they experienced this type of violence compared with 13% of poor women.

### 3. Violence against women among disadvantaged groups

In the qualitative research, women across all countries expressed the belief that there is a strong connection between poverty and unemployment and partner violence against women. Most of the women who had personal experience of physical violence were poor. Similarly, many women were aware of instances of physical violence perpetrated in households where there was financial stress even if they had not experienced it themselves. Indeed, poverty was often identified as one of the root causes of violence against women. In all countries, women talked about traditional gender roles still being very strong, with a clear divide between men's roles as breadwinners and women's roles as homemakers. They explained that when men struggle to earn enough money to sustain their family, this often leads to feelings of anger, shame and frustration and that these feelings are often taken out on women through both psychological and physical violence. This link between low income and violence also came up in all discussion groups and interviews with Roma.

Women who are poor are twice as likely as women on average to say that they have experienced some of the more severe forms of violence, such as being punched or kicked, or having their head beaten against something. They are also almost twice as likely to say that they have been raped by an intimate partner.

**Employment status:** As seen in Figure 3.1, women in certain employment categories are more likely to indicate that they have experienced intimate partner violence. In particular, women who are doing unpaid work in a family business are more likely to say that they have had such an experience since the age of 15 (33% versus 23% overall) and in the 12 months prior to the survey (16% versus 7% overall). This is also the case among women who are not working due to illness or disability (38% since the age of 15 and 12% in the 12 months prior to the survey).

Women who are or have been in a relationship and who are not working due to an illness or disability are about 30% more likely to say they have been pushed or shoved by an intimate partner than on average (22% versus 17%, respectively), twice as likely to say that they have been slapped (24% versus 12%, respectively), and more than three times as likely to say that they have had a hard object thrown at them (19% versus 6%, respectively) or that they were beaten with a fist or beaten with a hard object (19% versus 6%, respectively).

Women doing unpaid work in a family business are over three times more likely than average to say that they have experienced *attempted* rape at the hands of an intimate partner (10% versus 3%, respectively), and more than twice as likely to say they have consented to some form of sexual activity because they were afraid of what would happen if they refused (7% versus 3%, respectively, though it should be noted that this is a form of rape, nonetheless). While women in this group are particularly exposed to sexual violence, they are no more likely than average to say that they have experienced specific forms of physical violence.

**Ethnic/religious minorities:** Women from an ethnic/religious minority are less likely than women on average to say they have experienced intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15 (19% compared with 23% overall). It is worth noting, however, that women who belong to minority groups are also more likely to hold victim-blaming attitudes or believe that violence is a private matter and may therefore have been less willing to disclose their experiences of violence. Indeed, 32% of women from ethnic or religious minorities agree that "violence against women is often provoked by the victim", compared with 25% on average, and 45% agree that "domestic violence is a private matter", compared with 30% on average. There were no differences by ethnic/religious minority in the 12 months prior to the survey.

The qualitative research suggests that, among Roma communities, intimate partner violence is highly prevalent and that there is a complex range of factors that contribute to this. However, women suggested that physical violence is a learned behaviour that has been normalized within their communities.

**“He beats you up and makes you bleed ... You go outside; the neighbour cleans you up and makes you coffee. You laugh and go home again.”**

**Female, aged 20–40, Roma, urban, North Macedonia**

## Disabled women are more likely than women on average to have experienced some of the more severe forms of physical violence

**“It is as normal as when you say ‘Good morning’ to someone.”**

**Female, aged 18–34, Roma, Serbia**

**Refugees/displaced people:** Women who are refugees or internally displaced and who have ever had a partner are 18% more likely than average to have been pushed or shoved since the age of 15 (20% versus 17%, respectively), but they are over three times more likely than average to say that they have been suffocated or strangled by an intimate partner (10% versus 3%).

Women who are refugees or displaced are also more likely than women on average to indicate having experienced certain types of sexual violence. For example, nearly one in ten (9%) say that they have been raped by an intimate partner, and a similar proportion (10%) say that they have been forced to take part in some form of sexual activity when they did not want to. This is higher than the average for all women (4% and 3%, respectively). Likewise, 8% indicate having experienced attempted rape, compared with 3% on average.

**Women with disabilities:** Women who are disabled are somewhat more likely than average (26% versus 23%) to say they have experienced intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15; however, they are less likely to have experienced this in the 12 months prior to the survey (4% versus 7% on average).

Women who are disabled are also more likely than average to say that they have consented to sexual activity because they were afraid of what their partner might do if they refused (5% versus 3% on average).

In terms of severity, disabled women are more likely than women on average to have experienced some of the more severe forms of physical violence. Ten per cent of disabled women said that an intimate partner had beaten them with a fist or beaten them with a hard object, compared with 6% of women overall, and 5% said that an intimate partner had beaten their head against something, compared with 3% of women overall.

**Choice in marriage:** Choice in marriage is an important discriminator, with women who had no say in their marriage more likely than those who did to say that they have been subjected to intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence. This pattern is apparent in the prevalence of such violence since the age of 15 (26% versus 19%, respectively) and in the 12 months prior to the survey (10% versus 6%, respectively).



### 3. Violence against women among disadvantaged groups

It is interesting to note, however, that this seems to play a more prominent role when it comes to experiences of sexual violence than when it comes to experiences of physical violence. Indeed, 23% of women who had no say in their marriage indicate having experienced physical violence at the hands of an intimate partner since the age of 15 compared with 18% of those who did have a say. In terms of sexual violence, 11% of women who had no say in their marriage say they had such an experience, while the figure drops to 4% of women who did have a say. Considering the fairly common view of sex being considered a marital obligation, it follows that women who were unable to choose their marriage partner would indicate higher rates of sexual violence.

**Age at the time of marriage:** The prevalence of intimate partner physical violence also differs depending on the age at which women first marry: 27% of those who first married when they were children have experienced intimate partner physical violence later in life, compared with 22% of those who married as adults. In the 12 months prior to the survey, 11% of those who married when they were children experienced such violence, compared with only 6% of those who married when they were over the age of 18.

The survey findings showed a slight difference between those who married before and after the age of 18 in terms of intimate partner sexual violence (8% versus 6%, respectively, since the age of 15). This could be related to the respondents' ages, as 42% of those who married in childhood were over 50 at the time of the survey, compared with just 12% who were 18–29 years old at the time of the survey.

**Geographic location:** The survey findings do not show a significant difference between women in rural and urban areas in terms of experiences of physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of an intimate partner, with 24% of women in rural areas indicating having experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15 compared with 23% of those in urban areas (8% versus 6%, respectively, in the 12 months prior to the survey)

**Twenty-seven per cent of those who first married when they were children have experienced intimate partner physical violence later in life**

**At-risk groups:**

**Women aged 18–29:** While older women are more likely than younger women to indicate experiences of intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15 (26% of those aged 40–49, 24% of those aged 50–59% and 25% of those aged 60 and over compared with 18% of those aged 18–29), this is likely explained by the accumulation of experiences over a lifetime and the fact that many older women will have spent more time in intimate relationships. Conversely, when looking at the prevalence in the 12 months prior to the survey, it is women aged 18–29 who are most likely to say they have had this type of experience (10% compared with 7% on average and 4% among those aged 50 and over), despite not being considered disadvantaged. In part, this will likely be because, as women’s partners age, they become less physically able to perpetrate physical or sexual violence, but it may also in part be attributable to the fact that younger women are more likely to identify these behaviours as violence, consider them impermissible and speak out about them. Indeed, younger women in the qualitative research were more likely to consider “minor” acts of physical violence as violence.

**Indeed, in the qualitative research,** older women, particularly Roma women and women who lived in rural areas, perceived some physical violence such as slapping as a normal part of marriage. This perception was well illustrated in one of the in-depth interviews, where a woman suffered over a decade of psychological abuse and physical abuse, which included hitting and slapping, but the only incident she considered to be physical violence was where she was kicked and had her head beaten against a wall, resulting in a stroke and brain damage.

### 3. Violence against women among disadvantaged groups

**Table 3.1: Prevalence of individual forms of intimate partner physical and sexual violence, by demographic group**

	All ever partnered women	Ethnic/ religious minority	Finding it very difficult to cope on present income	Disabled	A refugee/ displaced person
	%	%	%	%	%
<i>Base size</i>	<i>14,085</i>	<i>170</i>	<i>1,376</i>	<i>74</i>	<i>239</i>
Pushed you or shoved you	17	12	29	20	20
Slapped you	12	13	22	16	20
Threw a hard object at you	6	6	11	10	5
Grabbed you or pulled your hair	7	9	14	11	11
Beat you with a fist or a hard object, or kicked you	6	6	11	10	7
Burned you	1	0.4	1	1	1
Tried to suffocate you or strangle you	3	4	3	3	10
Cut or stabbed you, or shot at you	1	2	2	1	2
Beat your head against something	3	3	6	5	4
Forced you into sexual intercourse by holding you down or hurting you in some way	4	2	7	4	9
Attempted to force you into sexual intercourse by holding you down or hurting you in some way	3	2	6	4	8
Made you take part in any form of sexual activity when you did not want to or you were unable to refuse	3	3	6	4	10
Have you consented to sexual activity because you were afraid of what might happen if you refused	3	3	7	5	5

**BASE:**  
All ever-partnered women  
aged 18-74, n in italics

**SOURCE:**  
OSCE-led survey on violence  
against women (2018)

### **Women's most serious incidents of intimate partner violence**

Women who disclosed that they had experienced intimate partner violence were asked what happened in the incident that they considered to be the "most serious", that is, the one that had the most impact on them physically or psychologically. They were also asked a series of follow-up questions regarding this incident.

Some groups of women<sup>29</sup> stand out as being significantly more likely than women on average to say they experienced more severe forms of violence during their most serious incidents. These groups are largely the same as those discussed above as most likely to experience particularly severe forms of violence.

This is notably the case for women who are not working due to illness or disability and for women who are refugees/displaced. For instance, one-quarter of women who are refugees or displaced say that their most serious incident involved being beaten with a fist or beaten with a hard object or kicked (24%), and one in five say that their most serious incident involved suffocation or strangling (17% compared with 4% on average).

Although women who are unemployed are no more likely than average to say that they have experienced more severe forms of violence, this group is nevertheless more likely to have experienced more severe forms of violence during their most serious incident, suggesting that these women are also at particular risk. One-quarter of unemployed women (26%) indicate that their most serious incident involved being beaten with a fist or beaten with a hard object or being kicked, compared with 16% on average. These women are also more likely to say that their most serious incident involved some form of sexual violence. Indeed, they are twice as likely as women on average to say that their most serious incident involved being made to take part in some form of sexual activity when they did not want to, and that they have consented to sexual activity because they were afraid of what might happen if they refused (Table 3.2).

<sup>29</sup> Demographic groups with base sizes of below 40 were not included in this analysis.

### 3. Violence against women among disadvantaged groups

**Table 3.2: Most serious incident at the hands of an intimate partner, by demographic group**

	All women who have ever experienced intimate partner violence	Unemployed	Not working due to illness or disability	Refugee/ displaced
	%	%	%	%
<i>Base size</i>	2,681	515	40	45
Pushed you or shoved you	36	33	30	25
Threatened to hurt you physically	29	26	24	18
Slapped you	27	35	33	57
Beat you with a fist or a hard object, or kicked you	16	26	19	24
Grabbed you or pulled your hair	12	22	13	21
Threw a hard object at you	10	14	24	4
Forced you into sexual intercourse by holding you down or hurting you in some way	6	6	3	10
Attempted to force you into sexual intercourse by holding you down or hurting you in some way	6	3	2	3
Beat your head against something	5	7	16	6
Have you consented to sexual activity because you were afraid of what might happen if you refused	5	10	1	4
Made you take part in any form of sexual activity when you did not want to or you were unable to refuse	4	8	1	4
Tried to suffocate you or strangle you	4	10	3	17
Threatened you with violent sexual acts (like rape, forced pregnancy, etc.) in a way that really frightened you	2	2	1	4
Burned you	1	1	0	0
Cut or stabbed you, or shot at you	1	2	2	5

**BASE:**  
All women aged 18–74 who have ever experienced violence from an intimate partner, n in italics

**SOURCE:**  
OSCE-led survey on violence against women (2018)

### Role of drugs and alcohol in women's most serious incident

Overall, nearly seven in ten women who identified a most serious incident of intimate partner violence said that the perpetrator was drunk at the time, and around 2% indicate that he was either under the influence of drugs or under the influence of both drugs and alcohol.

There are some notable differences by age, with 75% of women aged 60 or above and 73% of women aged 50–59 saying that their partner was drunk at the time of their most serious incident, compared with 59% of women aged 18–29. While, overall, relatively few women say their partner was under the influence of drugs at the time of their most serious incident, a reverse trend can be seen here, with more women aged 18–29 (4%) saying that their partner was drunk than women aged 60 or above (1%).

The drinking habits of women's current partners were recorded. The data shows that younger partners are less likely to be regular heavy drinkers than older partners, which may explain the increased importance of alcohol abuse in the most serious incidents involving elderly women. Two per cent of current partners aged 18–29 get drunk at least once or twice a week, compared with 6% of those aged 50–59 and 5% of those aged 60 or over.

In line with this, of the men who get drunk every day or almost every day, 13% are 39 years old or younger, while 83% of men who drink this regularly are 40 or above. In particular, 30% of partners who get drunk every day or almost every day are aged 50–59, making this the most alcohol-prone age group.

A similar trend is observed around education levels, with women educated to tertiary level (71%) almost twice as likely to indicate that their partner was drunk at the time of their most serious incident than women with only primary education or less (42%). However, the reverse is observed around household income. Poor women (72%) are more likely to say that their partner was under the influence of alcohol at the time of their most serious incident than those who are living comfortably (61%).

Geographic location is also important. Women living in rural areas (76%) are much more prone to violence related to alcohol abuse than women living in urban areas (64%).

### 3.1.2: Intimate partner psychological violence

In the qualitative research, women expressed the belief that psychological violence was very prevalent in relationships, and indeed the survey findings support this: three in five women who have ever had a partner indicate that they have experienced **psychological violence** at the hands of an intimate partner in their lifetime (60%), which is significantly higher than the EU average of 43% and at the same level as the highest-ranking countries in the EU (Denmark and Latvia, with the lowest being Ireland at 31%). It is also worth noting that a common discussion in the qualitative research was how normalized psychological violence is and how women feel that it is accepted and often not recognized as violence. Many women said that they did not realize they were being abused at first; psychological violence started as occasional verbal insults and increased over time into controlling behaviour and physical violence. Some disadvantaged groups seem to be at particular risk, including women who had no choice in marriage and who married when they were children.

### 3. Violence against women among disadvantaged groups

Women were asked about a number of different forms of psychological violence that have been grouped into four broad categories as follows<sup>30</sup>:

- **Economic violence**, which includes being prevented from making decisions about family finances and from shopping independently and being forbidden to work outside the home.
- **Controlling behaviours**, which include situations where a woman's partner tries to keep her from seeing her friends, *restricts her use of social media sites (such as Facebook, Twitter, etc.)*, tries to restrict contact with her birth family or relatives, insists on knowing where she is in a way that goes beyond general concern, gets angry if she speaks with another man, suspects that she has been unfaithful, *forbids the use of contraception or otherwise restricts decisions on family planning, prevents her from completing school or starting a new educational course, wants to decide what clothes she can wear or expects to be asked for permission so she can see a doctor.*
- **Abusive behaviours**, which include situations where a woman's partner forbids her to leave the house at all or *forbids her to leave the house without being accompanied by a relative*, takes away her car keys or locks her up, belittles or humiliates her in front of other people or in private, purposefully scares or intimidates her (e.g., by yelling or smashing things), makes her watch or look at pornographic material against her wishes, threatens to hurt or kill someone she cares about (other than her children), threatens to hurt her physically, threatens her with violent sexual acts (like rape, forced pregnancy, etc.) and *hurts or threatens to hurt her when visiting, picking up or bringing back her children (previous partner only).*
- **Using a woman's children to blackmail her, or abusing her children**, which includes threatening to take her children away, threatening to hurt her children, hurting her children or making threats concerning the custody of her children (previous partner only).

Women who were in a relationship were asked if any of these things had happened sometimes, often or all of the time or had never happened, while women who had been in previous relationships were asked if any of their previous partners had ever done any of these things to them.<sup>31</sup>

In terms of the overall prevalence of psychological violence since the age of 15, a number of differences can be observed according to sociodemographic groups:

**Disabled women:** Women who are disabled are more likely than women on average to have experienced intimate partner psychological violence, both since the age of 15 (63% versus 53%, respectively) and in the 12 months prior to the survey (31% versus 22%, respectively).

**Income status:** There is a clear link between income and the prevalence of psychological violence since the age of 15, with the rate of such violence rising from 47% among women who are living comfortably on their present income to 77% among women who are poor. This trend is also visible in the 12 months prior to the survey (15%, rising to 29%, respectively).

<sup>30</sup> The forms of psychological violence in italics were not asked about in the FRA survey.

<sup>31</sup> In relation to being threatened with physical or sexual violence, women were asked how many times their current and/or previous partner had ever done this and how often they had done it in the 12 months prior to the survey.

## OSCE-led survey on violence against women: Experiences of disadvantaged women

This link also came out strongly in the qualitative research. There was a lot of discussion about the fact that men are considered breadwinners and that, when they do not have enough money or lose their job, their feeling of inadequacy can manifest itself in acts of aggression and abusive behaviour. Traditional gender roles appeared to be particularly strong among Roma women, who explained that poverty is seen as the fault of men within their community.

**Choice in marriage:** Women who had no say in their marriage partner (68%) are more likely to say that they have experienced intimate partner psychological violence since the age of 15 than those who were able to choose their own marriage partner (58%). Again, this is also true of the prevalence in the 12 months prior to the survey (31% versus 21%, respectively).

**Age at the time of marriage:** In contrast to sexual violence, women who married when they were children (62%) are only slightly more likely than those who married in adulthood to have experienced intimate partner psychological violence (60%). They are, however, significantly more likely to have experienced intimate partner psychological violence in the 12 months prior to the survey (25% of those who married when they were children, compared with 19% of those who married after the age of 18). Again, these findings could be related to the age of the respondents, with 42% of such women being over the age of 50 at the time of the survey. It may be the case that, as perpetrators age, they are less able or willing to commit additional acts of sexual violence but are still capable of psychological abuse.

**Education:** The indicated prevalence of psychological violence since the age of 15 rises as education level rises, from 53% of those with only primary education or less to 62% of those with tertiary education. However, the opposite is true when it comes to the prevalence in the 12 months prior to the survey, from 23% of those with only primary education or less to 16% of those with tertiary education.

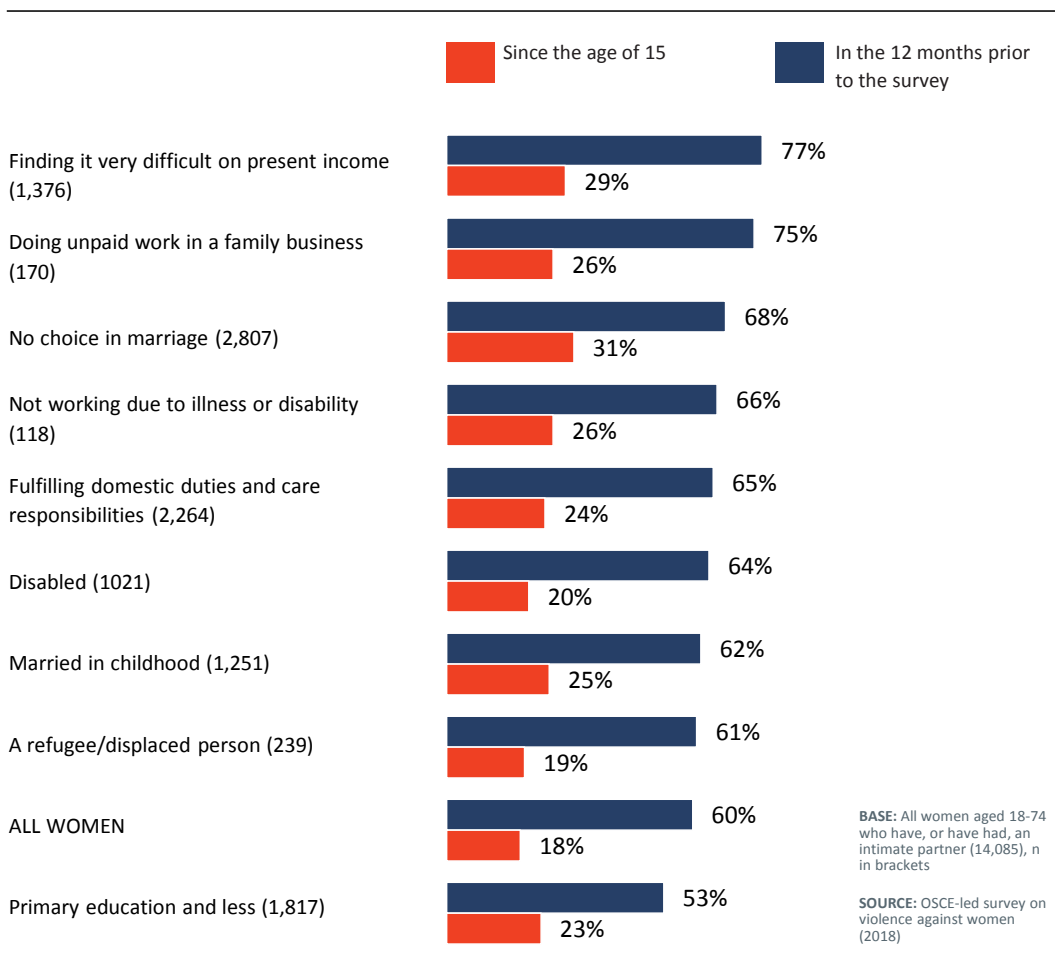
**Geographic location:** In terms of geographic location, women in the qualitative research seemed to think that violence, both psychological and physical, is more prevalent in rural areas, where attitudes would be less liberal.

The survey findings suggest, however, that psychological violence at any point in the victim's lifetime may be more prevalent in urban areas, with women living in such areas (61%) more likely than those residing in rural areas (58%) to indicate having experienced psychological violence since the age of 15. Women in urban areas were, however, less likely to indicate this for the 12 months prior to the survey (17% compared with 19% of women in rural areas), and psychological violence may have been under-reported due to women not recognizing such abuse.



### 3. Violence against women among disadvantaged groups

**Figure 3.2: Prevalence of intimate partner psychological violence, by demographic group**



The experiences of these women also vary according to the category of psychological violence, as set out above.

Overall, nearly half of all women (48%) indicate having experienced controlling behaviour at the hands of an intimate partner. This form of psychological violence is most prevalent among women who are doing unpaid work in a family business (67%); however, it is also particularly common among those who are not working due to illness or disability (58%).

Forty-three per cent of women overall say they have experienced abusive behaviour at the hands of an intimate partner. This form of violence is again more prevalent among women who are disabled (46%) and among women who are not working due to illness or disability (54%), highlighting the increased vulnerability of these women. This was illustrated in one interview with a Bosnian woman who was displaced during the Bosnian war and moved to Serbia. She explained that her husband's psychological abuse became much more frequent when she became disabled, because she was seen as bringing shame on his family.

The impression given by most women in the qualitative research was that verbal abuse committed by an intimate partner was a fact of life and so normalized that it was not perceived as violence but rather framed in terms of “quarrelling” or “arguing”. Women in the qualitative research also suggested that there is a fine line between psychological and physical abuse and that the former can very easily become physical.

**“[Your husband] thinks that you are his slave the moment you sign the marriage papers. That’s how he behaves. ‘Who are you? You are my wife and I can do whatever I want with you.’ That’s their attitude.”**

**Female, aged 55–65, displaced person, Serbia**

Nearly one in five women overall (19%) have experienced economic violence. Women who are doing unpaid work in a family business are more prone to this (26%), as are women who are self-employed (24%) and those who are fulfilling domestic duties (24%).

### **3.1.3: Physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of non-partners**

Physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of someone other than an intimate partner since the age of 15 has been experienced by almost one in five women overall (19%). There are many similarities with intimate partner violence in terms of which groups are most likely to indicate experiences of non-partner violence, as described below and illustrated in Figure 3.3. There are, however, some notable differences: geographic location is more of a discriminator for non-partner violence than for intimate partner violence, with 20% of those in urban areas having experienced violence at the hands of someone other than a partner (compared with 17% in rural areas), while, conversely, age has a less clear impact on the prevalence of non-partner violence than it does on intimate partner violence. The more severe forms of non-partner violence are especially prevalent among a number of disadvantaged groups, with disadvantaged women often more likely to experience more severe forms of non-partner physical and/or sexual violence even when they are only slightly more likely than others to experience less severe forms of violence.

#### ***Prevalence and severity of non-partner physical and/or sexual violence according to sociodemographic characteristics***

**Income status:** Women who are poor are much more likely than women who are living comfortably on their income to have experienced physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of a non-partner, both since the age of 15 (36% versus 12%, respectively) and in the 12 months prior to the survey (10% versus 3%, respectively).

While women who are poor are twice as likely to say they have been pushed or shoved or slapped, they are also at least twice as likely to indicate having experienced some of the more severe forms of violence, such as being beaten with a fist or beaten with a hard object, or being kicked (6% versus 3% on average), strangled or suffocated (3% compared with 1% on average), or having their head beaten against something (4% versus 1% on average).

### 3. Violence against women among disadvantaged groups

**Employment status:** As with intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence, women who are doing unpaid work in a family business are particularly likely to indicate having experienced non-partner violence both since the age of 15 (32% versus 11%, respectively) and in the 12 months prior to the survey (19% versus 5% on average).

Women who are doing unpaid work in a family business are twice as likely to have been pushed or shoved, but they are also substantially more likely to have experienced some of the more severe forms of violence. Indeed, they are almost twice as likely to have been beaten with a fist or a hard object or kicked (5% versus 3%, respectively) and three times as likely to have had a hard object thrown at them (9% versus 3%, respectively). Likewise, women who are not working due to illness or disability are no more likely to have been pushed, shoved or slapped, but they are nine times more likely than women on average to have had their head beaten against something by a non-partner (9% compared with 1% on average).

Women who are not working due to illness or disability stand out as being particularly likely to say that they have experienced non-partner sexual violence. Indeed, 13% say that they have had such an experience since the age of 15 (compared with 4% on average), and 9% say they experienced this in the 12 months prior to the survey, compared with 1% on average.

Women who are not working due to illness or disability are also substantially more likely than women on average to say that they have experienced each form of non-partner sexual violence.

Albeit to a lesser extent, women who are self-employed also indicate a higher than average prevalence of most forms of sexual violence, with 4% having been raped (compared with 2% on average) and 5% having unwillingly consented to sexual activity out of fear (compared with 2% on average).

**Refugees/displaced women:** Refugees and displaced women are also more likely to say they have experienced non-partner physical and/or sexual violence, both since the age of 15 (28% compared with 9% on average) and in the 12 months prior to the survey (9% compared with 5% on average).

While women who are refugees or displaced are only slightly more likely to have been pushed or shoved or slapped, they are almost twice as likely to have been beaten with a fist or a hard object or kicked (5% versus 3% on average), five times more likely to have been strangled or suffocated (5% versus 1% on average), and six times more likely to have been cut or stabbed or shot at (6% versus 1% on average). A similar pattern can be observed around the severity of the violence experienced by women who are returnees.

Women who are refugees or displaced are again more likely to say that they have experienced specific severe forms of sexual violence more often than on average. For instance, 5% have experienced attempted rape at the hands of a non-partner, and 4% have been raped by a non-partner, compared with 3% and 2%, respectively, on average.

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**Ethnic/religious minorities:** As with intimate partner violence, women who identify as an ethnic minority are less likely to say they have experienced physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of a non-partner. Again, however, it should be noted that they also have a higher likelihood of holding victim-blaming attitudes and may therefore have been less willing to disclose their experiences of violence.

**Age:** In contrast with intimate partner violence, age is not such a strong factor when it comes to non-partner violence. The prevalence since the age of 15 is lowest among the youngest and oldest age groups (both at 17%), while it is highest among women aged 40–49 (23%). Women aged 18–29 and those aged 40–49 are slightly more likely than women on average to say that they experienced non-partner violence (6% versus 5% on average) in the 12 months prior to the survey. Conversely, women 50 or older are slightly less likely to indicate this (4%).

**Disability:** Women who say they were severely restricted in their day-to-day activities in the six months before the survey due to illness or disability are also slightly more likely to have experienced non-partner physical and/or sexual violence than on average (22% versus 19%, respectively).

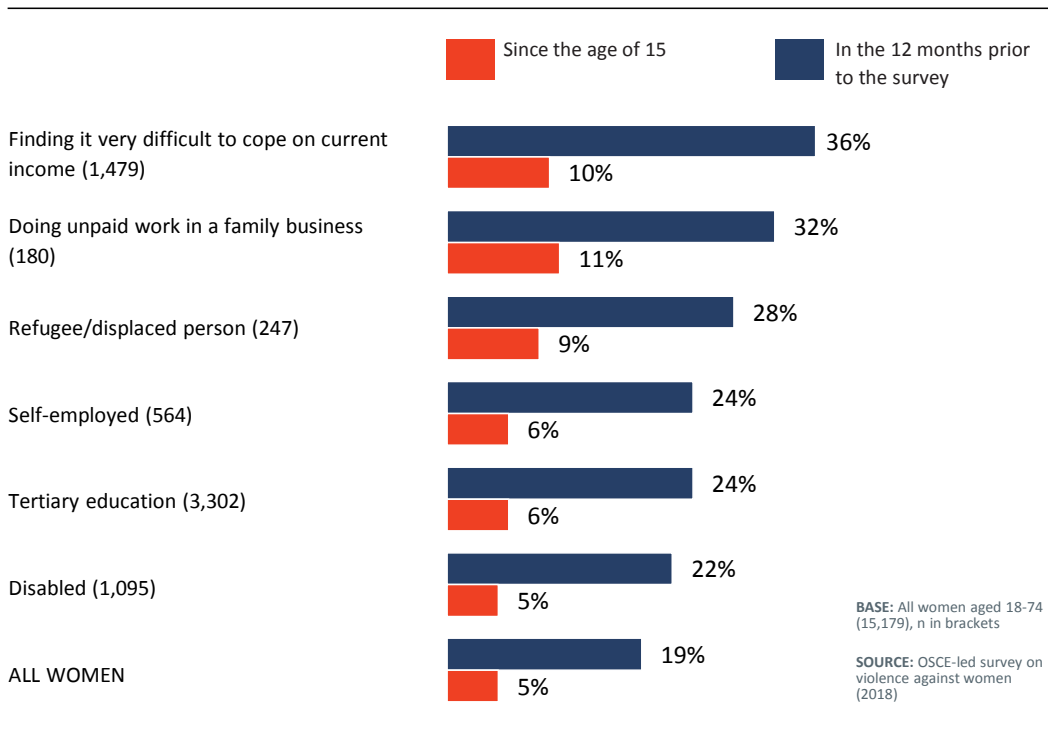
### **At-risk groups:**

As with intimate partner violence, women with tertiary education—while not traditionally considered to be a disadvantaged group—are more likely than women with less education to indicate having experienced non-partner violence (24% compared with 13% of women with up to primary education) since the age of 15. While this may partly be attributed to a greater willingness to disclose such experiences, the vulnerability of this group of women should not be overlooked. Factors such as the contact they have with others through their employment or during their education may come into play in explaining why this group is at a higher risk of experiencing certain types of violence.

Geographic location is more of a discriminator for non-partner violence than for intimate partner violence. While the prevalence of intimate partner violence is largely the same in urban and rural areas (24% versus 23%, respectively), 20% of women in urban areas say that they have experienced non-partner physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15, compared with 17% of women in rural areas. A similar pattern can be observed in the 12 months prior to the survey, with 5% of women in urban areas having experienced non-partner violence compared to 4% in rural areas. As discussed below, this slightly higher prevalence may be due to women in urban areas being more exposed to the abusive behaviour of strangers.

### 3. Violence against women among disadvantaged groups

**Figure 3.3: Prevalence of non-partner physical and/or sexual violence, by demographic group**



**Table 3.3: Prevalence of individual forms of non-partner physical and sexual violence, by demographic group**

	All women	Doing unpaid work in a family business	Not working due to illness or disability	Finding it very difficult to cope on present income	A refugee/ displaced person
	%	%	%	%	%
<i>Base size</i>	<i>15,179</i>	<i>180</i>	<i>131</i>	<i>1,479</i>	<i>247</i>
Pushed you or shoved you	12	22	3	22	15
Slapped you	7	8	3	13	4
Threw a hard object at you	3	9	10	8	4
Grabbed you or pulled your hair	4	3	1	8	9
Beat you with a fist or a hard object, or kicked you	3	5	1	6	5
Burned you	0.2	0	0.1	0.1	0
Tried to suffocate you or strangle you	1	2	1	3	5
Cut or stabbed you, or shot at you	1	0	0.4	1	6
Beat your head against something	1	2	9	4	1
Forced you into sexual intercourse by holding you down or hurting you in some way	2	0	12	4	4
Attempted to force you into sexual intercourse by holding you down or hurting you in some way	3	4	10	4	5
Made you take part in any form of sexual activity when you did not want to or you were unable to refuse	1	0	9	3	3
Have you consented to sexual activity because you were afraid of what might happen if you refused	2	0	9	5	3

**BASE:**  
All women aged 18-74,  
n in italics

**SOURCE:**  
OSCE-led survey on violence  
against women (2018)

### 3. Violence against women among disadvantaged groups

#### **Women's most serious incident of non-partner violence**

As with intimate partner violence, women who have experienced non-partner violence were asked what happened in the most serious incident that they had experienced.

Certain groups are more likely than average to say that their most serious incident of non-partner violence involved one of the more severe types of violence. This is notably the case for women who are educated up to primary level. Although this group is not more likely to indicate that they have been subjected to more severe forms of physical or sexual violence overall, they are around four times more likely than average to say that their most serious incident at the hands of a non-partner involved being strangled or suffocated, cut or stabbed or shot at, or that their head was beaten against something (Table 3.4).

They are also more than twice as likely as women on average to say that they were forced into sexual intercourse (12% versus 5% overall) or made to take part in some form of sexual activity when they did not want to (11% versus 3% overall).

Similarly, women who are self-employed are more likely than average to say that their most serious incident involved some of the more severe forms of violence such as rape (12% compared with 5% on average), and a similar pattern of experiencing more severe forms of violence is observed among women who are unemployed.

On the whole, women who are from an ethnic/religious minority are not especially likely to say that their most serious incident of non-partner violence involved more severe forms of violence. The exception to this is that women from these groups are more likely than average to say that the perpetrator tried to suffocate or strangle them (7% compared with 3%, respectively) and that it involved being cut or stabbed or shot at (10% compared with 2% on average).<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Note that while refugees/displaced women were most likely to suffer more severe forms of violence during their most serious incident, the base size (n=41) is too low to allow for rigorous analysis.

**Table 3.4: Most serious incident of non-partner violence, by demographic group**

	all women who have ever experienced non-partner violence	Primary education	Self-employed	Unemployed
	%	%	%	%
<i>Base size</i>	1,996	196	101	416
Pushed you or shoved you	30	20	29	27
Threatened to hurt you physically	20	14	31	16
Slapped you	15	14	11	21
Grabbed you or pulled your hair	9	5	9	16
Beat you with a fist or a hard object, or kicked you	7	4	9	15
Threw a hard object at you	6	4	1	8
Attempted to force you into sexual intercourse by holding you down or hurting you in some way	6	2	7	7
Forced you into sexual intercourse by holding you down or hurting you in some way	5	12	12	7
Made you take part in any form of sexual activity when you did not want to or you were unable to refuse	3	11	6	6
Have you consented to sexual activity because you were afraid of what might happen if you refused	3	1	6	6
Tried to suffocate you or strangle you	3	8	6	5
Threatened you with violent sexual acts (like rape, forced pregnancy, etc.) in a way that really frightened you	3	0	3	4
Cut or stabbed you, or shot at you	2	7	3	2
Beat your head against something	2	7	3	3
Burned you	0.2	0	0	0

**BASE:**  
All women aged 18–74 who have ever experienced violence from a non-partner, n in italics

**SOURCE:**  
OSCE-led survey on violence against women (2018)



### 3. Violence against women among disadvantaged groups

#### **Perpetrators of non-partner physical and sexual violence**

Women who say that they have experienced non-partner physical and/or sexual violence were asked to provide details about the perpetrator(s) (using the list provided<sup>33</sup>), including the sex of the perpetrator(s). In relation to physical violence, the most commonly identified perpetrator is a relative or family member of the victim (26%), followed by a friend, acquaintance or neighbour (24%) or someone else that the victim knew but did not specify from the list of perpetrator types provided (23%). Nearly one in five (18%) say the perpetrator was someone they did not know, which is lower than the EU average of 31%. This is quite consistent across different disadvantaged groups, though there are some differences worth noting.

**Employment status:** Women who are self-employed are more likely than average to say that the perpetrator of non-partner physical violence was a date or someone they just met (11% compared with 4% on average). Women who are students are more likely to indicate that the violence they experienced was committed by a fellow student or pupil (20% compared with 9% on average). They are also more likely to say that the perpetrator was a friend, acquaintance or neighbour (36% compared with 24% on average). Conversely, they are less likely than women on average to indicate that the violence was perpetrated by a family member, be it their own family or their partner's family, where applicable (20% compared with 31% on average). Similarly, women who are fulfilling domestic duties are more likely to identify the perpetrator as a friend, acquaintance or neighbour (39% compared with 24% on average).

**Income status:** There are also some differences in perpetrator types in relation to income levels. Women who are poor are twice as likely as those living comfortably to indicate that the perpetrator was one of their partner's relatives or family members (12% versus 6%, respectively). They are also more likely than those living comfortably to say that the violence was committed by someone they did not know (22% compared with 9% of women living comfortably).

**Geographic location:** Finally, certain differences can be observed between the perpetrators of non-partner violence in urban settings versus rural settings. Indeed, women living in rural areas are more likely to identify the perpetrator of violence as a friend, acquaintance or neighbour (33% compared with 20% in urban areas), while they are less likely to say that the perpetrator was someone they did not know (10% compared with 21% in urban areas).

<sup>33</sup> The list of perpetrators provided for non-partner violence includes: boss/supervisor; colleague/co-worker; client/customer/patient; teacher/trainer/coach; another pupil/fellow student; doctor/healthcare worker; a relative/family member (other than your partner); a relative/family member of your partner; a date/someone you just met; friend/acquaintance/ neighbour; somebody else you knew; guards at checkpoints/borders; police officer (not at a checkpoint or border); soldier or other armed man/woman (not police or a guard at a checkpoint/border); international peacekeeper/observer/aid worker; someone you did not know.

### 3.2: Sexual harassment and stalking

#### 3.2.1: Sexual harassment

The prevalence of sexual harassment was measured by asking respondents to specify the acts that they felt were unwanted, offensive or intimidating.<sup>34</sup> Six forms of sexual harassment were selected for their severity, and they are referred to in this report as “the most severe forms” of sexual harassment.<sup>35</sup>

Experiences of sexual harassment differ across groups. Each of the groups listed below, including those that can be considered disadvantaged and those that are not traditionally disadvantaged, are more likely to experience sexual harassment than on average. Younger women, professionals and those with the most education—all advantaged in other ways—are much more likely to be subjected to sexual harassment than women overall. The groups of women more likely to say they have experienced sexual harassment are also more likely to have encountered the most severe forms of sexual harassment.

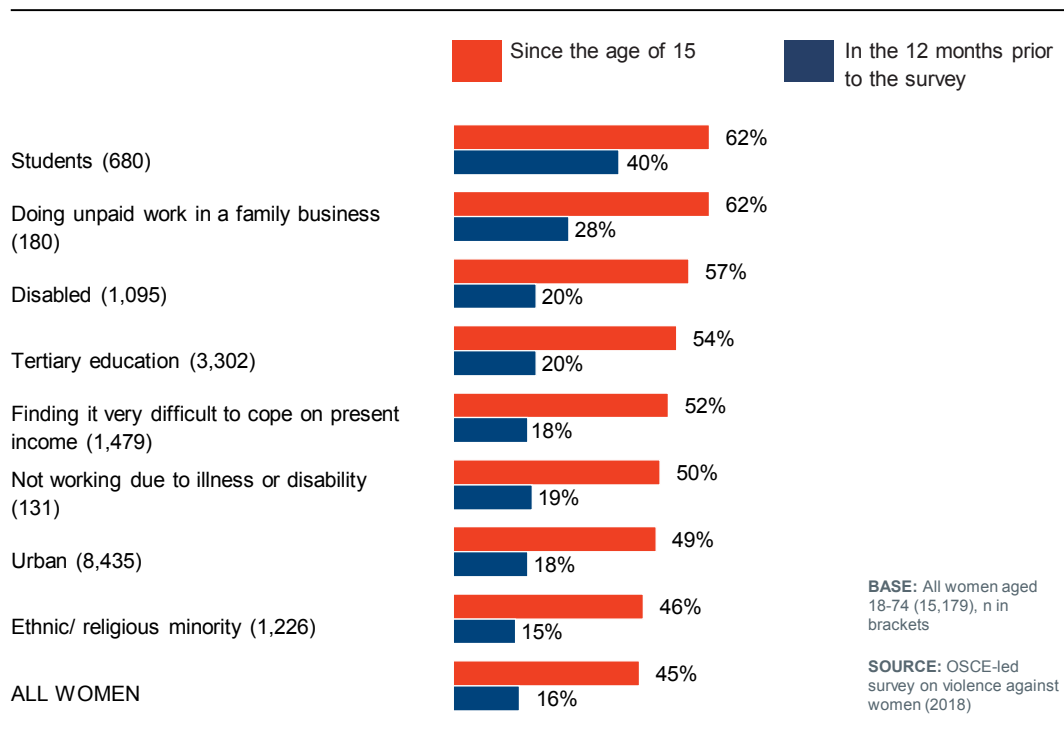
Across the region covered by the OSCE-led survey, 45% of women say they have experienced at least one form of sexual harassment since they were 15 years old, and 30% say that they have experienced one of the most severe forms. This is lower than the EU average of 55%, which ranges from 24% who experienced at least one form in Bulgaria to 81% in Sweden. Sixteen per cent of women in the region covered by the OSCE-led survey indicated that they had experienced sexual harassment in the 12 months prior to the survey, and 8% say the same about the most severe forms of sexual harassment.

34 In terms of sexual harassment, women in the survey were asked: How often from the time you were 15 years old until now/in the past 12 months have you experienced any of the following: 1) unwelcome touching, hugging or kissing? 2) sexually suggestive comments or jokes that offended you? 3) inappropriate invitations to go out on dates? 4) intrusive questions about your private life that offended you? 5) intrusive comments about your appearance that offended you? 6) inappropriate staring or leering that you found intimidating? 7) somebody sending or showing you sexually explicit pictures, photos or gifts that offended you? 8) somebody indecently exposing themselves to you? 9) somebody making you watch or look at pornographic material against your wishes? 10) unwanted sexually explicit emails or SMS messages that offended you? 11) inappropriate advances that offended you on social networking websites such as Facebook or in Internet chat rooms? With regard to each form of sexual harassment, women could indicate whether they had experienced it never, once, two to five times or six times or more. The prevalence of sexual harassment is based on respondents who reported having experienced one of the listed items at least once. Six forms of sexual harassment were selected for their severity, and they are referred to in this report as “the most severe forms” of sexual harassment.

35 The most serious forms of sexual harassment are reported as “unwelcome touching, hugging or kissing”, “sexually suggestive comments or jokes that offended you”, “somebody sending or showing you sexually explicit pictures, photos or gifts that offended you”, “somebody indecently exposing themselves to you”, “somebody making you watch or look at pornographic material against your wishes” and “unwanted sexually explicit emails or SMS messages that offended you”. The prevalence of the most severe forms of sexual harassment is based on respondents who report having experienced at least one of these six forms of sexual harassment on at least one occasion.

### 3. Violence against women among disadvantaged groups

**Figure 3.4: Prevalence of sexual harassment, by demographic group**

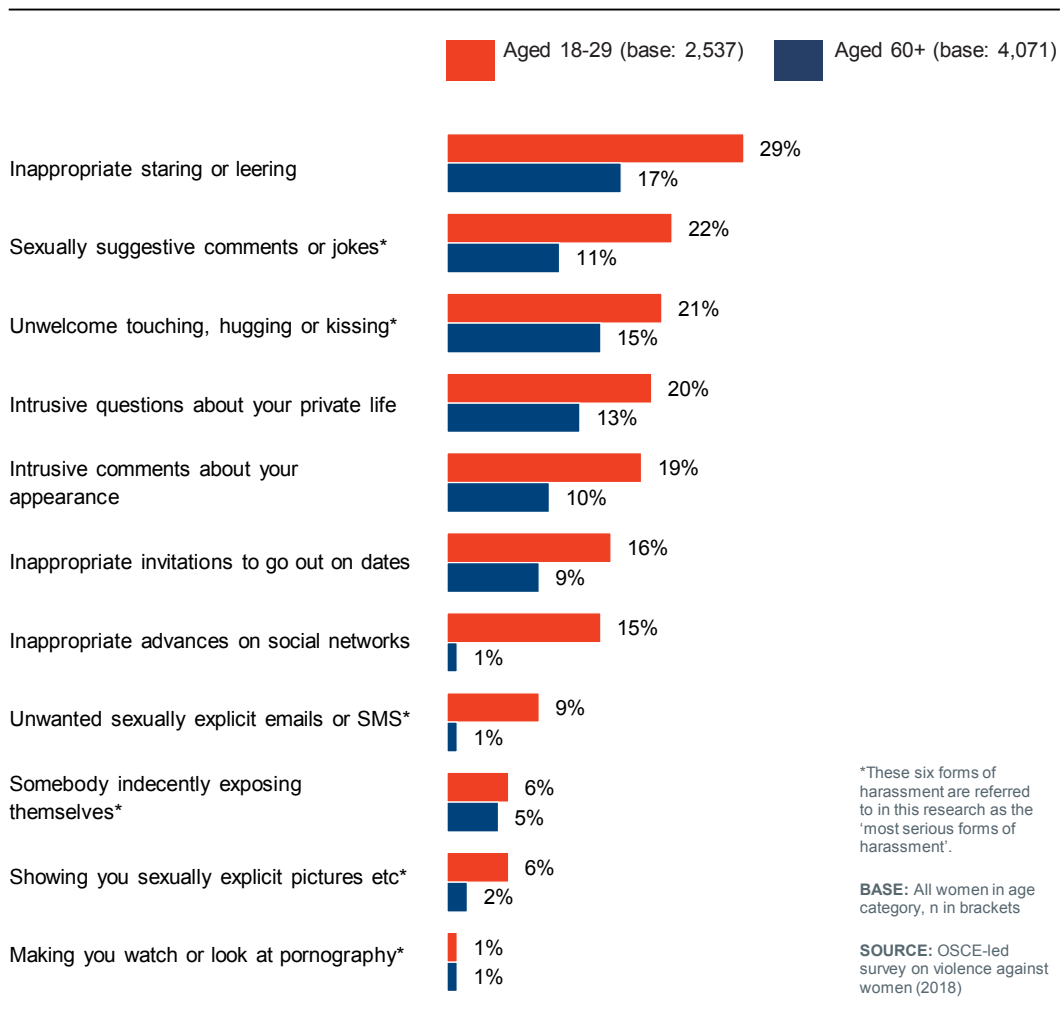


#### *Prevalence of sexual harassment according to sociodemographic characteristics*

**Age:** While older women were most at risk in regard to some issues, including those discussed in the preceding chapter, it is younger women who are at a greater risk of experiencing sexual harassment: more than half of women aged 18–29 have at some point experienced sexual harassment since the age of 15 (54%, compared with 36% of women over 60). Younger women are more likely than older women to report experiencing each of the 11 forms of sexual harassment, and there are notable differences in relation to cyber-harassment via mobile and Internet technology (Figure 3.5). Younger women are more likely than older women to have received unwanted sexually explicit emails or text messages that caused offence, as well as inappropriate advances that caused offence on social networking sites or in Internet chat rooms, since the age of 15. The more frequent usage of such technologies by younger women undoubtedly increases their risk of experiencing such harassment, but the findings also highlight the extent to which technologies are being used inappropriately.

**Figure 3.5: Forms of sexual harassment experienced, by age**

How often since you were 15 years old, until now, have you experienced any of the following?  
% ever experienced

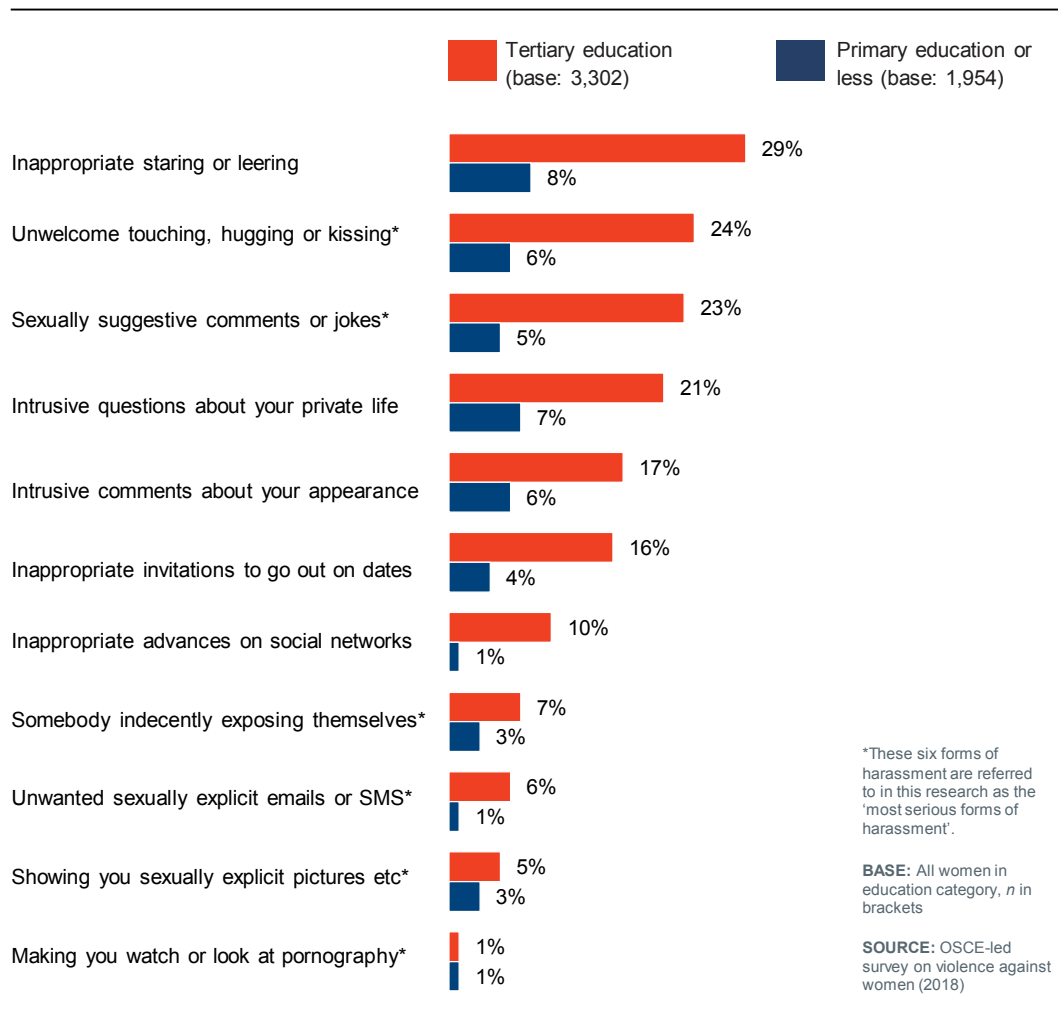


**Education:** There are also some very clear differences by education level, with each of the forms of sexual harassment explored in the survey being experienced more often by women with tertiary education than those with only primary education or less (Figure 3.6). Women educated to tertiary level (54%) are much more likely than those with only primary education or less (22%) to say they have been sexually harassed. The prevalence is even higher among students (62%). While women who are students typically fall into the 18–29 age group, they are still more likely to have experienced harassment than this age group overall (54%), suggesting that the school, college or university environment places these women at particular risk of sexual harassment.

### 3. Violence against women among disadvantaged groups

**Figure 3.6: Forms of sexual harassment experienced, by education level**

How often since you were 15 years old, until now, have you experienced any of the following?  
% ever experienced



**Employment:** Half of those in formal employment (50%) say they have experienced sexual harassment since the age of 15, compared with around one-third of those who are unemployed or retired (36% each). As discussed above, age and education are contributing factors in these differences, but it is likely that the greater interaction that women in the workplace have with others means they are more at risk of such encounters. Those in some better-paid occupations are also more likely to have experienced sexual harassment, notably professionals (60%) and technicians/associate professionals (57%), compared with skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers (43%). This may be associated with the higher levels of education they may have completed, which makes them more likely to identify certain behaviours as harassment.

**Income status:** Despite these findings, women who are poor are more likely to say they have experienced sexual harassment in comparison with women living comfortably (52% compared with 38%, respectively). Poor women tend to experience more of each form of sexual harassment apart from “inappropriate advances that offended you on social networking websites such as Facebook or in Internet chat rooms”, where women who are living comfortably are more likely to have experienced harassment (8% compared with 3%, respectively), likely because of their greater access to social media.

**Geographic location:** Much like with non-partner violence, women in urban areas are significantly more likely than those in rural areas to say they have experienced sexual harassment. Indeed, 49% of those in urban areas said they had experienced harassment, compared with 38% of women in rural areas. Once again, this may in part be the result of the fact that women in urban areas are more exposed to strangers or have greater employment opportunities and, subsequently, more interaction with others.

### 3.2.2: Stalking

#### Prevalence of stalking

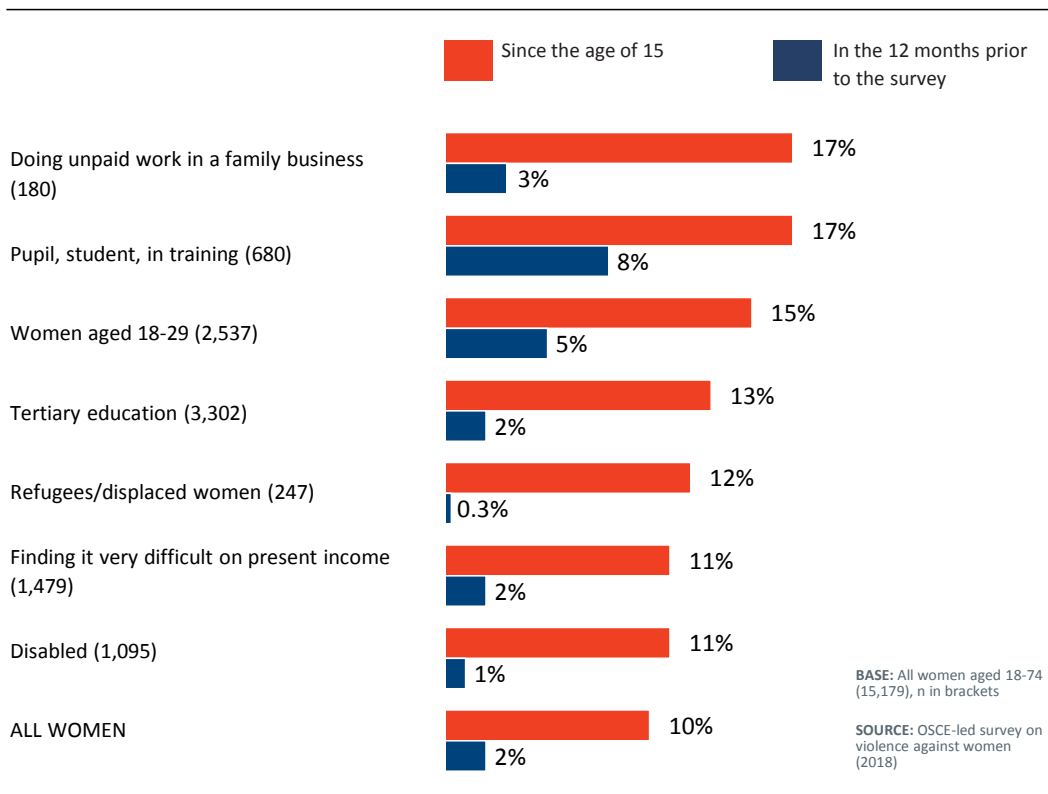
Ten per cent of women across the region covered by the OSCE-led survey state that they have been stalked<sup>36</sup> at some point since they were 15 years old. This is lower than the EU average of 18%, with results across the EU ranging from 8% in Lithuania and Romania to 33% in Sweden. Two per cent say they were stalked in the 12 months prior to the survey, which is lower than the EU average of 5%.

Some groups of women have experienced more stalking than women on average (Figure 3.7), notably those doing unpaid work in a family business (17% compared with 10% of women overall) and students (17%). Generally, the picture is similar to that reported for sexual harassment: the same groups tend to experience sexual harassment and stalking more often than women overall, including a number of groups who would not be considered disadvantaged.

<sup>36</sup> For stalking, women in the survey were asked the following questions: Since you were 15 years old until now/in the past 12 months, has the same person repeatedly done one or more of the following things to you: 1) sent you emails, text messages (SMS) or instant messages that were offensive or threatening? 2) sent you letters or cards that were offensive or threatening? 3) made offensive, threatening or silent phone calls to you? 4) posted offensive comments about you on the Internet? 5) shared intimate photos or videos of you on the Internet or by mobile phone? 6) loitered or waited for you outside your home, workplace or school without a legitimate reason? 7) deliberately followed you around? 8) deliberately interfered with or damaged your property? The prevalence of stalking is based on respondents who reported having experienced one or more of the forms of stalking listed above.

### 3. Violence against women among disadvantaged groups

**Figure 3.7: Prevalence of stalking, by demographic group**



**At-risk groups:**

**Age:** Women aged 18–29 are more likely than older women to say they have been stalked at some point since the age of 15, with 15% indicating this, compared with 10% of 30–49-year-olds and 7% of those aged 60 and over. A similar pattern emerges among women who were stalked in the 12 months prior to the survey. These differences by age are not just attributable to the greater use of technology among young people, because women in the 18–29 age group indicate having experienced each type of stalking behaviour more often than older women.

**Employment:** Students are more likely to have experienced stalking both since the age of 15 (17%) and in the 12 months prior to the survey (8%), which will be at least partly age-related, as nearly all students fall into the 18–29 age group.

**Education:** The prevalence of stalking is higher among women educated to tertiary level compared with those with only primary education or less, both since the age of 15 (13% versus 5%, respectively) and in the 12 months prior to the survey (2% versus 1%, respectively).



**Three in five poor women who identified a most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner physical and/or sexual violence have experienced one or more physical injuries as a consequence of the incident.**

**More than nine in ten disabled women who identified a most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner physical and/or sexual violence developed a longer-term psychological condition as a result.**



## 4. Impact of violence, sexual harassment and stalking on women from disadvantaged groups

This chapter provides an overview of the impact of violence on women's well-being and looks at how violence impacts different groups of women in different ways. In the survey, women were asked a number of questions about the impact that their most serious incident of physical and/or sexual violence, including threats thereof, had on them. The most serious incident was defined as the one that had the most impact, either psychologically or physically, on the victim. Women were asked about their short-term or immediate responses, referred to here as emotional responses, as well as those that develop over the longer term and are more long-lasting, referred to as psychological reactions. They were also asked if they had suffered physical injuries or consequences.

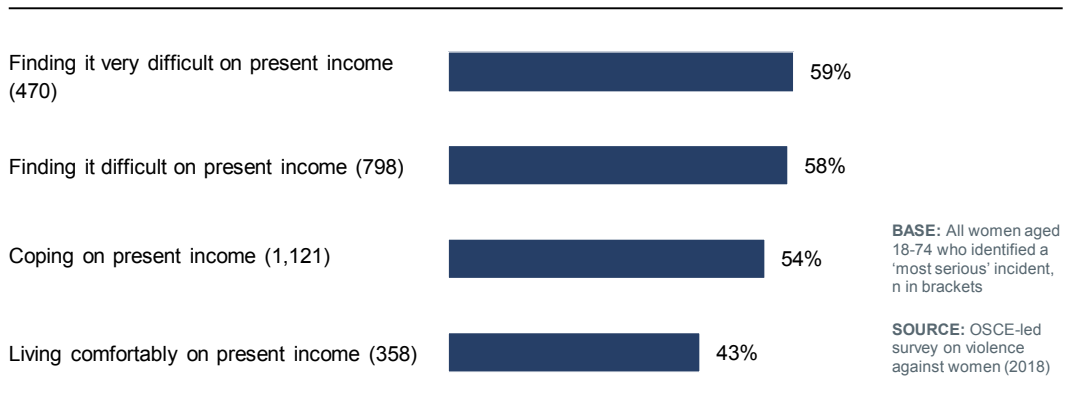
It is important to note that this analysis focuses only on the impact of the most serious incident of violence that women experienced. The survey findings do not reveal the full extent to which women from disadvantaged groups, as well as other at-risk groups, are impacted by their experiences of, and increased vulnerability to, different forms of violence, as there may also be long-lasting physical and psychological consequences following these other experiences. Nevertheless, the findings from this survey still demonstrate the public health consequences of violence against women.

### **Physical consequences of physical and/or sexual violence**

Across all types of perpetrators, more than half of women who identified a most serious incident of violence at the hands of a partner or non-partner said they had suffered from a physical consequence as a result (55%). Certain differences can be observed by demographic group, and there is, in particular, an apparent link between income and the prevalence of physical consequences. Indeed, while 43% of women who are living comfortably on their present income indicate having suffered from a physical consequence as a result of their most serious incident, this figure rises to 59% among those who are poor (Figure 4.1). This is likely explained by the fact that women who are poor are more likely to say that they have experienced some of the more severe forms of violence, as explored in Chapter 3.

**Figure 4.1: Physical injuries following women’s most serious incident of partner or non-partner violence, by income level**

Did your most serious incident of violence at the hands of an intimate partner or non-partner result in any of the following physical consequence[s]? (% who identified a physical consequence)



Certain other groups of women stand out when considering the prevalence of physical consequences as a result of their most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner violence.

**Employment:** Despite not being more likely to experience more severe forms of violence, students are more likely than women on average to indicate having suffered from a physical injury as a result of their most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner violence (66% versus 55% on average). This is in large part explained by their higher propensity to indicate suffering from wounds, sprains and burns than women overall (22% versus 12%, respectively).

**Ethnic/religious minorities:** Women who are from an ethnic or religious minority (66%) are more likely than average (55%) to indicate having suffered from a physical injury, despite not indicating a higher likelihood of experiencing more severe forms of violence. They are slightly more likely to indicate some of the more severe physical consequences, such as fractures and broken teeth (10% versus 6% on average), concussions or other brain injuries (13% versus 11% on average) and internal injuries (5% versus 3% on average).<sup>37</sup>

**Disabled women:** The survey data suggests that women with a disability are more likely to suffer from a physical consequence as a result of their most serious incident of violence (67% versus 55% on average). They are slightly more likely to indicate suffering from some of the more severe forms of injuries, such as fractures or broken teeth (8% compared with 6% on average), concussions or other brain injuries (13% compared with 11% on average) or pregnancy (5% compared with 1% on average). This is in line with their higher likelihood of suffering more severe forms of both physical and sexual violence, as explored in Chapter 3.

<sup>37</sup> This is also true of women who are returnees, 65% of whom indicate having suffered a physical consequence as a result of their serious incident. Again, however, a small base size (n=30) limits the robustness of this data.

#### 4. Impact of violence, sexual harassment and stalking on women from disadvantaged groups

##### Psychological consequences of physical and/or sexual violence

Four in five survivors of partner or non-partner physical and/or sexual violence felt the impact of at least one of the longer-term psychological reactions listed in Figure 4.2 as a result of the most serious incident of the violence that they had experienced. These most commonly include anxiety, feelings of vulnerability, depression and difficulty in sleeping. Again, certain differences are observed among different demographic groups. In particular, women who are disabled (91% versus 81% overall) and women who are poor (87% compared with 65% of women who are living comfortably) are substantially more likely to say they have suffered from a psychological consequence of the violence they experienced. This is possibly explained by their higher propensity to experience more severe forms of violence, as explored in Section 3.1.1. However, such a conclusion cannot be drawn across all of the groups that experience more severe forms of violence. For instance, women who are doing unpaid work in a family business are less likely to indicate having suffered a psychological impact as a result of their most serious incident despite being more likely to have experienced some of the more severe forms of violence (66%).

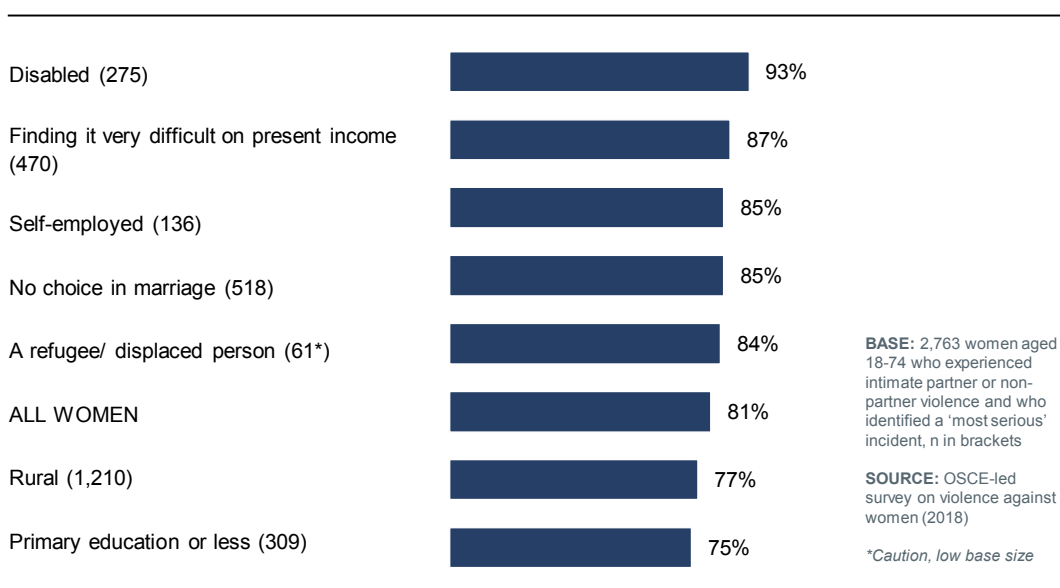
It can also be noted that the prevalence of psychological reactions increases as the victim's level of education increases. Indeed, 84% of women with tertiary education say that they suffered from a psychological consequence as a result of their most serious incident, compared with 75% of women with only primary education or less. This may be due to greater mental health literacy or the ability to recognize mental health disorders.

In the qualitative research, depression was discussed as a psychological consequence of violence against women; however, there were no clear differences between groups. Depression was also frequently discussed as a trigger of violence against women, particularly in Serbia, among Roma women, and among IDPs in Ukraine, who identified the men in their families and communities as being under financial strain due to the political situation, which has resulted in high levels of unemployment and financial insecurity.

One Roma woman from Serbia who had experienced extended physical abuse discussed suffering a range of severe psychological consequences as a result. After a long history of psychological, physical and sexual violence at the hands of her parents, family, friends and husband, she suffered from panic attacks, feelings of choking, hallucinations and anxiety.

**Figure 4.2: Experience of any psychological consequence following women's most serious incident of partner or non-partner violence, by demographic group**

Did your most serious incident of violence at the hands of an intimate partner or non-partner result in any of the following psychological consequences? (% who identified a psychological reaction)



### Emotional responses to physical and/or sexual violence

Almost all of the women who identified a most serious incident at the hands of an intimate partner or non-partner experienced at least one of the emotions set out in Figure 4.3 below. This widespread emotional impact of violence is generally consistent across different demographic groups. Regardless of the victim's relationship to the perpetrator, the most common responses following women's most serious incidents of violence are fear, anger or both—reactions typically felt by two in five women or more. When it comes to the prevalence of emotional responses, some differences can be observed in the following groups:

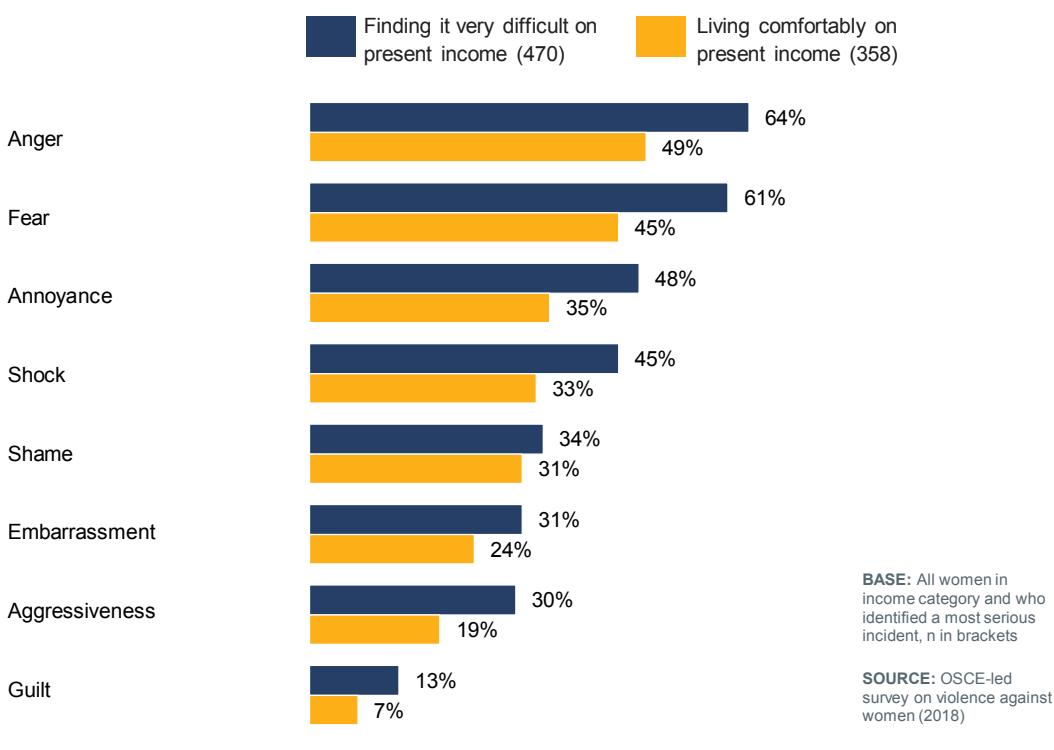
- Students (48%) and women who are living comfortably on their present income (45%) are less likely than women on average to feel fear as a result of their most serious incident (59%). This may be a reflection of their lower likelihood of experiencing particularly severe forms of violence, as explored in Chapter 3.
- Students (16%) are also less likely than women on average (28%) to feel ashamed as a result of their most serious incident of violence, which points to the shift away from victim-blaming attitudes discussed previously. Conversely, women with up to primary education (37%) are more likely to experience shame as a result of an incident of intimate partner or non-partner violence.
- Women with up to primary education (36%) and women who are unemployed (36%) are more likely than women on average (24%) to feel embarrassed as a result of their most serious incident.
- Women who are self-employed (26%) are substantially more likely than women on average (10%) to feel guilty as a result of their most serious incident.

Furthermore, a clear trend can be observed around household income and emotional responses to violence, with poor women more likely to say they have experienced each of the emotional responses following their most serious incident of violence than those who are living comfortably on their current income. This may be indicative of a pattern between financial security and emotional resilience.

#### 4. Impact of violence, sexual harassment and stalking on women from disadvantaged groups

**Figure 4.3: Experience of any emotional consequence following women’s most serious incident of partner or non-partner violence, by income level**

Did you feel any of the following as a result of your most serious experience of violence [at the hands of a partner or non-partner]?



The emotions felt by women in the survey were also mentioned in the qualitative research. Fear, shame and embarrassment were discussed in all the groups regardless of demographics. However, feelings of guilt were discussed in more detail in groups with minority Hungarians and Roma. A few women said that there were instances where they were responsible for the violence they experienced, because they challenged their husband or spoke inappropriately in front of their husband’s friends, or they didn’t leave him alone when he had been drinking. Other women in these minority groups talked about prevailing stereotypes to the effect that women trigger partner violence, suggesting that guilt might be a common emotional reaction to acts of violence.

#### Impacts of sexual harassment and stalking

##### Sexual harassment:

As with the most serious incidents of violence, the most serious incidents of sexual harassment and stalking resulted in most women having an emotional response: anger, embarrassment and fear with regard to sexual harassment, and annoyance, anger and fear in relation to stalking.

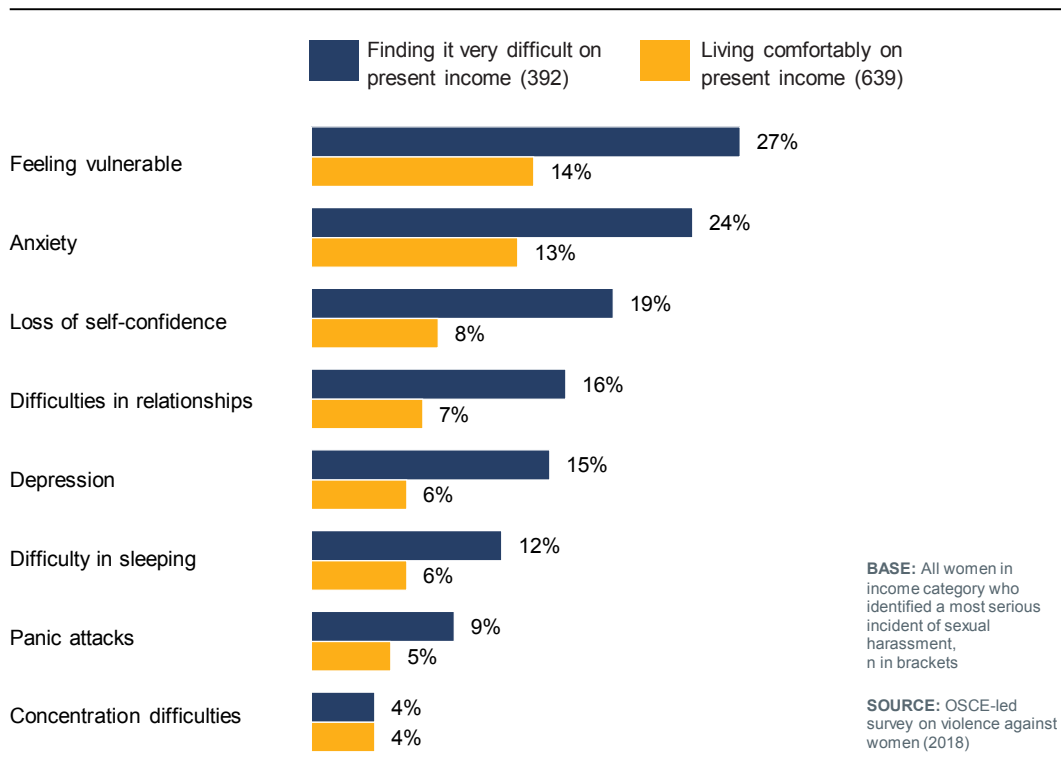
In terms of psychological responses to sexual harassment, women who are poor (66%) are more likely than average (49%) to say that they suffered from such a consequence as a result of their most serious incident of sexual harassment. This could be explained by their higher likelihood of experiencing the most severe forms of sexual harassment, both since the age of 15 and in the 12 months prior to the survey, as explored in Section 3.1. This could again be indicative of a correlation between financial security and emotional resilience.

## OSCE-led survey on violence against women: Experiences of disadvantaged women

Indeed, many previous studies support such a relationship. Low income has been associated with a higher risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder-related symptoms following trauma, with those living in poverty also more likely to suffer persistent psychological consequences, including general distress symptoms such as depressive moods and anxiety. Lower socio-economic status has also been found to decrease the likelihood of recovery following trauma. Many explanations have been suggested for this relationship, including the increased risk of exposure to compounded trauma throughout the lifetime of those who are economically disadvantaged, deprivation during childhood leading to chronic stress responses later in life, and a lack of access to the resources needed to support resilience and recovery, including paid medical leave and time off work, which are associated with higher-earning professions. Lack of access to such resources has also been found to increase the risk of developing long-term and more severe psychological symptoms following trauma.<sup>38</sup>

**Figure 4.4: Experience of psychological responses to sexual harassment, by income level**

Did you experience any of the following as a result of your most serious experience of sexual harassment?



<sup>38</sup> Bekh Bradley-Devano and Lesia Ruglass, "Trauma and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Economically Disadvantaged Populations", American Psychology Association.

#### **4. Impact of violence, sexual harassment and stalking on women from disadvantaged groups**

Students, however, are less likely than average to say that they suffered psychologically as a result of sexual harassment (33%, compared with 49% on average), despite being particularly prone to experiencing the most severe forms of harassment, both in the 12 months prior to the survey and in the more distant past. This could be indicative of the normalization of such violence in the university environment.

##### **Stalking:**

Turning to the psychological consequences of stalking, education is a key predictor of psychological impact, with women with up to primary education or less indicating psychological responses more often than those with tertiary education (62% versus 55%, respectively). It is worth noting that this does not seem to correspond to the severity of stalking, with women educated to primary level being less likely to indicate having experienced more serious forms of stalking, such as being deliberately followed around, or someone deliberately interfering with their property, than those educated to tertiary level (both 1% versus 4%, respectively). This could again be indicative of a link between education levels (and socio-economic status more generally) and emotional resilience.

Poor women (83%) are also more likely to indicate having suffered a psychological consequence than those who are living comfortably on their present income (52%).



**Less than 10% of survivors of current partner violence contacted the police following their most serious incident.**



## 5. Reporting and overcoming experiences of violence, sexual harassment and stalking by women from disadvantaged groups

### 5.1: Reporting experiences of violence

Reluctance to report violence is common among all women, and knowledge of what to do or where to turn in case of violence does not always guarantee effective reporting. While many women say they feel at least somewhat informed about what to do if they experience violence, and even though they have a relatively high degree of awareness of specialist support organizations, in reality few women overall report their most serious incidents of violence, especially to the police (18% on average across non-partner and intimate partner violence). Interestingly, the reporting rate is even lower among some groups who would not be considered disadvantaged, such as those who are 18–29 (15%) and those with tertiary education (16%). Conversely, reporting rates are higher among some disadvantaged groups, with around a third of those from ethnic and religious minorities and a similar portion of those who are refugees or displaced contacting the police following their most serious incidents (28% and 31%, respectively). It should be noted, however, that despite their comparatively higher propensity to report violence, the reporting rate remains low among all groups, both advantaged and disadvantaged.

Among women overall, even following the most serious incidents of physical and/or sexual violence identified by women in the quantitative research, the police were not informed in the great majority of cases (Figure 5.1). Victims of non-partner violence are most likely to report their most serious incident to the police, with 19% doing so. Victims of violence by previous partners (15%) are twice as likely as victims of current partners (7%) to go to the police about their most serious incident. Among victims of sexual harassment, only 2% contacted the police about their most serious incident. This figure is higher among victims of stalking, with 13% reporting their most serious incident to the police.

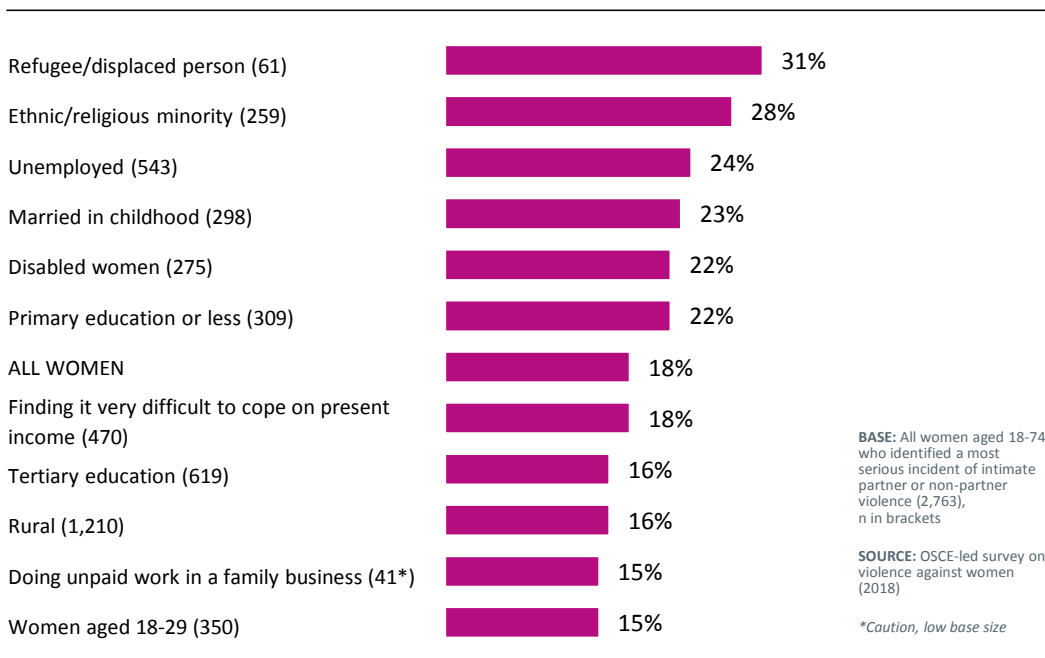
Women also tended not to contact other services. In relation to current partner violence, more than eight in ten did not contact the police or any other organization about their most serious incident (81%). The same is true for 65% of victims of previous partner violence and 53% of victims of non-partner violence.

Across all types of perpetrators combined, there is an inverse relationship between education and likelihood of reporting to the police. Women with tertiary education (16%) are less likely to report an incident to the police than those with only primary education or less (22%), despite being better informed of what to do if they experience violence. Such a relationship also exists when looking specifically at reporting of intimate partner violence (9% versus 16%, respectively).

The data also suggests that women from ethnic/religious minority groups have a higher propensity to report their most serious incident to the police. Indeed, while 18% of women on average report their most serious incident by any perpetrator type to the police, this figure rises to 28% among ethnic/religious minorities.

Refugees/displaced women are also more likely to report their most serious incident to the police (31% compared with 18% of women overall).

**Figure 5.1: Self-reporting to the police after women’s most serious incident of intimate or non-partner violence, by demographic group**



Other differences can be observed by demographic group:

- Young women aged 18–29 and elderly women aged 60 and over are less likely than those aged 30 to 59 to report their most serious incident of violence. Indeed, 15% and 16% of women from the youngest and oldest age groups, respectively, indicate having reported their most serious incident to the police, compared with 21% of women aged 40–49.

**Reporting to other support services**

When looking at reporting habits, either to the police *or another support organization*, nearly six in ten women (58%) who experienced non-partner violence or intimate partner violence do not contact any of these services. As with reporting to the police, young women are particularly likely not to report an incident to the police or another organization (69%), compared with 55% of women aged 60 or over. Although women with primary education or less are more likely than average to contact the police, these women are less likely to report an incident to any support service than women with secondary or tertiary education (66% did not contact any support service compared with 57% and 60% of women with secondary and tertiary education, respectively).

In terms of employment categories, students (70%), women who are self-employed (67%) and those fulfilling domestic duties (66%) are the most likely not to contact the police or any other support organization.

Just under half of women who are part of an ethnic or religious minority group (46%) say that they did not contact the police or another support service, suggesting that they are in fact more likely to reach out to these organizations when they experience violence. This is also the case of refugees/displaced women (51% did not contact any support service).

## 5. Reporting and overcoming experiences of violence, sexual harassment and stalking by women from disadvantaged groups

Income status does not seem to be an important discriminator when it comes to overall reporting to the police or another support service, with 60% of women living comfortably not reporting their most serious incident, compared with 57% of poor women.

In the qualitative research, perceptions of who would report incidents of violence to the police do not support the survey findings. Women generally thought that younger, better-educated and financially independent women would be more likely to report violence to the police. The reasons provided for this were that older women have more traditional attitudes and are more likely to perceive psychological and physical violence as “normal” and “acceptable”. Women taking part in the qualitative research expressed the belief that better-educated and financially independent have more options and do not feel as trapped in an abusive relationship and are therefore more likely to take action in response to violence.

Roma women, however, regardless of their age, said that they would be less likely to report to the police because of concerns of unequal treatment.

In the qualitative research, women who had personal experiences of violence and had reported it to the police were generally between 35 and 55, but they only reported violence after repeated instances and increased severity. It is important to note that several of these women had very negative experiences of reporting to the police, including inaction on the part of police or very weak action given the seriousness of the violence.

### ***Reporting sexual harassment and stalking***

#### **Sexual harassment:**

Half of women told someone about their most serious incident of sexual harassment (50%), with a quarter telling a friend (25%) and a similar proportion telling a family member or relative (24%); only a small number of women told other people about their most serious incident.

When it comes to sexual harassment, reporting habits across different demographic groups are similar to those around reporting non-partner or intimate partner violence. For instance, women who are refugees or displaced are more likely to tell someone about their most serious incident (67% told someone, compared with 50% of women overall). This is likely explained by the fact that they are much more likely than average to confide in their informal support networks, namely a friend (40% versus 25% on average) or their partner/boyfriend (16% versus 8% on average).

In line with patterns around overall reporting rates, there is also a link between level of education and the likelihood of sharing an experience, with only 34% of women educated to primary level telling someone compared with 52% of those with tertiary education. However, again, those with only primary education were more likely than those with tertiary education to report their most serious incidents of sexual harassment to the police (3% versus 1%, respectively).

### **Stalking:**

In relation to stalking, 13% of victims told the police about their experience. The groups of women who are generally less disposed to reporting their experiences of violence or sexual harassment to the police or another support service are those who are most likely to report their experience of stalking. Indeed, women with less education are substantially more likely to report their experiences (41% of those with up to primary education compared with 11% of women with tertiary education). This is also true of women who are poor (17% versus 11% of those living comfortably). Women who are unemployed and those who are fulfilling domestic duties and care responsibilities are also more likely than women on average to have reported an incident to the police (both 18%).

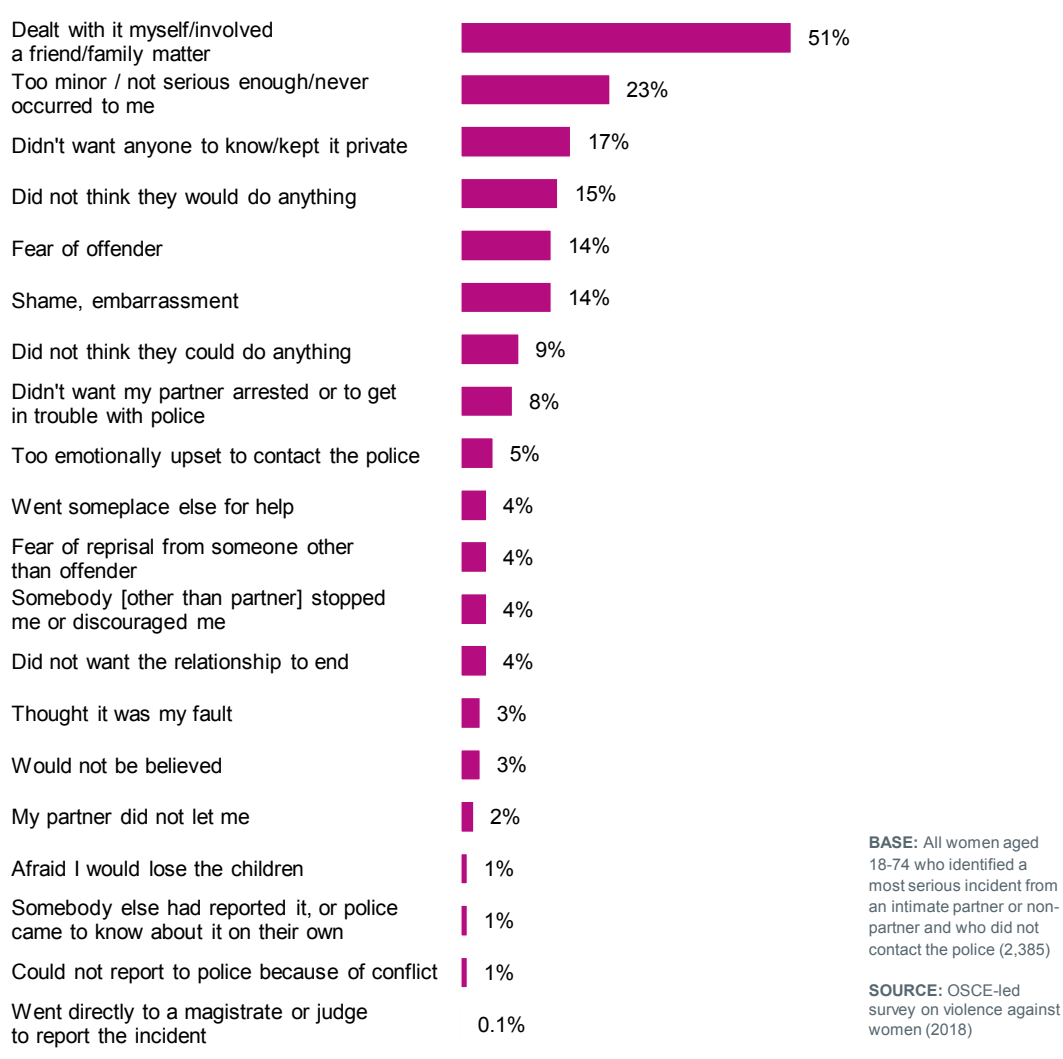
### **5.2: Barriers to reporting**

The barriers that disadvantaged women face to reporting incidents of violence are broadly similar to those facing women generally. The overall picture is set out in Figure 5.5, which illustrates the reasons why women do not talk to the police about their most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner violence. More than half of victims of violence (51%) say that they were able to deal with the incident themselves. Some disadvantaged women, however, were less likely to feel this way, with only 44% of women who are unemployed or from an ethnic or religious minority dealing with the problem themselves. There is also a clear relationship between income and feeling capable of dealing with an incident alone or with friends or family. Women who are living comfortably on their income (52%) are substantially more likely to say that they feel this way than women who are poor (41%). This is also true of education levels (49% of women with tertiary education versus 38% of those with up to primary education).

Almost a quarter of women (23%) said that they regarded the incident as too minor to report. Students are particularly likely to cite this as the reason for not contacting the police (36%). There is again a clear trend with household income, as women who are living comfortably (19%) are significantly less likely to cite this as the reason for contacting the police in contrast with women who are poor (26%). There is also a pattern around choice in marriage, with women who had no say in their marriage (27%) being more likely to indicate that the reason they did not contact the police was that the incident was too minor, compared with 23% of women who did have a say in their marriage.

## 5. Reporting and overcoming experiences of violence, sexual harassment and stalking by women from disadvantaged groups

**Figure 5.2: Reasons for not contacting the police after women's most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner violence**



Findings from the quantitative research that suggest that most women dealt with their most serious incident of violence themselves or felt that it was too minor an issue to report resonates with those of the qualitative research. Indeed, many women in the qualitative research said that the first response of any woman who was experiencing violence would be to endure it and, if necessary, to involve a close friend or relative rather than the police or a support service. This was particularly relevant among women from some minority groups. In North Macedonia, for example, women from an Albanian ethnic background explained in the qualitative research that they felt that there were differences in reporting behaviour based on ethnicity. They explained that Macedonian women would be more willing to seek help from an organization, would be better informed about the services available and would have more support from their birth family in doing so. In contrast, they said that an Albanian woman in North Macedonia would be more afraid to seek help, primarily as a result of her cultural upbringing and the belief that women are less valued in society.

**“[Macedonian women] are more advanced, they know the laws better, [and] more opportunities are given to them. [Their] family supports them in raising their voice, while [Albanian women] don't have [this support].”**

**Female, aged 18–34, Albanian, rural, North Macedonia**

There are a number of other barriers that were mentioned in the qualitative research as being particularly relevant to disadvantaged women. These are explored below.

**(i) Lack of confidentiality:** One barrier was the lack of confidentiality when reporting experiences of violence. Women who took part in the qualitative research said this was particularly problematic among women living in rural areas. They also said that NGOs, though less commonly accessed, were the best at ensuring women's confidentiality.

**“There is nowhere you can hide. You go to the social services, and the officials there will gossip about you, and the whole town will find out about you. They will tell a friend, that friend will tell another friend, that friend will tell your husband, and he will come and beat you up.”**

**Female, aged 35–50, rural, North Macedonia**

**“These NGOs don't share your story, and that makes women [trust] them more ... There are women working for these NGOs, and they are more caring; they care about confidentiality, while the police are less caring and [less] confidential.”**

**Female, aged 20–30, rural, Kosovo**

**(ii) Shame:** Many women expressed the belief that most people would assume that a woman had done something to deserve the violence she experienced. They said that most communities would be indifferent to violence and that women would be concerned about what their friends, family, colleagues and community would think.

These beliefs were expressed by women from certain minority communities in particular, such as Roma communities or minority Albanian communities in a number of countries.

**“People here would say, ‘Come on, how could she report her husband to the police?’ It's her husband. He's a man after all. Wasn't she ashamed? She has three children.”**

**Female, aged 19–40, Roma, Albania**

**“It's completely normal to share [incidents of violence] with one's family ... In the case of Roma families, there is a bit of shame when [what is discussed goes beyond] the family, when the neighbourhood hears [it] ... that's the problem.”**

**Female, aged 19–40, Roma, Albania**

**(iii) Fear of discrimination.** Some women expressed the fear that, if they did not have much money or were from certain minority groups, they would be treated differently by medical staff. Women also expressed the belief that, if they told a doctor the truth about how they received any injuries, the doctor would report it to the police whether the victim wanted them to or not. Montenegrin women expressed the belief that women from minority ethnic groups (like Roma or Albanians) might have difficulties reporting violence because of the prejudice that they face within society. They said that the police and other institutions would be less likely to help Roma women, as the people working for such institutions see violence as normal in the Roma community. Women whose first language was not Montenegrin also expected to find it more difficult to access information about how to report violence and to access support

## 5. Reporting and overcoming experiences of violence, sexual harassment and stalking by women from disadvantaged groups

Concerns were also expressed that the police and other institutions would not respond appropriately if women reported incidents of violence. This concern was particularly strong among Roma women. Their perception was that violence is believed to be normal within Roma communities and that the police are desensitized to violence within Roma families. They expressed the belief that there is a high risk that police would not respond to a call from a Roma woman, and this was indeed the experience for a number of the women interviewed. Women from other ethnic groups, including Macedonian, Montenegrin and Serbian women, also identified Roma as particularly vulnerable to institutional discrimination because of pervasive prejudice against Roma within society and the widely held perception that violence is normal within Roma communities. Concern about discrimination also arose among women of Albanian ethnicity in North Macedonia. For example, one Albanian participant from North Macedonia said that she had watched a police officer intervene and stop a man from hitting a woman. She said that when the man told the police officer it was none of his business, the police officer walked away. In North Macedonia and Serbia, women in the focus groups also shared stories about the police ignoring acts of physical violence against women.

**“I don’t think the police take measures ... I was going home, and I saw a couple near the police station. The man was dragging the woman to stop her going to the police station, while an officer was at the entrance and did not react.”**

**Female, aged 19–40, Albanian minority, North Macedonia**

**(iv) Lack of awareness of services.** Some women in the qualitative research said they were unaware of any specific services apart from the police and health services. Women in rural areas and women with low levels of education were seen as least likely to be aware of support organizations. Physically disabled women were also identified as very isolated and both unlikely to be aware of services and also unable to access them.

**“I think NGOs are very important, but people don’t know a lot about them, meaning they aren’t advertised very well. SOS lines and safe houses also mean a lot to a woman.”**

**Female, aged 18–37, rural, Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH)**

Language differences were also highlighted as forming barriers to accessing information. In Montenegro, for example, the women who took part in the qualitative research said that women whose first language was not Montenegrin would find it more difficult to access information about how to report violence and access support. Women in Serbia also noted that older women, particularly older women in rural communities, often do not speak Serbian and that this limits their access to information and services.

**(v) Lack of sufficient funding for services.** Some women said they were aware of support services but indicated that their impression was that such services have very limited funds and are therefore not able to provide effective support for victims of violence, either because they do not have capacity or they only provide short-term care for 48 hours. They suggested that this is another barrier to reporting because even if women are aware of services, their lack of confidence would prevent them from reaching out to these services. Women in rural parts of Serbia were identified as being particularly at risk of lacking access to services because limited funding means services are less available in such areas, and poor transport infrastructure makes it difficult to travel to those that are available. Serbian women said that the past ten to fifteen years had seen an increase in NGOs and support services for women who experience violence, but that these are mainly accessible to those in urban zones and therefore leave women in rural areas more vulnerable.

**(vi) Fear of escalating violence by reporting it.** Women expressed concern that if they reported intimate partner violence there would be serious repercussions from their partner. They expressed the belief that the police would not respond quickly to complaints and that they might not arrest their partner. Even if a man were arrested, they said, he would only be held by the police for a few days and would then be able to go home again and commit further violence.

Some women were concerned that there could be very serious consequences if their husband found out that they had reported them. This was a particular fear among women who had not made their own decision about their marriage. One such woman in Albania, who was forced by her mother to marry her husband at the age of 15, was subjected to years of physical, psychological and sexual abuse. She did not report the violence because she was fearful of her husband and what he would do to her.

Women said that, in rural areas, men had more social connections that helped them to evade any consequences of being reported. As men had more leisure and social time than women, they had a greater number of social contacts and were more likely to know someone working at an institution that would deal with a report.

Some of the women who experienced violence stated that, even when they decided to report the violence to the authorities, their partner was able to evade prosecution thanks to personal relationships with employees at the institutions involved. Women also expressed the fear that the perpetrator would take revenge upon finding out that they had reported the violence.

**“I would never turn to the police. You need [connections] for that too. A woman’s husband was in a very important position. He beat her up. She reported him. He pulled strings and nothing happened.”**

**Female, aged 35–55, urban, minority group (Bosniak), Serbia**

Roma women in North Macedonia expressed the belief that, within their communities, women with children were less likely to report violence because of a fear that their husbands would also act violently towards their children.

**(vii) Economic dependence.** Women in both disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged groups in the qualitative research expressed the belief that economic dependence was an important barrier to reporting, but this was especially true among women who were finding it difficult to manage on their income and who had nowhere to go should they separate from their partner. Some women said that women’s financial dependence on their partners was one of the most significant barriers to reporting, and it was seen as a huge barrier for Roma women, who are perceived (this perception also exists among Roma women themselves) as less likely to be able to find employment. The impact of a woman’s financial dependence was compounded if she could also not rely on her birth family for support in leaving her partner. A lack of financial independence or support would mean that a woman would not have a place to live if she left the perpetrator. According to the survey, more than half of women (55%) currently do not their own bank account. This is higher among certain disadvantaged groups, including those with only primary education or less (75%), those who are unemployed or poor (both 74%) and those who are part of a religious or ethnic minority (68%), further illustrating the economic dependence of disadvantaged women.

Participants expressed the belief that most women lacked the financial independence to be able to leave a violent partner, as they had no inheritance rights or property rights. If a woman did not have a job, her only option for financial support would be her birth family. Women expressed the belief that not all birth families would allow their daughter to live with them again. They said that some families would no longer consider their daughter to be their responsibility, and that others would encourage their daughter to endure the situation. They also said that some families might help but that they might set conditions, e.g., that she have no contact with her husband or children again.



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**“Even if a woman doesn’t want to suffer anymore, where can she go? She has no job; she has to move in with her parents. Her parents will tell her: ‘Why didn’t you endure it and stay there? We don’t have anything to give you here, no property—we gave it to our sons.’ Females don’t own any property ... They have to endure everything. If women had finances and a home, they would not have to put up with it.”**

**Female, aged 30–50, Albanian, rural, Kosovo**

**“I think that is the problem here. If a woman is working, if she has her own apartment, if she is in a situation where she can pay for kindergarten on her own or has someone to look after her child, I believe nobody would put up with [domestic violence].”**

**Female, aged 18–37, rural, Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH)**

The women taking part in the qualitative research expressed the belief that only a woman who was sufficiently financially independent would be able to leave her husband, and they said that this would be unlikely given that women earn less than men and were less likely to own property or receive an inheritance. Even in cases where married couples had purchased property together, the woman had no legal claim to the property. This meant that a woman would need to rely on her family to support her if she left her husband, and this support could not always be counted on.

**“[My husband] said, ‘She is not allowed to come to my house anymore.’ [He said] I was stealing from him. How can I steal from my own house? I am disabled and I work, plus I was beaten.”**

**Survivor of violence, Macedonian, disabled, North Macedonia**

Participants also said that, in cases of intimate partner violence, the police usually give the perpetrator a fine. This fine is taken from the family budget, so women said that the only outcome of reporting is that they will be worse off financially.

**“Many [women] do not report [violence], as the fine takes money out of the family finances.”**

**Female, aged 30–40, rural, North Macedonia**

**(viii) Lack of recognition of what is considered violence.** Some women said that minor physical violence and sexual violence within a relationship were considered, in some communities, to be normal behaviour, adding that psychological violence was not considered to be violence at all. Women expressed the belief that only serious physical violence that resulted in visible injuries might be taken seriously but even that, they said, would depend on the attitudes of the individual they reported it to.

Related to this, women said there were also strong cultural expectations among certain disadvantaged groups to the effect that women must be emotionally strong and patient and that they should be able to endure violence at the hands of their partners. Women expressed the belief that traditional values emphasize the importance of the family and the importance of women’s role in maintaining the family even in difficult situations. These attitudes were most strongly present in the qualitative research with Roma women and women in rural areas.

**“I have a friend in such a situation, and she tells me that her husband is violent. They have four children together, so you can’t just tell her to leave him. You have to think about the children as well. [Perhaps you could tell her] to talk to him, to their relatives. A [solution] should be found. You can’t just leave.”**

**Female, aged 40+, urban, Gagauz, North Macedonia**

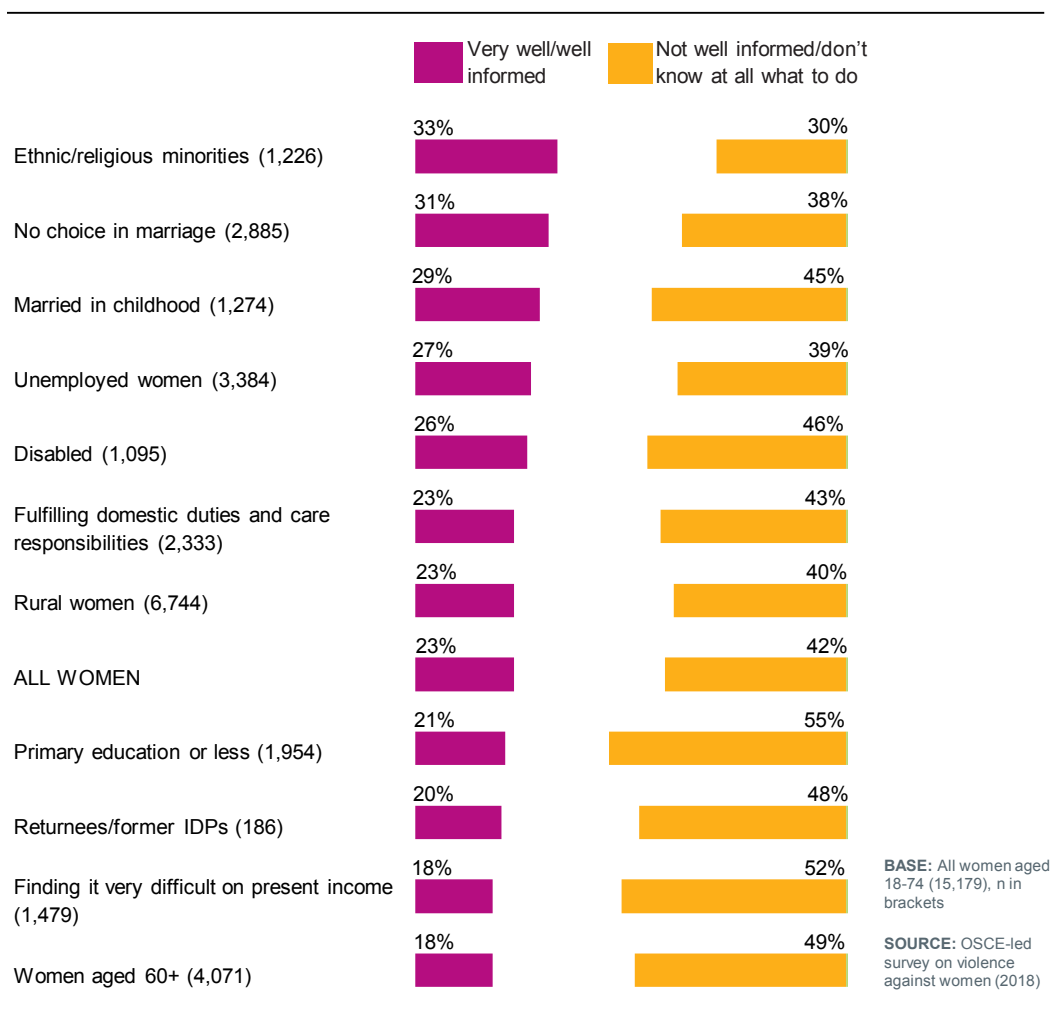
**5.3: Awareness of support services and what to do in case of violence**

Women in the survey were asked how well informed they felt about what to do if they experienced violence. Overall, 23% said they felt either very well or well informed, 33% said they were somewhat well informed, and 42% said that they did not feel well informed or did not know what to do at all. Awareness of support services and knowledge of what to do in case of violence differs between groups, as illustrated in Figure 5.2. The survey shows, for instance, that knowledge gets progressively worse as age increases and as income decreases. Indeed, 49% of women over 60 are not well informed or do not know what to do at all compared with 37% of women aged 18–29. More than half (52%) of women who are poor are not well informed or do not know what to do at all compared with 26% of women who are living comfortably.

Education level also seems to be a contributing factor, with 55% of women with primary education or less saying that they do not feel well informed, compared with 39% of those with tertiary education and 42% of women overall.

**Figure 5.3: Awareness of what to do in case of violence, by demographic group**

How well informed do you feel about what to do if you experienced violence?



## 5. Reporting and overcoming experiences of violence, sexual harassment and stalking by women from disadvantaged groups

Women who are part of a minority group or who are refugees or displaced seem, to a large extent, to be better informed about what to do should they experience violence, perhaps because they are in closer contact with government authorities to begin with. For example, 33% of women from an ethnic or religious minority say they feel very well or well informed. This trend is not entirely clear-cut, however, with women who are returnees (48%) indicating that they are less well informed than women on average (42% not well informed). Similarly, 46% of disabled women say they do not feel well informed.

The women surveyed were also asked whether they had ever heard of three local organizations or services that provide support to women who are victims of violence. The list of organizations that participants were asked about is provided in Annex 1. Across the area covered by the OSCE-led survey, 63% of respondents say they have heard of at least one of the three organizations they were asked about (as seen in Figure 5.3 below).<sup>39</sup> More specifically, 41% indicate being aware of just one of the three organizations, while 15% indicate being aware of two of them, and just 6% say they have heard of all three.

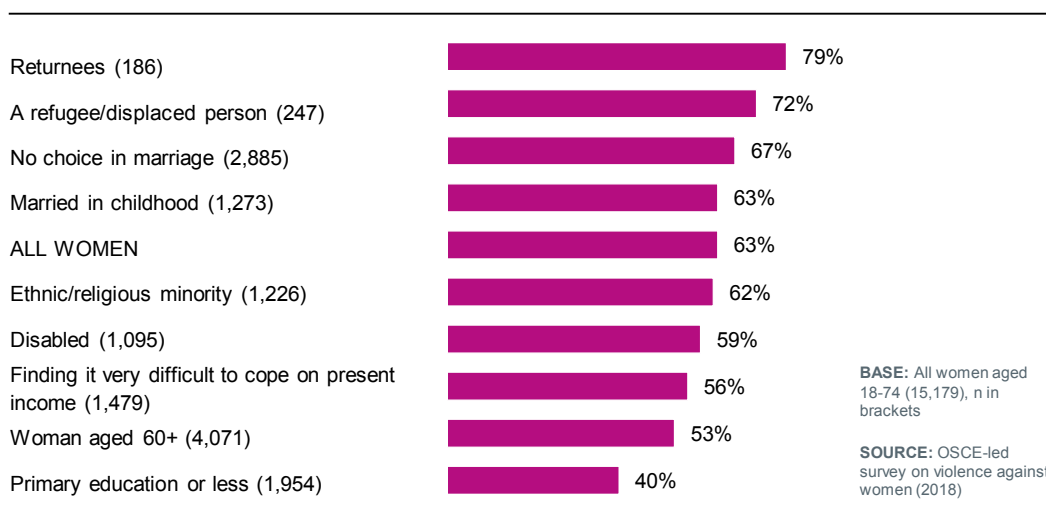
Here, education is a significant discriminator, with 72% of women with tertiary education saying that they have heard of at least one of the three organizations asked about. The same holds true for only 40% of women with only primary education or less, suggesting that, although women with less education may say they feel well informed about what to do, this does not translate into actual awareness of organizations that they could contact in case they experienced violence.

Seventy-nine per cent of women who are returnees have heard of at least one of the organizations, and the corresponding figure is 72% for refugees/displaced women. Sixty-two per cent of women from an ethnic or religious minority say the same, which is comparable with the overall average.

Age again plays an important role, with about half of women aged 60 or over saying they have heard of at least one organization (53%), compared with two-thirds of those aged 30–49 (67%). Younger women (aged 18–29) are slightly less aware of support organizations, with 62% of them knowing of at least one.

**Figure 5.4: Awareness of at least one of three support organizations asked about in the survey, by demographic group**

Have you ever heard of the following organizations or services?  
% who have heard of at least one support organization



<sup>39</sup> Awareness of the police in Ukraine is not included in this analysis.

5.4: Satisfaction with services

Satisfaction with the police

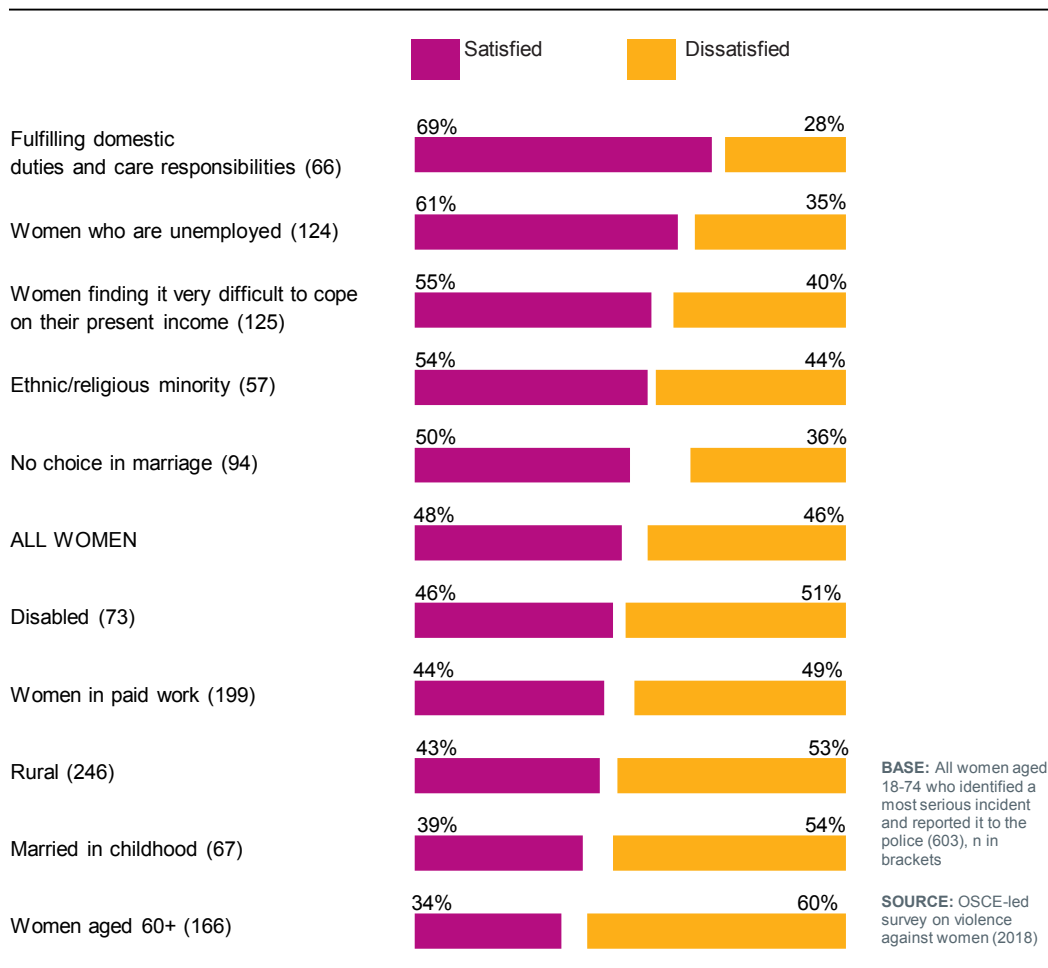
**Age:** Age is an important factor in terms of satisfaction with the police, with older women significantly less likely to say they were satisfied with the support they received following their most serious incident of partner or non-partner violence than younger women. Indeed, just 34% of women aged 60 or over say the service was satisfactory, compared with 78% of those aged 18–29.<sup>40</sup>

**Income status:** There is also a link between income and satisfaction, with just over half of those finding it very difficult on their present income (55%) saying that they received satisfactory support, compared with 83% of those living comfortably on their income. It is clear that the women who are most comfortable financially are substantially more satisfied with their interactions with the police than those who are not. This could suggest that those who are most well-off tend to have better access to high-quality services, or that increased wealth leads to preferential treatment.

**Geographic location:** Women in rural areas (43%) are less likely than those in urban areas (50%) to indicate being satisfied with the police.

**Ethnic/religious minorities:** While base sizes for some groups are too small to allow for detailed analysis, 54% of women from an ethnic or religious minority say they were satisfied with the service they received, slightly above the average of 48%.

Figure 5.5: Satisfaction with the police, by demographic group



40 Note the low base size (n=62).

## 5. Reporting and overcoming experiences of violence, sexual harassment and stalking by women from disadvantaged groups

A small number of women in the qualitative research shared personal experiences of contacting the police after experiencing violence, but some clear messages emerged from those who had such experiences or from others who knew about the experiences of family and friends. Women generally had low expectations of the police, which partly explained their unwillingness to contact the police. Although some women said the police exceeded their expectations, the general response of women who had personal experience was critical. Women tended to be dissatisfied with how the police handled their cases, saying that their complaint was ignored or not followed up thoroughly and that the police were generally inefficient, ineffective and unwilling to take action. Minority ethnic or religious participants in the qualitative research generally had negative experiences of reporting violence to the police and other services and sometimes felt discriminated against. One woman from a minority ethnic group, after a particularly serious physical assault, was referred by her doctor to the police, who pressured her to drop the charges. She said that the behaviour of the police officers towards her was discriminatory due to her ethnicity:

**“At the police station, I experienced discrimination based on my ethnic affiliation. Also, even though I had requested that the police not arrest my husband but only to warn him not to repeat this kind of behaviour again, some police officers advised me in an aggressive way to drop the charges.”**

**Female, aged 19–40, survivor of violence, ethnic minority (Roma), Albania**

Roma women seemed to have particularly low expectations of services, saying that many representatives of formal institutions believe that violence is a common thing among the Roma community, so they do not react to it.

**“A beaten-up Roma woman is not treated in the same way as a beaten-up white woman. When she goes to the police, they say, “That’s how you do things. Go home. Things will get sorted out by themselves.”**

**Female, aged 18–29, urban/rural, minority group (Roma), Serbia**

### Satisfaction with health services

From the quantitative results, base sizes do not allow for a robust analysis of satisfaction with hospitals or doctors and healthcare services, and few clear patterns emerge.

Overall, 70% of women say that they are happy with the service they received from hospitals following their most serious incident, and 26% say that they are dissatisfied. Older women who contacted a hospital following their most serious incident of violence are less likely to be satisfied with the service that they received; however, only 61% of those aged 50–59 and 65% of women over 60 were satisfied, compared with 84% of those aged 30–39.

Satisfaction with the service received from hospitals decreases the more women are educated. While results should be treated cautiously given the small base size for women who have primary education or less (n=31), 94% of women with only primary education or less indicate being satisfied with the service they received, dropping to 73% of women with secondary education and 62% of women with tertiary education.

**“I did not want a gynaecologist to see me. He was a man, and I told him, ‘If you touch me, I will cut both your hands off!’ That’s what I said to the doctor. I was very shy, but I said it ... And nobody knew about this; nobody in the whole world knew about the fact that I was raped. And I didn’t let him touch me.”**

**Survivor of violence, long-term health condition, Moldova**

#### **Other support services**

A number of women taking part in the qualitative research said they had contacted a centre for social work or a social welfare centre in Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia or Serbia. These women were all critical of the support that they received because they found the bar for accessing support too high or the support that was offered was too short-term to really be beneficial and protect them from having to return to a violent environment. These women were all over 45 years of age, from ethnic minorities and struggling financially, and two were also disabled. They contacted these services after prolonged experiences of psychological and physical violence. One Bosniak participant, for example, explained that she was told she needed to have filed for divorce before any support could be offered; however, she did not have the financial means or the support system in place to do this, so she felt trapped in a violent situation. A Roma participant’s husband had a friend at the centre for social work in Serbia, and she said that the centre supported her husband by suggesting that she could not care for her daughter. Another woman was an IDP in Serbia and was given what she perceived to be very bad advice from the centre, which was to leave her children with her husband, even though she was concerned her husband would be violent towards them. She followed their advice, and her husband left their children alone in the house for several days.

#### **5.4: Support that survivors of violence want**

Disadvantaged women tend to have specific needs following experiences of violence, such as for financial and emotional support. Among women overall, the most-mentioned source of information, advice or support wanted following the most serious incident of partner or non-partner physical and/or sexual violence was just someone to talk to, who could provide moral support, which was mentioned by around a third of all women who had experienced violence (Table 5.1). Protection from further violence and harassment was particularly important for victims of previous partner violence and non-partner violence (20% and 23%, respectively) and more so when the most serious incident included a form of sexual violence (increasing to 37% and 27%, respectively).

## 5. Reporting and overcoming experiences of violence, sexual harassment and stalking by women from disadvantaged groups

**Table 5.1: Types of information, advice and support wanted following an incident**

	Current partner %	Previous partner %	Non-partner %
Someone to talk to/moral support	31	39	35
Protection from further victimization/harassment	10	20	23
Practical help	10	17	18
Medical help	7	14	17
Financial support	6	16	11
Information about security/crime prevention	5	10	8
Information from the police	3	9	9
Help in reporting the incident/dealing with the police	3	6	11
Help with insurance/compensation claim	2	2	4
None of the above/did not want any support	49	30	26

**BASE:** All women aged 18–74 who have experienced physical/sexual violence since age of 15 and identified a most serious incident: current partner (1,068), previous partner (1,079) or non-partner violence (1,298).

**SOURCE:** OSCE-led survey on violence against women (2018)

There are a number of ways in which disadvantaged groups of women are more likely to need specific support.

**Income status:** Women who are poor (21%) are more likely to be in need of financial help than women overall (14%), but they are also more likely to need other types of support, including information about security and crime prevention (12% versus 8% overall), practical help (15% versus 10% overall), medical help (18% versus 14% overall) and someone to talk to for moral support (45% versus 40% overall).

In the qualitative research, women discussed the challenge that financial constraints pose to victims of domestic abuse. They said that victims of domestic violence are often financially dependent on their partner (sometimes because they are prevented from working), and as such would be unable to live independently. They were often hindered by property laws stipulating that property could be in the husband's name only, and they said they were angry about this because it seems unfair to be the victim of abuse and to have to leave their home. They said that financial support from the government was lacking to help them get out of abusive relationships. They said that women who do not have financial support or assistance with accommodations, such as from their family, would be primarily concerned about how to find a safe place to live and manage financially.

**Ethnic/religious minorities:** Women from minority groups may need specific types of support following experiences of violence, and the data provides some insight into the sources of support that are particularly sought after by women from an ethnic/religious minority. Women from this group are more likely than average to indicate wanting information about security and crime prevention (22% compared with 10% on average). They are also more likely to seek protection from further victimization (31% compared with 23% on average). Women from an ethnic/religious minority are more likely than women on average to want information from the police (15% versus 10%, respectively) or medical help (21% versus 16%, respectively).

In the qualitative research, many women from minority ethnic and religious groups said they felt disadvantaged and that the police and other services would not treat them in the same way as majority communities. Indeed, a number of women from disadvantaged groups, including Roma, IDPs and women with disabilities, had direct experience of police inaction and discrimination.

**“The police only write down the complaint, but they don’t recommend anything to those women, no safe house or anything.”**

**Female, aged 18–36, Roma, urban, Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH)**

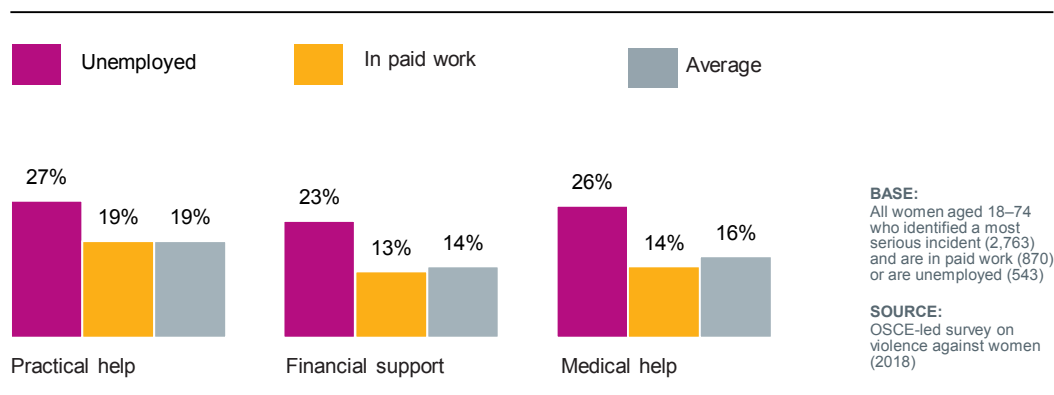
**“Some people just need to talk with a psychologist ... some of them have suicidal thoughts. Do you know how many suicides we have?”**

**Survivor of violence, IDP, Ukraine**

After an experience of violence, women who have a disability are more likely than average to want financial support (24% versus 14% on average); medical support (23% versus 16%); and help in reporting the incident/dealing with the police (14% versus 9%).

**Employment:** While trends by employment type are not entirely clear-cut, unemployed women are consistently more likely to say that they would want specific types of support following an incident of violence, perhaps due to their lack of a professional support network. Unemployed women in particular are more likely than average to say that they wanted practical help following their experience of violence (27% compared with 19% of women in paid work and 19% of women overall). Women who are unemployed are also more likely to say they wanted medical help (26% compared with 14% of women in paid work and 16% of women overall) and financial support (23% compared with 13% of women in paid work and 14% of women overall) following their most serious experience of violence.

**Figure 5.6: Types of support wanted after women’s most serious incident of partner or non-partner physical and/or sexual violence, by employment type**





## 5. Reporting and overcoming experiences of violence, sexual harassment and stalking by women from disadvantaged groups

### 5.6: Overcoming intimate partner violence

Victims of intimate partner violence were asked what had helped them overcome the violence. There are some distinctions between what helped women who have experienced current partner violence from those who have experienced previous partner violence. In cases of current partner violence, the most mentioned considerations were that that women's partners had changed their behaviour (20%) or that the women had received support from family and friends (18%). In contrast, unsurprisingly, just 3% of women whose previous partner was the perpetrator said that the individual had changed their behaviour. Here, the most-mentioned way of overcoming the experience was to leave the relationship (26%).

Around a quarter of victims of current or previous partner violence (27% and 22%, respectively) said that they were able to overcome the violence because it had no consequences; however, this was rather less likely to be the case among poor women (21% across both perpetrator types combined). Overall, only a small number of women said that they had not recovered from the experience (4% across both perpetrators combined); however, this is more pronounced among women with only primary education or less (13%), which is perhaps reflective of the increased challenges that they face in seeking support and in getting out of an abusive relationship.

It was often a woman's particular circumstances and whether the violence was committed by a current or previous partner that determined how they sought to overcome their experiences:

Victims aged 60 or over were more likely than women aged 18–29 to feel that they had suffered no consequences from current partner violence (32% versus 20%, respectively). In the case of previous partner violence, however, 33% of women aged 18–29 said they suffered no consequences from the violence, compared with 18% of women 60 or older. Younger victims of current partner violence are more likely to say that the perpetrator had changed his behaviour (33% compared with 15% of those who were 60 or older).

Women who had completed only primary education or less were less likely to cite their own emotional strength in overcoming violence. For current partner violence, 7% mentioned this compared with 14% of women with tertiary education. In the case of previous partner violence, the figures were 3% and 16%, respectively. Women with only primary education or less were, however, more likely than women with tertiary education to say that they overcame violence at the hands of a current partner thanks to support from their family and friends (20% versus 16%, respectively).

Women who made their own decision to get married were more likely than those who had no choice to be able to draw on the support of family and friends to help them after a violent incident (20% versus 9%, respectively, in the case of current partner violence, and 22% versus 18%, respectively, in the case of previous partner violence). Women who made their own decision to get married were also more likely to cite their personal strength and decisiveness to help them get over incidents of violence (15% versus 10%, respectively, for current partner violence and 16% versus 7%, respectively, for previous partner violence).



# ANNEXES

## Annex 1: List of support organizations mentioned in the survey

**Table A1.1: List of support organizations mentioned in the OSCE participating States covered in the survey**

		“Have you ever heard of the following organizations or services?” Yes, %
Albania	Counselling Line for Girls and Women – Tirana	65
	Centre for Legal Civic Initiatives	41
	Gender Alliance Centre for Development	44
Bosnia and Herzegovina	SOS line for victims of domestic violence 1265 (asked about in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina only)	56
	Medica Zenica (asked in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Brčko District only)	32
	Foundation for Local Democracy (Sarajevo) (asked about in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Brčko District only)	16
	Lara Bijelina (asked about in Republika Srpska only)	26
	SOS line for victims of domestic violence 1264 (asked about in Republika Srpska only)	49
	United Women, Banja Luka (asked about in Republika Srpska only)	35
Montenegro	NGO SOS Line Nikšić	52
	NGO SOS Telephone Podgorica	62
	NGO Women’s Safe House Podgorica	85
North Macedonia	Health Education and Research Association	24
	Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women	13
	National Council for Gender Equality	26
Serbia	Regional SOS helpline for women victims of violence in Vojvodina	23
	Counselling centre for combating violence against women – SOS hotline and safe house, Belgrade	70
	Autonomous women’s centre, Belgrade	35
Moldova	Trustline for women administered by the La Strada International Centre	56
	Refugiul Casa Marioarei (shelter)	28
	Assistance and Protection Centre for Victims	52
Ukraine	Centre of Social Services for Families, Children and Youth	59
	La Strada Ukraine	15
	The Police	94

**Table A1.2: List of support organizations respondents were asked about in Kosovo**

		“Have you ever heard of the following organizations or services?”	Yes %
Kosovo	Criminal Victim Assistance Line (public prosecutor)		27
	Gjakovë/Đakovica safe house		37
	The Kosova Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims		37

**Annex 2: Ethical and safety considerations**

Given the sensitivity of the survey, a number of steps were taken to protect both respondents and interviewers from potential harm and to provide sources of support in the event of distress:

- All interviewers and moderators were women who had experience conducting surveys on sensitive issues and who were native speakers of the language used for the interviews. All interviewers and moderators attended a two-day briefing.
- For the protection of both respondents and interviewers, interviewers were instructed not to disclose in advance that the survey was about violence, and to conduct the survey in private.
- At the end of the survey, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, all respondents were offered information on support organizations that they could contact should they wish to discuss any issues arising as a result of taking part in the survey.
- The project co-ordinator was available for interviewers and moderators to speak with at any time during fieldwork, and individual meetings with counsellors could be arranged if needed.
- Adherence to ethical principles is a cornerstone of the research methodology used for the OSCE-led survey, and the procedures used by the World Health Organization<sup>41</sup> and the *United Nations Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women*<sup>42</sup> were taken into account.

41 Ethical and safety recommendations for intervention research on violence against women. Building on lessons from the WHO publication *Putting women first: ethical and safety recommendations for research on domestic violence against women* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2016), accessed 19 August 2019, <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/251759/9789241510189-eng.pdf;jsessionid=8E35B9DA678667DD989016A395720263?sequence=1>.

42 *Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women: Statistical Surveys* (New York: United Nations, 2014), accessed 19 August 2019, [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/docs/guidelines\\_statistics\\_vaw.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/docs/guidelines_statistics_vaw.pdf).

### Annex 3: Surveys on violence against women

Table A3.1 provides a summary of other surveys that were conducted prior to the OSCE-led survey and that measure violence against women. The results of these surveys are not directly comparable with the results of the OSCE-led survey due to differences in the survey methodologies and survey instruments used.

**Table A3.1: Sample details of previous surveys that measured violence against women in the OSCE participating States covered by this survey**

	Survey	Data collection year	Sample size	Target population
Albania	VAW	2007	2,600	Women 15–49
	VAW	2013	3,600	Women 18–55
	Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) <sup>42F43</sup>	2008–2009	Households: 7,999 Women: 7,584 Men: 3,013	Women 15–49 Men 15–59
	Demographic and Health Survey	2017	Households: 15,823 Women: 10,861 Men: 6,142	Women 15–49 Men 15–59
Bosnia and Herzegovina	VAW	2012	Bosnia and Herzegovina: 3,300 Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina: 2113 Republika Srpska: 1,187	Women 18–75
Montenegro	VAW	2011	1,103	Women and men 18+
North Macedonia	VAW	2012	2,100	Women and men 15+
Serbia	International Violence against Women Survey (IVAW)	2003	1,456	Women 18–49
	VAW – covering the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina	2009	516	Women 18+
	VAW – covering central Serbia	2010	2,500	Women 18–75
Moldova	IVAW (DHS)	2005	Households: 11,095 Women: 7,440 Men: 2,508	Women 15–49 Men 15–59
	VAW	2010	1,575	Women 15–65
Ukraine	IVAW (DHS)	2007	Women: 6,841 Men: 3,178	Women 15–49 Men 15–49
	VAW	2014	1,606	Women 15–49

43 No VAW module was included in this DHS.

**Table A3.2: Sample details of previous surveys that have measured violence against women in Kosovo**

	Survey	Data collection year	Sample size	Target population
Kosovo	VAW	2007	2,600	Women 15–49
	VAW	2013	3,600	Women 18–55

#### Annex 4: Survey and qualitative fieldwork

The OSCE commissioned Ipsos to undertake a qualitative and quantitative study of violence against women in seven OSCE participating States. The research was also conducted in Kosovo. This is the first comparative study of its kind in this area, and it is intended to be used to improve policy-making in future by both local and international stakeholders working on policy and programme implementation in the area covered by the survey.

The key research questions for the project are as follows:

- What is the extent of violence experienced by women in non-conflict and in conflict situations?
- Which different forms of violence do women experience in non-conflict and in conflict situations?
- Who are the perpetrators of violence against women in non-conflict and in conflict situations?
- What are the consequences of violence?
- Do women report their experiences to the police or other authorities or organizations?
- Are there differences between women’s experiences of violence depending on their age, education, professional status, whether or not they have experienced conflict or if they can be defined as an internally displaced person or a migrant?
- What are the social attitudes towards VAW in general and VAW in conflict situations?

#### Quantitative survey

A quantitative survey was conducted among a representative sample of women aged 18 to 74 living in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Moldova and Ukraine. The survey was also conducted in Kosovo. Fieldwork was conducted between April and September 2018.

#### Sampling

The following section describes the sampling approach used for the survey.

#### Sample frames

In the preparatory phase for the main survey, suitable sample frames that made it possible to create representative random probability samples were obtained in each OSCE participating State. This was also done in Kosovo.

**Table 4.1: Sample frames/primary sampling unit (PSU) lists in covered OSCE participating States**

	Name of the PSU list	Provider of the list	Update	PSUs	Average PSU size
Albania	List of polling station territories	Electoral Commission	2017	Electoral polling station territories	644 voters
Bosnia and Herzegovina	List of census enumeration areas (CEAs)	Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina	2013	Units created by combining several neighbouring CEAs	73 households
Montenegro	List of CEAs	Statistical Office of Montenegro	2011	Units created by combining several neighbouring CEAs	73 households
North Macedonia	List of polling station territories	Electoral Commission	2016	Electoral polling station territories	593 voters
Serbia	List of CEAs	Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia	2011	Units created by combining several neighbouring CEAs	88 households
Moldova	List of polling station territories	Central Electoral Commission	2016	Electoral polling station territories	1,415 voters
Ukraine	List of electoral polling station territories	Central Election Commission of Ukraine	2014	Electoral polling station territories	1,068 voters

**Table 4.2 Sample frames/PSU lists in Kosovo**

	Name of the PSU list	Provider of the list	Update	PSUs	Average PSU size
Kosovo	List of polling station territories	Electoral Commission	2014	Electoral polling station territories	751 voters

In Montenegro and Serbia, address registers were available for part of the sample. This included areas where there were sufficient address details (street names and address numbers) to uniquely identify the addresses.

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### Survey population and sample size

The target population for this survey is women aged 18 to 74 residing in one of the OSCE participating States covered. The same target population of women aged 18 to 74 was covered in Kosovo.

In the majority of OSCE participating States covered, the target sample size was 1,750. The same target sample size was used in Kosovo. Due to the smaller overall population in Montenegro, the sample size there was 1,150 interviews. In Ukraine, 2,000 interviews were targeted, including a booster of 250 interviews to increase the number of conflict-affected women in the sample (via the addition of 25 sampling points in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, covering only those considered safe enough for interviewers to work in). In Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2,070 women were targeted. This was to allow for 1,000 interviews to be conducted in each of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska, and 70 interviews in the Brčko District. The sample of 1,750 interviews in Kosovo included an oversample of areas predominantly inhabited by Kosovo Serbs, targeting 300 interviews in these areas.

### Coverage

The survey aimed to cover the whole population of women aged 18–74 in each OSCE participating State. The survey also aimed to cover the whole population of women aged 18–74 in Kosovo. In certain participating States, however, the actual coverage is slightly lower than 100% either due to non-coverage of the sample frame or as a result of accommodating fieldwork practicalities. The fieldwork coverage and a description of areas not covered are given in Table A4.3 and Table A4.4 below.

**Table A4.3: Fieldwork coverage in covered OSCE participating States**

Coverage		Areas not included in coverage
Albania	100%	The sample frame covered all territories in Albania. Due to fieldwork practicalities, six PSUs with fewer than 100 voters were excluded from the selection, as these were regarded as remote and secluded. These accounted for less than 0.1% of the population.
Bosnia and Herzegovina	97%	The sample frame covered all territories in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Due to fieldwork practicalities, all settlements with fewer than 40 households were excluded, as these were considered to be remote and secluded. Three per cent of the population live in these settlements.
Montenegro	96%	All settlements with fewer than 30 households were excluded, these represent 4% of the population. (Montenegro is highly mountainous with a lot of remote areas with a small number of inhabitants. Since these areas are hard to reach and are very sparsely populated, and thus impractical to cover, they are excluded from the coverage.) Additionally, homes built or inhabited since 2011 are not covered, since they were not available in the sample frame. The effect this had on coverage was not expected to be significant, but the actual proportion is not known.
North Macedonia	99%	The sample frame covered all territories in North Macedonia. Due to fieldwork practicalities, PSUs with fewer than 70 voters were excluded from the selection, as these were usually remote and secluded. They covered 1% of the population.



Coverage		Areas not included in coverage
Serbia	98%	<p>Areas in south Serbia with an Albanian majority (who did not participate in the latest census) are not covered. This population represents 1% of the total population.</p> <p>Additionally, homes built or inhabited since 2011 were not covered, since they were not available in the sample frame. The effect this had on coverage was not expected to be significant, but the actual proportion is not known.</p> <p>Finally, all settlements with fewer than 30 households were excluded, as they are considered to be remote and secluded. They represent 1% of the population.</p>
Moldova <sup>44</sup>	99%	<p>Due to fieldwork practicalities, localities with fewer than 300 registered voters were excluded from the coverage. These are usually very small villages with difficult access (roads are not well developed). These represent 1% of the population who voted.</p>
Ukraine	84%	<p>The survey could not cover non-government-controlled areas or areas near the contact line. In practice, this meant that the Autonomous Republic of Crimea could not be covered, nor could parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. In total, 16% of the Ukrainian population lives in these areas.</p> <p>Additionally, PSUs with fewer than 100 voters were excluded from the selection, as these were regarded as remote and secluded. These areas cover 0.1% of the population.</p>

**Table A4.4: Fieldwork coverage in Kosovo**

Coverage		Areas not included in coverage
Kosovo	100%	<p>Due to fieldwork practicalities, PSUs with fewer than 100 voters were excluded from the selection, as these were regarded as remote and secluded. Only five PSUs in Kosovo were excluded for this reason. These accounted for less than 0.1% of the population.</p>

In each OSCE participating State, a multistage, stratified, random probability sample was designed. A multistage, stratified, random probability sample was also designed for Kosovo. The random probability sampling approach assumes that each individual has a known and non-zero chance of being included in the sample.

<sup>44</sup> The Transnistrian region was not covered and is not included in the coverage calculation.

### Stratification

Stratification increases the precision of survey estimates if done correctly and if using variables that are linked to the key survey variables. In all the OSCE participating States covered, a combination of region and local population size was used as a stratification variable. In Kosovo, a combination of region and local population size was used as a stratification variable, and an additional layer of stratification was used that separates areas with a predominantly Kosovo Albanian population and areas with a predominantly Kosovo Serbian population.

Prior to the sample selection, PSUs were distributed across strata according to the proportions in the survey population across strata.

### Stages of sample selection

#### Stage 1: Selection of PSUs

Within each stratum, PSUs were selected randomly, with probability proportional to size.

#### Stage 2: Selection of addresses/dwellings

A set number of addresses was selected within each sampled PSU. Addresses were selected randomly, either from a register in areas where one was available in Montenegro and Serbia, prior to the start of the fieldwork, or when the interviews were carried out, following the random walk rules specified for this survey.

#### Stage 3: Selection of households at the address/dwelling

There is usually a one-to-one relationship between households and addresses. In a small number of cases, however, where more than one household was identified at a selected address, the electronic contact sheet randomly selected one household.

#### Stage 4: Selection of respondents in the household

In each sampled household, one woman was selected for the interview. The respondent was selected randomly from a list of all eligible women in the selected household, i.e., all women aged 18–74 within the household were listed by age in descending order on the electronic contact sheet. The contact sheet then randomly selected one of them using a random-number generator.

No substitutions of selected households or respondents were permitted once the selection was made. Interviewers were required to make a minimum of three visits (contacts) to each selected household to establish eligibility and secure an interview in order to maximize the response rate.

### Weighting

The weights for each OSCE participating State were calculated in two stages: a) sampling design weights and b) post-stratification weights. The same approach was used in Kosovo. The design weights reflected probabilities of selection at each sampling stage: selection of PSUs, selection of addresses, then households within addresses (if applied) and selection of respondents. The post-stratification weights were calculated to compensate for nonresponse. Region, local population size and age categories were used for post-stratification.

As explained earlier, the samples for Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ukraine oversampled certain parts of their territories. The sample that was used for Kosovo also oversampled certain parts of the territory. Republika Srpska and the Brčko District were over-represented in the sample for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Areas predominantly inhabited by Kosovo Serbs were oversampled in the sample used for Kosovo. Government-controlled areas were over-represented in the sample for Ukraine. These disproportions were corrected in the post-stratification weighting stage, so that the proportion of the population living in each of the oversampled areas in the final weighted samples represented their actual share in the overall target population of these OSCE participating States. The same approach was used in Kosovo.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, two additional weights were calculated in addition to the overall weight that allowed analysis at the level of the entire territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The two weights were calculated to allow reporting for the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and for Republika Srpska separately (entity-level weights).

Finally, an additional weight (population weight) was calculated to allow reporting for the entire sample of all OSCE participating States, or for a group of these. The same approach was used in Kosovo. This weight reflects the distribution of the survey population across the OSCE participating States. The weight also reflects the distribution of the survey population in Kosovo.

#### **Final sample size and response rates**

Due to a better than expected response rate in all survey locations, the final sample size was greater than what was initially targeted. The final sample size and response rates are provided in Table A4.5 below.

**Table A4.5: Final sample sizes and response rates in OSCE participating States covered in the survey**

	<b>Eligibility rate (households with at least one woman aged 18–74)</b>	<b>Response rate</b>	<b>Final sample size</b>
Albania	93%	61%	1,858
Bosnia and Herzegovina	83%	45%	2,321
Montenegro	82%	34%	1,227
North Macedonia	91%	49%	1,910
Serbia	73%	41%	2,023
Moldova	88%	40%	1,802
Ukraine	78%	35%	2,048

**Table A4.6: Final sample sizes and response rates in Kosovo**

	Eligibility rate (households with at least one woman aged 18–74)	Response rate	Final sample size
Kosovo	96%	59%	1,990

The response rate was in accordance with the RR3 definition of response rates by the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR).<sup>45</sup>

**Table A4.7: Demographic breakdown of achieved sample**

Age	Weighted, %	Unweighted, %
18–29	20	17
30–39	20	18
40–49	18	19
50–59	19	19
60+	23	27
<b>Work status</b>		
In paid work	42	30
Self-employed	4	4
Doing unpaid work in an unpaid business	1	1
Unemployed	11	22
Pupil, student, in training	5	4
Not working due to illness or disability	1	1
Fulfilling domestic duties and care responsibilities	13	15
Retired	21	22
Compulsory military/community service/other	1	0.4
<b>Education</b>		
No formal education	1	3
Primary education	3	10
Secondary education	60	65
Tertiary education	36	22

<sup>45</sup> *Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates for Surveys*, 7th edition (Oakbrook Terrace, IL: The American Association for Public Opinion Research, 2011), p. 46.

**Table A4.7: Demographic breakdown of achieved sample**

	Weighted, %	Unweighted, %
<b>Household income</b>		
Finding it very difficult on present income	11	10
Finding it difficult on present income	27	22
Coping on present income	47	47
Living comfortably on present income	14	21
<b>Location</b>		
Urban	62	56
Rural	38	44
Disabled	5	7
Not disabled	95	92
<b>Minority group</b>		
Ethnic/religious minority	5	8
Immigrant minority	0.1	0.3
Sexual minority	0.1	0.1
Refugee/displaced person	1	2
Returnee (former IDP/refugee)	0.4	1
<b>Conflict-affected</b>		
Yes	16	33
No	84	67

**Sampling tolerances**

As the data is based on a sample rather than the entire population, and the percentage results (or estimates) are subject to sampling tolerance, not all differences between results are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. When calculating the confidence intervals, the effective sample size must be taken into consideration.

The effective sample size (or the design effect, a related concept) is linked to individual estimates and so it will vary across estimates. To calculate the design effects for the total sample size in each OSCE participating State and overall, the formula based on the following ratio was used:

Design effect = (unweighted sample size) \* (Sum of the squared weights) / (Square of the sum of weights)<sup>46</sup>

46:Kish, L. (1992). Weighting for unequal Pi. Journal of Official Statistics, vol. 8, pp. 183-200

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This approach of design effect estimation is related to disproportional sampling (in the case of the OSCE survey, the women in each household were selected with unequal probability, depending on the number of eligible women in the household), as well as unequal nonresponse across population segments, which were corrected with post-stratification weights (as described above).

The tables below summarize the design effect for the total sample size and conflict-affected sample size and provide confidence intervals based on the effective sample size for a survey estimate of 50%.

**Table A4.8: Effective sample sizes for the OSCE participating States (total sample)**

	N	Design effect	Effective sample size	95% confidence interval for a survey estimate of 50% based on a weighted sample	
				Lower	Upper
Albania	1,858	1.257	1,478	47.5%	52.5%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2,321	1.367	1,698	47.6%	52.4%
Montenegro	1,227	1.377	891	46.7%	53.3%
North Macedonia	1,910	1.434	1,332	47.3%	52.7%
Serbia	2,023	1.398	1,447	47.4%	52.6%
Moldova	1,802	1.367	1,318	47.3%	52.7%
Ukraine	2,048	1.199	1,708	47.6%	52.4%
Total sample	15,179	4.090	3,711	48.4%	51.6%

**Table A4.9: Effective sample sizes for Kosovo (total sample)**

	N	Design effect	Effective sample size	95% confidence interval for a survey estimate of 50% based on a weighted sample	
				Lower	Upper
Kosovo	1,990	1.420	1,401	47.4%	52.6%

## Annex 5: Sociodemographic characteristics of disadvantaged groups (interlinked disadvantages)

### Age:

There is a direct inverse relationship between age and income status, whereby the percentage of women who are poor per age bracket increases as age increases, and, conversely, the percentage of women who are living comfortably decreases. Of women aged 60 or over, 21% are poor and 7% are living comfortably, whereas 5% of those aged 18–29 are poor and 21% are living comfortably. This is likely related to the higher cost of living associated with rearing a family, as well as the financial dependence caused by loss of income among retirees. There are only minor differences in the proportion of women from different age groups that identify as ethnic/religious minorities, as refugees/displaced or as returnees.

As might be expected, the proportion of respondents who are considered disabled increases with age (and, more specifically, with every increase in age bracket). Only 2% of women aged 18–29 said they had been severely limited by an illness or disability in the six months prior to the survey, compared with 13% of women aged 60 or over.

### Income status:

As mentioned, those who are poor tend to be older. Indeed, 63% of women who are poor were over the age of 50. As is to be expected, women who are poor are the least likely to have their own bank account. This financial dependence may put them at greater risk of abuse at the hands of their partners during times of economic hardship. Only 9% of women who are poor considered themselves to be part of an ethnic/religious minority, 1% are refugees or displaced and 0.4% are returnees, while 85% do not consider themselves to belong to any minority group. A significant proportion (16%) are, however, disabled. Women who are poor (10%) are also more likely than women in general (4%) and women living comfortably (4%) to hold only primary education.

### Education level:

More women who are educated only to primary level or less defined themselves as belonging to ethnic or religious minority groups (18% compared with 6% of those with secondary education and 3% with tertiary). However, while minority groups are less likely to be educated to tertiary level (as discussed below), there are also many women who are disadvantaged in terms of their education who do not belong to a minority, refugee or returnee group (75%). Women who are educated to primary level or less tend to be older, which reflects the greater availability of secondary and tertiary education in more recent years. Forty-seven per cent of those with only primary education are over the age of 60, while 66% are over the age of 50. Conversely, only 8% are aged 18–29. Women educated only to primary level or less are also more likely to be poor, highlighting the link between educational attainment and earnings, with almost twice as many women with only primary education being poor (23%) than woman living comfortably on their income (12%). In contrast, only 7% of women with tertiary education are poor, compared with 17% of women who are living comfortably. Women with only primary education or less (20%) were also more likely to be severely limited by a disability or illness than those who have tertiary education (3%), possibly reflecting barriers to access in the education system for those with disabilities. A much higher proportion of women with only primary education or less had no say in their marriage when compared to those with higher education (48% of women with primary education or less versus 17% of women with secondary education and 12% of women with tertiary education).

### **Ethnic/religious minorities:**

Fourteen per cent of women from ethnic-minority backgrounds are educated to only primary level or lower, compared with 4% of women in general, while only 19% are educated to tertiary level, compared with 36% of women in general. They are also the least likely to have their own bank account (only 31% do, compared with 41% of women overall) and are also more likely than women overall and more likely than any other minority group to be poor (17% versus 11% of women in general). In terms of age, 24% of ethnic/religious minorities are aged 18–29, 14% are 30–39, 15% are 40–49, 17% are 50–59, and 30% are 60 or older. A higher proportion of those from ethnic/religious minorities said they had been severely limited by an illness or disability in the six months prior to the survey (11% compared with 5% of women overall), which could reflect difficulties in access to healthcare among such groups.

### **Refugee/displaced status:**

Seven per cent of refugees/displaced women have only primary education or less, while 27% have tertiary education—less than the overall average of 36%. This likely reflects the educational opportunities available to such women before they were forced to leave their homes, rather than the educational opportunities available to them in their receiving societies. Refugee women are equally likely as women overall to be poor (11% for both) and slightly less likely to be living comfortably (12% versus 14%, respectively). Interestingly, refugee/displaced women were more likely than women in general to have their own bank account (51% versus 41%, respectively). Ten per cent of refugee/displaced women had been severely limited by an illness or disability in the six months prior to the survey. Only 11% of refugees/displaced people defined themselves as belonging to an ethnic/religious minority. Refugees/displaced women are split fairly evenly across a range of age groups: 18% are aged 18–29, 19% are 30–39, 22% are 40–49, 20% are 50–59, and 21% are 60 or older.

### **Age at the time of marriage:**

Women who were married as children tend to be older, which could suggest that the practice of child marriage is becoming less common. Twelve per cent of women who were married when they were children were aged 18–29 at the time of the survey, while 30% were over the age of 60, and a further 12% were between 50 and 60. Of those who were married when they were children, 10% considered themselves to be part of an ethnic minority, 2% considered themselves to be refugees, and 1% considered themselves to be former refugees. Women who married young were less likely to have completed tertiary education (9%) than women overall (36%) and more likely to have completed only primary education (21% versus 4% on average), which likely reflects the fact that girls who marry young are often expected to take on spousal and familial responsibilities at the expense of their education. Indeed, 22% of women who married when they were children were fulfilling domestic duties and care responsibilities at the time of the survey, while the same proportion was unemployed. A similar number (24%) were retired, reflecting the older age of this group of respondents. Of those who were first married as children, only 9% had completed tertiary education. This may be indicative of the impact child marriage can have on educational opportunities and attainment.

### **No choice in marriage:**

Women who had said they had no choice in their marriage also tended to be older, with 25% of such women falling within the 60–74 age bracket. Just 11% of women who had no choice in their marriage were aged 18–29 at the time of the survey. Again, this may suggest that norms around forced marriage are changing. A further 26% of these women were aged 50–59 at the time of the survey. Women who had no choice in their marriage were far less likely to have their own bank account (28% compared with 42% of those who chose their spouse themselves), illustrating their financial dependence on their spouses.



**Geographic location:**

Women in rural areas are more likely than women in urban areas to have only primary education or less (7% versus 3%, respectively) and less likely to have completed tertiary education (15% versus 31%, respectively). Slightly more rural women are disabled than urban women (7% versus 5%, respectively) and more rural women than urban women are poor (12% versus 9%, respectively). Urban women are more likely to be younger (21% of urban women are aged 18–29 compared with 18% of rural women), and rural women tend to be slightly older (19% of urban women are 50–59 compared with 22% of rural women; 22% of both urban and rural women are over 60).

**Employment status:**

As might be expected, those who were unemployed (12%), not working due to illness or disability (34%) or retired (22%) were most likely to be poor. Nevertheless, only 15% of those in employment said that they were living comfortably. Unemployed women and women fulfilling domestic care duties are least likely to have their own bank account (74% and 72%, respectively), although it should be noted that 45% of women in paid work do not have their own bank account. Less than 1% of women working in paid employment have only primary education, while 51% have secondary education and 49% have tertiary education. In contrast, the majority of those who are unemployed have secondary education (72%), while only 10% have tertiary education and 10% have only primary education or less. It appears that education does not necessarily have a bearing on whether women are doing unpaid work in a family business, with 43% of such women educated to tertiary level and only 4% educated to primary level or lower.

**Disability:**

Women who had been severely limited by an illness or disability in their day-to-day activities in the six months prior to the survey were overwhelmingly older, as would be expected. Of those women who were considered disabled based on the above definition, 54% were over the age of 60 and a further 20% were aged between 50 and 59, while only 7% were aged 18–29. Again, women who were disabled did not belong predominantly to any minority group, with only 6% viewing themselves as an ethnic minority. Similarly, only 2% considered themselves to be a refugee or displaced person. Due to the older age of the disabled respondents, it is difficult to identify trends in disabled women's employment opportunities, as 50% were retired at the time of the survey. The same proportion of disabled women were in paid work as were unemployed (13% each), while a further 12% were fulfilling domestic duties or care responsibilities.

**Annex 6: Qualitative research details**

In addition to the quantitative survey, a qualitative study was conducted involving focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. The focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were conducted by experienced moderators working for local fieldwork agencies. All moderators received project-specific training prior to embarking on any fieldwork. A discussion guide was developed and used during the focus groups and in-depth interviews. This was translated into the relevant local languages by the local fieldwork agencies.

**Focus group discussions**

Between seven and nine focus group discussions (FGDs) were held in each of the seven OSCE participating States, including groups with women from minority ethnic groups and women with experience of conflict. The same was done in Kosovo. Pilot FGDs took place in February 2018, with all others taking place between June and September 2018.

Participants were recruited for the focus group discussions via free-find methods. The composition of the groups was determined in such a way as to provide coverage of urban and rural areas and to include women of different age groups and women from ethnic-minority groups as described below.

Table A5.1. Composition of FGDs in OSCE participating States

	Number of FGDs	Urban/Rural	Composition	Age (number of groups)
Albania	7	4 urban	6 Albanian 1 Roma	18–35 (3) 36+ (4)
Bosnia and Herzegovina	9	3 rural	4 Bosnian 4 Serbian 1 Roma	18–37 (3) 38–55 (3) 56+ (2)
Montenegro	8	3 rural	4 mixed Montenegrin/Serbian 2 Macedonian 1 Albanian 1 Roma	18–29 (2) 30–55 (4) 51+ (4)
North Macedonia	9	4 urban	5 Macedonian 2 Albanian 2 Roma	18–34 (3) 20–45 (2) 35–55 (3) 55–74 (1)
Serbia	8	2 mixed urban/ural	4 Serbian 2 Roma 1 Bosniak 1 Hungarian	18–34 (2) 35–55 (5) 56+ (1)
Moldova	8	6 urban	5 Moldovan (including 1 with women from the Transdnestrrian region) 1 Moldovan/Russian 1 Roma 1 Gagauz	18–34 (3) 20–45 (2) 35–54 (3) 55–74 (1)
Ukraine	8	3 rural	<b>N/A but 3 FGDs were conducted with IDPs</b>	18–35 years (2) 18–50 (1) 36–55 (3) 56+ (2)

Table A5.2. Composition of FGDs in Kosovo

	Number of FGDs	Urban/Rural	Composition	Age (number of groups)
Kosovo	8	5 urban 3 rural	5 Kosovo Albanian 2 Kosovo Serbian 1 Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian	18–29 (3) 25–55 (3) 40+ (2)

In addition, the groups included a mix of women who were in paid employment and women who were not economically active, women who did and did not have children, and women who had lived through a period of conflict.

The broad aims of the focus group discussions were as follows:

- to understand societal attitudes/cultural norms concerning women generally, VAW and perpetrators of VAW;
- to explore how societal attitudes/cultural norms concerning women have changed over time, including in times of conflict;
- to explore awareness of, and views on, existing support/barriers to disclosure; and
- to identify how prevention and support could be improved.

During recruitment, women were not asked if they had any experiences of intimate partner or non-partner violence. While it was not intended to ask women about such experiences directly during the focus groups, there were some women who had experienced violence and chose to talk about this during the discussions.

### **In-depth interviews**

Thirty-five in-depth interviews were conducted with women who had experienced violence. Some of the in-depth interview participants were recruited via the survey, with women who agreed to be contacted for further research at the end of the interview. Others were recruited with the assistance of local NGOs. Women from minority groups were recruited for the in-depth interviews to the extent possible within the existing sample frame. In total, six interviews were conducted with women who were IDPs, six with women from an ethnic-minority background and seven with women who had a long-term health condition or disability.

During recruitment, all potential respondents were informed that the interview would go into more detail about their experiences of violence. This was done so that they could decide whether or not they wished to participate given the sensitive and potentially emotional nature of the interview.

The in-depth interviews were held at each woman's place of residence or at another location of their choice. All interviews were conducted in private.











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