

SAFE CITIES

SAFETY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN PUBLIC SPACES IN DEVOLL AND
PRRENJAS



February 2022
Observatory for Children and youth Rights

This study report on safe cities, focusing on the safety of women and girls from sexual harassment and other forms of violence in public spaces, was prepared by the "Observatory for Children and Youth Rights" thanks to the financing and support of the Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in implementation of the **project** "Tackling the root causes of discrimination against women in Albania" **in cooperation with Forum for Equitable Development**. The opinions and views expressed in this report are of the authors' team and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia or the Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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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.[1]
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.[2]
Neighborhood	is a territorial subdivision of the municipality in urban areas.[3]
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 of women and girls.[4]
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. [5]
Sexual Harassment	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. [6]
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
SIGI	SIGI or otherwise the OECD Development Centre's Social and Gender Institutions Index is a mechanism measuring discrimination against women in social institutions (formal and informal laws, social norms and practices) extended to 180 countries, including Albania.

Safety audit

A safety audit is a process of gathering information to assess the risks and hazards in one area of open public space. It is performed by local independent experts regardless of gender, age, or profession to evaluate the efficiency, reliability, and effectiveness of health and safety systems of targeted areas. These safety audits are undertaken on different days of the week and diverse times of the day and night. For the purpose of this study, the local independent experts are elected to be girls and women for bringing the safety sensitivity of gender perspective in public areas.

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1. Introduction

Every woman and girl can be a victim of violence regardless of nationality, ethnicity, age, or profession. Worldwide, 1 in 3 women (30%) have experienced physical and/or sexual violence during her lifetime.[7] While in most cases it is reported that violence exerted by an intimate partner, where 27% of women aged 15-49 and who have been in a relationship report experiencing some form of violence,[8] harassment and violence exerted by other persons also remains an issue that needs to be further elaborated.

Regarding the situation of violence against women and girls in Albania, from the 2018 survey results that: 3 in 4 women or 75.4% of women reported that violence against women is a major problem in Albania, and 70.8% of women thought sexual violence against women and girls is a major problem in Albania. In addition, 2 in 3 women or 69.9% of women reported that sexual harassment of women and girls is a major problem in Albania and 2 in 3 women or 68.4% reported that in Albania it is a major problem to persecute women.[10]

This study carried out by the Observatory in the two 2 municipalities Devoll and Prrenjas is based on the 2 dimensions of the Index of Social and Gender Institutions, which are: restricted physical integrity (violence against women) and restricted civil liberties (right to movement). The *restricted physical integrity* (RPI) dimension captures social institutions that increase women's and girls' vulnerability to a range of forms of violence and limit women's control over their bodies and reproductive autonomy.

The restricted civil liberties (RCL) dimension captures discriminatory laws and practices restricting women's access, participation and voice in the public and social spheres.[10]

SIGI covers four dimensions of social institutions, including major socio-economic areas affecting women's lives. These dimensions are: discrimination in families; restricted physical integrity; limited access to production and financial resources and restricted civil liberties. Based on the SIGI report, in 2019, Albania was categorized as a country with a low level of discrimination in SIGI (23%)[1], showing progress from previous years, where in 2014 Albania was categorized as a country with a high level of discrimination in SIGI. [2] The dimension "Limited Body Integrity", in the 2019 SIGI report, is estimated at a low level (16%), pointing to positive steps taken from 2014, where it is reported at a medium level (26%). The dimension "Restricted civil liberties", noticed that this dimension has also marked progress, where in 2019 it is estimated at a low level (13%), and 2014 is estimated at medium level (45%).

Despite the progress Albania has marked in these 4 dimensions of SIGI over the course of 5 years (2014-2019), it is noted that the indicator related to women who do not feel safe to walk alone at night is 70% worth for 2019. The higher the value the higher the inequality which makes this indicator of the dimension "Restricted civil liberties" remain among the indicators with the highest and problematic value.

Based on the two SIGI's dimensions, restricted physical integrity (violence against women) and restricted civil liberties (right to movement), as well as based on the previous studies carried out by the Observatory on the safety of women and girls in public spaces, this next study I undertaken in the Municipalities of Devol and Prrenjas. This study specifically targeted violence against women and girls in public spaces, perceptions about sexual harassment and violence, as well as the impact that situations of isolation from pandemics may have caused to the safety of women and girls in public spaces. The safety of women and girls in these spaces is a very complex and difficult issue to assess. Each woman and girl perceive in different ways the feeling of security or the risk of experiencing harassment or violence. But being a perception, it becomes very difficult to measure and evaluate the experiences of women and girls. On the other hand, it is this perception that defines how women and girls interact with public spaces.

Women and girls often feel unsafe and endangered in public spaces. Previous studies carried out by the Observatory on this subject in various areas of Tirana, Shkodra and Korca have found that the safety of women and girls in public spaces is still not at the right level. On the other hand, each area has different specifics which also determine the level of security. This once again highlights the need for data collection for specific areas. This would enable sufficient information for the interventions needed in this area. [13][14][15]

Based on the safety problems of women and girls in public spaces/environments in the municipalities of Renjas and Devoll, or perceptions and experiences regarding sexual harassment and violence, a series of recommendations have been prepared to local authorities. These recommendations address the need for the proper definition of acts, policies and practices for safe and green public spaces; as well as in terms of preventing violence against women and girls and promoting freedom of movement for girls and women.

Building such practices, introduced by civil society actors co-ordinating not only the institutional responsibilities of local government, but also the needs of residents, citizens' perceptions and observations of independent experts, - is a model that ensures that public investment is made in the country and timely, enabling the provision of the life and dignity of every resident and citizen, regardless of age, gender or belonging.



2. Methodology

This study report is focused on two municipalities in Korca County: The Municipality of Devoll and prrenjas Municipality. This study was undertaken during December 2021, where a total of 400 questionnaires were carried out with randomly selected citizens on the streets. Independent eskpert trained by the Observatory about the observation missions and security inspections, carried out a total of eight (8) structured observation missions at different times and locations, and eight (8) inspections (audits) of safety on the road, even these at different times of the day.

This study is designed aimed at collecting, processing and presenting accurate and reliable data on the safety of women and girls in public spaces. Analysis of this data has generated sufficient information where decision-making will be based on the steps needed to ensure better access to green and safe public spaces for women and girls.

For the drafting of this study are used data from a range of information sources such as: revision of existing literature, questionnaires with residents or persons who frequent public spaces in these municipalities, security audits, as well as observations in the area. The data collection was carried out through a previously established and tested methodology. Special attention has been paid to the collection of data for 2 specific areas of SIGI: Restricted civil liberties (right of movement) and Limited Body Integrity (violence against women).

Through this study, the aim was to identify the perception of citizens on what would make them feel safe and protected in public spaces and to conduct their voices near the institutions responsible for the investment and maintenance of selected areas. With such data, the decision-making process based on them will be more likely to achieve effective results by making areas targeted in this study zones where every woman and girl will feel safe and protected.

2.1. Goal and Objectives

Objectives:

1. Determine factors that hinder the free movement of women and girls in public spaces;
2. Better explain issues related to the safety of women and girls in selected areas;
3. Identify the necessary policies/ practices/ steps for making public spaces green, accessible and safe for all women and girls and inform decision-makers at the local level about these issues.

Goal

Identifying factors that determine the safety of women and girls in public spaces and necessary steps to make these spaces green, accessible and safe for all women and girls.

2.2. Data Collection

This study was carried out in two different municipalities of Korca region: Municipality of Devoll and Municipality Prrrenjas. In each municipality, data were collected through instruments as follows:

- *Questionnaires with citizens (400)*

In each municipality, 200 questionnaires were filled out with persons who frequented the area. Respondents belong to the group over 16 years. The selection of respondents was random by choosing the third or fourth pedestrian. Through the questionnaire's information that was gathered consisted on:

1. The generalities of the respondents;
2. Their general impression of safety in the neighborhood/zone;
3. Their general impression of sexual harassment and violence;
4. The impact of COVID-19 on the safety of women and girls in public spaces;
5. General impression on improving neighborhood/ area security.

- *Structured observation missions (8)*

In each municipality, 4 structured monitoring missions were carried out during daylight hours and evening in the selected areas.

Observations were carried out in each municipality during the hours: 08:00–10:00; 12:00–14:00; 16:00–18:00; and 8:00–10 p.m. a) These missions were undertaken by a group of 2 people who were equipped with a guide on what they would observe. Observations focused on various characteristics of the area such as lighting, maintenance, movement of people in the area, signaling as well as existing services or lack thereof. The purpose of these missions was to collect factual information on the existence of these characteristics. These missions were also documented with photographs.

- *Road safety inspections (8)*

a) 4 road safety audits were carried out at each municipality. These inspections were carried out by a group of 4–6 trained girls, who moved to the area and kept notes on their perception of different aspects of security in the area according to a form drafted in advance. The form included various aspects such as: the feel of the fear over the area, lighting, maintenance, movement of people in the area, signalling and the existence of services in the area. Monitoring here was carried out with the aim of assessing the sensations and perception of women and girls on the impact that each of the above-mentioned characteristics has on the level of safety.

2.3. Ethical principles and limitations of study

Despite this study being based mainly on perceptions rather than personal experiences of respondents, ethical principles of conducting studies on violence against women and girls were taken into consideration. Staff engaged in data collection were trained in advance through an online training. During the training, the way interviewers would approach people who would fill out questionnaires and how field monitoring and auditions would be performed. During the training, staff were introduced to data collection instruments and each question was explained in detail. Special importance was also devoted to ethical issues where staff were instructed how to ensure the confidentiality of the data collected. Staff were also informed of existing support services for women and girls' victims/survivors of violence, information to be considered in case of need.

During the completion of this study, some difficulties and limitations were encountered. *First*, the perspective of public servants or service providers in these areas was not part of this study.

Second, no preliminary information was gathered on the plans of the respective municipalities to invest in the area, which would provide basic data on security readiness in these areas.

Also, being a perception-based study, its findings may face controversy from other residents of these areas or interest groups.

3. General findings from the study

The findings of this study are based on data collected through 400 questionnaires with citizens, 8 observation missions and 8 security audits.

Participants in questionnaires were 62% *women/girls* and 38% *men/boys*. 83% of respondents belong to the age of 16-29. 44% of respondents have completed secondary education, while 28% of them have completed university/postgraduate studies. 43% of respondents have declared to be unemployed, 36% are employed, while the rest are students, retired or beneficiaries of Disability Assistance (DA) (according to the decision of the Medical Commission for Assignment of Ability to Work (KMCA)). 6% of respondents (22 respondents) belong to an ethnic group of which 13 are Roma and 9 Egyptians. Only 3% of respondents suffer from disability problems.

Questions in the questionnaire were gathered according to the three main categories:

- General impression about neighborhood/area security
- General impression about sexual harassment and violence
- General impression of improved safety in the neighborhood/area

Special attention was paid to the impact of COVID-19 on the safety of women and girls in public spaces.

Both areas reviewed in this study are reported to have adequate infrastructure and generally sufficient spaces. Care or maintenance in the area is presented at relatively satisfactory levels. As for the public transport service, in Prrenjas this service looks relatively good, while in Devoll this service leaves to be desired, where 48% of respondents claim that this service does not exist.

Respondents in Prrenjas are relatively satisfied with the opportunities for fun, where they are confused: playgrounds, the Cultural Centre, the sports corner, the gym, the library, the park, the boulevard, as well as the centre in service of third age people. The situation is different in Devoll, where some interviewees people highlight the lack of public spaces for entertainment and play, as a result of the missing of a children's playground or the construction of a boulevard.

In terms of safety in the area, 3 from 4 interviewed citizens, or 77% of respondents in both cities say they feel safe on the roads/environments they usually frequent. Respondents were asked how safe they feel in: the streets/ alleys of the neighborhood; entrances to houses/palaces; garden/school entrances; in front of shops/ bars/ restaurants/ points of the lottery; Bus stations and flower/playgrounds, - where about 80% of respondents, or 4 to 5 respondents expressed themselves as being very safe/safe when frequenting these surroundings. Elements that affect security, such as lighting or the existence of places where one can hide without being distinguished from others, are generally seen with a positive eye from respondents in these cities.

Respondents in both cities say they find it easy to find or go to the health centre or the police commissary, while in terms of centres/NGOs/other institutions that provide services against violence, are accessible to Prrenjas but appear to be missing in Devoll. The police presence is visible in both areas, but it is reported to be higher presented in Prrenjas.

It was further analysed what makes a person expose more to the risk when moving to the area by analyzing factors that could affect safety, as: gender (being a girl/woman); religious affiliation, ethnicity; to be from another city or neighborhood; age; only (unaccompanied); sexual orientation and clothing. In both areas, factors that pose risk are considered: gender, age, only (unaccompanied); although the percentage of respondents who consider these elements to be factors that affect the safety of women and girls does not appear high. This percentage ranges from 19%-27% in Prrenjas and 41%-48% in Devoll. As the other factor affecting the safety of women and girls in Devoll is also listed as such by 42% of respondents. We consider that the perception of citizens in Devoll and Prrenjas regarding “the safety of women when walking only at night” remains at high problematic levels as reported for Albania in the SIGI report for 2019.

Recently, the impact of public environments and people frequenting them at the safety level of women and girls in public environments has been analysed. Respondents were asked if they view the elements below as factors affecting their safety in the area, as: poor lighting; lack of maintenance of public spaces; the flux of people on buses/bus stops; road blocks (parked cars, various objects); lack of people in the area; the lack of police patrols and groups that stay in certain places or come around the area. In Prrenjas, as the factor that most affects security in the area, poor lighting is mentioned by 46% of respondents, while in Devoll there are groups that stay in certain places or come around the area by 29% of respondents. Other characteristics are considered to affect safety in the area by a relatively low percentage of respondents.

In terms of the form of incidents, the situation in Prrenjas is more secure where respondents generally think it is little possible for a woman/girl to experience a form of sexual harassment, much less a form of violence. The opposite occurs in Devoll where respondents say it is relatively possible (to a degree 2–3 out of 5) for a girl to experience forms of sexual harassment. The possibility of women/girls being subjected to sexual violence is perceived higher where most respondents perceive it very possible (on a scale 1–2 out of 5) to occur such incidents. As possible perpetrators of violence are mostly considered to be someone unknown. Some respondents think that harassment and sexual violence occur late at night, while the rest (almost the same part) thinks it could happen any hour. Referring to the places when these incidents may occur, respondents believe that it could happen mostly on abandoned corner, but it could happen anywhere also.

The situation created by COVID-19 has also had its impact on the way public spaces are used by residents. In both areas it is accepted that during this period the movement of people in

the area has been reduced, the frequency of public spaces, as well as the frequency of buses. In terms of safety in public spaces, most respondents in Devoll feel that COVID-19 has not influenced security or the answer that they do not know. Of those who think COVID-19 has influenced security in public spaces, most think it has made these spaces safer. While in Devoll 46% of respondents think that public spaces have become safer during COVID-19.

During the study, it was also dedicated to public institutions that can provide assistance or provide solutions to problems with regard to the safety of women and girls. From the interviewers in Devoll and Prrrenjas, in both areas, the Police Comisariatns and the Municipalities are mentioned as protective institutions; But trust of respondents in these institutions presents moderate.

In terms of what would make citizens feel safer, in Dévoll it is mentioned as the most important measure of police patrol, followed by the creation of public spaces friendly for women/girls and children; Recomendation about feeling safety in Prrrenjas, was refering to the improvement of lights in the road and city.



3.1. Safety of women and girls in public spaces in Devoll

Devolli is a municipality in Korçë region, southeastern Albania. The municipality consists of the administrative units of Hoçisht, Miras, Progër and Bilisht. It derives its name from the Devoll River flowing through the valley. The city centre is the city of Bilisht.

In the Municipality of Devoll there are about 13396 families and the number of inhabitants is about 41369 (for the city of Bilisht i reside 3541 families and 10506 inhabitants). The municipality of Devolli is an area dominated by rural population, whose income insurance relies on two main sources, agriculture and livestock on the one hand and remittances from immigration on the other.

In addition to cultivating different cultures, such as wets and vegetables, residents deal greatly with treemaking by being among the highest-producing areas in the country. Livestock is another aspect through which residents generate income. An integral part of this new municipality is the Little Prespa Lake.[16]

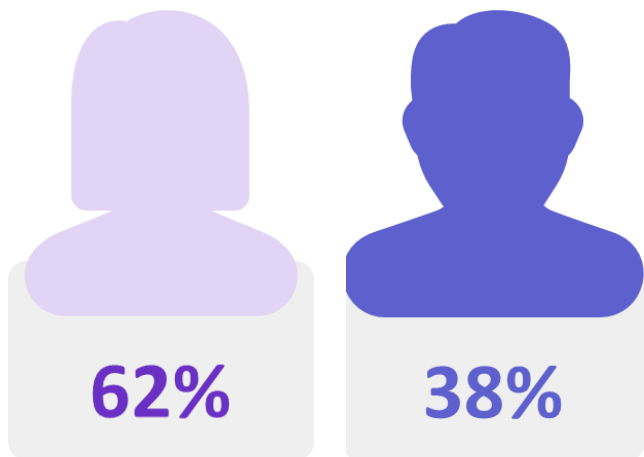


The municipality of Devolli, as a new municipality created in 2015 as a result of the new territorial reform in the country, is valued with low financial resources, which also affects the quality of providing social services to marginalized groups and people in need such as violated women and girls. "Our budget is small, but we try to do the best. We are among the few municipalities that use 6% of our budget to support families in need", - says mayor.[17]

Sensitivity of Devoll Municipality to domestic violence and gender-based violence is evidenced in budget planning for year 2021, where there is reported to be a budget of amount 200,000 ALL (EUR 1,667) for activities to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women. Said this, it shows that the Municipality feels the need to address the issues of domestic violence, but on the other hand the available fund to carry out these activities or to provide other services remains very limited.

Currently, for several years, there have been no local civil society organizations, non-profit organizations or international organizations with a social profile in the Devoll municipality. Their establishment and functioning would help support groups in need and address various community problems.

They would constitute a strong point of co-operation with local government, in relation to the provision of various social services much needed for the community and especially for groups in need.[18]

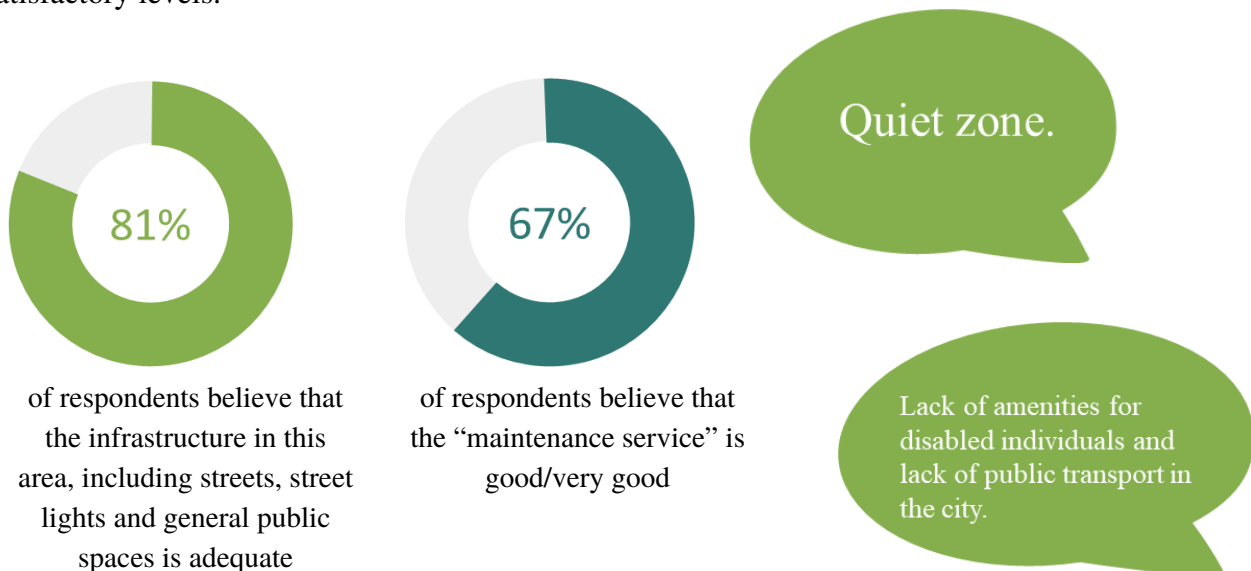


Referring to our study, in this area, **200 questionnaires** were carried out, of which 62% with *women/girls* and 38% with *men/boys*. Perceptions collected through questionnaires were further validated through field audits and observations by a staff trained in advance.

Graph 1: Percentage of respondents by gender

3.1.1. General impresion about security at Devoll municipality

In terms of maintenance and infrastructure, the situation in Devoll presents itself at relatively satisfactory levels.



Graph 2: Maintenance and infrastructure

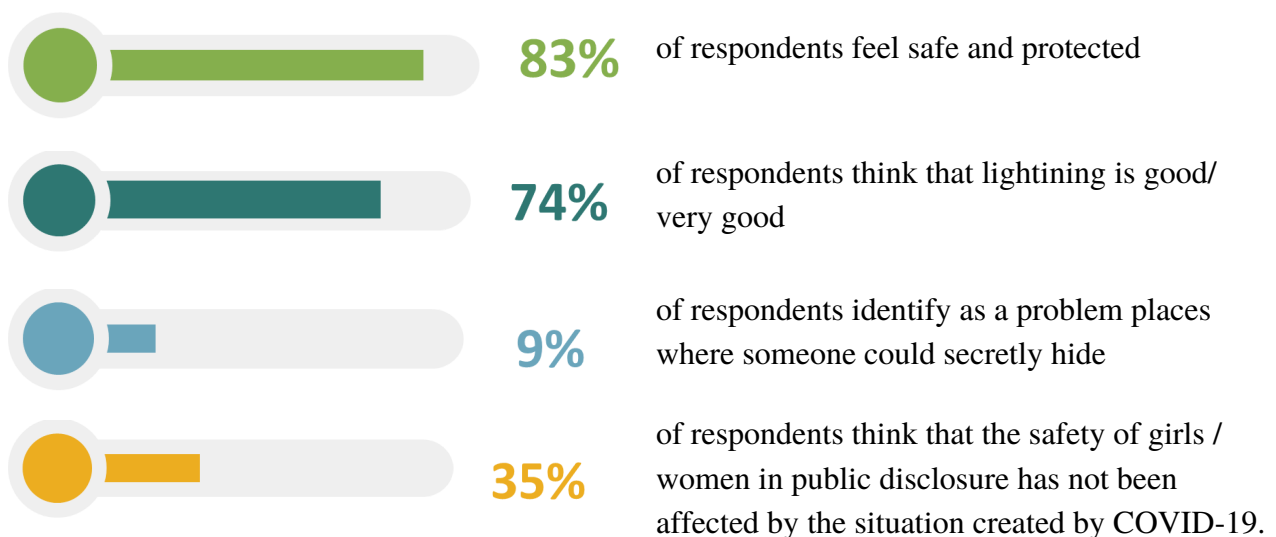
One of the long-term goals of the Municipality of Devoll since 2016 is the provision of public transport service for the urban connection of villages, administrative unit centres with the town of Bilisht (long-term target I.6.1), with the aim of facilitating the movement of residents, integration of the new municipality, facilitating the movement of women, girls, and the elderly and increasing access to quality village education service (Operational Plan of Local Development, Devoll Municipality – 2016). This commitment of the Municipality of Devoll is esteemed even today somehow realized, since also from our observations on the ground it is evident the lack of the public transport.

More than half of respondents say there is no opportunity for fun for children, teenagers, adults and the elderly. This was also evident during field observations.[21]

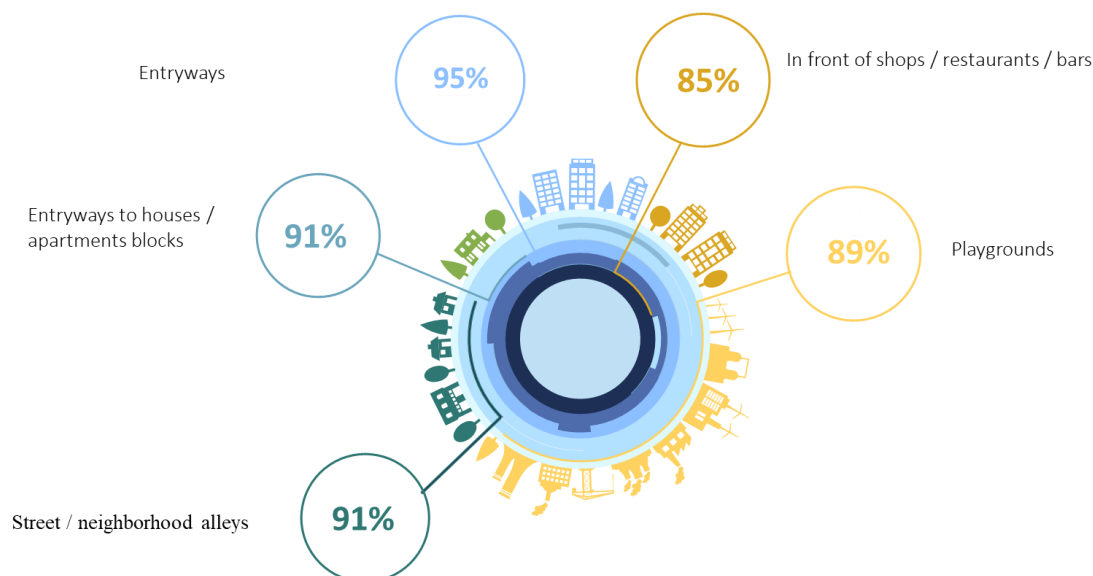
The area is described as a safe and enlightened area. These findings are also supported during security audits, where lighting is estimated at 4 on a scale of 1–5. As for the entrances to houses/palaces/buildings, during observations the lighting is described as good.

One of the long-term objectives of Devoll Municipality since 2016, is the lighting of public spaces of villages and streets that currently have no lighting (long-term target I.5.1), with the aim of facilitating the movement of residents in the evening hours, or in the early hours of the morning, facilitating the movement for women and girls (Operational Plan of Local Development, Devoll Municipality – 2016). This commitment of the Devoll Municipality is almost realized to a considerable extent, as this study also shows a good lighting infrastructure on the streets of this Municipality.

Referred to the Local General Plan of the Municipality of Devoll, in relation to the "Transport Infrastructure" one of the action highlighted as the priority for intervention is also the improvement of existing road infrastructure with adaptive measures, such as: maintenance, asphalt, lighting, signaling, etc.[22]



Respondents were also asked about the safety of environments that are more used more frequently, such as neighborhood streets/ pathways, entrances of residential or school, gardens, etc. Referring to the graph 4, most respondents consider these environments safe or very safe.

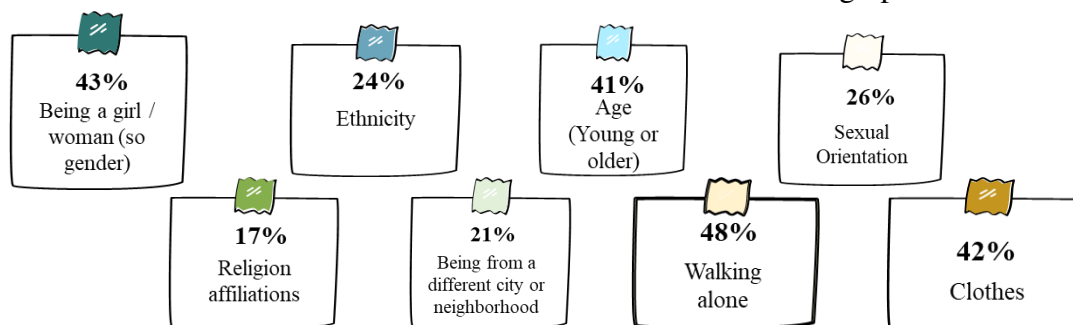


Graph 4: Percentage of respondents who believe that below listed public spaces are safe / very safe

The presence of institutions in the area is also noticed and highlighted by the most of respondents, - that it is easy to find them, such as: the health centre (99%), the police station (97%) and the Centre/OJF/ Other institutions that provide anti-violence services (24%). 41% of respondents say the area is regularly patrolled by police, while 40% of them say they do not know if the area is patrolled by police.

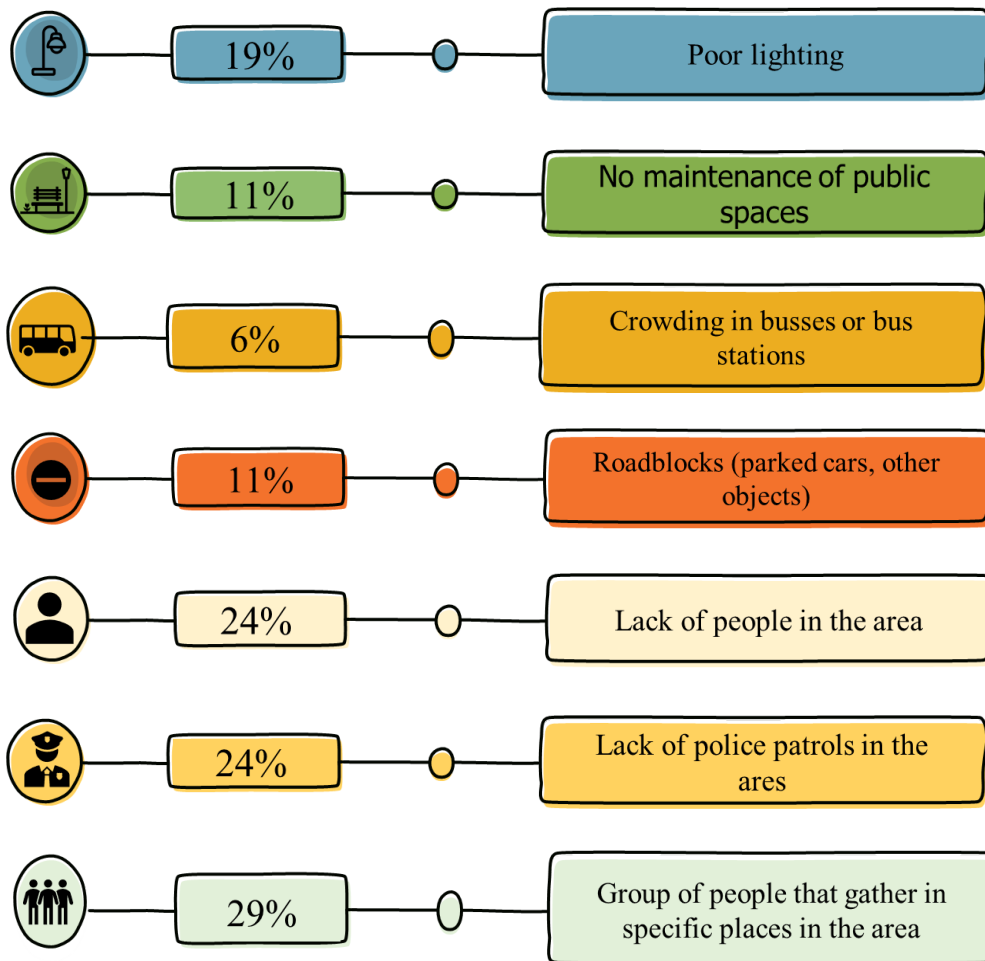
With interest during this study was also identifying factors that would affect a person's level of safety when frequenting the target area. The factors were analyzed by 2 categories:

- personal factors including gender, age, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, background and walking alone, analyzed in Graph 5
- as well as other factors related to the conditions of the area listed in graph 6



Graph 5: Percentage of respondents who think that personal factors affect the safety in the area

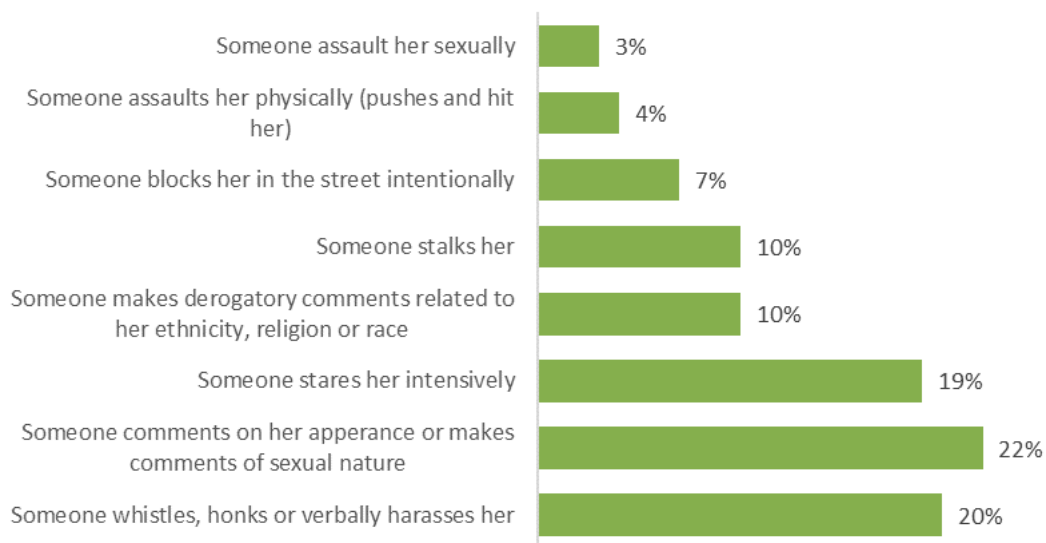
Walking alone and being a girl/woman is thought to make a person more at risk when moving to the area, expressed by 48% and 43% of interviewed people.



Graph 6: Percentage of respondents who think the factors above affect security in the area

Groups that stay in certain places or come across from the area are mentioned as the main factor affecting safety in the area by 29% of respondents. Other factors were the lack of people in the area and the lack of police patrols, by 24% respectively. These findings are also supported by security audits where the above factors were assessed somehow safety (on a scale from 1-very uncertain to 5-very safe) in terms of the sense of security in this area.[23]

Information was also gathered on the form of incidents of violence or sexual harassment that women and girls may experience in this area.



Graph 7: Percentage of respondents who think that it is possible/very possible for a woman/girl to experience one of the behaviors

Referring to the graph above, most of the incidents are verbal. This is also made evident by security audits reports, where groups of boys walking or staying in the street, throw words and speak to you without knowing, which make a girl/ women to feel risky.[24]

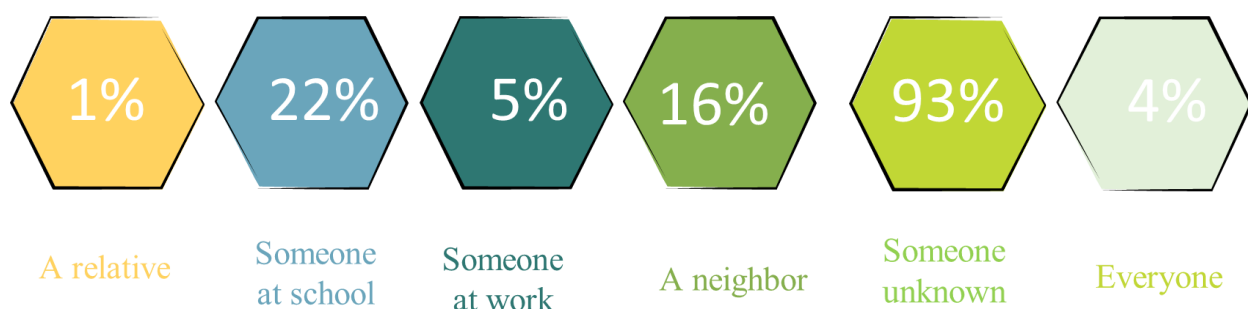
Referred to the Local General Plan of the Municipality of Devoll, in relation to the "Transport Infrastructure" one of the action planed for intervention is also the creation of roads suitable for soft movement (pedestrians, cyclists), where it is proposed as necessity:

- Building of the sidewalks in the city of Bilisht;
- The creation of pathways for walking and riding the bicycles, near by the River Devoll;
- Building of paths for side walking on “Vergmali I Moraves” [25]

During the implementation of questionnaires with citizens, or during audit missions carried out in December 2021, none of the priorities of the Local General Plan for this municipality is mentioned or highlighted. This brings as a need a public communication with citizens from the side of Municipality, when this institution builds and engages in development plans so much important for the life of every day for citizens of the Municipality of Devol, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, settlement, etc.

3.1.2. General impression about sexual harassment and violence in Devoll

Sexual harassment and violence were assessed as important issues in this study, devoting a whole session of questions. Sexual harassment and violence can occur both outdoors and by strangers, as well as in family settings and by persons within the circle of trust. Further more, the questions in this study address issues related to: identifying perpetrators who have committed sexual harassment or violence, whether these episodes occurred from a relative of the victim, from a distant acquaintance or from a stranger and others. The following graph presents the opinions of the respondents regarding this issue.



Graph 8: Percentage of respondents that think that sexual harassment/violence is most likely to be perpetrated by the persons stated above

What is noted is that 93% of respondents think that harassment or/and sexual violence can occur by a stranger and 22% think that harassment or/and sexual violence can occur by someone in school

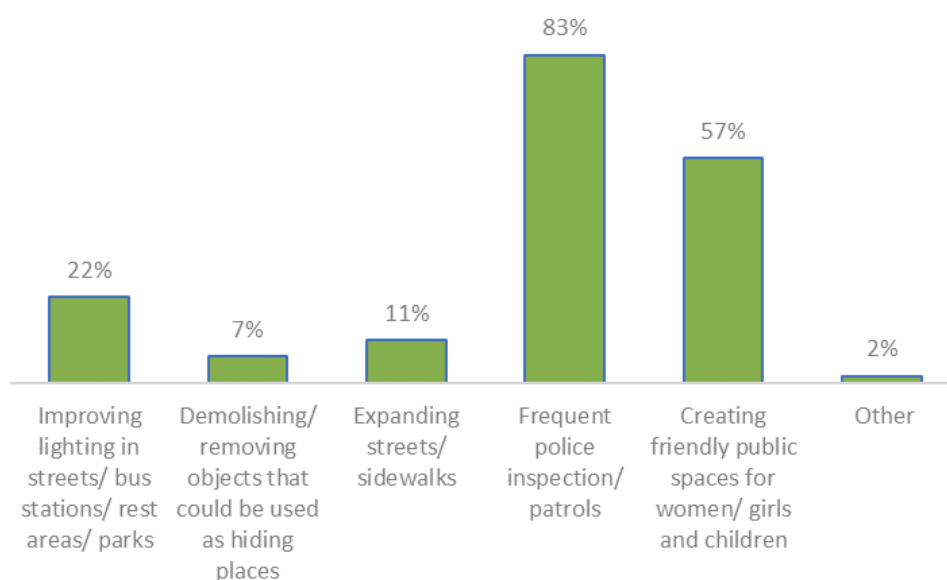
Regarding the time when sexual harassment occurs, respondents highlights two moment: late night which is expressed by 37% of them, while 34% think it happens every hour. As far as sexual violence is concerned, 42% think it happens late at night and 36% think it happens every hour.

As far as where sexual harassment is most likely to occur, it can happen anywhere: on the streets according to 11% of respondents, in an abandoned place according to 37% of them, or anywhere according to 37% of respondents. As for where sexual violence can occur, most of respondents (52%) say it can happen in an abandoned place. The rest think sexual violence can happen anywhere, respectively 23% of respondents.

3.1.3. General impression of improving security at Devoll

Furthermore, it was also analysed what would contribute to the improvement of security at Dévoll. In this section, it was dedicated to public institutions and institutions that can provide assistance or provide solutions to problems with regard to the safety of women and girls. 60% of respondents say there are institutions that can offer assistance. 10% of them say they have no service, while 30% say they have no information. What is obvious is that trust in these institutions is not at the highest level. 17% of respondents say they have a lot of confidence in them. 66% are somehow confident, while 15% have little confidence. During observation missions it is also noted that there is no public number or notification/ advertisement in public spaces indicating and referring where emergency assistance may be required.[26]

Questionnaire was finalized by asking citizens what would make them feel safer in the neighborhood/area, information that summarized in the Graph 9



Graph 9: Percentage of respondents who confirmed that the actions listed above would help them feel safer,

As a main measure that would make citizen feel safer, is the frequent inspection or monitor by the police officers, respectively by 83% of respondents. Creating public spaces friendly for women/girls and children is the next measure that would make 57% of respondents feel safer.

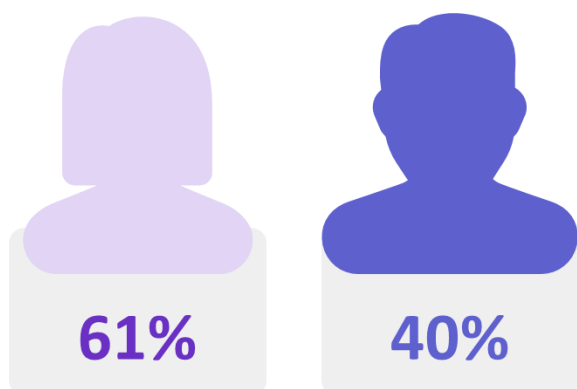
Playgrounds for children and parks for other members of community, still continue to remain as a need and demand for several years; In 2018, by the Child Protection officer in this municipality reports that Bilisht-city Centre - as in many other small towns, children do not have much choice for playing and doing creative activities. There is only one opportunity for them, the summer camp organized in co-operation with donors, that is made 1 time a year for several days.[27]

3.2. Safety of women and girls in public spaces in Prrenjas

Përrenjasi is a town and one of municipalities in Elbasan Region, eastern Albania. The municipality was formed at the 2015, as a result of local government reform by the merger of the former municipalities Prrenjas, Qukës, Rrajcë and Stravaj, that became municipal units. The city centre is the city of Prrenjas. Prrenjas municipality is inhabited with about 33031 inhabitants. The municipality of Prrenjas has a favourable geographical position, as it is located close to two customs points with Macedonia. During the transition, development strategies have been lacking in this area. However, immigration to the Prrenjas area has not been high. This is as many residents of the area have chosen seasonal employment in neighbouring Macedonia, with whose income survives a good part of the population.



Prrenjas Municipality inform in its webpage that during these last years are organized public awareness events referring to domestic violence and gender base violence; Also are organized different events such as the initiative for empowering women and girls, to empower young people returning from emigration, free psychological and legal services for girls and women with violence problems, offering service to women and families for 30 children with disability and setting up a daily center for the elderly(2020).[28]

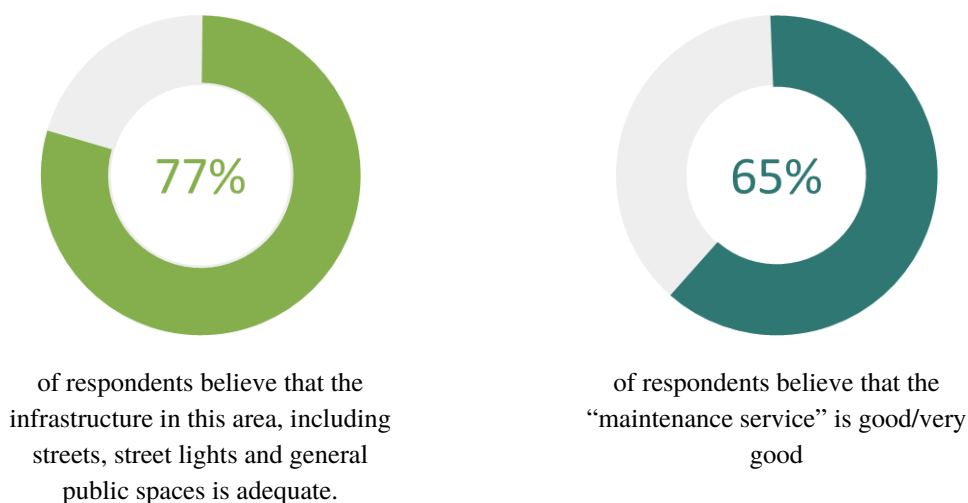


In the area, 200 questionnaires were carried out, 61% with *women/girls* and 40% with *men/boys*. Perceptions collected through questionnaires were further validated through field audits and observations by a staff trained in advance.

Graph 10: Percentage of respondents by gender

3.2.1. General impression about security in Prrenjas

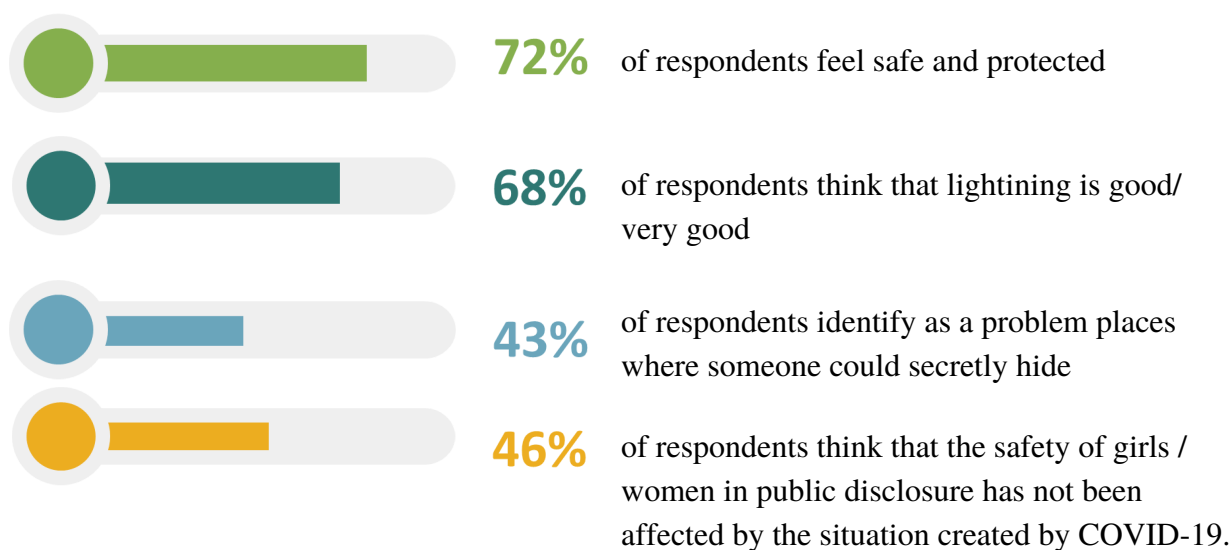
In terms of maintenance and infrastructure, the situation in Prrenjas presents itself at relatively satisfactory levels.



Graph 11: Maintenance and infrastructure

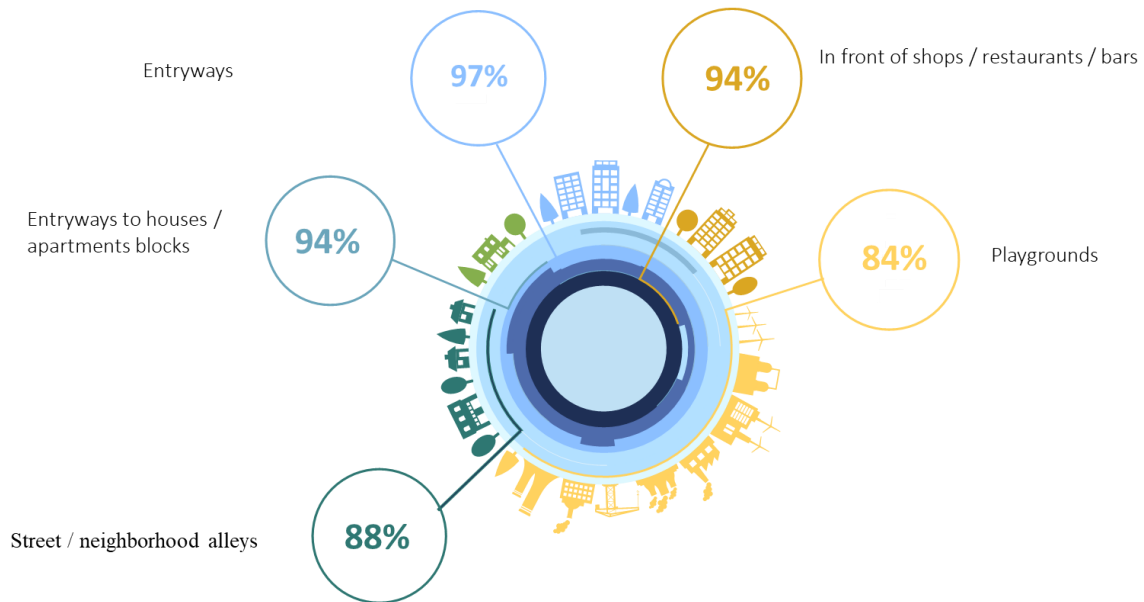
In the area there are also opportunities for fun for all groups. For children 72% of respondents, the opportunity for entertainment and children play ground; referring to the needs and desires of teenagers, adults and elderly, 68% of interviewer expressed the need to set up a cultural centres. Regarding the places that are currently used for entertainment, 66% of the respondents say that bar cafes are and remain the main entertainment places for these groups.

Prrenjes municipality is described as a safe area by most respondents (72% of respondents feel safe and protected). In terms of light, 68% of them think it's good/very good. Referring to the areas observations conducted at night, it is confirmed and reported that there is lighting and is very good, giving security to citizens. [29]



Graph12: Percentage of respondents who feel safe

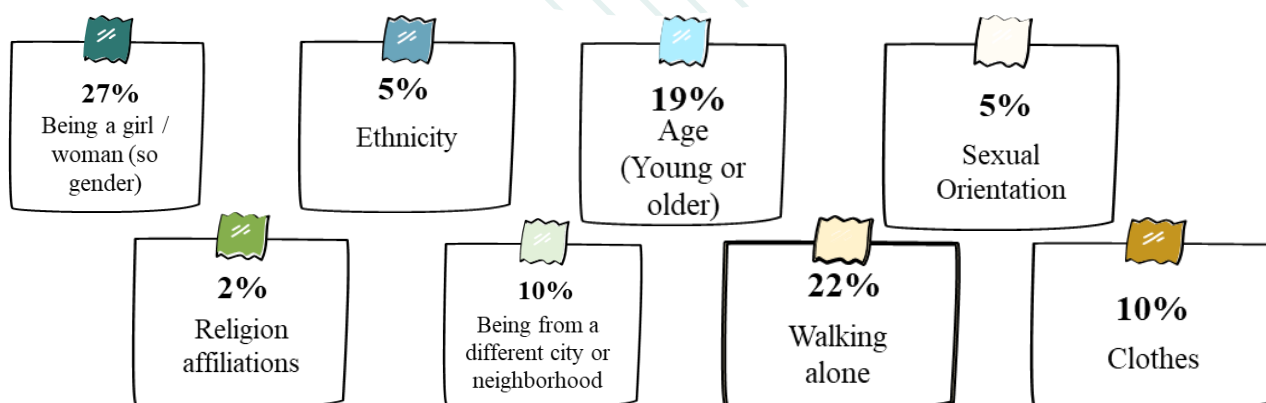
Interviewers were also asked about safety in environments that are frequented mostly by most city residents, such as: neighborhood streets/alleys, residential or school entrances, flowering, etc. As can be seen from Graph 13, most respondents consider these environments safe or very safe.



Graph 13: Percentage of respondents who believe that below listed public spaces are safe / very safe

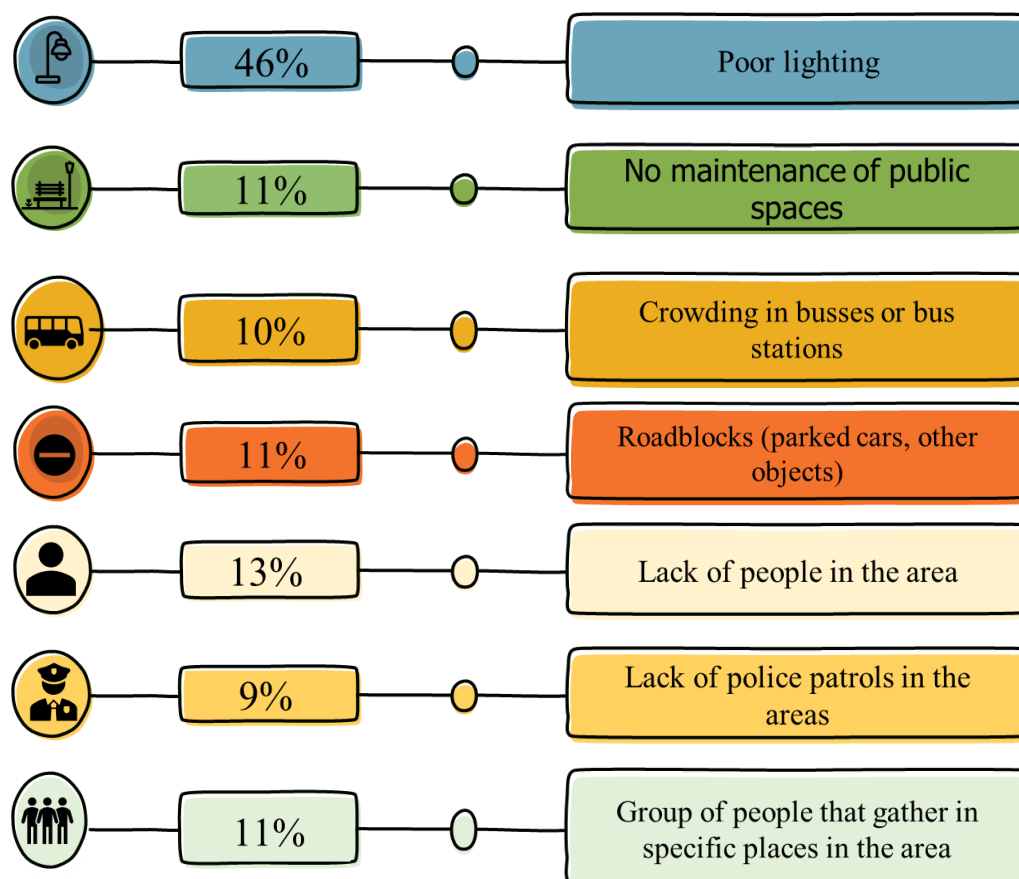
The presence of institutions in the area is also noticed and highlighted by the majority of respondents who say they would find it easy to find: the health centre (99%), the police station (98%) and the Centre/OJF and others institutions that provide services for victims of violence (90%). Meanwhile, one in three interviewers (69%) of respondents say the area is regularly patrolled by police.

This study paid attention also to the identification of factors that would affect the level of security of a person when frequents the specific public areas, referring to internal personal factors such as: gender, age, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, origin and walking alone , as well as external environmental factors such as: poor lighting, lack of maintenance of public spaces, influx of people in buses / bus stations, roadblocks (parked cars, various objects, lack of people in the area, etc.). Citizens' opinions on the impact of internal personal factors and external environmental factors, you can find presented in Graph 14 and other factors listed in Graph 15.



Graph 14: Percentage of respondents who think that personal factors affect the safety in the area

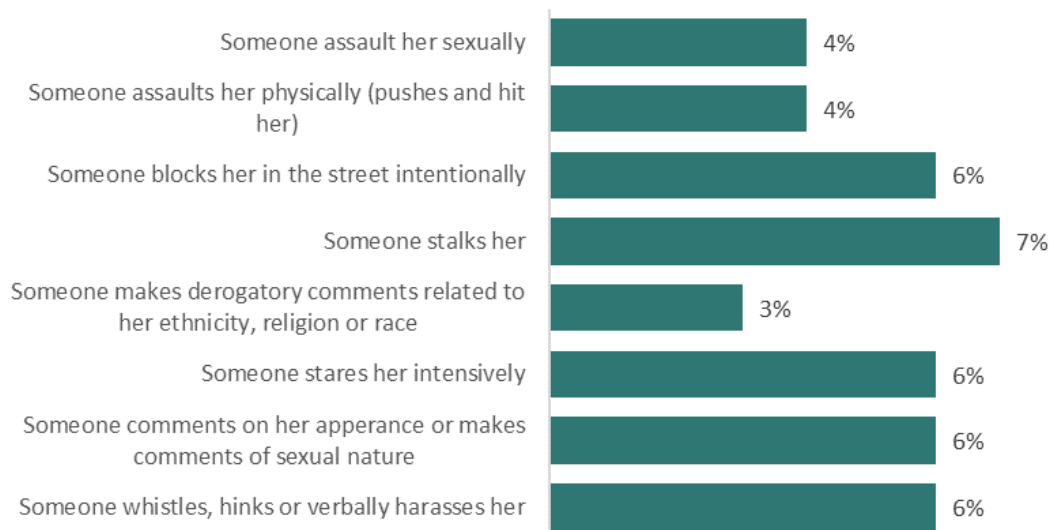
Women and girls are perceived as the most at risk by 27% of respondents. Walking alone and referring to the age of citizens are considered as high-risk elements that may expose the person when walking or being in the area.



Graph 15: Percentage of respondents who think the factors above affect security in the area

Poor lighting is mentioned as the main factor affecting safety in the area, respectively, of 46% of respondents.

Recently, information was gathered on the form of incidents of violence or harassment that women and girls may experience in this area, information summarized in Graphic 16.



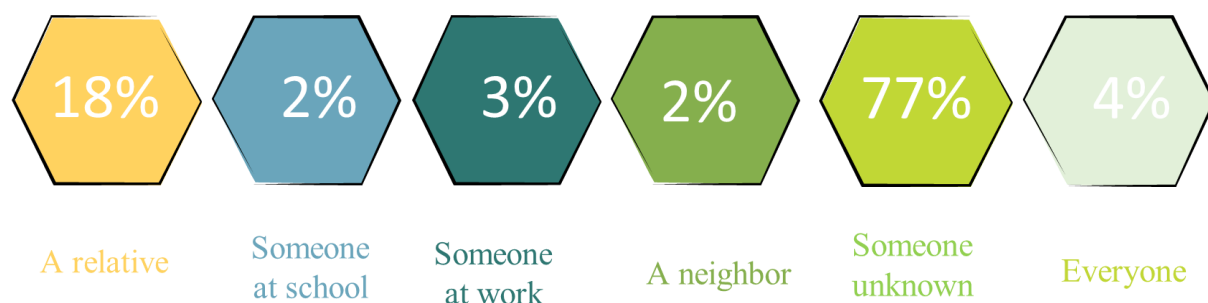
Graph16: Percentage of respondents who think that it is possible/very possible for a woman/girl to experience one of the behaviors

As can be seen from the graph above, the percentage of events is relatively small. The incidents that can happen are verbal, or someone can follow them.

3.2.2. General impression about sexual harassment and violence in Prrenjas

This study is focused also on identifying potential perpetrators of sexual harassment or violence, whether these episodes are at risk of occurring by a relative, a distant acquaintance or a stranger.

This information is summarized in the following graph. Most respondents think that harassment or sexual violence occurs mainly by unknown persons, 77% of them.



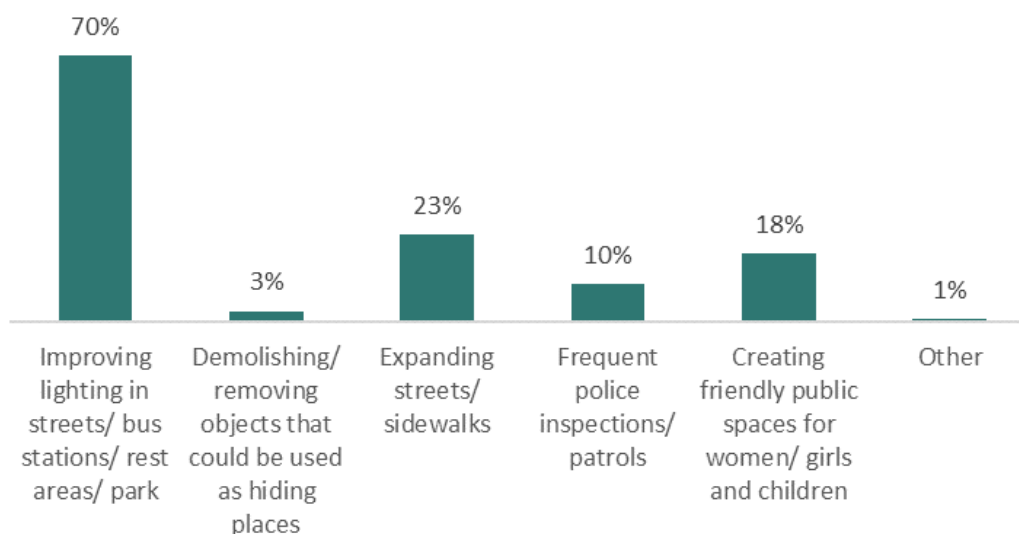
Graph 17: Percentage of respondents that think that sexual harassment/violence is most likely to be perpetrated by the persons stated above

In terms of time when harassment or sexual violence occurs, the majority of Prrenjas respondent's express harassment or sexual violence can occur at any hour, 39% and 61%, respectively. Also, in terms of where harassment or sexual violence is most likely to occur, respondents say sexual harassment can occur in an abandoned place (48%) and sexual violence can occur anywhere (85%).

3.2.2. General Impression for improving security in Prrenjas

Respondents were further asked about public institutions they know where they can address problems regarding the safety of women and girls. 54% of respondents say there are institutions that can provide assistance and generally these institutions are the Municipality and the Police. What is noticeable is that confidence in these institutions is at high levels. 61% of respondents say they have a lot of confidence in them, 29% are somewhat confident, while 7% have little confidence. Only 3% say they have no faith at all.

Recently it was discussed what would make citizens feel safer in the neighborhood/area, information summarized in Graph 18.



Graph18: Percentage of respondents who confirmed that the actions listed above would help them feel safer,

As a main measure that would make interviewed citizen feeling safer, is improving the street lights, highlighted and mention as priority by 70% of respondents. Investment in road infrastructure, as expansion of roads or sidewalks. Other need identified by citizen is also building of public spaces friendly for women/girls and children, considered important respectively by 23% and 18% of respondents; while the road and public space inspection/patrol by police officer in more frequent way is considered important factor for improving safety in the area by 10% of respondents.

4. CONCLUSIONS

At the end of this study it can be said that based on the opinions and perceptions of engaged citizens, both target municipalities can be considered somehow safe from harassment or sexual violence in public spaces.

Referring to the two SIGI dimensions on which this study is based: restricted physical integrity (violence against women) and restricted civil liberties (right to movement), we note that these two municipalities Devoll and Prrenjas remain at almost the same levels as those in which Albania was reported in 2019.

Based on previous studies that the Observatory has conducted in other areas of Albania referring to the safety of women and girls in public spaces, it is estimated that individuals have different levels of perception of security, based on elements, such as:

- Citizen's awareness and sensitivity about the role and obligations of local service-providing institutions;
- Standard and quality of services provided by local institutions to citizens;
- Citizen's awareness and sensitivity about international security standards in a democratic society;
- The level of trust that citizens have in local service-providing institutions in receiving quality services, on time and with confidence.

Based on these above-mentioned elements, the findings of the study conducted in the Municipalities of Devoll and Prrenjas, encourage us to think about the different levels of perception of security standards that citizens and individuals know, expect, require and expect to be met by authorities and local service providers

4. 1. Conclusions for Devoll municipality

Some of the causes that seem to affect the level of women security and not only, in Devoll are:

- People who stay in certain places or come around the area are mentioned as the main factor that increases insecurity in the area.
- The lack of public transport in this area is also a risk factor, as people must walk for a long distance or use alternative means of transport.
- Lack of lighting or poor lighting in the city streets, where in some places citizen felt expose to any risk of being violated.
- The lack of police patrols also increases the insecurity of residents in Devoll Municipality.
- Lack of citizens trust in services offered by local institutions.

Despite the problems listed above, residents in the city of Dévolli generally feel safe in this area as on the streets, at the entrances of institutions, at bus stations, in front of bars or restaurants, as well as in parks.

Main public institutions, such as: health centres, police or other organisations are considered easily accessible by most citizens.

People who walk alone are considered the most at risk in the area. Being a woman/girl as well as clothing also seems to play a role in the level of risk. Sexual orientation, ethnicity, being from another city or neighbourhood or religious affiliation do not appear to pose an important risk factor.

Some of the violence incidents in public spaces that women and girls may face are: harassment in the form of a whistle, car horn noise or verbal harassment by a car, comments on the appearance or comments of a sexual nature, staring earnestly (to look intently), following from behind or walking by her side, intentional blocking of the road, or offensive comments about ethnicity, religion or race.

Incidents of sexual harassment appear to be more present compared to those of sexual violence. As places where these incidents occur, isolated places are mainly mentioned, however there are many citizens who think that sexual harassment can happen anywhere and anytime.

4. 2. Conclusions for Prrenjas Municipality

The causes affecting the level of insecurity in Prrenjas Municipality are more or less the same as the Municipality of Devoll and why some of them carry another weight/ level of importance.

- Poor street lighting is listed as the main factor that increases uncertainty in the area.
- The existence of places where one can hide without being distinguished creates a sense of insecurity among the inhabitants of the area.
- The need to build a playground for children and other youth space places for entertainment and sport event. The building of on cultural center and space is identified as urgent need by citizens participated in this study.

Major service institutions such as health centres, police or other organisations are considered easily accessible by most citizens. Police also patrol the area regularly.

As factors that affect the level of security of the individual in the area, it was mentioned as the most important being a girl or a woman. As important factors were listed also age and clothing.

Sexual orientation, ethnicity, being from another city or neighborhood or religious affiliation do not appear to pose an important risk factor.

As it was highlighted in Dévoll, in Prrenjas to is identified that incidents of sexual harassment in public spaces that women and girls may face are: harassment in the form of whistles, car horn noise or verbal harassment by a car, comments on the appearance or comments of a sexual nature, staring earnestly (to look intently), following from behind or walking by her side, intentional blocking of the road, or offensive comments about ethnicity, religion or race.

5. Recommendation

Firstly, it would be worth taking into account residents' thoughts by Municipalities, while planning to carry out infrastructure interventions. Such studies would be value as a good source of information.

5.1. General Recommendation

- The Municipalities are need to define acts, policies and practices for safe and green public spaces; as well as in terms of preventing violence against women and girls Municipalities has to promote freedom of movement for girls and women.
- v The necessary co-ordination of institutional responsibilities of local government to ensures that public investments are made in the right place and time, enabling the safety, security and dignity of each resident and citizen, regardless of age, gender or affiliation; These investments could be based as well on the needs of residents, perceptions of citizens and observations of independent experts.
- The municipality of Devoll and Prrenjas should consider the findings of this study in its urban development plans, as well as extend certain public services to different areas.
- The findings of this study should certainly be shared with the Albanian State Police and Local Police Commissariats by suggesting and taking special measures to: (i) increase the frequency of police patrol during the day and especially during the late hours of the night; (ii) increasing people's confidence in the police especially for cases related to specific forms of violence such as sexual harassment and sexual violence, using certain strategies of education and police in the community, etc.
- When planning new interventions, the Municipality of Devolli and Prrenjas and the Agency of Territory Regulation must take into account the creation or addition of new playground for children, other entertainment places for different group age, suitable for people with special needs too.

- All initiatives planned to intervene in the two areas studied to improve different conditions should also be based on the perception and information provided by women, girls, men and boys of different ages or groups, who live or frequent these spaces. When these perceptions exist, such as this study - should be considered.
- Continuous monitoring and evaluation of accomplished interventions is also extremely important. Meetings and observation missions to monitor and evaluate investments made and people's perception of security in public spaces should be undertaken regularly. Results from these monitoring and evaluation missions as well as studies of this nature should serve as guides for additional interventions in these spaces to return them to safe places to any form of violence, including harassment and sexual violence.
- Although, the Coordinated Referral Mechanism (MKR's) primary responsibility is to manage domestic violence cases as well as take concrete preventive actions to reduce this form of violence, it does not remain out of the spotlight of this mechanism, even addressing or preventing other forms of violence against women, including sexual violence. Consequently, expanding the discussion with MKR members, especially during regular meetings of the technical group on sexual harassment and sexual violence of women and girls happening even in public spaces, would precede a series of preparatory measures that MKR should undertake both in the direction of education and information on the prevention of such cases, as far as the management of these cases.



5.2. Recommendations for improving safety

First, the municipality should take additional measures to improve infrastructure, which would increase the safety of women and girls in the public spaces of this area.

Other recommendation for Devoll Municipality are:

- Measures must be taken to improve streetlight, by improving lighting also in paths, entrances of the buildings, palaces, or dwellings.
- Roadblocks must be eliminated as much as possible. Also, in urban plans, the lack of sufficient spaces between buildings or roads should be considered to be safety.
- The maintenance of the area should be in focus of the municipality. The municipality must also take measures to provide access to the area also for peoples with disabilities or for persons who have difficulty moving, by placing ramps, expanding sidewalks, etc.
- Public transport services should be established in the area, making sure that stations are placed near key institutions such as schools, health centres, etc.
- Maps or signals should be placed in the area that can help residents to instructed them where they can find the hospital, primary health care center, police commissariats, social protection center and others, if they need to.
- Municipality should coordinate the work with its depended service-providing institutions as well as with other institutions in the territory to increase citizens' trust in the institutions and services they provide.
- Municipality of Devoll should be engaged in building playgrounds for children as well as other entertainment spaces for other age groups.

The municipality must also cooperate with other institutions to provide an integrated approach to cases of violence and sexual violence:

- The Coordinated Referral Mechanism (MKR) among the work that do about the treatment of specific cases, this Mechanism could issue also the public awareness events and information share about the forms of violence, ways of reporting, as well as institutions that offer services in such cases.
- The Municipality must also coordinate its work with Police to increase patrol in the area as well as find a way to remove people who consume alcohol or drugs from the area and groups staying in certain places, - which are mention by citizens as the main factor that increase they unsafety in the city.

5.3. Recommendations for improving safety

To improve security in this area, the municipality must initially invest in improving infrastructure, in this case mostly focused on:

- Improving lighting and extending it throughout the area should be the priority of the municipality. Lighting should be provided not only on the main roads but also in the pathways as well as at the entrance to institutions, palaces or dwellings. Also lighting the spaces where waste baskets are located would make citizens of this Municipality feel safer.
- The municipality must also take measures to provide facilities and for people with disabilities or for persons who have difficulty moving by placing ramps, expanding sidewalks, etc.
- Municipality should be engaged also in creation of new green spaces, children's playgrounds, building a cultural center, as well as other entertainment places for different groups should also be planned.
- Municipality should be engaged in placing maps or signals in the city, which will orient citizens to the needed services as: hospital, primary health care center, police commissariats, social protection center and others.

The municipality must also co-operate with other institutions to raise awareness of residents, and information share about all forms of violence, ways to report it, as well as institutions that offer services in such cases.

Prrenjas Municipality must also coordinate its work with Police to increase patrol in the area as well as find a way to remove people who consume alcohol or drugs from the area and groups staying in certain places, - which are mention by citizens as the main factor that increase they unsafety in the city.

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QYTETE TË SIGURTA

Shkurt 2022

Observatori për të Drejtat e Fëmijëve dhe të Rinjve