



Canada 

# SAFE CITIES

○ **FEBRUARY 2021**

The safety of women and girls in public spaces in Korçë and Shkodër





This report on safe cities, focused on women and girls' safety from sexual harassment and violence in public spaces was prepared by the "Observatory for Children and Youth Rights" with the support of Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives. The opinions and views expressed in this report are those of the authors' team and do not necessarily reflect those of the "Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives".

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## KEY CONCEPTS

### Safe City-

is a city that enables its citizens to feel equally safe, to live and act free from sexual harassment or other forms of violence in public spaces. A safe city takes the necessary actions to eliminate gender based violence, to ensure equal access and opportunities to both men and women in all the spheres of social, economic, cultural and political life.<sup>1</sup>

### Public space-

is defined as an area or a place that is open and accessible to all people, regardless of their gender, race, ethnicity, age, or socio-economic background. This space, suitable for public gatherings could be the town's squares/plazas, parks or other connecting infrastructure such as sidewalks or streets.<sup>2</sup>

### Neighborhood-

is a territorial subdivision of the municipality in urban areas. The neighborhoods are created by the Municipal Council decision and include areas with a population of over 15,000 residents.<sup>3</sup>

### Violence against women and girls -

is defined as any act of gender-based violence that results or could potentially result in physical, sexual or mental harm, damage or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, arbitrary restraint or deprivation of freedom, whether in public or private life.<sup>4</sup>

### Physical Violence-

is defined as the intentional use of physical force and/or power, including threats against oneself, other persons, or against a group or community which results or has the potential to result in injury, death, psychological harm, poor development or deprivation.<sup>5</sup>

### Sexual Harassment-

is defined as unwanted sexual behavior, which is humiliating, offensive or intimidating. Sexual harassment can be written, verbal or physical and can happen in person or online.<sup>6</sup>

### Sexual Violence-

is defined as any sexual act, attempt to commit a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advancements, or acts directed towards one person's sexuality, using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home or work place.<sup>7</sup>

1 Adapted from: <http://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/237-what-are-safe-cities-and-communities-for-women-and-girls-.html>

2 Adapted from: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/urban-development/migrants-inclusion-in-cities/good-practices/inclusion-through-access-to-public-space/>

3 Law No.8652, date 31.7.2000 "On Organization and Functioning of Local Government, available at: [http://observator.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Ligi\\_8652\\_31.07.2000\\_per\\_organizimin\\_e\\_qeverisjes\\_vendore.pdf](http://observator.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Ligi_8652_31.07.2000_per_organizimin_e_qeverisjes_vendore.pdf)

4 Adapted from: [https://www.who.int/health-topics/violence-against-women#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/violence-against-women#tab=tab_1)

5 Adapted from: <https://www.who.int/violenceprevention/approach/definition/en/>

6 Adapted from: <https://au.reachout.com/articles/what-is-sexual-harassment>

7 Adapted from: [https://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/violence/global\\_campaign/en/chap6.pdf](https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/global_campaign/en/chap6.pdf)

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## 1. ON WOMEN AND GIRLS' SAFETY IN PUBLIC SPACES

Violence against women and girls does not choose a country, a city, a neighborhood, or a particular woman. It could happen to anyone. Worldwide, 1 in 3 women (35%) experience physical and/or sexual violence during their lifetime.<sup>8</sup> While violence in the majority of reported cases is perpetrated by an intimate partner (30% of women in a relationship have experienced a certain form of violence<sup>9</sup>), harassment and violence from non-related perpetrators remain a serious issue.

Besides domestic setting, the violence commonly occurs in public spaces as well. Women and girls' safety in public spaces is a complex and difficult issue. A woman's perception on safety from harassment and violence is very personal. Therefore, it is very difficult to assess, measure or evaluate women or girls' experiences. On the other hand, the very same perception defines the way that women and girls interact with public spaces.

Women and girls often feel unsafe and at risk in public spaces. Two previous studies accomplished by Observatory on this topic<sup>10</sup>, in 5 different areas of Tirana have concluded that women and girls' safety in public spaces remains an issue that requires intervention. Asked how safe they feel in their area, only 25% of respondents in "Porcelan" area, 23% of them in Shkozë and 25% of them in "Student City" answered that they feel safe or very safe from sexual assault<sup>11</sup>. Meanwhile in Laprakë, 32% of respondents feel safe/very safe, and in "21 Dhjetori" area 56% of them<sup>12</sup>.

Back streets and dark alleys are not the only places considered unsafe. Main streets, neighborhood alleys, or crowded places such as bus stations are also considered unsafe by 11% of respondents in Porcelan, 6% of respondents in Shkozë and 7% of respondents in "Student City", who think that sexual harassment occurs mainly in streets or alleys<sup>13</sup>. On the other hand, only 23% of respondents in Laprakë and 53% of respondents in "21 Dhjetori" consider streets/neighborhood alleys safe or very safe, while only 42% of them consider bus stations safe<sup>14</sup>.

The factors that impact the safety level in different areas are diverse. In Laprakë, the main issue to affect the safety, named by approx. 89% of respondents is drug consumption and drug users; in 21 Dhjetori this statistic is 42%. Another issue that affects the safety, as reported by 68% of respondents in Laprakë and 75% of respondents in 21 "Dhjetori"<sup>15</sup> is people crowding at bus stations.

Women and Girls' experiences in public spaces are very personal and different. Women and girls from different age groups, different socio-economic background and ethnicity might have different experiences in the very same streets or neighborhoods. The citizens themselves have the same perception. Young girls are considered to be at higher risk according to 61% of respondents in Porcelan, 56% of respondents in Shkozë and 57% of respondents in Student City.<sup>16</sup> Age is listed as one of the factors that defines the level of risk from 46% of respondents in "21 Dhjetori" and 58% of respondents in Laprakë.<sup>17</sup>

8 World Health Organization (WHO), Violence Against Women, Key Facts, November 2017, Available in: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women#:~:text=Global%20estimates%20published%20by%20WHO,sexual%20violence%20in%20their%20life-time.&text=Globally%2C%20as%20many%20as%2038,by%20a%20male%20intimate%20partner>

9 World Health Organization (WHO), Violence Against Women, Key Facts, November 2017, Available in: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women#:~:text=Global%20estimates%20published%20by%20WHO,sexual%20violence%20in%20their%20life-time.&text=Globally%2C%20as%20many%20as%2038,by%20a%20male%20intimate%20partner>

10 Observatory for Children and Youth Rights (2016): "Tirana Safe City Programme: Scoping Study on Sexual harassment and Sexual Violence against Women and Girls in Urban Public Spaces", prepared by Monika Kocaqi, supported from UN Country Team Albania with funds of Swedish Government and "Report on safe cities for women and girls, regarding sexual harassment and other forms of violence in public spaces" prepared by Observatory for the Rights of Children and Youth, with the support of Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives (February, 2020)"

11 Observatory for Children's Rights (2016): "Tirana Safe City Programme: Scoping Study on Sexual harassment and Sexual Violence against Women and Girls in Urban Public Spaces", prepared by Monika Kocaqi, supported from UN Country Team Albania with funds of Swedish Government

12 "Report on safe cities for women and girls, regarding sexual harassment and other forms of violence in public spaces" prepared by Observatory for Children and Youth Rights (February, 2020)"

13 Observatory for Children's Rights (2016): "Tirana Safe City Programme: Scoping Study on Sexual harassment and Sexual Violence against Women and Girls in Urban Public Spaces", prepared by Monika Kocaqi, supported from UN Country Team Albania with funds of Swedish Government

14 "Report on safe cities for women and girls, regarding sexual harassment and other forms of violence in public spaces" prepared by Observatory for the Rights of Children and Youth, with the support of Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives (February, 2020)"

15 "Report on safe cities for women and girls, regarding sexual harassment and other forms of violence in public spaces" prepared by Observatory for the Rights of Children and Youth, with the support of Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives (February, 2020)"

16 Observatory for Children and Youth Rights (2016): "Tirana Safe City Programme: Scoping Study on Sexual harassment and Sexual Violence against Women and Girls in Urban Public Spaces", prepared by Monika Kocaqi, supported from UN Country Team Albania with funds of Swedish Government

17 "Report on safe cities for women and girls, regarding sexual harassment and other forms of violence in public spaces" prepared by Observatory for the Rights of Children and Youth, with the support of Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives (February, 2020)"

Certain groups of community are considered to be at higher risk compared to the rest of population. Roma and Egyptian community members are considered to be at higher risk of violence and harassment by 26% of respondents in Porcelan, 18% of respondents in Shkozë and 28% of respondents in Student City.<sup>18</sup> Sexual Orientation is also listed as a reason that affects individuals' risk level by 20% of respondents in "21 Dhjetori" and 39% of respondents in Laprakë.

So, every street or area is different. Women and girls who attend these areas and streets are also different. As such, there is a need to collect data in the specific areas itself. The data collected would provide the necessary information to enable specific and appropriate interventions in these areas.

Previous studies, focused on the safety perceptions of research participants have identified a variety of issues. These studies and research help "read" and understand the needs of citizens, especially the ones of women and girls using public spaces; they help address these issues through informing local government authorities on the required intervention and investment policies.

The belief that "safe access and safe use of public spaces" is a basic human right for the life and dignity of people, holds local actors and authorities accountable to enact such a right. As such, local government investment in public spaces are necessary to turn them into entertaining and safe havens for each individual at any time.

Building practices introduced by civil society, which align the responsibilities of local government with the community needs and perceptions, and independent experts' observations constitute a model that ensures that public investments are done in the right time and right place, guaranteeing the safety and dignity of each individual regardless of age, gender or belongings.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

During the design phase of the study, a particular importance was given to the process of collecting accurate and reliable data. Making informed decision-making, based on accurate and reliable data will produce effective results, which will make the target areas safe for every woman and girl.

The study is based on a variety of methods and tools such as: desk review, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, liability audits, observations and discussions with relevant municipalities.

This study aims to bring forth the needs of citizens and interest groups for public space safety and to advocate with the institutions that are responsible for funding and maintaining the public spaces in target areas.

### 2.1. The goal and objectives

The goal: Obtaining sufficient data to identify the factors that determine the safety of women and girls in public spaces, also to determine the required interventions to make these spaces safe and user-friendly.

Objectives:

1. To clearly explain women and girls sexual harassment issues in target areas;
2. To provide relevant information on such issues to future programs and interventions that will be planned and implemented in these areas;
3. To help improve the sustainable safety and security in the city and community.

### 2.2. Data Collection

The target of this study is two different cities: Shkodër and Korçë. A specific area was selected in each city. The selection of the specific target area was done in consultation with the relevant municipality, taking in consideration: the community that lives or uses the area, aiming for a heterogenous community; the presence of public or private institutions in the area; Municipality's actual or planned investments in the selected area. Based on this criteria, neighborhood 10 and neighborhood 1 were selected, respectively in

<sup>18</sup> Observatory for Children and Youth Rights (2016): "Tirana Safe City Programme: Scoping Study on Sexual harassment and Sexual Violence against Women and Girls in Urban Public Spaces", prepared by Monika Kocaqi, supported from UN Country Team Albania with funds of Swedish Government



the cities of Korçë and Shkodër.

Data collection was done through employing a variety of methods and tools described below:

1. **Questionnaires, administered with citizens (600)** – 300 questionnaires were distributed and completed in each municipality. The sample was chosen by random selection of pedestrians (18 years old and over) in the street. The number of questionnaires – 300 in each municipality ensures a confidence level of 95% and a confidence interval of 5%. The questionnaires were used to collect general information on the perceptions of citizens for women and girls safety in public spaces, risk factors as well as the use of public spaces from women.
2. **Semi-structured interviews (10)** – Five interviews were conducted in each municipality with representatives from the sectors of education, health, administrative units, nonprofit organizations and businesses. These interviews aimed to collect the service providers' perceptions on issues related to the violence and discrimination against women in public spaces; also to generate recommendations for improving the safety in these areas.
3. **Focus groups discussions (8)** – Four focus group meetings were organized in each area with women and girls from the target communities. Each focus group included women and girls from 4 different age groups: 18-25 years old, 26-35 years old, 36-45 years old, and over 45 years old. The aim of these 4 focus groups was to generate extensive information on: (i) the safety level in target areas, (ii) the factors that affect the safety level, and also (iii) the potential action that could be taken to improve the safety level.
4. **Structured Observation Missions (8)** – Four structured observation missions were carried out in each municipality during day and evening hours in the target areas. A pre-designed form was used to collect the observed data in the target areas.
5. **Street safety inspection (audits) (8)** – Four street safety audits were conducted in each municipality. A group of girls kept notes on their feelings and perceptions of safety or risks in a pre-designed form, while walking around the target areas.

### 2.3. Ethical Principles and the limitations of the study

Even though, this study is mainly based on the respondents' perceptions rather than personal experiences, the main principles of research, concerning violence against women and girls were kept in consideration.

The staff involved with data collection process was trained online beforehand. The staff was trained how to approach the sample of questionnaire respondents, how to organize and conduct focus group meetings and interviews, how to monitor and conduct field inspections/audits. During training, the staff was introduced to data collecting instruments; each data collection question was explained thoroughly to them. A particular importance was given to ethical issues. As such the staff was trained and guided on how to guarantee the confidentiality of collected data. The staff was also informed on the existing support services for women and girls victims/survivor of violence. This information was to be considered if and when needed.

Several difficulties and limitations were encountered during this research.

First, the use of public spaces and the perception of safety level might have been impacted by COVID 19 situation. People walking with or without face masks affect other people's feelings and perceptions differently. The temporary ban on public gatherings might have impacted the perception of safety in the target area. Previous studies have informed that crowds of people are a factor that impacts the perception of street safety and risks.

This study did not conduct a comparative research between the pre and post COVID situation, therefore it is unable to conclude whether the perception of safety or unsafety in the target areas is temporary and a consequence of the pandemic situation.

Also, this study is based on perceptions. As such, its findings might be contradicted by other residents of the target areas or other interest groups.

### 3. SAFETY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN PUBLIC SPACES IN KORÇË DHE SHKODËR

The same data collection instruments were used in both Korçë and Shkodër: questionnaires with citizens, focus groups with women and girls from different age groups, interviews with service providers, field observations and safety inspection/audits.

The infrastructure and its maintenance seem to be better in the city of Korçë rather than Shkodër. Public transportation service is rated as “average” in Neighborhood No. 10 in Korçë, but it is completely missing in Neighborhood No. 1 in Shkodër.

Respondents in Korçë are relatively satisfied with their entertainment infrastructure, such as playgrounds, “Rinia” park, children’s city etc. The situation is presented differently in Shkodër, where there seem to be no entertainment venues.

Regarding the issue of safety in target areas, in both cities, over half of respondents confirm that they feel safe/very safe. This percentage is higher in Korçë. Level of satisfaction, concerning infrastructure that affects the safety, such as streetlights or the presence of areas /places where someone could hide from others, is higher in Korçë than in Shkodër.

In terms of identifying institutions where citizens can receive services, both areas’ respondents listed the health center. In both areas, the Health Center is easy to locate and access. Percentage of respondents who share that it is easy for them to locate the police station is higher in Korçë, while the percentage of respondents that state that their area is regularly patrolled by the police is considerably higher in Shkodër.

When asked what makes a person more susceptible to risk in target areas, both neighborhoods’ respondents mentioned: being a woman/girl and walking alone. In Shkodër, the age and the attire were considered among other risk factors. In Korçë, among other factors, drug or alcohol users were mentioned, while in Shkodër it was stressed that the lack of street lighting increased the level of risk.

When asked about the type of incidents, both areas’ respondents shared that the majority of incidents are verbal such as: comments with sexual content, whistling or intensive staring.

In both areas, the majority of respondents stated that they have no information or knowledge whether there are other incidents of sexual assault and violence in their areas. Some respondents stated that such incidents happen rarely or never. A very small percentage of respondents stated that such incidents occur often/very often. The majority of respondents in both areas stated that they have no information on the time or place where incidents occur. When asked who the perpetrators of these incidents are, it was stated predominantly that they are unknown people.

The research placed a special attention to institutions which support or address issues related to women and girls safety. In Korçë, the respondents confirmed the presence of such institutions, while in Shkodër the respondents stated that there are no, or that they have no knowledge about such institutions in their area. However, the level of trust in these institutions is not in high level.

When asked what would make the citizens feel safer in target area, the respondents in Korçë mentioned - “frequent police patrolling”, while respondents in Shkodër mentioned – “improving the street lighting system”.

#### 3.1. Women and Girls’ safety in public spaces in Korçë

In Korçë city, the target of the research is Neighborhood No. 10. There are around 800 families and 3200 residents that live in this neighborhood. There are several institutions located in this area such as: kindergarten, 9-years school, high school, vocational school and university, health center, daily community center for children in need and 2 NGOs.

The team administered 300 questionnaires in this area, out of which 68% with women/girls and 32% with men/boys. Focus group meetings with women and girls provided the team with extensive information about their perceptions and thoughts on the topic of research. Perceptions and thoughts collected through the 5 interviews with employees of administrative units, education and health sectors, a pharmacist and representatives of foundations were also included in this study. The perceptions collected through questionnaires were further validated through field observations and inspections by the trained research staff.

### 3.1.1. General Impression around safety in Neighborhood No. 10, Korçë

Maintenance in Neighborhood No. 10 in Korçë seem to be in satisfactory level.

56% of respondents do think that infrastructure including streets, street lights and general public spaces in this area is adequate. The respondents are generally satisfied with the maintenance of the area and public transportation. Respectively, 49% and 40% of them do think that these services are good/very good. These findings are supported by the field safety inspections. The main words used to describe the first impression of the area were: “The area is quiet, clean and populated”<sup>19</sup>. However, during the observation process, a lack of facilities for people with disabilities was observed in the area<sup>20</sup>.

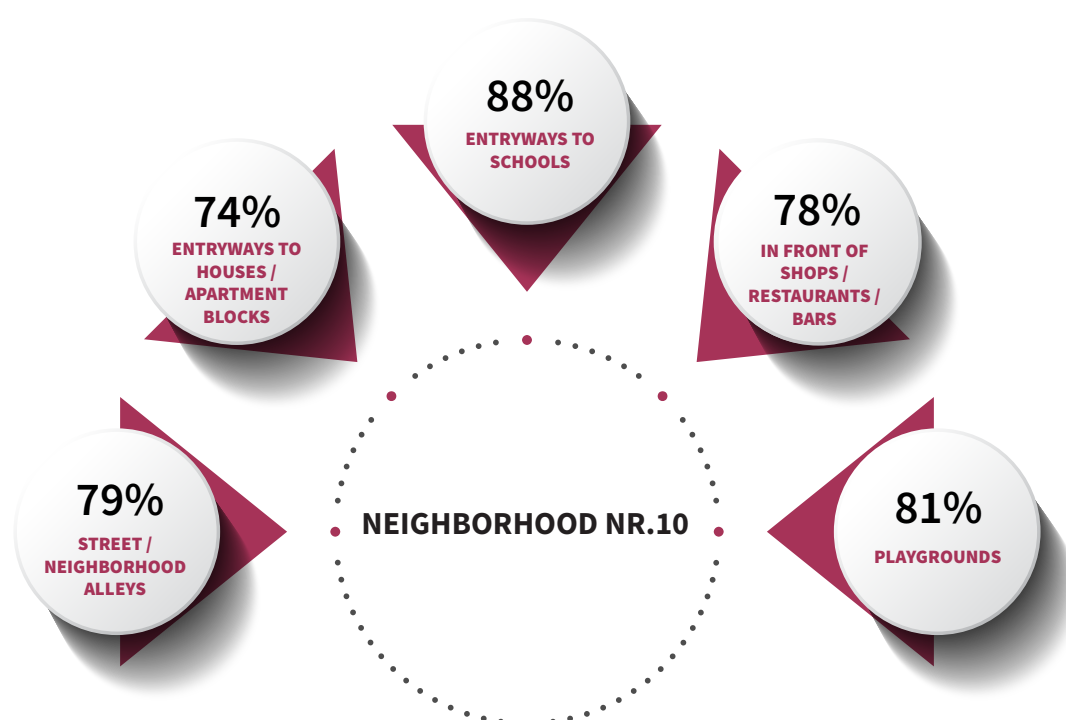
More than half of respondents confirm that there are several entertainment venues for children in their area. As such they mention: playground, children’s city, “Rinia” park, etc. For other age groups, they mentioned “Rinia” park, and for youth, they mentioned “some sports’ areas”. The use of “Rinia” park as an entertainment facility was identified during field observations.<sup>21</sup>

The area is described as safe (62% of respondents feel safe and protected) and well-lit (60% of respondents think that lighting is good/ very good). These findings are supported by other sources of information also. The observation missions report that “The area is well-lit and all the lights turn on”<sup>22</sup>. During safety inspection, the lighting system was rated from 2 - 4 on a 1 to 5 scale. The lighting of entryway to houses, buildings and apartment blocks was described as average.<sup>23</sup>

Places where someone could secretly hide from others were identified as a problem by 41% of respondents. This same issue was stressed several times during the focus group meetings. In this regard, an old building amidst new apartment blocks, and old and rundown cars, parked in the streets were brought as examples.<sup>24</sup>

The respondents were asked about the level of safety in spaces that are used often by the majority of residents such as: streets/ neighborhood alleys, entryways to schools or apartment blocks, parks, etc. As can be seen in Graph 1, the majority of respondents consider these spaces safe or very safe.

Graph 1: Percentage of respondents who believe that below listed public spaces are safe / very safe, Korçë



19 Safety Inspection/Audit, dt. 27.09.2020, at 11:00

20 Safety Inspection/Audit, dt. 23.09.2020, at 10:00

21 Safety Inspection/Audit, dt. 25.09.2020, at 15:00

22 Observation, dt. 27.09.2020, at 19:00

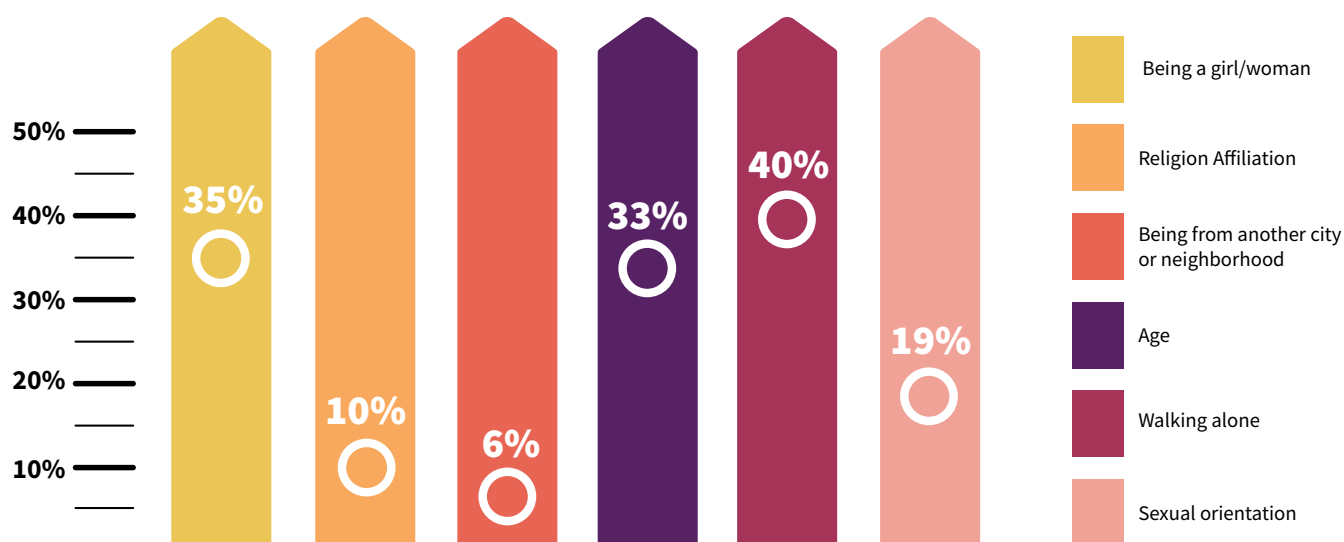
23 Observation, dt. 27.09.2020, at 19:00

24 Focus group with women / girls 16-24 years old, dt. 20.10.2020

The presence of institutions is recognized and emphasized by the majority of respondents. The respondents state that it would be easy for them to locate: the health center (82%), the police station (67%), and the center/NGO/institution that provides services against violence (43%). 58% of respondents state that police officers patrol the area regularly. The presence of institutions and the collaboration among them was highlighted also during the interviews with the representatives of Administrative unit, school, health center and foundation.

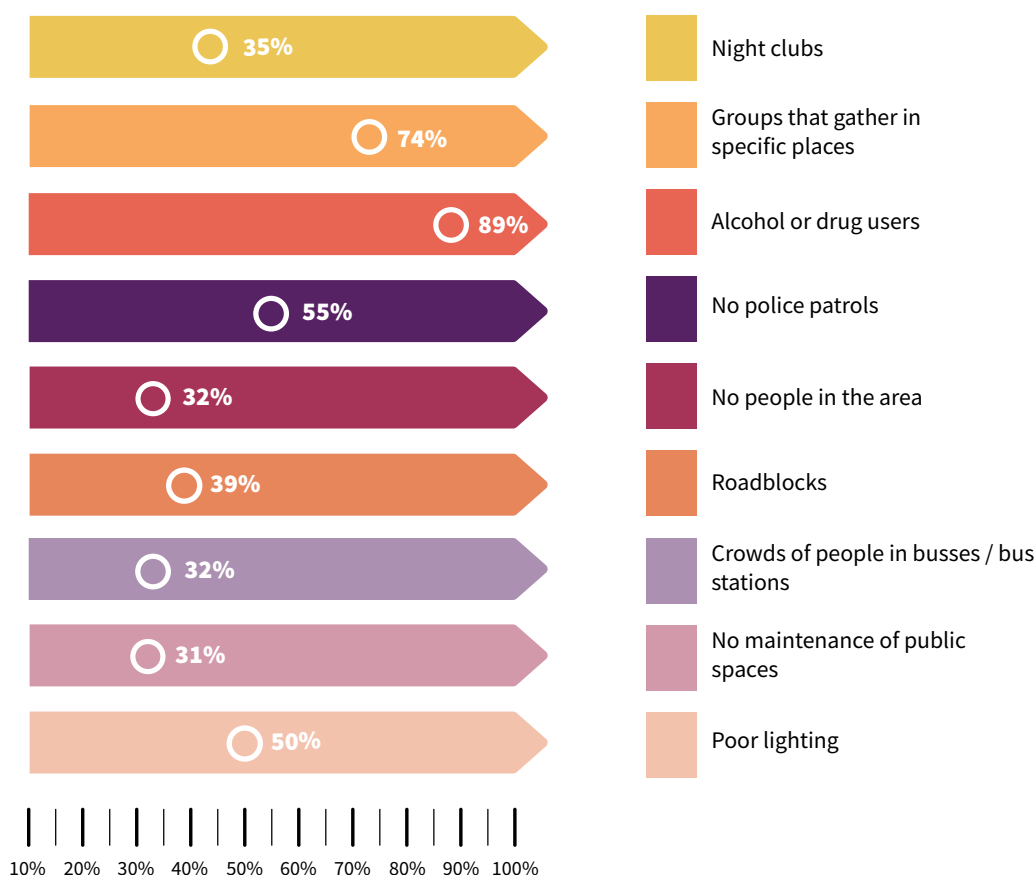
Among others, the research focused on identifying the factors that affect the level of safety in target area. These factors were divided and analyzed into two categories: personal factors, including gender, age, religion affiliations, sexual orientation, origin and walking alone, listed and presented in Graph 2; and other factors that deal with the area's condition, listed and presented in Graph 3.

Graph 2: Percentage of respondents who think that personal factors impact the safety in the area, Korçë



Walking alone in the area is thought to make a person more susceptible to risk by 40% of respondents. Women and girls are perceived to be more susceptible to risk by 35% of respondents.

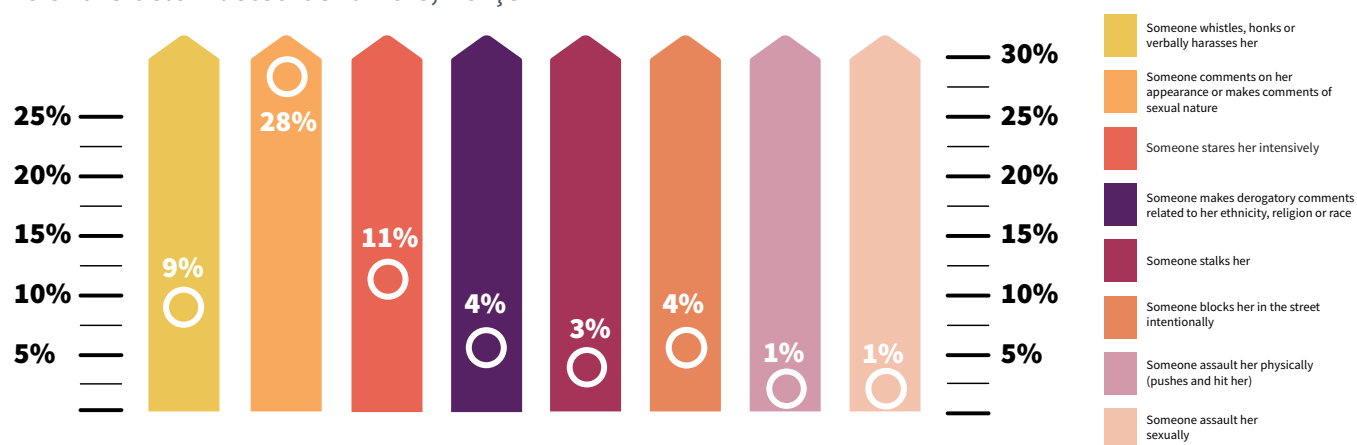
Graph 3: Percentage of respondents who think that the factors listed below affect the area's safety, Korçë



The presence of alcohol or drug users in the area is mentioned as a main factor that affects the safety of the area by 89% of respondents. This same issue was highlighted by other information sources. During focus group meetings, it was stressed out that some drug users gather behind the social center which is attended by children who are often unaccompanied.<sup>25</sup>

Lastly, the team collected information on the type of violence that women and girls were most likely to experience in this area. The collected information is illustrated in Graph 4.

Graph 4: Percentage of respondents who think that it is likely/very likely for a woman/girl to experience one of the below listed behaviors, Korçë



As per the graph, the majority of incidents are verbal. The same type of incidents are noted in the safety inspection/audits. The observed behavior according to safety inspection report is: groups of boys/men get together and throw comments at women/girls passing by.<sup>26</sup>

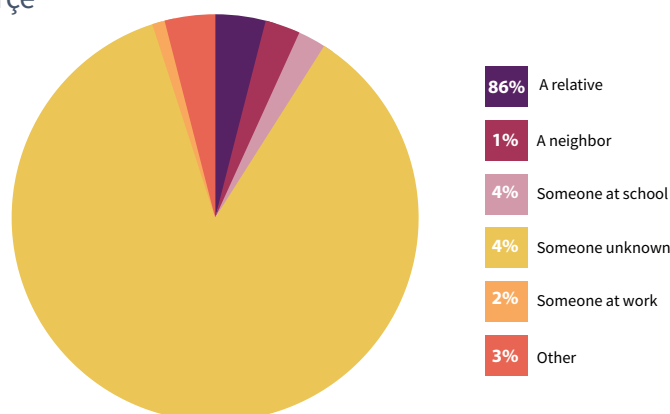
### 3.1.2. General impressions on sexual harassment and violence in Neighborhood No.10, Korçë

Although rare, incidents of sexual harassment or violence do occur in Neighborhood No. 10 in Korçë.

33% of respondents think that incidents of sexual harassment occur rarely. When asked about incidents of sexual violence, this percentage drops to 12%. Respectively, 8% and 1% of respondents think that these incidents (sexual harassment and sexual violence) occur often. It is noted that majority of respondents, respectively 32% and 59% of them state that they have no knowledge of such incidents. Also, during all five interviews, it was stressed out that no incidents of violence occur at all, much less so, of sexual violence.

Identifying whether the perpetrator of sexual harassment or violence is a close, distant or unknown relationship of the victim was of special interest for this research. This information is presented in Graph 5. The majority of respondents, specifically 86% of them think that the incidents of sexual harassment or violence are perpetrated mainly by unknown people. Only 4% of respondents think that sexual harassment or violence are perpetrated by close relatives of the victims.

Graph 5: Percentage of respondents who think that sexual harassment/violence is perpetrated by the persons stated below, Korçë



<sup>25</sup> Focus group with women / girls 26-35 years old, dt. 20.10.2020

<sup>26</sup> Safety Audit, dt. 27.09.2020, at 18:00



Regarding the time when sexual harassment incidents occur, the respondents have two opinions: They occur late at night, expressed by 30% of respondents, or they occur at any time, expressed by 24% of them. A considerable part of respondents, 38% of them state that they don't know. When it comes to sexual violence incidents, the majority of respondents, 66% of them state that they don't know when they occur, while 23% of them think that they occur late at night.

In relation to the place where the sexual harassment incidents occur: 12% of respondents think they occur in the street, 22% of them think they occur in abandoned places, 22% of them think that they occur anywhere, and a considerable percentage of respondents, 37% of them state that they don't know.

In relation to the place where the sexual violence incidents occur, the majority of respondents, 55% of them state that they do not know. The rest, around 40% of respondents state that they occur in abandoned places.

### 3.1.3. General impressions on improving the safety in neighborhood 10, Korçë

Furthermore, the team analyzed the factors that could contribute to improving the safety in the neighborhood or area. In this section, attention was paid to the public institutions which provide support or address issues related to women and girls safety. Half of respondents think that there are institutions that can help with such issues; 22% of them believe that these institutions do not exist, while 28% of respondents state that they have no information. It was noted that the level of trust in these institutions is low. Only one fourth of respondents state that they have a lot of confidence in these institutions; 46% of them have average level of confidence; 20% of them have little confidence while 8% have no confidence at all. The observation missions noted that direction maps / signs pointing to where help could be found in case of emergency were missing.<sup>27</sup>

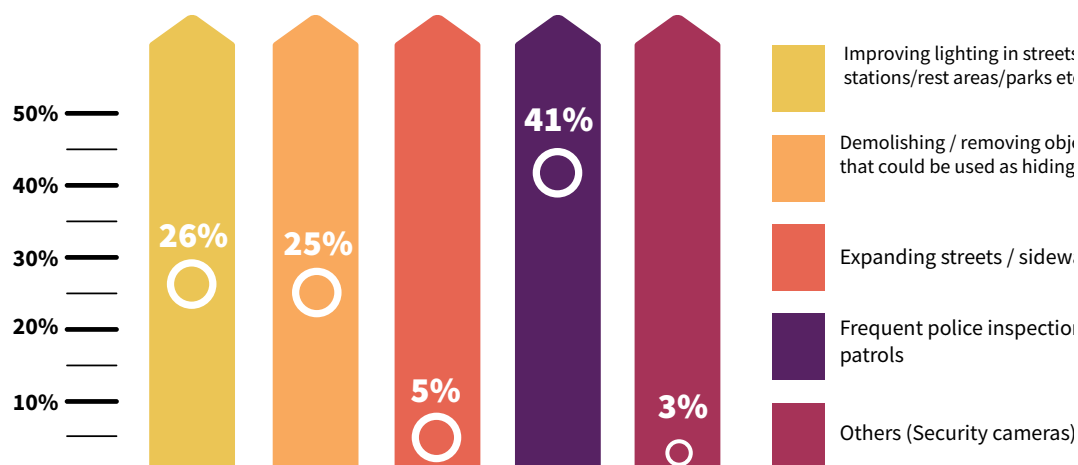
During focus group meetings with women and girls, the participants brought up specific cases where relevant institutions failed to provide the support expected from them.

*"In one case, in our area, our children were physically violated by an older lady who resides in this same neighborhood. She hit the children while they were getting out of the center. We contacted the police authorities who advised us to drop the charges as children do usually create problems to each other and to other community members. They took no steps to prevent the perpetrator who still continues the same behavior with the children who attend the center".<sup>28</sup>*

Another thing noted was that responsible institutions did not provide regular information on sexual harassment and violence. During semi-structured interviews, it was admitted that this information was not disseminated regularly. The employees of Administrative unit, when asked during interviews, whether they provide information on sexual harassment and violence said: - "Yes, when it is requested and when it occurs".<sup>29</sup>

Lastly, the information generated from discussions on "what would help the citizens feel safer in the neighborhood" is summarized in Graph 6 below.

Graph 6: Percentage of respondents who stated that the actions listed below would help them feel safer, Korçë



<sup>27</sup> Observation dt. 21.09.2020, at 19:00

<sup>28</sup> Focus group with women / girls 36-45 years old, dt. 20.10.2020

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Administrative Unit Staff

The main actions that would make citizens feel safer are: Frequent police inspections or patrolling, stated by 41% of respondents; improving street lighting system, by 26% of respondents; and removing structures/objects that could be used as hiding places by 41 % of respondents. Other actions considered necessary by a smaller percentage of respondents were the expansion of street and sidewalks and placing security cameras.

The same findings were confirmed during focus group meetings also.

### 3.2. The safety of women and girls in public spaces in Shkodër

In Shkodër city, the target of the research is Neighborhood No. 1. There are around 7875 families and 31500 residents that live in this neighborhood. There are several institutions located in this area such as: The Prosecutor's Office, the Court of Appeal, two schools, one health center, one community center and one multi-functional center.

The team administered 300 questionnaires in this area, out of which 45% with women/girls and 55% with men/boys. Focus group meetings with women and girls provided the team with extensive information about their perceptions and thoughts on the topic of research. Perceptions and thoughts collected through the 5 interviews with employees of administrative units, education and health sectors, and representatives of a non-governmental organization and a small business were also included in this study. The perceptions collected through questionnaires were further validated through field observations and inspections by the trained research staff.

#### 3.2.1. General Impression on safety in Neighborhood No. 1, Shkodër

Maintenance in Neighborhood No. 1 in Shkodër is not described as satisfactory. Only 40% of respondents believe that the infrastructure in this area, including streets, street lights and general public spaces is adequate. The respondents are generally unsatisfied with the maintenance of the area. The percentage of respondents who believe that the "maintenance service" is good/very good is 30%. Also the observation mission, described the maintenance as "Average".<sup>30</sup>

Regarding the service of "public transportation", 82% of respondents state that this service does not exist. A lack of facilities for people with disabilities is observed in the area, during the observation mission<sup>31</sup>.

*"The infrastructure is very poor. There are no street lights"*<sup>32</sup>

*"The area is lit and there is a sign that indicates the school. However I would want the school area to be better lit, with dedicated lights as it is very difficult to see it at night"*<sup>33</sup>

The focus group meetings identified some areas that are difficult to access not only for citizens but also for service providers.

*"There is a street in this area, known by residents as "Lufta e Miletit". There are several families that live in this street. The street is monitored by security cameras and it is cut off from the rest of neighborhood by a bullet-proof door. And this is done to protect a well-known family which is bound in blood feuds."*<sup>34</sup>

"Places where someone could secretly hide from others" are identified as problematic by 56% respondents. Field Observation missions listed "objects/places where someone could secretly hide from others" such as: dumpsters, back alleys or partial constructions.<sup>35</sup>

The respondents were asked about the level of safety in the spaces that are used often by the majority of residents such as: streets/ neighborhood alleys, entryways to schools or apartment blocks, parks, etc. As can be seen in Graph 7, the majority of respondents consider these spaces safe or very safe.

30 Observation, dt. 01.10.2020, at: 11:00

31 Observation, dt. 25.09.2020, at 20:30

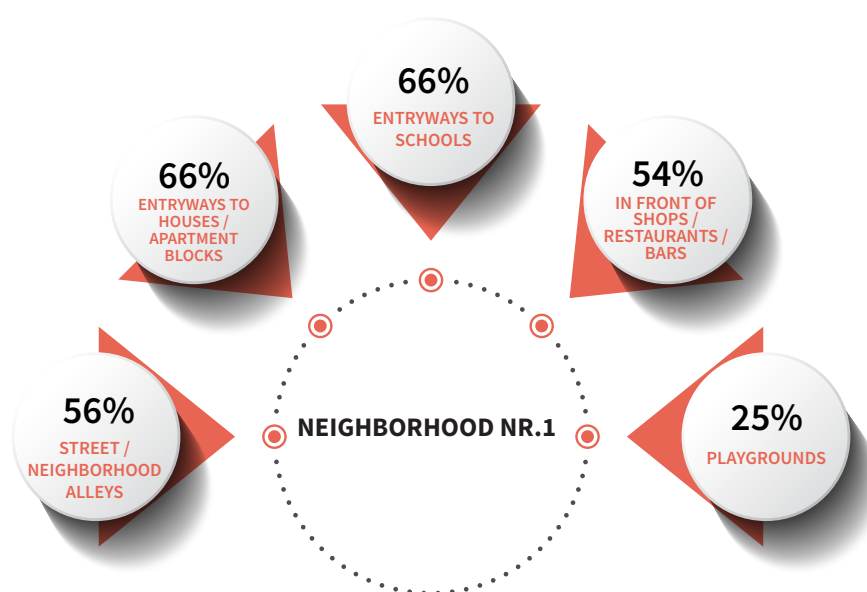
32 Interview with the health center staff

33 Observation, dt. 02.10.2020, at 20:30

34 Focus group meeting with women / girls 56-45 years old dt. 28.10.2020

35 Observation, dt. 02.10.2020, at 20:30

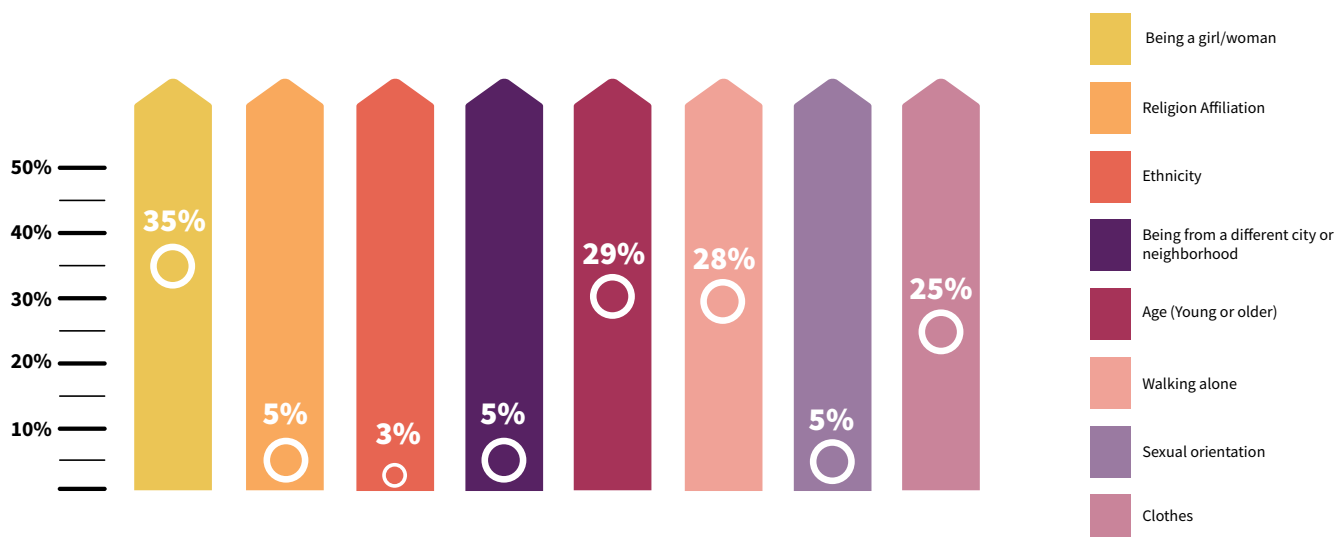
Graph 7: Percentage of respondents who believe the below public spaces are safe / very safe, Shkodër



The presence of institutions is recognized and emphasized by the majority of respondents. The respondents state that it would be easy for them to locate: the health center (83%), the police station (44%) and the center/NGO/institution that provides services against violence (18%). 83% of respondents state that police patrols the area regularly.

This research was particularly interested to identify the factors that affect the level of safety in the target area. These factors were divided and analyzed into two categories: personal factors, including gender, age, religion affiliations, sexual orientation, origin and walking alone, analyzed and presented in Graph 8; and other factors, listed and presented in Graph 9.

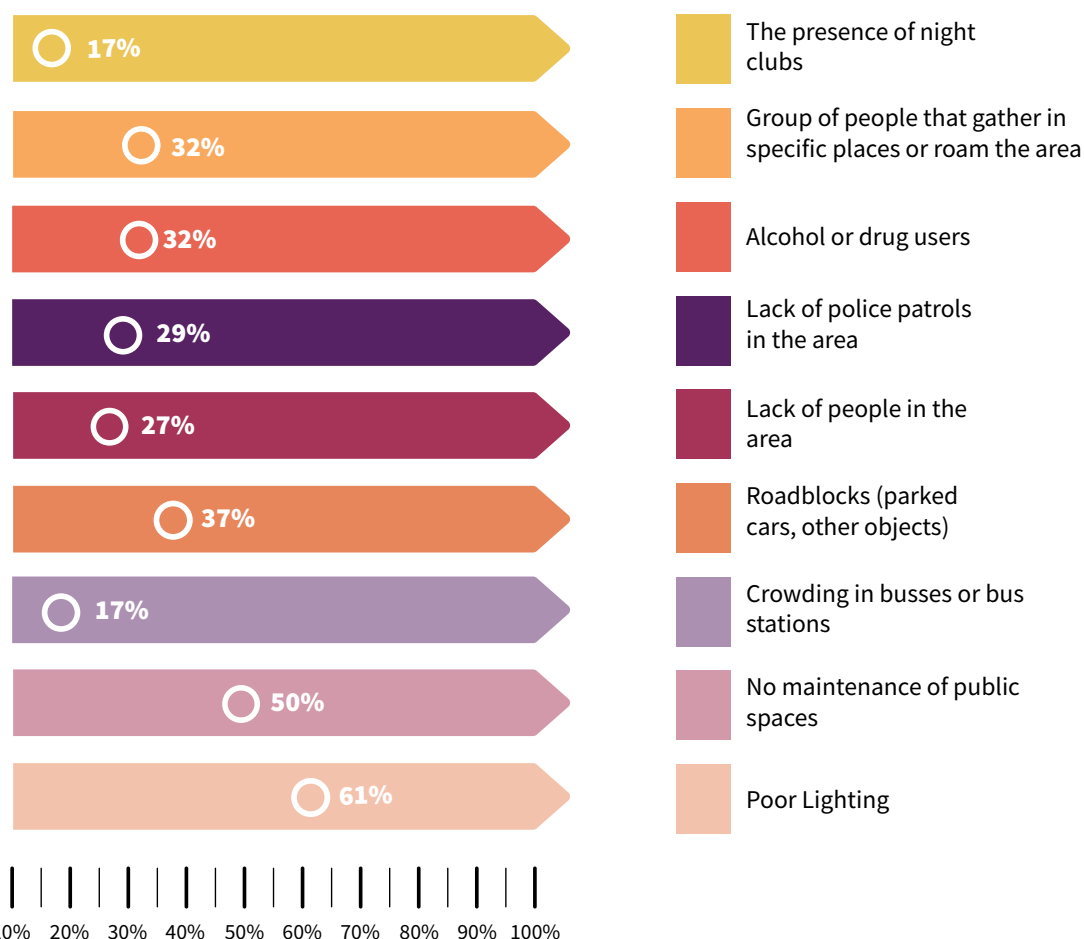
Graph 8: Percentage of respondents who think that personal factors affect the safety in the area, Shkodër



Women and girls are perceived to be more susceptible to risk by 35% of respondents. Walking alone, age and attire are also considered to increase the susceptibility to risk.



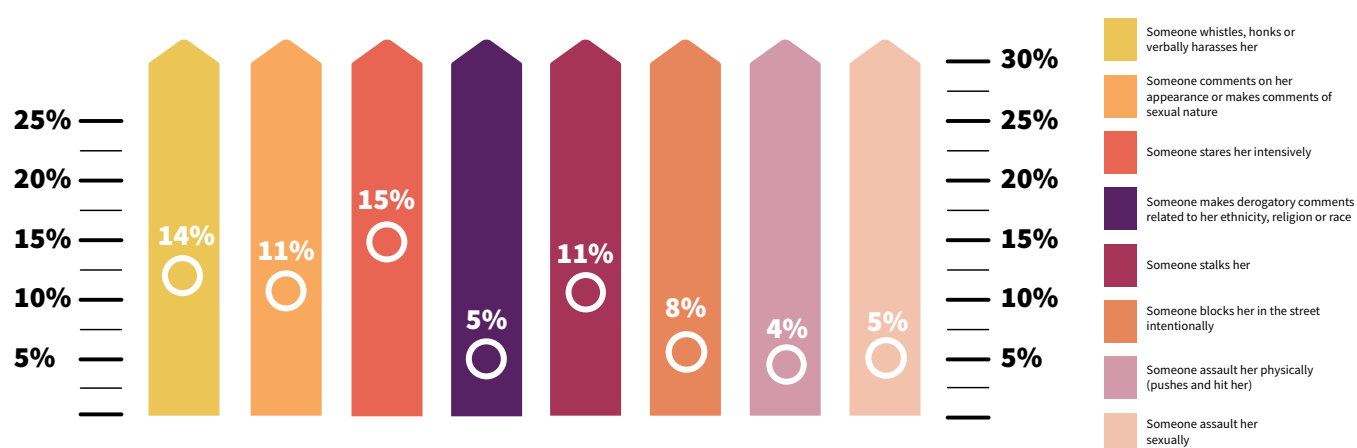
Graph 9: Percentage of respondents who think that the factors listed below affect the area's safety, Shkodër



Poor lighting is identified as a main factor that affects the safety in the area, by 61% of respondents.

Lastly, the team collected information on the type of violence that women and girls were most likely to experience in this area. The collected information is presented in Graph 10.

Graph 10: Percentage of respondents who think that it is possible/very possible for a woman/girl to experience one of the behaviors listed below, Shkodër



As per the graph, the majority of incidents are verbal. The same type of incidents were noted in the safety audit reports. Although, crowds or gathering of people are not common in this area, the intensive staring creates negative feelings and vibes.

“There were no crowds of people. There were just 5-6 people in one bar. I felt unsafe just from the way they stared”.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Safety Audit, dt. 27.09.2020, at 20:30

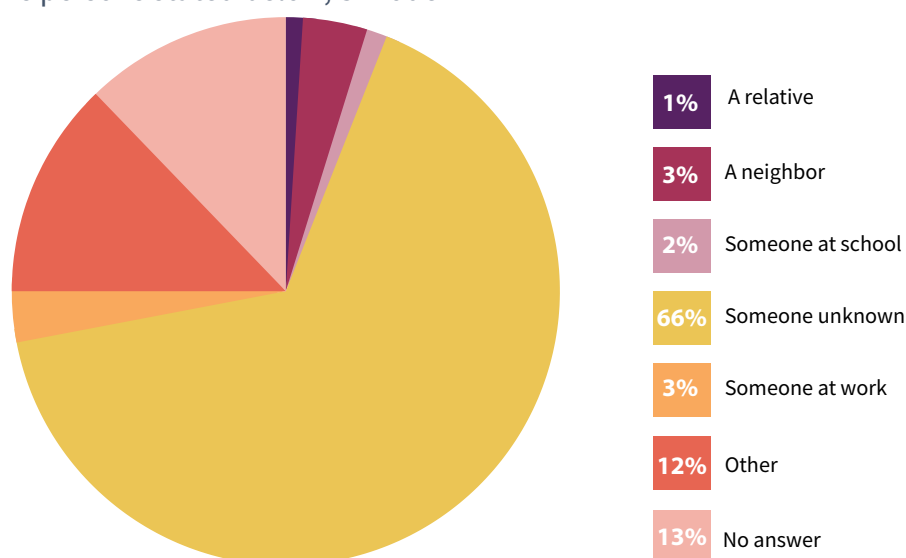
### 3.2.2. General impression on sexual harassment and violence in neighborhood no. 1, Shkodër

The majority of respondents state that “sexual harassment or violence incidents” do not occur or they do not have information about them. 41% of respondents think that “sexual harassment” incidents do not occur; 47% of respondents think that “sexual violence” incidents do not occur. It is worth mentioning that a large percentage of respondent, respectively 44% and 45% of them state that they do not know whether incidents of “sexual harassment or sexual violence” do occur. Also, during all five interviews it was stressed out that there are no incidents of violence at all, much less so, of sexual violence. Focus groups discussions negate also the occurrence of such incidents.

“As we said before, we have never heard about incidents of sexual harassment or sexual violence in the public spaces of this neighborhood.”<sup>37</sup>

Identifying whether the perpetrator of sexual harassment or violence is a close, distant or unknown relationship of the victim was of special interest for this research. This information is presented in Graph 11. The majority of respondents, specifically 66% of them do think that the incidents of sexual harassment or violence are perpetrated mainly by unknown people.

Graph 11: Percentage of respondents that think that sexual harassment/violence is most likely to be perpetrated by the persons stated below, Shkodër



Regarding the time, when the “sexual harassment or sexual violence” incidents occur, the majority of respondents, respectively 76% and 89% of them state that they do not know. In regard to the time when sexual harassment incidents occur, 12% of respondents think that they occur late at night, while 10% of them think that they occur at any time. Regarding “sexual violence” incidents, the percentages are respectively 7% and 3%.

In relation to the place where the “sexual harassment or sexual violence” incidents are most likely to occur, the majority of respondents, respectively 69% and 74% of them state that they do not know. The rest, around 18% of respondents think that these incidents may occur in abandoned places.

### 3.2.3. General impressions on improving the safety in Neighborhood No. 1, Shkodër

The respondents were also asked if they knew about any institution that worked with women and girls’ safety issues. Only 13% of respondents confirmed that there are institutions that can provide assistance; 63% of respondents stated that there are no such institutions, while 25% of them responded that they have no information about it. It was noted that the level of trust in these institutions is not at high levels. Only 13% of respondents stated that they have a lot of trust in these institutions; 14% of them have moderate level of trust; 27% of them have little level of trust, while 45% of respondents have no trust at all in these institutions.

During focus group meetings it was pointed out that women have always tried to address the problems on their own, without seeking institutional assistance.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Focus group with women/girls 18-25 years old, dt. 28.10.2020

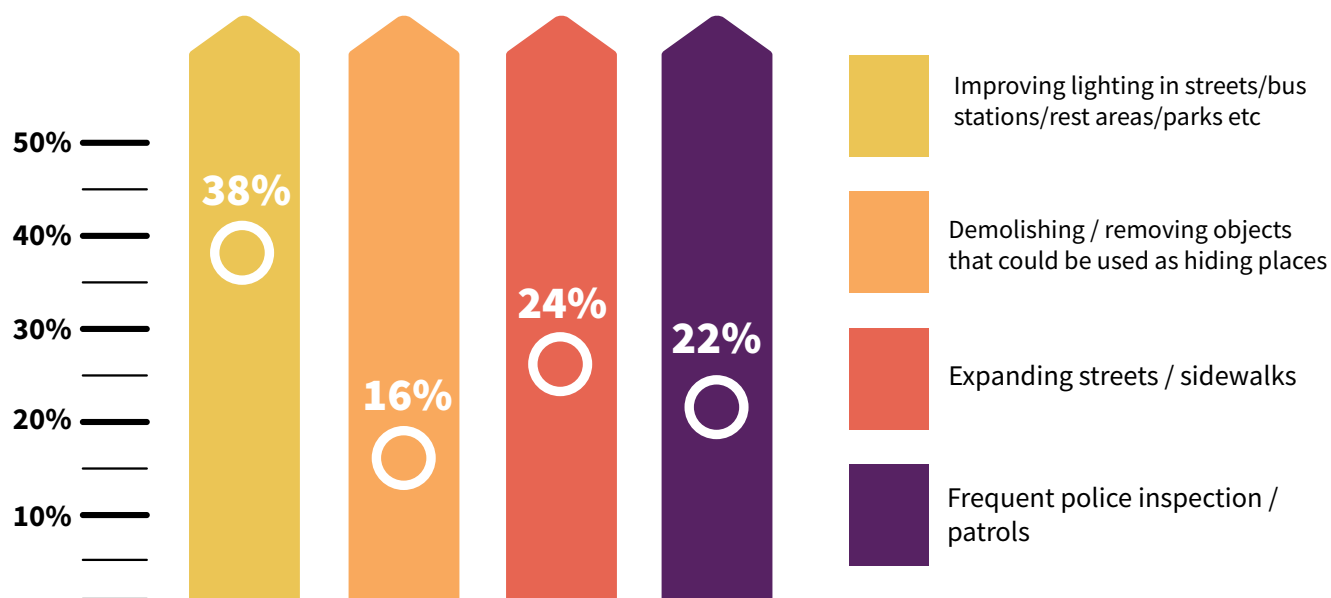
<sup>38</sup> Fokus grup me gra/ vajza mbi 45 vjeç, dt. 28.10.2020

Another finding was that responsible institutions did not provide regular information on sexual harassment and violence incidents. During structured interviews, the institution representatives admitted that they provide information on sexual harassment and violence to other line institutions but not to the public itself. The organizations of civil society remain the main provider of such information.

*“We provide regular information to the schools that we work with. In our particular case, we collaborate closely with “Azem Hajdari” school. We have prepared training curricula and have trained the faculty and the students on: cases of violence, identification of violence, protection, referring and reporting systems. The students are also informed on the responsible institutions where to report cases of violence.”<sup>39</sup>*

Lastly, the information generated from the discussions on “what would help the citizens feel safer in the neighborhood” is summarized in Graph 12.

Graph 12: Percentage of respondents who confirmed that the actions listed below would help them feel safer, Shkodër



38% of respondents listed “improving the lighting system” as the main action to make them feel safer. “Expanding the streets and sidewalks” and “frequent police inspections or patrolling” are considered important by respectively 24% and 22% of respondents. “Demolishing or removing structures” that could be used as hiding places by perpetrators is considered important by 16% of respondents.

The very same actions were discussed during interviews and focus group meetings also. “Paving the streets” and “removing the stray dogs” were some other actions that would increase the perception of safety, according to the discussions held.

## 4. CONCLUSION

At the end of this study, it is concluded that none of the target areas can be considered completely safe from sexual harassment or violence. The situation is somewhat more problematic in Shkodër.

### 4.1 Conclusions for Neighborhood No. 10 in Korçë

Some of the factors that decrease the level of safety in Neighborhood No. 10 in Korçë are:

- The presence of alcohol and drug users, also crowds of people in specific areas are the main factors that decrease the safety in the target area.
- Limited spaces between buildings or streets, as well as roadblocks can pose a risk to the residents living and being active in the area.
- Poor infrastructure maintenance makes residents feel uncomfortable.
- Poor public transportation service, including crowding at bus stations, prolonged travel time puts citizens, especially women and girls at higher risk when they are using this service.

<sup>39</sup> Structured interview with the representatives of Non-Governmental

- Lack of / or poor lighting system on certain areas increases the level of risk for the residents using these areas.
- The presence of hiding places, such as old cars or old, abandoned buildings create a feeling of unsafety among the residents.
- The lack of frequent police patrols decreases the level of safety for the residents.

Regardless of the issues listed above, the residents of Neighborhood No.10 in Korçë city feel generally safe in this area - in the streets, entryways to institutions, bus stations, in front of bars and restaurants, parks and gardens.

The main institutions such as the health center, police station, or other organizations are easy to locate and access from majority of citizens.

People walking alone are considered at higher risk in this area. Age, gender (being a woman/girl) as well as the attire affect the level of safety. Sexual orientation, ethnicity, coming from a different city/ neighborhood or religion affiliation do not seem to constitute significant risk factors.

Some incidents that women and girls may experience in public spaces are: harassment in the form of whistling, honking or verbal harassment from people driving, comments on their appearance or comments with sexual content, intensive staring, stalking, intentional stopping/blocking in the street, or derogatory comments related to ethnicity, religion or race.

The incidents of sexual harassment seem to be more prevalent compared to the ones of sexual violence. These incidents occur predominantly in isolated places, however many citizens believe that these incidents could occur anywhere and anytime.

#### 4.2 Conclusions for neighborhood no. 1 in Shkodër

The factors that decrease the level of safety in Neighborhood No. 1 in Shkodër are more or less the same as the ones in the city of Korçë, although some of them have a bigger effect on the residents.

- Poor lighting system is listed as the main factor to decrease the safety level in the area.
- Limited spaces between buildings or streets, as well as roadblocks can pose a risk to the residents of the area.
- Poor maintenance of the area – littered streets, overfilled dumpsters make the residents feel uncomfortable.
- The lack of public transportation increases the risk level, as the residents have to walk or use alternative transportation means.
- The presence of hiding places, such as alleyways, dumpsters or partial constructions create a feeling of unsafety among the residents.
- The presence of alcohol and drug users is mentioned as a factor that causes unsafety.
- Lack of spaces for entertainment is listed as an important factor that affects the safety.

Nevertheless, the residents feel relatively safe in the area. The percentage of respondents that confirm that they feel safe in the area is lower than the one in Korçë, however.

The main institutions such as the health center, police station, or other organizations are easy to locate and access from the majority of residents. The police officers patrol the area regularly.

The most important factor that affects the safety in Neighborhood No. 1 in Shkodër is gender - “being a woman or girl”. Other important factors are age and attire. Sexual orientation, ethnicity, being from another city or neighborhood or religion affiliations do not seem to constitute significant risk factors

Similar to Korçë, some incidents that women and girls may experience in public spaces are: harassment in the form of whistling, honking or verbal harassment from people driving, comments on appearance or comments with sexual content, intensive staring, stalking, intentional stopping/blocking in the street, or derogatory comments related to ethnicity, religion or race.

It is noted that majority of respondent’s state that they have no information about the occurrence of “sexual harassment and violence” incidents.

## 5. RECOMMENDATION

It is of the utmost importance that municipalities take into account the opinions of the residents, before planning and implementing infrastructure interventions in these areas. The study that we are presenting and other similar studies would serve as a very good source of information.

### 5.1 Recommendation to improve the safety level in Neighborhood No. 10 in Korçë

First of all, the municipality should take additional actions to improve the neighborhood's infrastructure, which would increase the women and girls' safety in public spaces. More specifically:

- Improving the lighting, especially in alleyways and entryways to buildings, houses and apartment blocks.
- Demolishing and removing all objects that could serve as hiding places, specifically: old, battered and abandoned cars and buildings.
- Removing roadblocks. Addressing the lack of sufficient space between buildings and streets should be part of the area's urban plans.
- Providing better maintenance of the area. The Municipality should take action to make the area accessible to people with disabilities, placing ramps, expanding the sidewalks etc.
- Improving the public transportation, by improving the bus station infrastructure and by increasing the frequency of transportation during rush hours to avoid crowding at bus stations.
- Placing maps or directive signs to orient and guide residents and visitors to institutions where they can find help and assistance when and if needed.

The municipality should collaborate with other institutions to provide an integrated approach to the cases of violence specifically to cases of sexual violence:

- The Coordinated Referral Mechanism should be active not only to manage specific cases but also to disseminate information on violence, on reporting mechanisms and the available services provided by different institutions.
- The municipality should collaborate with police authorities to increase the frequency of police patrols in the area, also to remove alcohol and drug users and groups of people who gather at particular places, making them unsafe.

### 5.2 Recommendation to improve the safety level in Neighborhood No. 1 in Shkodër

To improve the safety level in this area, the municipality should primarily invest in improving the infrastructure, specifically:

- Improving the lighting system to cover all the area should be a priority of the municipality. Apart main streets, lighting should be provided in alleyways, and entryway to institutions, buildings, houses and apartment blocks. Placing lights around the dumpsters' ground would make the residents feel safer.
- Placing a bigger focus on maintaining the area, specifically paving the streets, picking up and removing the trash and cleaning the dumpsters.
- Demolishing and removing all objects that can potentially serve as hiding places for perpetrators, such as old, abandoned buildings.
- Removing all roadblocks that limit mobility. The lack of sufficient space between buildings and streets should be included in the area's urban plans.
- Giving people with disabilities access to this area. As such the municipality should take action to place ramps, expand the sidewalks etc.
- Giving residents of this area access to the public transportation. The Municipality should make sure that the bus stations are located beside main institutions such as schools, health centers etc.
- Building and expanding green areas, but also playgrounds for children and other entertainment venues for other age groups.

- Placing maps or directing signs to orient and guide residents and visitors to institutions where they can find help and assistance when and if needed.

The Municipality should collaborate with other institutions to raise the residents' awareness and access to information on violence and its forms, reporting mechanism as well as the services that are provided by different institutions.

The Municipality should coordinate with police authorities to find ways to remove alcohol or drug users from this area as their presence affects the level of residents' safety. The municipality should also focus its attentions to some specific areas that were identified as more problematic by this study; responsible institutions find it hard to intervene in these areas also.

### 5.3 General Recommendations

The municipalities of Korçë and Shkodër should consider the findings of this study when planning infrastructure intervention or services in these areas.

- The findings of this study should be shared with State Police, recommending them to take special actions: (i) to increase the frequency of police patrols during hours of the day and particularly late hours of the evening, especially in the city of Korçë; (ii) to increase the community's trust in police authorities and their ability to manage specific cases of violence such as sexual harassment and violence, using community educational and policing strategies.
- When planning new interventions in the target neighborhoods, the Municipalities of Korçë and Shkodër and The Agency for Territory Development should consider developing and extending the green areas (especially in Shkodër Municipality), building playgrounds and entertainment venues for different age groups, appropriate also for people with special needs. Maintenance projects should be regular and responsible in order to increase the value of investment and interventions.
- All planned intervention in target areas should consider the perceptions and information provided by women, girls, men and boys of different age groups, who reside or visit the target areas often. When available, conclusions of other similar studies, should be taken in consideration.
- It is of the utmost importance to regularly monitor and evaluate all implemented interventions. There should be regular meetings and observation missions to monitor and evaluate the actual investments and to assess the residents' perceptions on public space safety. The findings and results of such missions and studies should guide additional interventions in these areas, in order to turn them into safe haven from any type of violence, including sexual harassment and violence.
- The main responsibility of CRM is to manage domestic violence cases and to undertake actions for preventing and reducing this form of violence. However, working to prevent and reduce other forms of violence against women, including sexual violence, should not be left out. Discussing the issues of sexual harassment and violence experienced by women and girls in public spaces with CRM membership, especially during ENT meetings would help CRM be better prepared to educate and inform the community but also to better manage these cases of violence.





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