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INFOSHEET

2018 PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER EQUALITY AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

ALBANIA

The data in this infosheet was collected in 2018 as part of a baseline survey exercise conducted by the Observatory for Children and Youths Rights Albania under the EU-UN Women regional programme 'Implementing Norms, Changing Minds.' Data includes responses from 1260 women, girls, men and boys of ages 15-64, in the region of Elbasan and municipalities of Durrës, Korçë, Shkodër, Kamëz, Tiranë and Vlorë, in both urban and rural areas, including members of disadvantaged communities (Roma, Egyptian, persons with disabilities, and LGBTI+).

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COUNTRY CONTEXT

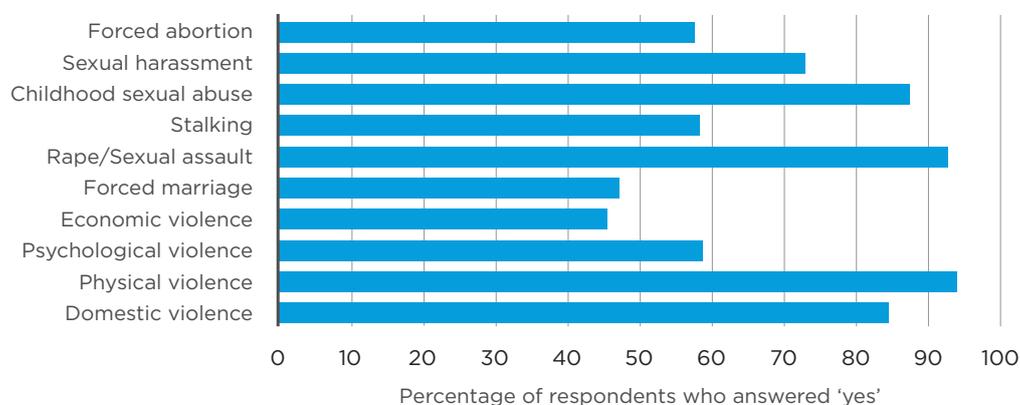
- Violence against women is deeply rooted in patriarchal traditions and customs of Albanian society, such as strict gender roles and identities, patriarchal authority, respect for the code of honour, power and control of older generations over the entire family, poverty, inequality in the area of employment or education, and gender-based migration.
- Specific progress regarding the legal framework on the issue of violence against women and gender equality started in 2006 with the approval of the Law on Domestic Violence. A major step has been the amendment of Criminal Code 2012 and 2013, which criminalized some forms of violence against women within the scope of the Istanbul Convention.
- The Government of Albania signed the Istanbul Convention on 19 December 2011, and ratified it on 4 February 2013.¹
- Despite legal improvements, violence against women remains prevalent in Albania, including femicide, which has become a serious concern.

Knowledge of the Law

Key finding #1: Only 65.4% of respondents were aware of the existence of a law on gender equality, and 78.4% were aware of the existence of laws against violence against women and domestic violence. A slightly higher proportion of men than women knew of the existence of such laws. Among the age groups, for both questions, adolescents and young adults were most knowledgeable, and seniors were least knowledgeable.

Key finding #2: A high proportion of respondents were not aware that non-physical and other forms of violence are punishable by law. While the vast majority of respondents knew that certain forms of violence were punishable by law (domestic violence, physical violence, rape/sexual assault), they were much less aware of the criminal nature of non-physical forms of violence (psychological, economic) and lesser-known form of violence (forced marriage, forced abortion, stalking – see Figure 1).

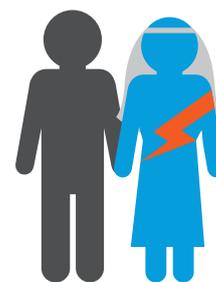
Figure 1: Are the following forms of violence punishable by law?



1. See: <http://www.conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/ChercheSig.asp?NT=210&CM=&DF=&CL=ENG>

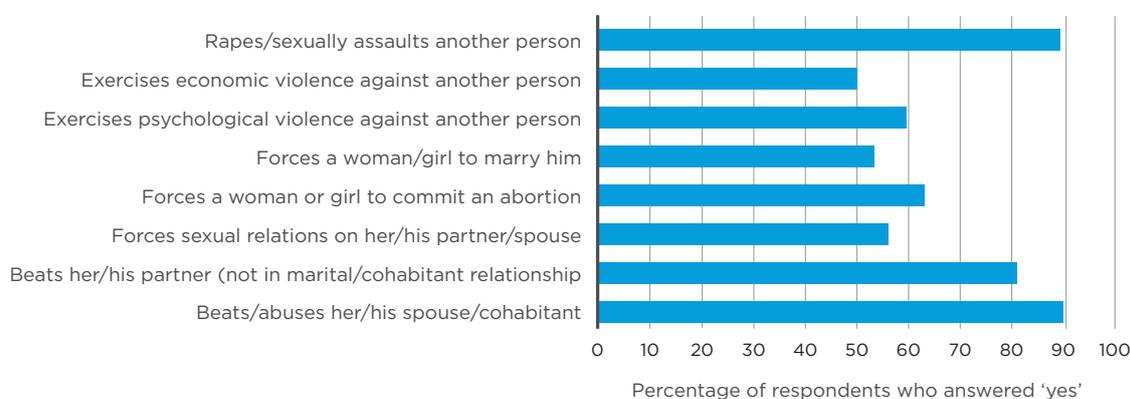
Key finding #3: Marital rape is perceived differently than other crimes. While the vast majority of respondents knew rape/sexual assault to be crime (92.5%) and believed a person would be punished for committing it (89.4%), a much lower proportion of respondents believed someone would be punished for forcing sexual relations on a spouse/partner (56.0% - see Figure 2 below).

This contradiction may suggest that 1) respondents do not perceive marital rape to be equally as severe as rape/sexual assault in other circumstances, 2) respondents believe that one partner has 'rights' over the other's body within the context of a relationship, and/or 3) respondents do not believe the law will be implemented effectively for this crime.



Only 56% of respondents believed someone would be punished for forcing sexual relations on a spouse/partner

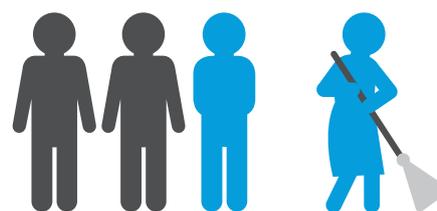
Figure 2: Would a person be punished if he/she...



Perceptions of gender roles

Key finding #1: Women are expected to behave within traditional gender roles and be subservient to men.

One in three male respondents and one in four female respondents believe that girls belong in the domestic sphere, while boys should pursue career and leadership opportunities. A high proportion also believe that women should behave subserviently to their male partners. See Figure 3 over the page.



1 in 3 male respondents believe that girls belong in the domestic sphere

Figure 3: Women's Roles in Society



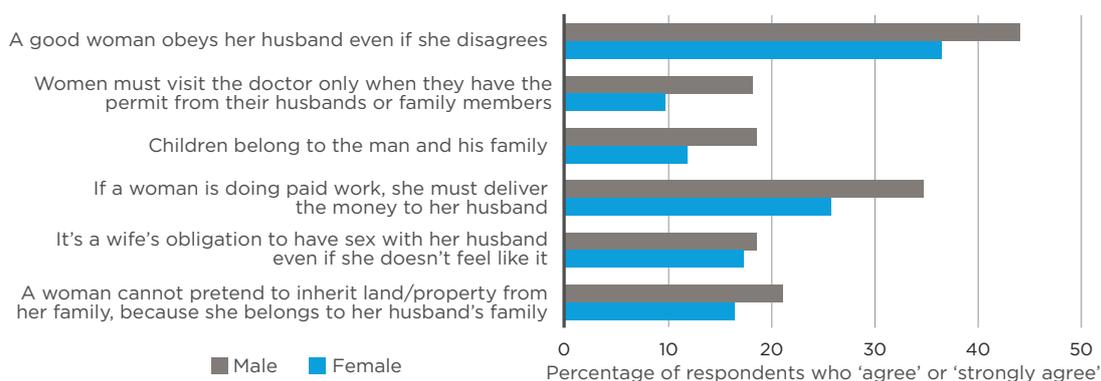
Key finding #2: Men are perceived to hold 'rightful' positions of dominance and power over women. See Figure 4 below.

- *Control over women's bodies:* Nearly 1 in 5 respondents agree that women should have sex with their husbands regardless of their own desire, and nearly 1 in 5 male respondents believe women should only visit the doctor with permission from their male partners.
- *Control over women's finances:* Notably, 1 in 3 male respondents and 1 in 4 female respondents believe that a woman's income is the property of her husband. More than 1 in 5 male respondents believe that women 'belong' to their husband and his family, and thus should not inherit wealth from her family.

- *Control over basic decision-making and autonomy:* Nearly 1 in 5 male respondents agree that a couple's children belong to the male partner and his family. Over one-third of female respondents and nearly half of male respondents believe women must obey their husbands.

Key finding #3: Men are the primary supporters of beliefs that place them in positions of power over women. In each question, men showed greater support for traditional gender roles that limit the opportunities and self-determination of women. Since men hold disproportionate economic, political, and social power, it is imperative to work with men and boys to change their attitudes and beliefs toward gender norms.

Figure 4: Men's Control over Women



Attitudes toward violence against women



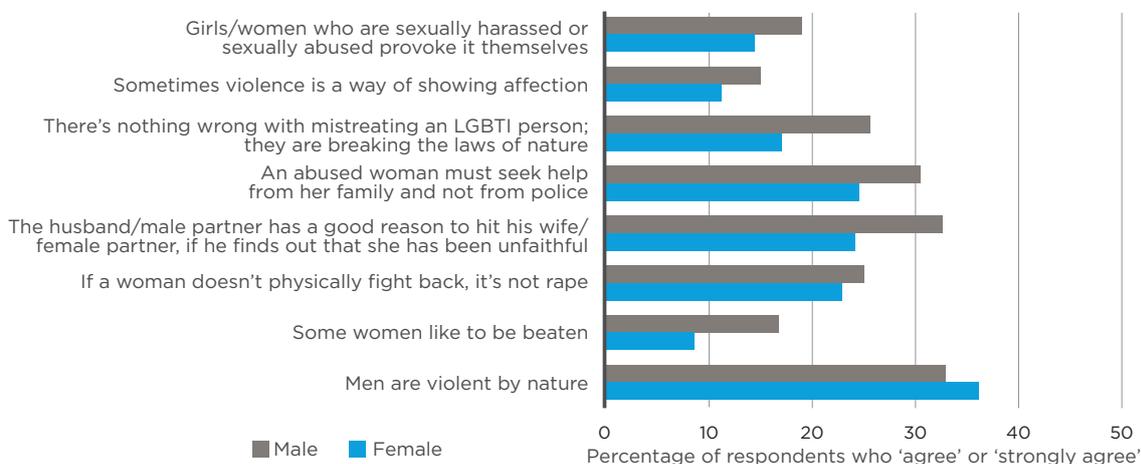
Key finding #1: A significant percentage of respondents hold beliefs that justify and minimize the impact of violence against women. These beliefs and myths reduce the accountability of perpetrators and place responsibility and blame on victims of violence. As a notable example, 1 in 3 male respondents and 1 in 4 female respondents agreed that infidelity was a ‘good reason’ for a male partner to hit his female partner (see Figure 5 below). Although not included in Figure 5, 22.8% of male respondents and 17.0% of female respondents also believed that even the suspicion of infidelity was a ‘good reason’ for a man to hit his female partner.

Key finding #2: Beliefs that support traditional gender norms and beliefs that justify and minimize violence against women are inherently linked. These beliefs and attitudes are mutually reinforcing, and violence against women cannot be eradicated until women are seen and treated as equal to men. The perception of men as rightful holders of power over women promotes men’s use of physical and non-physical violence in attempts to exercise that power (see Figure 5 below).

22.8% of male respondents believed that even the suspicion of infidelity was a ‘good reason’ for a man to hit his female partner

Key finding #3: Domestic violence is perceived as a private issue that should be addressed within the family. A high proportion of both male and female respondents agreed that abused women should not seek help from the police (see Figure 5), while 22.6% of male respondents and 16.5% of female respondents believed that those outside of the family should not intervene in situations of domestic abuse.

Figure 5: What do you think about the following statements?



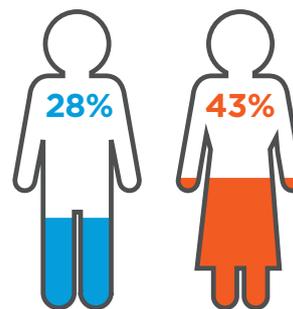
Willingness to prevent or report violence

Key Finding #1: Respondents were very hesitant to provide assistance in situations of domestic violence. Compared to other countries in the baseline study, respondents from Albania showed notably less willingness to intervene to prevent violence.

Key finding #2: Respondents were significantly less willing to help prevent violence against members of marginalized communities, highlighting how other forms of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity or sexual orientation often enable and promote violence against women. Only 28% of male respondents and 43% of female respondents showed willingness to take action to prevent violence against LGBTI individuals.

Key finding #3: Women showed to be more willing than men to intervene in violent situations and take action to prevent violence. In addition to increased willingness to help strangers experiencing violence, women were also notably more willing to assist individuals from marginalized communities, such as LGBTI individuals, ethnic minorities, and refugees and migrant women.

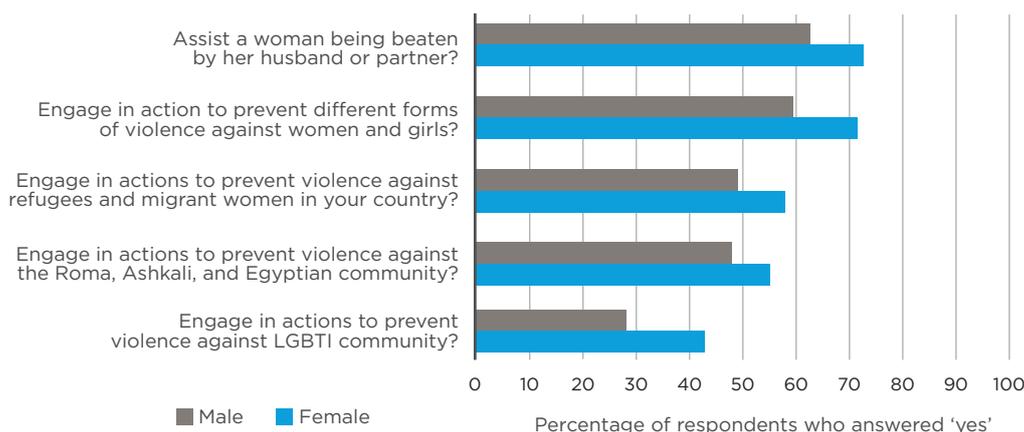
Key finding #4: Attitudes that minimize or justify violence against marginalized women are not limited to marginalized groups, but are directed toward all women.



Only 28% of male respondents and 43% of female respondents showed willingness to take action to prevent violence against LGBTI individuals

Victim-blaming attitudes that identify some people as 'deserving' of violence, as seen in Figure 5 regarding LGBTI individuals and in Figure 6 below, should not be interpreted as only being relevant to minority or disadvantaged groups. These attitudes are likely to be directed at any woman who does not conform her behavior to strict gender norms (e.g., by wearing revealing clothing, flirting, consuming alcohol, being perceived as 'promiscuous', etc.). The persistence of these attitudes toward any women is a threat to the safety of all women.

Figure 6: In the future, would you be willing to...



Commonality of discussions on VAW/G and gender equality

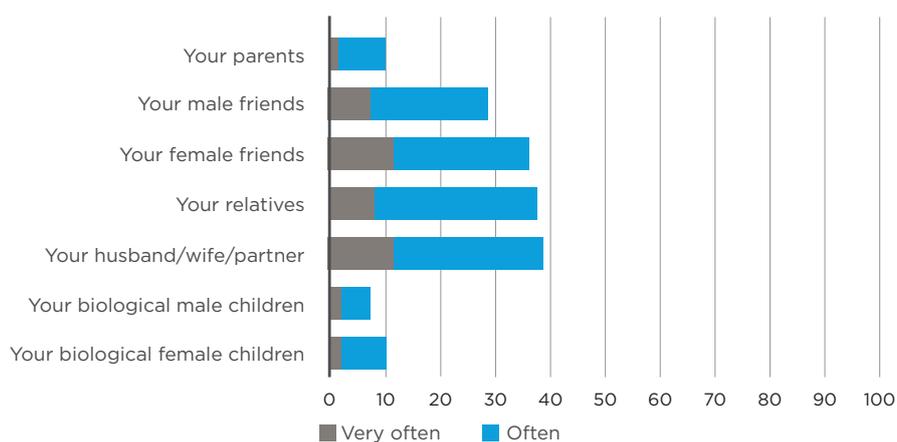
Key finding #1: Issues related to violence against women and girls are rarely discussed outside of family and close friends. Violence against women and girls remains a private issue in Albania. Respondents were most likely to discuss these issues with female friends and their partner/wife/husband. See Figure 7 below.

Key finding #2: Respondents rarely discuss issues related to violence against women and girls with their children. When they do, they more often discuss such issues with their daughters than with their sons.



Issues related to violence against women and girls are rarely discussed outside of family and close friends

Figure 7: In the past 12 months, have you discussed issues related to the prevention of VAWG with...



Common channels for messaging on VAW/G and gender equality

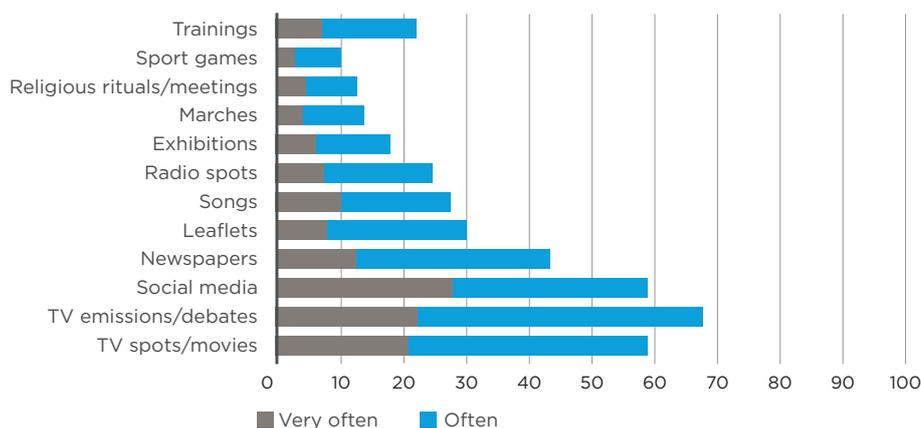
Key finding #1: Commonly used methods of communication are most likely to reach target audiences. TV spots, TV emissions/debates, social media and newspapers are the most effective channels of information related to the prevention of violence against women. See Figure 8 below.

Key finding #2: Alternative methods of communications, such as sports games or songs, may be less effective in reaching a large audience, although they may be useful as part of a broader campaign that also utilizes common methods of communications. In addition, marches showed low impact on the public.



Commonly used methods of communication (TV, social media, newspapers) are most likely to reach target audiences

Figure 8: In the past 12 months, have you heard about issues related to gender equality or the prevention of VAW/G through...



PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAMMING

- **Work with men and boys, to challenge traditional gender norms and address the concerns,** fears and pressures that men face because of toxic gender roles. Violence against women cannot be prevented without the active participation of men and boys and the eradication of patriarchal traditions.
- **Work with women towards recognizing intimate partner violence, particularly non-physical violence,** and specifically raise awareness within society about the gravity of any form of violence against women and girls, under any pretext.
- **Consider and address the specific needs of individuals from marginalized groups.** Responses suggested high levels of discrimination that may prevent such marginalized individuals (LGBTI community members, ethnic minorities, refugee and migrant women) from having equal access to quality information and services.
- **Directly challenge the perception of domestic violence as a ‘private’ issue.** Programming should emphasize that the blame and responsibility for violence lies with the perpetrators, and that domestic violence is a topic to be confronted and addressed by all Albanians, no matter where the violence occurs.
- **Include the topic of violence against women in both professional and educational fields,** as in university study programmes, vocational curricula and professional development schemes.
- **Engage with professionals involved in the domestic violence response, such as police officers, lawyers, judges, and healthcare professionals** to prevent prejudices that blame women for violence committed against them.
- **Use more common channels to raise awareness about violence against women and girls through awareness initiatives and campaigns.** Documentaries and TV emissions are considered highly effective due to the large number of people they reach in short periods of time. Moreover, other tools, such as billboards, flyers, visual art, exhibitions and various activities are also highly recommended to raise awareness and involve more people.
- **Create awareness regarding less known forms of violence such as, forced marriage, forced abortion and economic violence.** The lack of information about the content of legislation prohibiting violence against women is a widespread problem in Albania, especially regarding lesser-known forms of violence.
- **Ensure that programming is intergenerational and targets individuals of all age groups.** The findings in this study showed that seniors (and adults, to a lesser extent) had the least knowledge on criminalized forms of violence against women.
- **Advocate for increased state budgets to raise awareness on VAW/G and gender equality.** Although the state has the responsibility (under domestic legislation and Istanbul Convention standards) to promote gender equality and prevent VAW/G, awareness-raising initiatives are primarily funded by external donors.