

MEASURING THE SHADOW PANDEMIC:

**VIOLENCE AGAINST
WOMEN DURING
COVID-19**

COUNTRY REPORT: ALBANIA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

More than half of women in Albania have experienced or know another woman who has experienced VAW and said they perceive violence, abuse, or the harassment of women to be a problem in their communities. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought with it a noticeable rise in specific indicators associated with VAW and exacerbated existing tensions and safety issues for many women, which vary in type and severity based on socioeconomic status and vulnerability to stressors. This research delves into the relationships between measures of violence against women (VAW)

and the demographic, behavioural and socio-economic factors related to them.

While most women in Albania felt that their safety has not been significantly impacted by COVID-19, the study indicates that the pandemic has negatively impacted safety concerns for the most vulnerable women who had already been facing hardships. Further, the study suggests that associations such as food insecurity, loss of income and unemployment, have worsened concerns and experiences of safety but also have an impact on women's overall well-being.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2018, a National Population Survey on Violence Against Women and Girls conducted by the Albanian Institute of Statistics, in partnership with UNDP and UN Women, revealed that 21% of women in Albania had ever experienced physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of their current or recent partner and 8% were experiencing it currently.¹

Since the pandemic began, rapid gender assessments (RGAs) conducted by UN Women using administrative data from police, VAW hotlines, and other service-providers suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased risk factors for women, intensified some of the existing forms of VAW and hindered access to services that would be available for women and girls survivors of violence.² Measures im-

plemented to limit the spread of the pandemic, such as lockdowns and curfews, have had an impact on VAW risk factors, especially for women and girls who faced multiple forms of discrimination. During the lockdown period in Albania (March to May 2020), the number of calls to the national counselling hotline tripled compared to the same period a year ago, while the number of domestic violence reports to the police was lower than in 2019.³

In the face of the threat that COVID-19 lockdown measures posed to women facing domestic violence, the Albanian Government, and its Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MoHSP) in particular, implemented several measures to mitigate this risk.⁴ The

1 Albanian Institute of Statistics, UN Women and UNDP. 2018. [Survey on Violence Against Women and Girls in Albania, 2018.](#)

2 UN Women. 2020. ["COVID-19 and ending violence against women and girls."](#)

3 UN Women Albania. 2020. ["What happened after COVID-19: Albania."](#)

4 Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). 2020. ["Good practices, mitigating practices used as well as challenges faced by Albania to ensure effective enjoyment of human rights during the COVID-19 pandemic."](#)

Government ordered the non-suspension of family cases, including those relating to domestic violence and children's rights, and during this time frame, Albania's Criminal Code also tightened penalties for domestic abuse. Women with issued protection orders were included alongside women head of families and women on economic aid plans as some of the first groups to be included on the Government's economic measures package. Over the past year, the Government has also developed and adopted several protocols to enable the continuation of specialist support services for survivors of VAW and human trafficking, including basic services in a context that would not compromise their health or the health of service-providers, and assisting local authorities in adequately handling domestic violence cases.⁵ The Government also encouraged citizens to report domestic abuse, highlighting the importance of this especially during the COVID-19 lockdown period.

Within this context, UN Women commissioned Ipsos to conduct an RGA survey on the impacts of COVID-19 on women's well-being

and safety in 13 countries across regions. In adapting the surveying methodology to be feasible in the COVID-19 context, proxy measures on experiences of VAW were used to collect data on sensitive topics to reduce the risk to the respondents, and thus may not be directly comparable to other studies conducted before the pandemic.

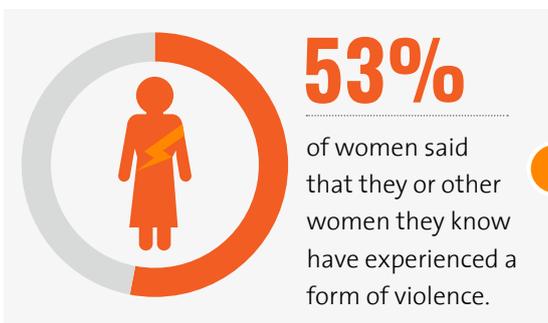
Having reliable data that are collected in line with methodological, safety and ethical standards, without putting women at greater distress and risk of violence, is critical to informing where policies and programmes can respond to the UN's system-wide efforts to scale up actions to address VAW in the context of COVID-19.

This report details the findings of the survey in Albania in August through September 2021. The survey was conducted with women aged 18 and older who had access to a mobile phone. Mobile phone ownership among women aged 18–49 in Albania was estimated to be 94% in 2018.⁶

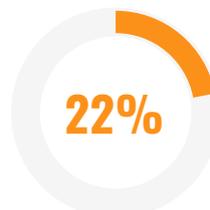
5 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 2020. [Protocol on managing domestic violence cases at local level through the Coordinated Referral Mechanism \(CRM\) during the COVID-19 situation.](#)

6 INSTAT and UN Women. 2021. [Women and Men in Albania: 2021](#)

KEY FINDINGS



Verbal Abuse



Denied Basic Needs



Sexual Harassment



6%

of women feel unsafe in their homes.



16%

said this has gotten worse as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.



11%

of women live in households with conflict among adults at least weekly.



23%

said conflict between adults has become more frequent as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.



51%

of women think that the experience of verbal or physical abuse at the hands of a partner is common for women in their community.



79%

said this has gotten worse as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.



52%

of women think that physical harm, abuse and harassment are a problem for women in their community.



29%

of women think physical harm, abuse, and harassment has gotten worse since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.



34%

of women feel unsafe walking alone at night.



13%

of women feel unsafe walking alone during the day.



39%

of women think that it is common for women to be harassed in public.



2. PERCEPTIONS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

2.1. Proxy measures of violence against women in the community

When considering the measures of violence against women at the community level in this study, it is important to be aware of the methods used. Due to the remote nature of this survey, indirect questions were asked as proxy indicators of VAW, and as such, it was not possible to distinguish respondent experiences from those of other women in their community or whether this experience occurred within or outside of the household. Therefore, while data from this study should not be interpreted

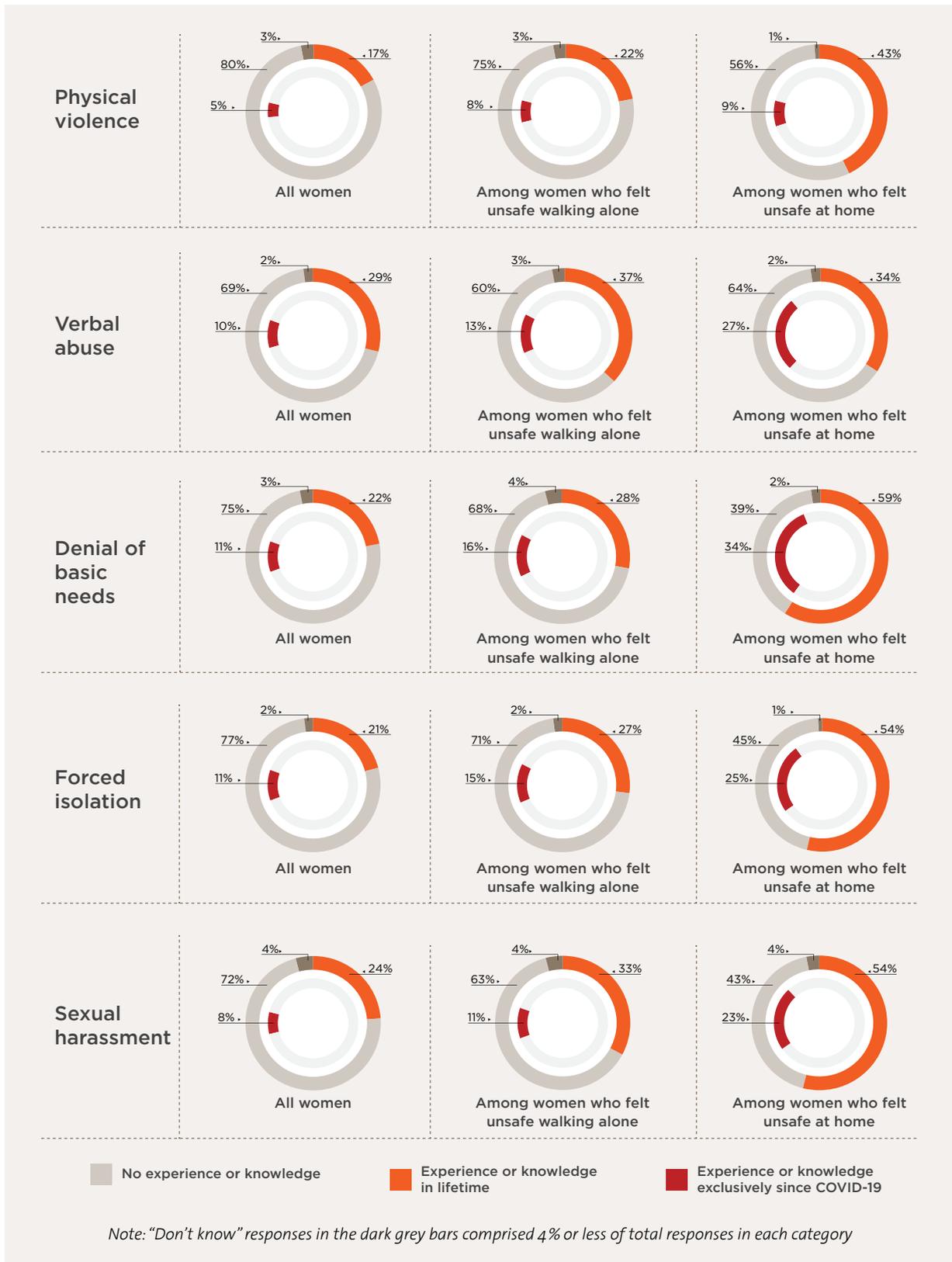
as prevalence data, it nevertheless provides critical information on the impact of COVID-19 on women's perception of well-being and safety.

More than half of women in Albania (53%) know a woman who has experienced, or have themselves experienced, a form of VAW in their lifetime (such as violence, denial of basic needs, sexual harassment, restrictions or verbal abuse).⁷ Of this group of women, 17% have experience or knowledge of VAW exclusively since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

7 Cognitive testing of this question revealed that for many women forced isolation and denial of basic needs were influenced by COVID-19 related measures and economic stress. The results of this study suggest that women may bear a disproportionate burden when it comes to COVID-19 effects; however, it is important to keep the overall context in mind when interpreting results.

FIGURE 1

Experience or knowledge of specific forms of VAW, since COVID-19 and over lifetime



Young women aged 18 to 29, and those that said they were single were more likely to have experienced or know someone who has experienced any type of VAW in their lifetime (60 and 62%, respectively) compared to women on average. Younger women were particularly more likely to report experiences (personal or familiar) of verbal abuse and sexual harassment, whether it was in their lifetime (24% for both) or only since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (12% among women aged 18–29 and 14% among single women).

Results from Albania suggest strong linkages between income, employment and experiences of VAW. Women who said they experienced a decrease in income in the last year were more likely than women on average to have experiences or knowledge of nearly all forms of VAW, whether it was exclusively since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic or over their lifetime. This was particularly acute in the areas of verbal abuse (34% over their lifetime; 13% exclusively since the onset of COVID-19) and denial of basic needs (27% in their lifetime, 13% exclusively since the onset of COVID-19). For unemployed women, the experience of verbal abuse since the COVID-19 pandemic was more than three times that of the overall sample (31, compared to 11%), and their experiences of physical violence were twice that of the overall sample

(12, compared to 5%). Additionally, women who said they contribute more to household income than their partner were far more likely to have experienced sexual harassment in their lifetime (35, compared to 24% on average).

Women who felt unsafe in their homes and those who felt unsafe walking alone, during the day or at night, were both much more likely than women to report experiencing or knowing a woman who has experienced any type of VAW in their lifetime. Women who said they have felt unsafe in their homes were particularly likely to say they have experienced verbal abuse or denial of basic needs starting during the COVID-19 pandemic, indicating the intersecting forms of violence that some women experience.

In addition, women who said they or someone they know have experienced at least one form of VAW in their lifetime were more likely to be severely food insecure. In particular, women who said that they or another woman they know has experienced denial of basic needs were four times more likely to be food insecure than those that did not, and almost twice as likely to share experiences of forced isolation. Women who said they or another woman they know has experienced verbal abuse or sexual harassment were also twice as likely to be food insecure.

3. FEELINGS OF SAFETY

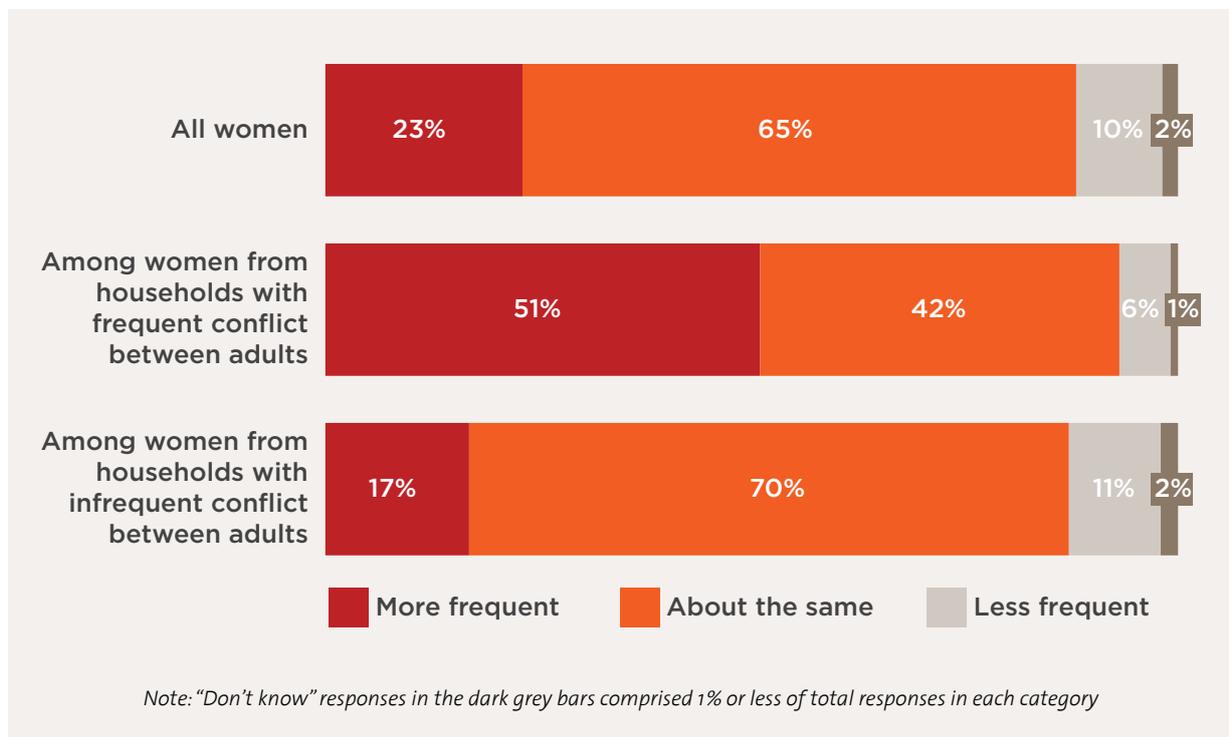
3.1. Personal safety inside the home

When it comes to safety within the household, 11% of women said that there has been conflict between adults in their household at least weekly over the past six months; 45% said conflict has happened once a month or less; and 42% said they have had no conflicts at all. Women who said they live with children were more likely than those living without children to say there have been household conflicts at least weekly (14, compared to 9%).

While the majority of women (65%) said that COVID-19 has had no impact on the frequency of arguments in their household, nearly a

quarter (23%) said that conflict has become more frequent since the onset of COVID-19. Among women who said their income has decreased, 28% said that household conflict has increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, similarly for women who said they earn more than their partner (33%), suggesting that the downstream impacts of COVID-19 are associated with household tensions. Additionally, those who experienced conflict more often were three times more likely to say that the frequency has increased as a result of the pandemic, suggesting that already existing household tensions have been heightened as a result of COVID-19.

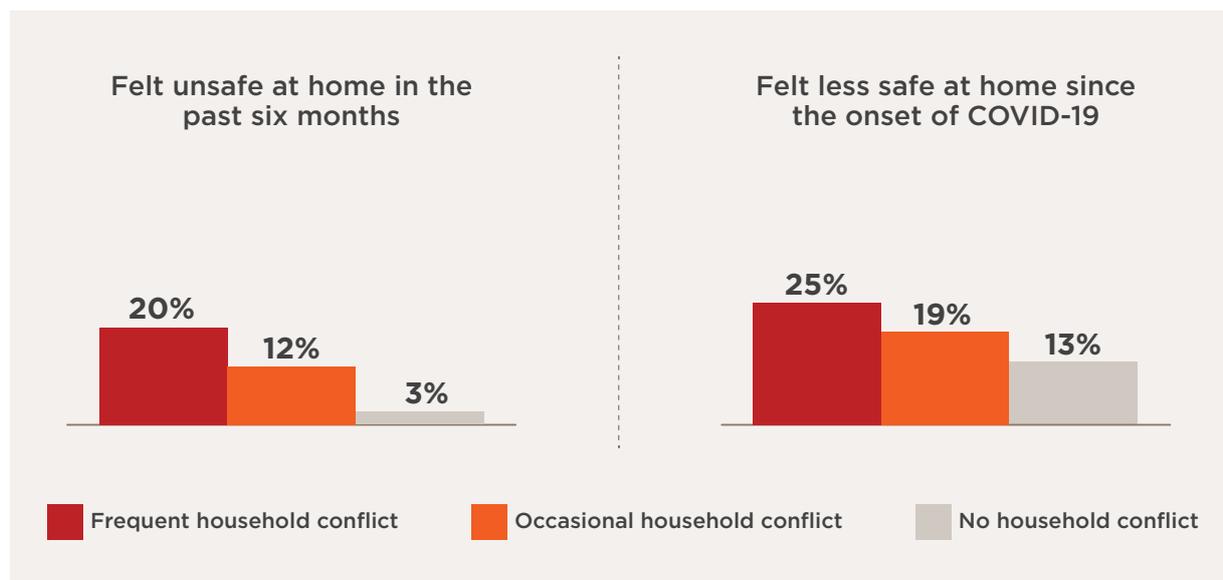
FIGURE 2
Changes in frequency of household conflict as a result of COVID-19



Only 6% of women said they have felt unsafe in their household in the last six months; however, those who experienced frequent conflict (at least weekly) between adults in the household were more than six times as likely as those with infrequent conflict to have felt unsafe in their homes (20, compared to 3% among women who said they have household conflict infrequently). Additionally, women who said they earn more than their partner were three times as likely to have felt unsafe in their homes (15, compared to 5% among women who earned the same or less), as were women living with children when compared to women living without children (8, compared to 4%).

Around 1 in 6 women (16%) said that the COVID-19 pandemic has made things worse in terms of how safe they feel in their home. Similar to the findings on household conflict, women who reported decreased income were more likely than those who did not to say that COVID-19 has made things worse in terms of how safe they feel in their homes (18, compared to 12%), indicating the influence of economic stressors on women’s sense of stability and safety in the home. Among women who said they had felt unsafe in their homes, 58% said that COVID-19 has made things worse, reinforcing the point that the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified already existing vulnerabilities and safety issues for women in Albania.

FIGURE 3
Perceptions of women’s safety in the household, by frequency of household conflict



When asked why they have felt unsafe in their homes, these women most often cited an inability to communicate or reach out for help (38%), the presence of physical violence

generally in the home (34%), the presence of physical violence against other adults (38%), or violence against children (32%).

FIGURE 4

Reasons for women feeling unsafe in their homes (among the 6% who reported feeling unsafe)



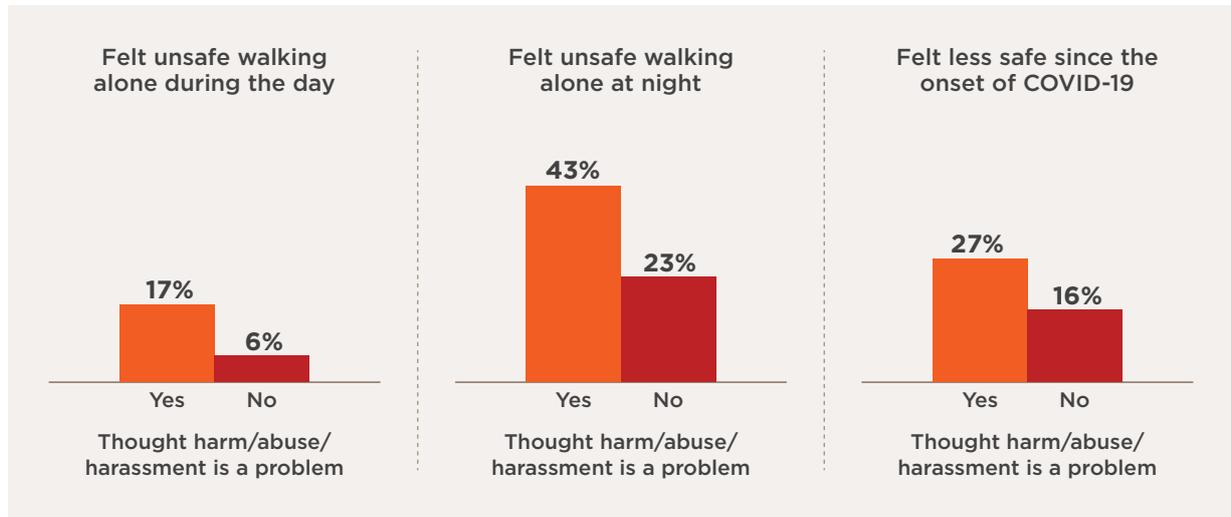
3.2. Personal safety in public spaces

When out in their communities, the majority of women said they feel safe walking around the areas where they live during the day (87%), but this drops to 56% when asked the same question about walking alone at night, and nearly 1 in 4 women (22%) said they feel less safe while out at night since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Younger women, aged 18 to 39, were more likely than older women to feel unsafe walking alone at night (42, compared to 28% of women ages 40+), as were single women (39%).

Women who said they think VAW is a problem in their community, as well as those who said that they or another woman they know had experienced VAW in their lifetime, were less likely to feel safe walking alone, whether at night or during the day, compared to women on average. These groups were also significantly more likely to say that their feelings of safety in public have decreased since the onset of COVID-19.

FIGURE 5

Perceptions of safety while out in public, by perception of VAW



4. PERCEPTIONS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

4.1. Women's perceived safety inside the home

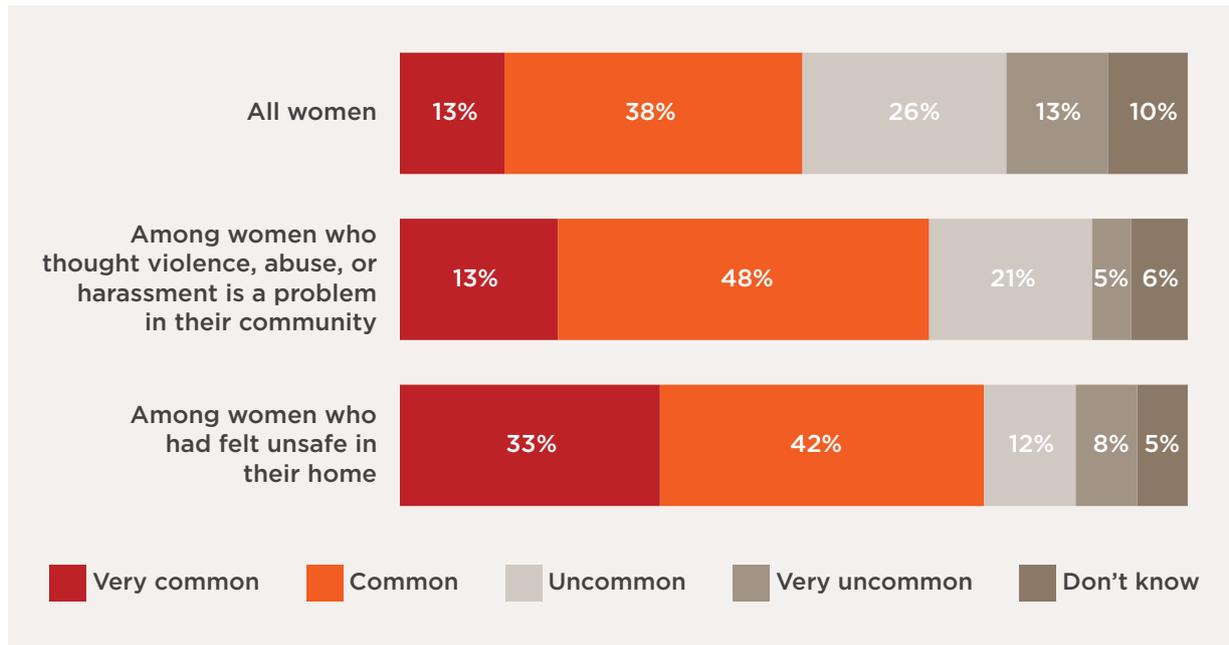
Despite a minority of women reporting that they have felt unsafe in their own homes, half (51%) of women said they think that the experience of verbal or physical abuse at the hands of a partner is common for women.⁸ Women who said they are single were more likely than all women on average to think this was common (59%), as were those who were employed (56%), lived in urban areas, (53%) and had tertiary education (58%).

Similar to the perceptions of safety in public spaces, personal experience appears to be connected with perceived safety inside the home. Among women who have felt unsafe in their own home, 75% said they thought the experience of verbal or physical abuse at the hands of a partner is common, and among women who have frequent conflict in their households this number was 68%, highlighting the likelihood that the safety of women's home environment influences their perception of the safety for women in their community.

Women who view partner abuse as common were also more likely to be severely food insecure than those who did not, stressing the significance of economic security on women's broader sense of safety as well.

8 Combines responses of "Very common" and "Common".

FIGURE 6
Perception of partner abuse, by perceptions of safety



While 51% of women said they think it is common for women to experience physical and verbal abuse at the hands of a partner, only 17% said that they or another woman they know had experienced physical violence and 29% had experienced verbal abuse in their lifetimes, and even fewer reported that they themselves had felt unsafe in their homes in the past six months (6%). The inconsistencies between these numbers suggest that while domestic violence may be discussed generally and among friends and family, it is likely underreported in research and to authorities.

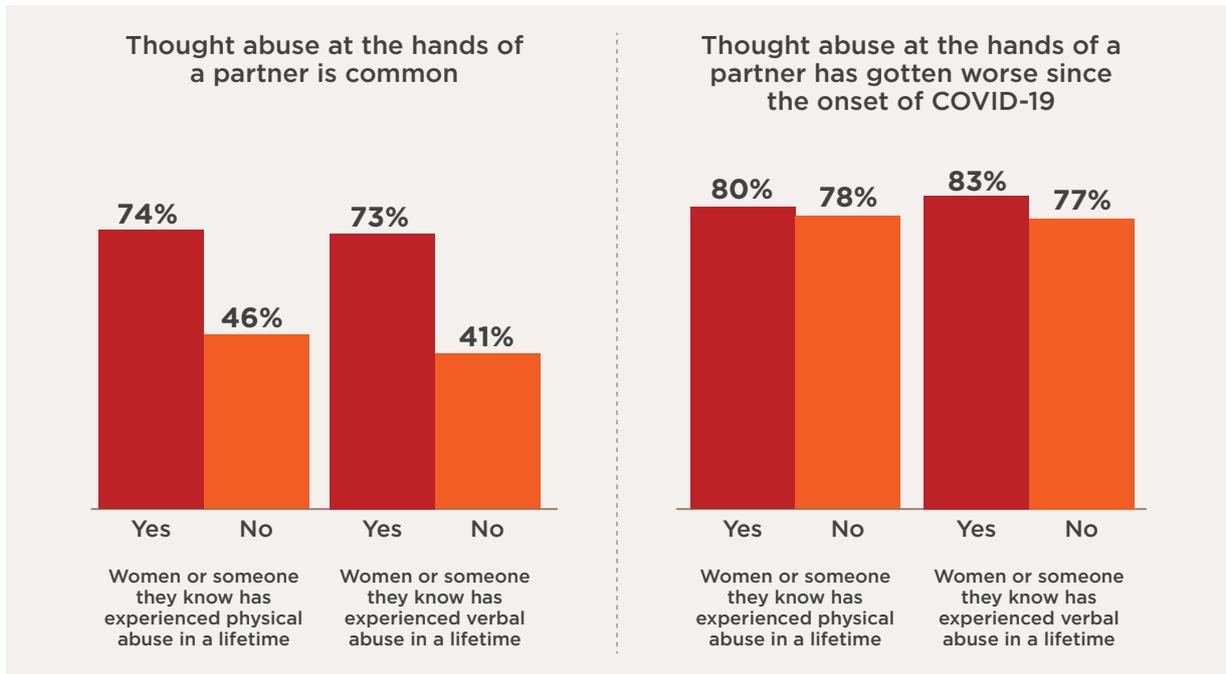
Most women surveyed (79%) thought things have gotten worse since the start of the pandemic in terms of women experiencing physi-

cal and verbal abuse at the hands of a partner, a number which rises to 85% among women who thought that the experience was common in the first place.

Notably, women who reported experiencing or knowing someone who experienced VAW – both in their lifetime and since the start of COVID-19 – were more likely to think that partner abuse was a common occurrence in their communities (64, compared to 36% among women who did not). These data points suggest that women may be including their own experiences when reporting on the experiences of women in their community.

FIGURE 7

Perceptions of partner violence, by experience or knowledge of VAW in lifetime



The majority of women (69%) said they believe that women would seek out help if they experienced verbal or physical abuse at the hands of a partner, though this is slightly less than those who believed women would seek help when experiencing safety issues in public. The majority (54%) believed these women would first seek help from family – an increase from the 48% who said family support would be sought first in cases of public harassment.

Despite 38% of women saying that legal support or help in reporting incidents or dealing with police was an available resource in their community, less than 1 in 5 women (18%) believed they would first go to the police in these instances – a decrease from the 35% who believed police help would be first sought in cases of public harassment. Additionally, women who said they have felt unsafe in their homes were seven times more likely to first seek help from friends (7 compared to 1% among women who did not). These data points further indicate that domestic violence may be underreported to authorities in comparison with other forms of VAW.

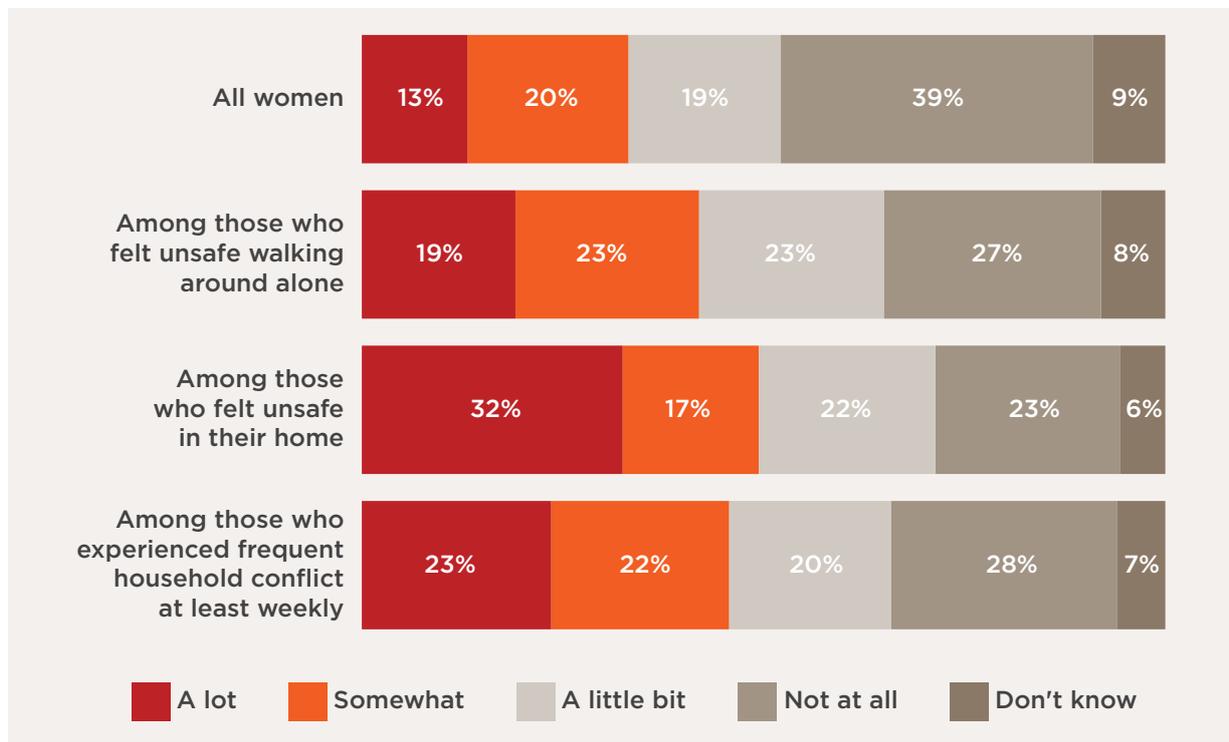
4.2. Perceptions of violence against women in the community

A third of women in Albania (33%) said that they think violence, abuse or the harassment of women in their community are at least somewhat of a problem, and an additional 19% said that they are a little bit of a problem. Women aged 18 to 29, those who were single, and those living in urban areas were particularly likely to think that violence, abuse or the harassment of women were a problem in their communities.

Women who have themselves experienced safety issues, whether inside or outside the home, were significantly more likely to perceive violence, abuse or the harassment of women as a problem in the community, indicating that safety within the home influences views of the environment outside the home.

FIGURE 8

Extent to which violence, abuse or harassment is a problem in the community



Nearly a third of women (29%) said they thought violence, abuse or the harassment of women in their community have increased since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and a further 52% said they have stayed the same. It is worth noting that women who reported feeling unsafe in their own homes were significantly more likely to perceive an increase in violence, abuse or the harassment of women since the start of COVID-19 (41, compared to 28% among women who felt safe in their homes), as were women who had experienced – or known someone who had experienced – some type of VAW in their lifetime (34, compared to 22% of women who had not). This indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic may have exacerbated already high-risk conditions for vulnerable women in Albania.

4.3. Women’s perceived safety in public spaces

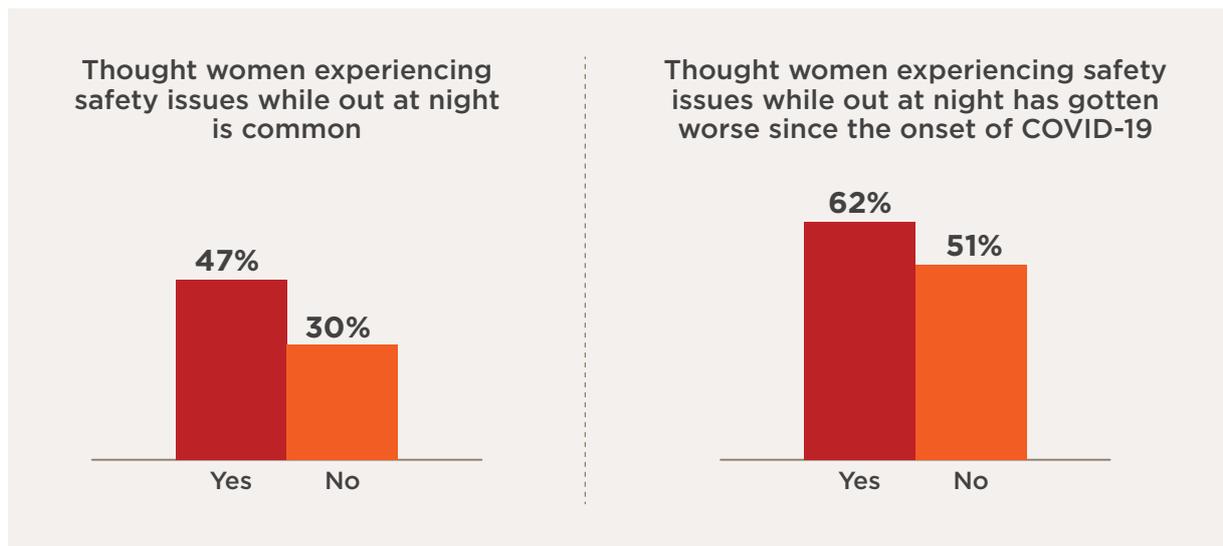
Women’s perceptions of their own personal safety in public spaces were fairly consistent with their perceptions of how common it was for women in the community to feel unsafe in public at night. Nearly 4 out of 10 women (39%) said they think it is common for women to experience harassment and safety issues in public at night, consistent with 34% of women who said they themselves feel unsafe at night.

Similar to results on their own personal feelings of safety, younger women aged 18–29 (45%) and single (47%) women were more likely to say that it is common for women to experience safety issues when out at night than older women (33% of women aged 50 and older) and their partnered counterparts (38%). Women who said they lived in urban areas were significantly more likely than those in rural areas to think this was common (42, compared to 32%).

Interestingly, these patterns do not hold when asking women whether things have gotten better or worse in terms of safety in public at night since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, as over half (57%) of women said they think it has gotten worse, revealing a gap between the general perception of safety and

personal feelings or experiences. Women aged 50 and older, as well as partnered women were especially likely to think that things have gotten worse (65 and 61%, respectively), while younger women aged 18 to 29 and those that were single were the least likely (43 and 41%, respectively).

FIGURE 9
Perception of safety issues, by experience or knowledge of VAW in their lifetime



Three out of four women (75%) expected that women experiencing harassment or abuse in public spaces would seek help, and nearly half (48%) said that they expected women would seek support from family first, while a third (35%) expected that they would first go to the police. This was consistent with 38% of women who said that legal support or help in reporting incidents or dealing with police was an available resource in their community.

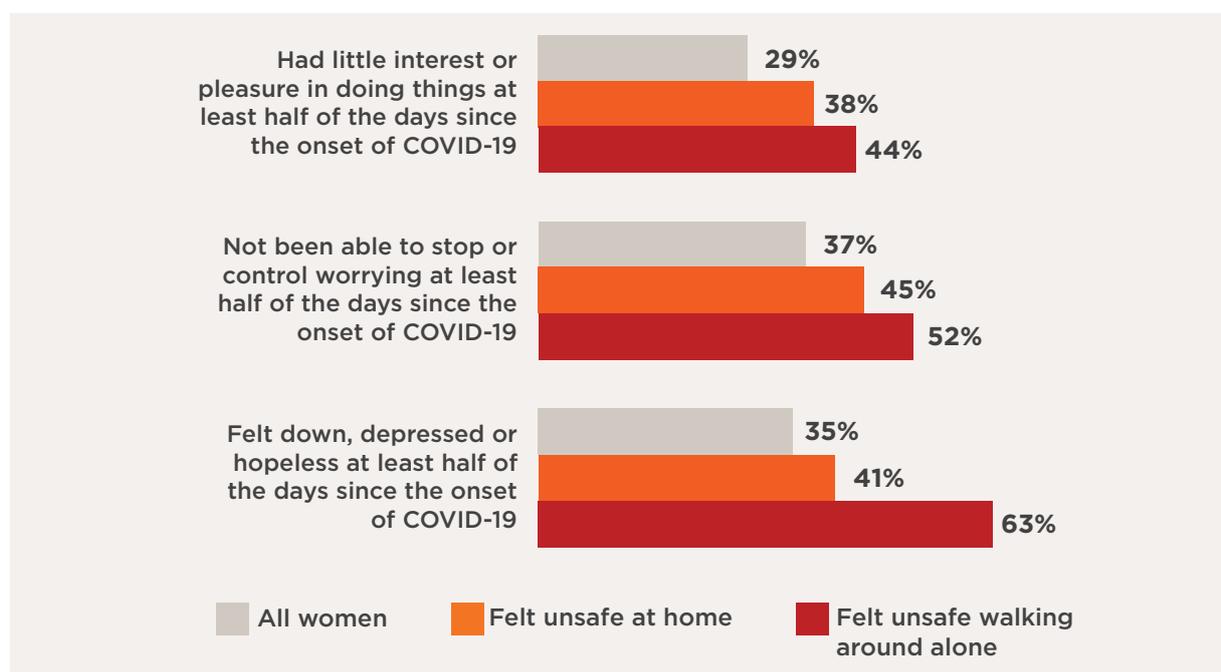
Nevertheless, any sense of anxiety and fear outside of the household that they may have experienced does not seem to have stopped women from engaging in public. More than 4 in 5 women (81%) said that they had left their house at least once a week, and more than half (57%) left daily, although this was heavily skewed towards employed women (76%) and women living in urban areas (67%). The majority of women said they still see their friends and social groups with either typical (15%) or reduced (78%) frequency, despite constraints related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. IMPACTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

This study indicates strong relationships between measures of VAW, changes in women’s behaviours, and their feelings of mental

health, suggesting that impressions and experience of safety (or lack thereof) may be a strongly associated with women’s well-being.

FIGURE 10
Measures of mental health, by feelings of safety



In addition to experiences of safety being associated with mental and emotional well-being, as shown in Figure 10, 37% of women were unable to stop worrying; 29% had little interest or pleasure in doing things; and 35% felt down, depressed or hopeless at least half the days since the onset of the pandemic. However, these measures of mental health were more pronounced among specific groups of women, such as: those living in rural areas (with rates of 41, 34, and 43%, respectively, on each marker); those who had lower educational levels (at 44, 33, and 46%, respectively); and highest among those with a disability (at 55, 39 and 48%, respectively.) These groups were also more likely

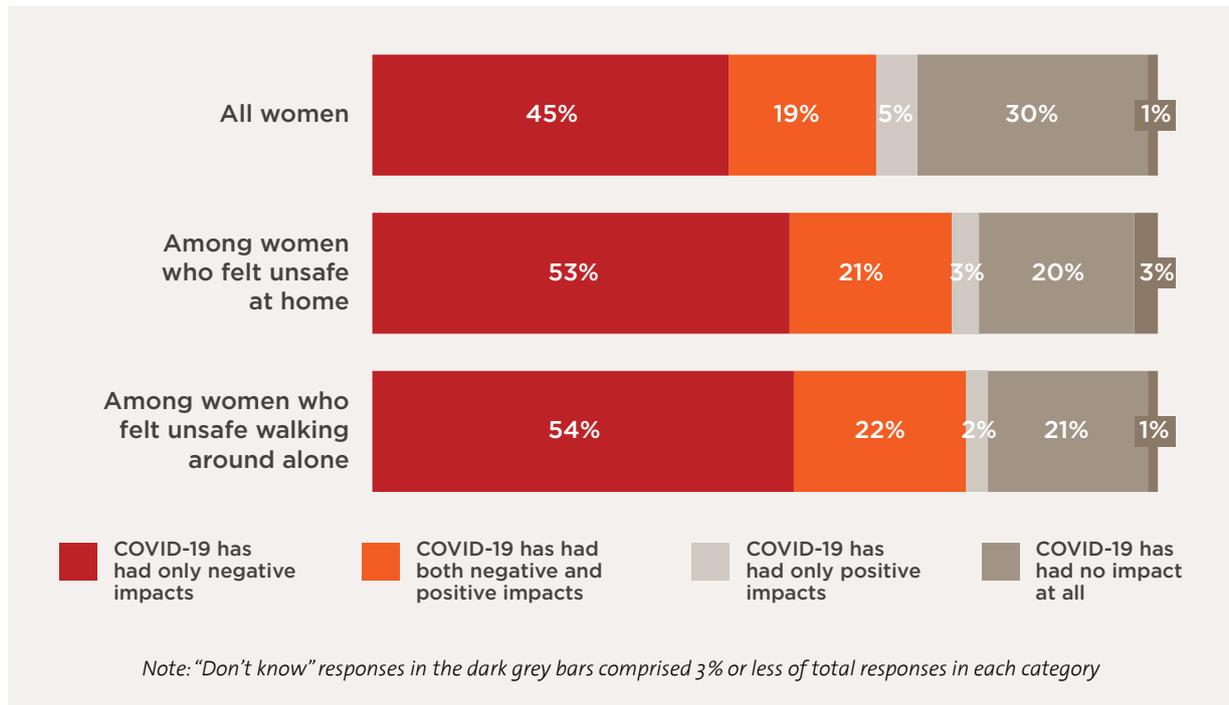
than the overall sample to report experiencing symptoms of depression and anxiety at least half the days since the onset of COVID-19.

Women who had feelings of depression at least half the time since the onset of COVID-19 were also two to four times more likely to experience severe food insecurity compared to those who said they never had these feelings.

In addition, women who said they had felt unsafe, whether it was in their home or in the public spaces, were more likely to report symptoms of anxiety and depression at least half the days since the onset of COVID-19, and to say that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted them negatively.

FIGURE 11

Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health, by feelings of safety



Those who experienced decreased income over the past year (53%) and had experienced any type of VAW exclusively since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (52%) were both more likely than those who did not to report an exclusively negative impact on their mental health as a result of COVID-19. The group of women who experienced exclusively negative impacts of COVID-19 on their mental health were also more likely to be food insecure. This suggests, as previous reports have found, that the negative impacts of COVID-19 are felt the strongest by those already experiencing hardship.

More than half of women (56%) said that resources like professional mental health experts were not available as support services in their community. Women who felt unsafe in

their own homes were more likely to say this (63%), as were women who reported frequent or occasional arguments and conflict in their homes (62%), further limiting the ability of vulnerable women to get the help they need.

The impact of violence against women in public and private spaces was also observed when analysing women's socialization and movement patterns. Although the majority of women (57%) reported that they left the house on their own daily in the past month, women who felt unsafe in their homes were less likely to leave the house by themselves daily in the same period (45%), and more likely to report that COVID-19 had limited their interaction with friends and social groups (85 compared to 77%).

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The impacts of COVID-19 on VAW in Albania are worthy of attention as a sizeable portion of the female population has felt less safe, both within and outside their homes, particularly since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. With around 26% of women likely experiencing food insecurity at the time of the study and 56% saying they had lost income, mostly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, external stressors that can increase the risk of VAW are on the rise. This presents an opportunity to address factors that can reduce the risk of VAW, as well as to put more effective methods of dealing with VAW into place.

This research has shown that VAW is an intersectional issue in Albania that has differential impacts on women of all ages, relationships, socioeconomic statuses and education levels. As a result, policy and programmatic interventions require tailoring not only to the factors that drive experience of violence but also to the perceptions of VAW and the knowledge, awareness and trust in resources available to help women deal with it. Considering this, the research supports three recommendations:

1. Design VAW interventions to meet people where they are and consider how VAW programming could be mainstreamed through policy interventions in other areas, including through fully integrating VAW measures in post-COVID-19 recovery plans as an opportunity to build back better.

The complex nature of VAW, particularly in countries like Albania where social and gender norms can obfuscate understanding of prevalence, calls for a comprehensive policy approach that mainstreams the issue and its impacts across a number of areas. This study has provided insights on the notable influence of external factors on the risk of VAW, particularly as it relates to economic dependence.

Women who felt unsafe within and outside their homes were more likely to be unemployed, to report decreased income over the past year and were also more likely than those who felt safe to be food insecure. As policy interventions and programming begin to confront the impacts that COVID-19 has had on society, it is critical to address the economic vulnerability of women as it may play a significant role in alleviating a major potential driver of VAW.

As planned in the new National Strategy for Gender Equality (NSGE) 2021–2030, adequate resources (human, financial, infrastructural, etc.) must be allocated to advance the goal of reducing all forms of harmful practices, gender-based violence and domestic violence. Efforts included in the NSGE aim to empower women, young women and girls in all their diversity to have full control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexual and reproductive health.

Approaches that go beyond gender mainstreaming to put women at the centre of policy development and support their economic integration are needed to build long-term COVID-19 recovery plans that work for girls and women, particularly those most vulnerable to violence. Comprehensive recovery policies and programmes are encouraged to focus more efforts on the economic reintegration of women survivors of violence and on all women's economic empowerment.

Throughout this process, however, it is critical to consider the impacts that interventions may have on particular external stressors, such as intentional or accidental shifting of gender roles and norms that could easily do more harm than good if not carefully accounted for. This is addressed further in recommendation three.

2. Work to enhance the response and provision of essential services by authorities and civil society structures, and to improve trust, in order to improve reporting and bolster women's confidence and feelings of safety.

While the majority of women in Albania expected women to report incidents of VAW experienced in public and private spaces, most of these women also believed that help is more likely to be sought from family rather than official channels. Further, with the exception of medical services, most women in Albania are unaware of or do not have access to resources should they find themselves in an unsafe and vulnerable situation, suggesting that more work needs to be done to raise awareness and accessibility of services, particularly as they relate to protection and mental health.

This supports previous data that shows that the COVID-19 pandemic may have exacerbated already high-risk conditions for vulnerable women in Albania. As such, enhancing the role of police in monitoring protection orders for women who have already reported violence is critical. In addition to supporting women who have already availed themselves of support provided by authorities, more work needs to be done to achieve the NSGE objectives to provide better access to justice and to specialist support services for women, young women, and girls in all their diversity. This study found that while some women would first go to the police in cases of VAW, the more common answer was to seek support from family, and only around a third were aware or had access to legal support or help in reporting incidents or dealing with police. Research has shown that this perception is often closely linked to a lack of trust in institutions, which can be built by strengthening the response capacity of these institutions themselves, ensuring availability of high-quality and ethical survivor-based services, with specific attention to providers who are the initial contacts for women to protect the safety and ensure the comfort of survivors,

and efforts to make the role of police in reporting VAW more visible.

More than half of women (56%) said that resources like professional mental health experts were not available as support services to women in their community. However, many women reported suffering from symptoms of anxiety and depression both prior to and as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This suggests that more work needs to be done to provide more accessible mental health services, by connecting women to the mental health support that they need and by placing such services in primary health care centres, and in communities and among existing accessible networks.

3. Support further research that goes beyond understanding VAW prevalence to examining its underlying social norms and behavioural drivers, particularly around breaking taboos and help-seeking behaviours.

While this study provides insightful information about the current state of VAW in Albania, it is critical to conduct further research to understand the nuances that could not be captured, due to methodological and situational barriers. If social distancing and stay-at-home measures continue to compromise the implementation of face-to-face data collection, innovative remote methods could be explored, which facilitate adherence to globally agreed methodological, safety and ethical standards.

In particular, research that is qualitative in nature will be helpful in understanding how to destigmatize VAW by building a more thorough framework of the underlying social and gender norms and the reasons why (or why not) women seek help from through formal channels. The 2018 National Population Survey⁹ in Albania found that social attitudes promoting shame and silence around domestic

9 Instat Albania, UNDP and UN Women. 2019. [NATIONAL POPULATION SURVEY : Violence Against Women and Girls in Albania.](#)

violence and sexual violence in particular are pervasive in Albania. Over half (52%) of women and girls aged 18–74 who were surveyed maintained that all or most people in their communities believe violence between a husband and wife is a private matter and others should not intervene, and nearly half of women (47%) also agreed that all or most people in their communities believe a woman should tolerate some violence to keep her family together. Attitudes of blame and surrounding domestic and sexual violence are also common, with nearly a third of women perceiving that all or most people in their communities believe when a woman is beaten by her husband that she is partly to blame or at fault (28%), and over a fifth of women (21%) saying that all or most people in the community believe that if a woman is raped, she has probably done something careless to put herself in that situation.

Investing in further research is necessary to better understand the social norms and behavioural drivers of these attitudes and the best ways to counteract and shift attitudes surrounding VAW. Research should also be aimed at helping women survivors of such violence feel safer and more comfortable when seeking help through official channels. For instance, this RGA shows that younger women were particularly more likely to say they had experiences or knowledge of VAW, suggesting that more work needs to be done to support

them in particular. This could include developing awareness-raising initiatives to shift the social or gender norms and behavioural drivers that perpetuate VAW among young people. It could also involve working with youth more closely to address sexual harassment, verbal abuse, intimate violence among adolescents and cyberviolence.

In addition to these specific initiatives, it is important to capitalize on programming that is already working with women in their communities to provide additional education and support on issues related to VAW, including by increasing awareness of resources available to vulnerable women. Centralized resources may not be accessible for all women experiencing violence from a partner or household member, not only because domestic violence is often considered a private matter but also because of a lack of accessibility and fear of repercussions. Further, socialization and connection with others outside the home can provide important support systems and escape for women in unsafe home situations. Programmes designed to allow these women to regularly and safely connect with others outside their household – whether virtually or in-person – could be a powerful tool in providing these vulnerable women with increased safety and support.

7. METHODOLOGY

The survey was fielded via Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing using random-digit dialing to mobile numbers between 18 August and 20 September 2021. The total number of completed interviews was 1,210. During the survey period, Albania was experiencing a spike in weekly reported new COVID-19 cases, although this spike did begin to taper off and drop slightly towards the end of the study.¹⁰ A nightly curfew was implemented mid-way through the study, going into effect on 1 September 2021.¹¹ Albania also experienced a gradual, steady increase in reported vaccinations over this time period.¹²

The sample was drawn via random-digit dialing among the population with mobile phone numbers, so the sample population is limited to women aged 18 or over with mobile phone access. Women over age 60 were also specifically targeted with an existing database to ensure adequate coverage of this age group. The percentages for each age group from this survey match the percentages for each age group from Albania's Census data.¹³

Age group	Percentage of adult women based on Census data	Percentage of adult women from sample data
18–29	24%	23.8%
30–39	16%	16.2%
40–49	15%	14.7%
50–59	17%	17.3%
60+	28%	28%

10 Reuters COVID-19 Tracker. 2021. "Albania" <https://graphics.reuters.com/world-coronavirus-tracker-and-maps/countries-and-territories/albania/>. Accessed in October 2021.

11 US Embassy in Albania. 2021. "COVID-19 Information" https://al.usembassy.gov/updates_covid19/. Accessed in October 2021.

12 Reuters COVID-19 Tracker. 2021. "Albania" <https://graphics.reuters.com/world-coronavirus-tracker-and-maps/countries-and-territories/albania/>. Accessed in October 2021.

13 INSTAT. 2021. "Population by Age group, Sex, Type and Year". http://databaza.instat.gov.al/pxweb/en/DST/START__DE/POP01/table/tableViewLayout2/?rxid=63431e2b-dcoc-4f7e-908e-46f973c156d3

DEFINITIONS

Community: A term referencing the geographic area in which the respondent lives.

Food insecurity: This study used the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)'s formulation to measure food insecurity, with an eight-statement battery. These data can be used to establish estimates of the proportion of the sample who were moderately or severely food insecure, which can also be disaggregated by other variables of interest through the use of the FAO Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) module. Any references in the report to prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity represent estimates of the prevalence and should be interpreted as such.

Partnered: A term referring to women who were married or living/cohabiting with a partner

Violence against women: Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or was likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Felt unsafe walking alone: Refers to women who indicated that they felt "not very safe" or "not safe at all" walking alone outside during the day (at question Co2) or during the night (at question Co3).

Experienced or knew someone who had experienced VAW: Refers to women who indicated that they, or another woman they knew, had experienced any form of VAW. "Since COVID-19" is added to indicate women who indicated that these incidents had only been occurring since the start of the pandemic.

Experienced frequent conflict: Refers to respondents who indicated that they experienced conflict or arguments in their homes at least once a week during the last six months (at question C19).

Experienced infrequent conflict: Refers to respondents who indicated that they experienced conflict or arguments in their homes "once or twice" or "never" during the last six months (at question C19).

Violence, abuse or the harassment of women are a problem the community: Refers to respondents who indicated that physical harm, abuse or the harassment of women are "a lot", "somewhat", or "a little bit" of a problem where they live (at question Co7).

Violence, abuse or the harassment of women are not a problem the community: Refers to respondents who indicated that physical harm, abuse or the harassment of women are "not at all" a problem where they live (at question Co7).

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Produced by the Women Count programme
Editor: Jen Ross
Design: Ouissal Hmazzou



220 East 42nd Street
New York, New York 10017, USA

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