

OSCE-LED SURVEY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

# WELL-BEING AND SAFETY OF WOMEN



**VIOLENCE AGAINST  
WOMEN IN CONFLICT**

OSCE: THEMATIC REPORT

# OSCE-led survey on violence against women: Conflict and violence against women



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## Background

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

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

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

Violence against women and girls also occurs in times of conflict, and the OSCE commissioned this qualitative and quantitative study in order to shed light on the prevalence of different forms of VAWG in non-conflict and conflict-affected settings in selected OSCE participating States: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, Moldova and Ukraine. Research was also conducted in Kosovo.<sup>3</sup>

This study, the first such representative survey conducted in South-Eastern Europe or Eastern Europe to provide comparable data across the region, encompasses gender attitudes and the experiences of women from minority groups.<sup>4</sup> Its aim is to provide robust data in order to develop more comprehensive and evidence-based policies, strategies, programmes and activities to prevent and combat VAW. The ultimate goal of this research is to provide evidence for informed decision-making and advocacy at different levels and thereby contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as a reduction of VAW in the target regions, improved services for survivors and greater security for women.

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

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

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

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



# Executive summary

## What is this report about?

This report explores the ways in which women have been directly affected by conflict and experiences of VAW in the context of conflict versus non-conflict settings. It provides an overview of the prevalence, forms and nature of conflict-related violence in the region covered by the OSCE-led survey. The data collected provides information about the prevalence of conflict-related incidents of physical and sexual violence, sexual harassment and stalking in pre-conflict settings, during conflict and in post-conflict situations. This data had never been collected in the OSCE region before, and this report will feed into the OSCE's work on conflict early warning.

The report focuses on the findings of the OSCE-led Survey on the Well-being and Safety of Women, which was conducted in 2018 in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, Moldova<sup>5</sup> and Ukraine.<sup>6</sup> The research was also conducted in Kosovo. It should be read alongside individual reports for each of the eight settings, a regional report for the whole area and one other thematic report on how VAW impacts women from disadvantaged groups.<sup>7</sup>

## Why is it important?

Violent conflicts have had an impact on individuals, communities and authorities in the region covered by the survey. Among other impacts, the destructive nature of armed conflicts can increase the risk of different forms of gender-based violence against women. This study shows that conflict and conflict-related violence against women have long-lasting consequences and are of a different nature compared with other contexts of violence towards women. Legal and policy responses need to take these different realities into account.

## Scope of the research

The OSCE-led survey included quantitative and qualitative components and was undertaken with the goal of providing comparable data on **different forms of violence** women experienced in their childhood and throughout the course of their lives.

The survey covered physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated by non-partners or intimate partners, as well as sexual harassment, stalking and childhood violence.

The study furthermore examined the prevalence of attitudes that perpetuate gender inequalities and tolerance of VAW.

The research notably examined violence that women experience **in conflict and non-conflict settings**, as well as the impact that violence has on women. To ensure that a full picture of violence related to conflict was provided, the survey questionnaire was designed in a holistic way to measure whether each form of violence was connected to armed conflict, including *when* violence happened in relation to the armed conflict.

Further details of the methodology used can be found in Chapter 1.

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

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

<sup>7</sup> Other OSCE reports relating to this survey are available at: <https://www.osce.org/projects/survey-on-the-well-being-and-safety-of-women>

The following are definitions of the key terms used throughout this report. More details are available in Chapter 1:

- Conflict

For the purposes of this research, conflict is defined as armed fighting between two or more organized groups, attacks on communities or general insecurity caused by conflict or crisis.

- Directly conflict-affected women

Women who lived through a situation where there was a conflict for a period of at least one week (see definition above) and who had at least one conflict-related experience from a predefined list of experiences<sup>8</sup> were considered to be directly conflict-affected.

- Conflict-related violence

Directly conflict-affected women who indicated that they had experienced violence were asked whether this violence happened in connection with the conflict(s) they experienced.

### Who are directly conflict-affected women?

Of the 18% of women in the region who lived through a period of conflict for at least one week, 72% indicate that they heard the sound of gunshots, bombing or shelling in the area where they lived at the time of the conflict. The majority of women who lived through a period of conflict also indicated that armed personnel were stationed or moving around in large numbers for at least one week in the area where they lived (58%), and a third (33%) stated that they had to flee or evacuate their homes temporarily. Women who lived through a period of conflict and said they had a conflict-related experience such as these are defined for the purposes of this research as directly conflict-affected.

**Overall, roughly 3.5 million women in the region (16%) have been directly affected by conflict, ranging from 8% of women in Moldova to 64% in Bosnia and Herzegovina and 73% in Kosovo.** These women are more likely to be older (which is to be expected given that, with the exception of Ukraine, the conflicts that most women in the survey lived through took place in the 1990s and early 2000s) and to have less education than women who are not directly conflict-affected. They are also more likely to be unemployed or fulfilling domestic duties and care responsibilities. Finally, women who are directly conflict-affected are more likely than those who are not to have a long-standing illness or health problem (37% compared with 31%). Of those who are conflict-affected and have a health issue, 12% say it was caused by the conflict they lived through.

Women defined as directly conflict-affected were asked a subsequent set of questions on the impact that conflict had on them. The most common response (mentioned by 28% of directly conflict-affected women) was that the men in their family were away from home because they had to flee, they fought in the conflict, they were detained, or they went missing, while 24% of directly conflict-affected women said that health services in the area, including women's health services, were unavailable for a prolonged period of time.

### What are the major findings?

The OSCE-led survey sheds light on the ways in which women have been affected by conflict, the prevalence and nature of conflict-related violence, and the consequences of conflict and conflict-related violence on women. It also draws attention to the silence and stigma that prevent women from reporting and taking action when they have been victims of conflict-related violence. The key findings include the following:

<sup>8</sup> For a full list of the experiences asked about, see "Definitions" in Chapter 1.

- There is evidence to suggest that the violence experienced by women directly affected by conflict can **be more severe** than violence experienced by women who are not conflict-affected. This is even more marked for women who are **refugees/displaced or returnees**.
- Incidents of conflict-related non-partner violence are much more likely to occur at the hands of **multiple perpetrators** than non-partner violence that is not associated with conflict.
- Living through conflict has an impact on women's physical health. Women who are directly conflict-affected are more likely than those who are not to say they have a **long-standing illness or health problem**. **This is even more the case among women who are or have been displaced**.
- Women whose current or previous **partner** suffered from a **psychological consequence as a result of conflict** are more likely to say they have experienced **intimate partner violence**.
- There is a continued **taboo** around **discussing experiences of violence** suffered during and as a result of conflict, which may also play a part in lower disclosure rates in the survey.

Further key findings from each topic area are explored in more depth below.

### 1. Prevalence of violence among directly conflict-affected women and of conflict-related violence

#### Main findings

- Of the directly conflict-affected women in the region, approximately 430,000 **(12%) disclose that they were a victim of** intimate partner or non-partner violence, sexual harassment or stalking that was associated with a conflict.
- **Women who are refugees or displaced** are more likely to indicate that they suffered physical violence at the hands of any perpetrator since the age of 15 (37%) compared with women overall (29%). They are also more likely to indicate having experienced intimate partner sexual violence since the age of 15 (12% compared with 7% overall).
- Women who are directly conflict-affected have also been victims of, or witnesses to, other forms of violence, including **armed groups deliberately threatening, spreading rumours or perpetrating actual violence against women** to terrify the local population (9%); members of **armed groups harassing local women** (8%); and members of armed groups employing **deeply humiliating practices against local women** (5%).
- Nearly two in five directly conflict-affected women who identified a **most serious incident** of partner or non-partner physical and/or sexual violence attribute it to the conflict(s) they experienced (38%).
- During the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, women described in some detail the extreme experiences of violence they had endured or were aware of that were a direct result of the conflict. This included **rape** in camps, **violence perpetrated by armed individuals** and heightened tensions within families causing an increase in domestic violence.
- Contrary to what might be expected, women who are directly conflict-affected are less likely than women who are not to disclose having experienced violence or harassment since the age of 15, with 63% of women who are directly affected by conflict doing so, compared with 72% of women who are not directly conflict-affected. This covers all forms of violence, including intimate and non-partner physical and/or sexual violence, intimate partner psychological violence, sexual harassment and stalking.

### Conclusions

The data shows that conflict-related violence includes more than sexual violence by a non-partner. It includes all forms of violence, as well as threats of violence, humiliating practices on the part of armed groups and sexual exploitation. Furthermore, the data suggests that some groups of women affected by conflict are more likely to be vulnerable to violence, such as women who are refugees, displaced women or women returnees.

## 2. Nature of conflict-related violence

### Main findings

- Of the directly conflict-affected women who identified a most serious incident of violence, the percentage of these incidents that were associated with conflict varies greatly depending on where the women were living at the time of the survey (2018). In Serbia, only 7% of the most serious incidents of intimate partner violence were associated with conflict, while this rises to 56% in Albania. This may serve as an indication of the nature of the conflict experienced.
- The majority of conflict-related experiences of physical and/or sexual violence took place **during an armed conflict** (53%) and a third **before a conflict** (32%). One in five (22%) took place in the five years following a conflict, and a further 8% took place more than five years after a conflict.
- Those incidents of conflict-related non-partner violence that were identified as the most serious were more likely to have occurred at the hands of **multiple perpetrators** (17% of women indicate that their most serious incident was perpetrated by three or more people, a rate more than three times higher than that of all women who identify a most serious incident of non-partner violence not associated with conflict (5%)). Among women who are or have been displaced, 19% of the incidents of non-partner violence that were identified as the most serious were perpetrated by three or more people.
- Those incidents of sexual harassment that were identified as the most serious and that were associated with conflict were also more likely than those not associated with conflict to have been perpetrated by multiple people (38% say their most serious incident was carried out by three or more people compared with 12% of women whose most serious incident was not associated with conflict).
- Women who are directly conflict-affected and who associate their most serious incident of non-partner violence with conflict are more likely than women who do not associate their most serious incident of violence with conflict to say that the incident was carried out by someone they did not know (34% compared with 17%). These incidents are also more likely to have been perpetrated by an armed official or aid worker (8% compared with 1% of women whose most serious incident was not associated with conflict).
- Women who are directly affected by conflict are almost twice as likely as those who are not to say that their **most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner violence** involved having their **head beaten against something** (7% compared with 4% of women of not directly affected by conflict) and are more likely to say that their **most serious incident involved being punched, beaten with a hard object or kicked** (21% compared with 14%).
- Where women's most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner violence was connected to conflict, they are sometimes more likely to say it involved the more severe forms of violence. For instance, women whose most serious incident is connected to conflict are more than twice as likely to say they were raped during the incident (13% versus 6%).
- Women who are refugees or displaced are nearly nine times more likely than average to say their most serious **incident of intimate partner or non-partner violence involved being cut or stabbed** or shot at (17% compared with 2% on average), while returnees are more than three times more likely to say their most serious incident involved being raped (21% compared with 6% on average).



## Conclusions

Experiences of violence in connection with conflict can differ from experiences outside of conflict situations, for example, in terms of **severity and the number of perpetrators**. The evidence shows that victims of conflict-related violence are much more likely to have suffered violence at the hands of **multiple perpetrators**.

### 3. Silence and stigma surrounding conflict-related violence

#### Main findings

- Women whose **most serious incident of physical and/or sexual violence was associated with conflict** are **less likely** than women whose most serious incident was not associated with conflict to have **reported the incident to the police** (13% compared with 18%). They are also **less likely** to have **contacted a lawyer** (3% compared with 10%).
- The reasons that women who associate their most serious incident with conflict give for not contacting the police are similar to the reasons women give in general, including that they preferred to deal with it themselves (48%), they considered it too minor (17%), they felt ashamed (15%), or they wanted to keep it private (13%). Issues of shame and embarrassment stemming from conflict-related violence emerged in the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews.
- The belief that the police would not do anything was a barrier for 5% of women who associated their most serious incident with conflict, compared with 15% of women whose most serious incident was not associated with conflict. However, the inability to **report their most serious conflict-related incident to the police** because of conflict was an issue for 8% of women, compared with 2% of women who did not associate their most serious incident with conflict.
- In the qualitative research, women who had experienced violence – and in particular sexual violence – at the hands of armed soldiers spoke about the feelings of shame this had brought on them. Several women explained that they had never told their family or a support service about the violence they suffered. Among the women who did seek support from an NGO, many only did so years after the incident. This is substantiated by the quantitative data, which suggests that women who associate their most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner violence with conflict are more likely to say that they did not report the incident to a support service (other than the police) because they preferred to deal with it themselves (70% compared with 61% of women who do not associate their most serious incident with conflict).

## Conclusions

Many women who have experienced conflict-related violence do not report their experience or seek help. The reasons for not reporting violence are linked to cultural barriers, feelings of shame and fear. Concerns about how they would be viewed or that they would not be respected, particularly in relation to sexual violence perpetrated by uniformed perpetrators, were mentioned during the qualitative research.

### 4. Influence of partner's involvement in conflict on VAW

#### Main findings

The data shows that whether or not a woman's partner fought in a conflict also has important consequences on the prevalence of violence against women:

- Three in ten women (30%) whose current or previous partner fought in a conflict indicate having experienced intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15, compared with 23% of all women who have ever had a partner.

## OSCE-led survey on violence against women: Conflict and violence against women

- Similarly, in Ukraine, the prevalence of intimate partner violence in the 12 months prior to the survey is higher among those women whose partners have fought in a conflict than among those whose partner has not fought in a conflict (17% compared with 7%).
- The prevalence increases further when a woman's partner has **suffered from a psychological consequence as a result of having fought in a conflict**. **Women whose current partners have experienced a psychological consequence** are nearly twice as likely to indicate having suffered physical and/or sexual violence at their hands since the age of 15 (27%) compared with 14% of all women with a current partner. This also holds true for women whose previous partner suffered a psychological consequence; just over twice as many women say they have experienced physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of a previous partner who suffered a psychological consequence from fighting in a conflict (51%) compared with 25% of all women with a previous partner.

### Conclusion

A **key influencer in the prevalence of intimate partner violence** is whether or not the victim's **partner was involved in a conflict**. More specifically, men who were involved in a conflict and who suffered from a psychological consequence as a result are substantially more likely to subject their partners to physical and sexual violence today.

## 5. Consequences of conflict and conflict-related violence

### Main findings

- Women who are directly conflict-affected are more likely than those who are not to say they have a **long-standing illness or health problem** (37% compared with 31%).
- Of those women who are directly affected by conflict and who have a long-standing illness or health problem, 12% attribute this illness or health problem to the conflict they lived through.
- The impact of conflict on victims' health is even more noticeable among women who are refugees/displaced or returnees, 42% and 39% of whom, respectively, say they have a long-standing illness or health problem.
- There are significant differences across places in the proportion of conflict-affected women who associate their most serious incident of violence with conflict. This may reflect the nature and duration of the conflict.
- Directly conflict-affected women who associate their **most serious incident** of physical or sexual violence with conflict are more likely than women whose most serious incident is not associated with conflict to say they suffered from multiple **long-term psychological impacts**, with 26% stating they have suffered from four or more of the impacts asked about, compared with 20% of women who identified a most serious incident of violence not associated with conflict. Serious incidents associated with conflict are **more likely to lead to** anxiety and depression in particular.
- The **likelihood of some psychological impacts** from a woman's most serious incident of non-partner or intimate partner violence **increases** in proportion to the **number of conflict-related experiences a woman has had**. Feelings of vulnerability (36% compared with 17% of women who experienced one conflict-related experience), difficulties in sleeping (34% compared with 17%) and difficulties in relationships (34% compared with 17%) were all more commonly experienced by those who had four or more conflict-related experiences than among those women who say that they had only one conflict-related experience.
- Women were also indirectly affected by conflict. For instance, in the qualitative research, women explained that they were unable to access their pension because they had not contributed enough as a result of the conflict they lived through.
-

### Conclusions

Since women who are directly conflict-affected are more likely to suffer **from poor health**, policies to support victims of violence and health policies need to take the legacies of armed conflicts into account. The **psychological trauma of conflict is widespread and long-lasting. Women who are directly conflict-affected and who had conflict-related experiences of violence are more likely to experience long-term psychological impacts as a result of their experiences.** OSCE participating states could consider assessing and integrating this evidence into their health policies and fund special measures for the generation of women and men who have experienced armed conflict.

Taking all the findings and conclusions into account, the following action points are proposed:

### Proposed action points

#### For all OSCE participating States:

1. Include paragraphs on preventing intimate partner violence in codes of conduct for military staff.
2. Provide psychological support for military personnel and their families to prevent domestic violence.
3. Include in bilateral assistance activities with armed forces good practices on the provision of psycho-social support for soldiers who have fought in conflict settings, including information about how to prevent intimate partner violence.
4. Offer rehabilitation programmes to men who have fought in an armed conflict to help them come to terms with their experiences and recover from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or other forms of psychological trauma.

#### For OSCE executive structures:

- Provide opportunities for OSCE participating States to exchange good practices on the support of (former) military personnel and their families aimed at preventing intimate partner violence/domestic violence.
- Develop guidance/training on the adaptation of codes of conduct to prevent intimate partner violence for participating States.

**Thoughts on the information collected in terms of timelines and perpetrators in relation to conflicts**

The research provided a baseline for the number of women directly affected by armed conflict in the regions covered. It also provided baselines for what women actually experienced during conflict and the nature of conflict-related violence in the regions covered:

- The majority of conflict-related experiences of physical and/or sexual violence took place during an armed conflict (53%), and nearly a third of such experiences took place before a conflict (32%).
- The majority (57%) of incidents of sexual harassment associated with conflict took place prior to the conflict. One-third (33%) of women say that the incidents of sexual harassment that they experienced in connection with a conflict occurred during the conflict, and 9% say such incidents took place in the five years following the conflict.
- The most serious incidents of sexual harassment associated with conflict are more likely to have been perpetrated by multiple people; more than three times as many conflict-related incidents were carried out by three or more perpetrators (38% compared with 12% on average).

However, the research also made very clear (see the main results report) that official reporting of any form of VAWG and the existing barriers to reporting and seeking help are high; therefore, official numbers cannot be used to detect short-term changes in the prevalence of VAWG in times of tension or conflict.

Taking the above trends into account, systematic information collection for the purpose of early warning could include information from women's organizations and shelters on the nature of sexual harassment and physical and/or sexual violence.

These findings provide a basis for OSCE executive structures and other actors working on early warning to take the specific nature of sexual harassment and physical and/or sexual violence before the outbreak of armed conflict into account when collecting information.

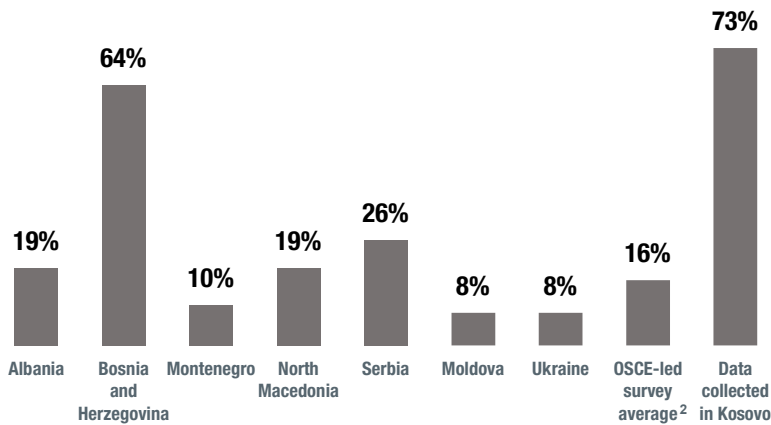




A quantitative survey was conducted among a representative sample of women aged 18 to 74 living in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, Moldova and Ukraine. The survey was also conducted in Kosovo.<sup>1</sup> A total of 15,179 interviews were conducted face-to-face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

## ONE IN SIX WOMEN IN THE REGION HAS BEEN DIRECTLY AFFECTED BY CONFLICT

% of women who are directly conflict-affected, by place



**3.5 million**

women in the region are directly conflict-affected, having lived through a period of active armed conflict and had at least one conflict-related experience<sup>3</sup>

**219,000**

women consider themselves to be refugees or displaced and **100,000** self-identify as returnees

**173,000**

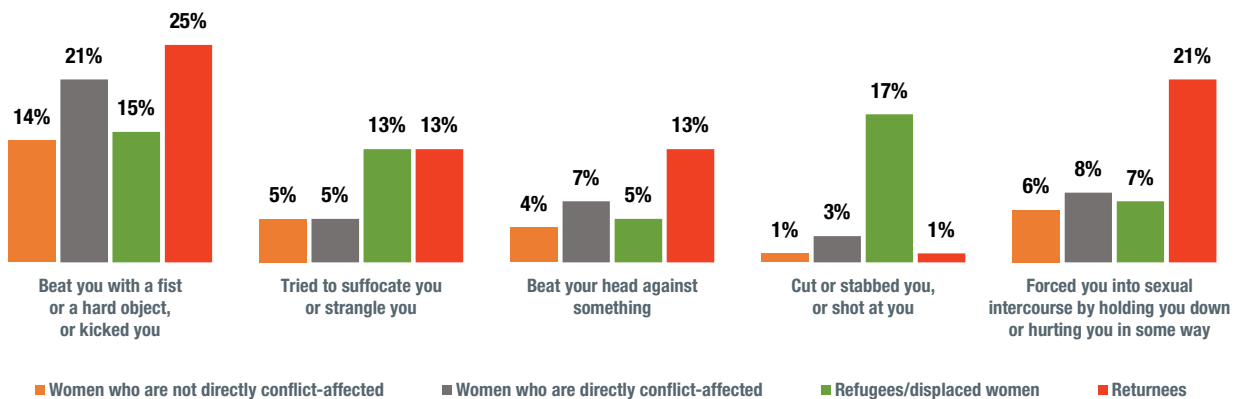
directly conflict-affected women who identified a most serious incident of intimate partner violence connect it to conflict

**114,000**

directly conflict-affected women who identified a most serious incident of non-partner violence connect it to conflict

Approximate figures

## THESE WOMEN ARE EXPERIENCING MORE SEVERE FORMS OF VIOLENCE AT THE HANDS OF AN INTIMATE PARTNER OR A NON-PARTNER



Base for share of women directly affected by conflict: All women aged 18-74 in Albania (1,858); BiH (2,231); North Macedonia (1,910); Montenegro (1,227); Serbia (2,023); Moldova (1,802); Ukraine (2,048); Kosovo (1,990)

Base for forms of violence experienced in the most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner violence: All women aged 18-74 who identified a most serious incident and are not directly conflict-affected (2,640); directly conflict-affected (1,037); refugees/displaced (72); returnees (42)

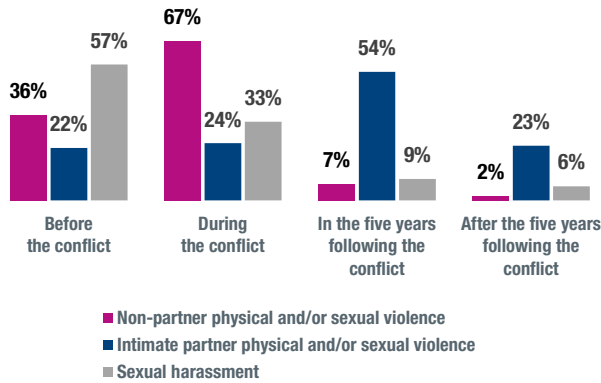
<sup>1</sup> All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text should be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244.

<sup>2</sup> Including data collected in Kosovo

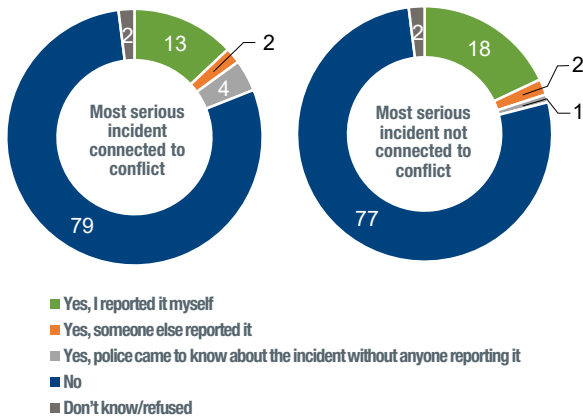
<sup>3</sup> For the full list of experiences, see Table 2.2 in Chapter 2

### CONFLICT HAS VARIOUS IMPACTS ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

WHEN VIOLENCE HAPPENS IN RELATION TO CONFLICT VARIES ACCORDING TO ITS NATURE

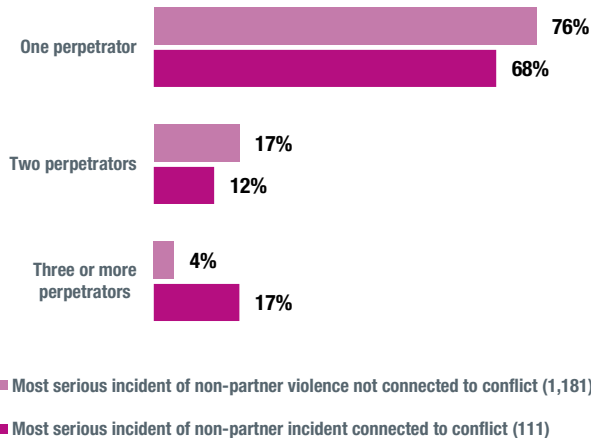


### INCIDENTS CONNECTED TO CONFLICT ARE LESS LIKELY TO BE REPORTED TO THE POLICE



### MULTI-PERPETRATOR VIOLENCE IS MORE COMMON IN CONFLICT

Number of perpetrators involved in the most serious incident of non-partner violence

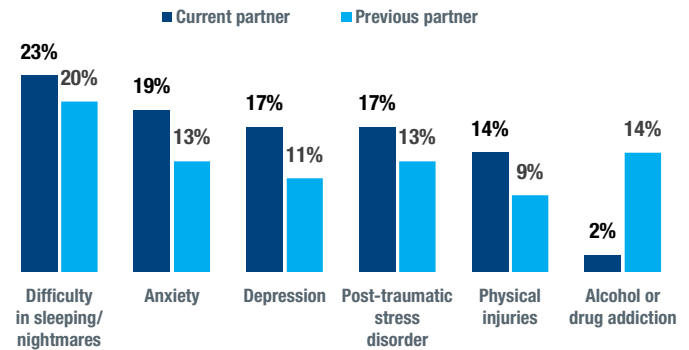


Base for timeline of violence in conflict: All women who experienced violence connected to conflict: non-partner (70); intimate partner (48); sexual harassment (82)  
 Base for reporting to police: All women aged 18-74 who identify a most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner violence and connect it to conflict (284); all those who do not connect it to conflict (2,479)  
 Base for number of perpetrators in parenthesis

### A PARTNER'S INVOLVEMENT IN CONFLICT HAS IMPACTS ON THEIR WELL-BEING AND ON INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

FIGHTING IN CONFLICT HAS CONSEQUENCES ON AN INTIMATE PARTNER'S WELLBEING

Share of partners who reportedly suffered a physical or psychological consequence as a result of fighting in conflict

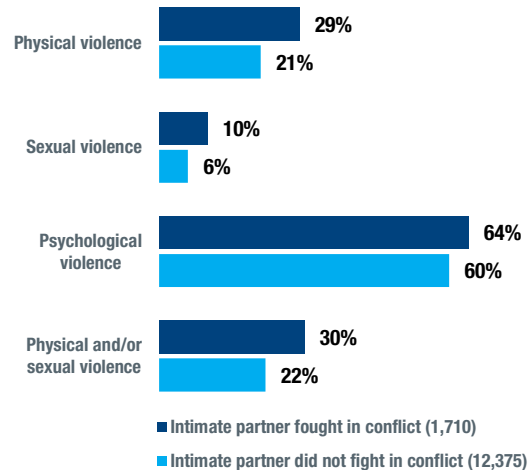


### PREVALENCE OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE IS HIGHER WHEN PARTNER FOUGHT IN CONFLICT

% who experienced physical or sexual violence at the hands of a current or previous partner in the 12 months prior to the survey



Prevalence of intimate partner violence since the age of 15 according to involvement in conflict



Base for physical and psychological consequences of fighting in conflict: All women whose current partner (1,296)/ previous partner (517) fought in conflict  
 Base for prevalence of violence according to whether intimate partner fought in conflict in parenthesis

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# 1. Introduction to the OSCE-led survey

Preventing and combating violence against women is a **core area of the OSCE's work**. The participating States have adopted three Ministerial Council decisions on preventing and combating violence against women, including most recently in December 2018 in Milan. The OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality from 2004 and other decisions also refer to combating violence against women. The OSCE recognizes the importance of combating violence against women to achieve comprehensive security and fulfil the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. At the same time, gender-based violence is one of the most pervasive impediments to women's full, equal and effective participation in political, economic and public life.<sup>9</sup> The OSCE has also recognized the particular needs of women and girls when implementing government policies related to protection and durable solutions and the importance of including women in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation.<sup>10</sup> The lack of comparative insights into the prevalence and characteristics of violence against women has limited possibilities to exchange experiences and develop cross-regional initiatives to improve policies and measures related to preventing violence and protecting women from violence.

## OSCE Ministerial Council decisions on preventing and combating violence against women and on women in conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation

- MC.DEC 14/04: Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality
  - Identifies combating violence against women as a priority area of work for the OSCE, as well as the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.
- MC.DEC 14/05: Women in Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation
  - Recognizes that men's and women's skills and experience are essential to peace, sustainable democracy, economic development and therefore to security and stability, and it also recognizes that UN Security Council Resolution 1325 links gender equality and security.
  - Emphasizes the importance of women's full and equal participation in all phases of conflict prevention, resolution and peace-building.
  - Calls on participating States to take the important role and particular needs of women and girls into account for the implementation of government policies relating to protection and durable solutions.
- MC.DEC 15/05: Preventing and Combating Violence against Women
  - Recognizes violence as a threat to human security and urges participating States to provide full access to justice, medical and social assistance, confidential counselling and shelter. It also calls on participating States to criminalize gender-based violence and highlights the importance of prevention.

<sup>9</sup> See OSCE Ministerial Council Decision 4/18 on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women.

<sup>10</sup> See OSCE Ministerial Council Decision 14/05 on Women in Conflict Prevention, Crisis Management and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation.

- Expresses deep concern about the targeting or particular vulnerability to violence of girls and some groups of women in situations of armed conflict and the need to protect them.
- Urges participating States to take all necessary steps to prevent gender-based violence against women and girls during and after armed conflict and emergencies and to take special measures to address the needs of women and girls in the post-conflict environment.
- MC.DEC 7/14: Preventing and Combating Violence against Women
  - Calls for action on legal frameworks, prevention, protection, prosecution and partnerships. It addresses the area of reliable data collection and calls on participating States to speed up efforts to bring legislation into line with relevant international standards, including the Istanbul Convention.
  - Takes note of international and regional initiatives to combat sexual violence, particularly in armed conflict.
- MC.DEC 4/18: Preventing and Combating Violence against Women
  - Recognizes that inequality is a root cause of violence against women and calls for measures to address this, including by engaging men and boys in combating violence. It also notes that special measures should be taken to address specific forms of violence such as sexual harassment and online violence.

### Prior research

In the OSCE region, research on the prevalence and characteristics of different forms of violence against women committed during armed conflicts and other forms of partner and non-partner violence perpetrated against women influenced by conflict-related factors has not previously been conducted in such a comprehensive manner at a regional or local level. Existing research and analyses are available in two distinct forms. One is focused on sexual violence, and particularly rape, during conflict, while the other is more focused on factors related to the influence of conflict on post-conflict partner or non-partner violence. The research is sometimes more focused on justice, reparations and the support system for women victims of conflict-related violence (e.g. Kostić, 2017; OSCE, 2014) and, in a few studies, on the consequences for their personal lives and well-being (e.g. Begić, 2016; Kosovo Women's Network, 2008, etc.).

Taking into account the available findings from prior research, the most severe forms, scale and consequences of conflict-related sexual violence were found in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Ukraine.

A recent study by What Works (**not covering** South-Eastern Europe or Eastern Europe)<sup>11</sup> showed that both non-partner sexual violence and intimate partner violence are pervasive in conflict settings. The research also showed that rates of non-partner sexual violence can differ across settings and that intimate partner violence is “extraordinarily high among conflict-affected populations”.<sup>12</sup> The What Works study also examined the causes, context and drivers of VAWG in conflict and found that “systematic gender inequality and patriarchal norms”<sup>13</sup> are at the root of the issue. What Works also identified the following conflict-related drivers that increase the prevalence of VAWG: increased controlling behaviours and patriarchal practices, normalization of violence, migration and displacement, poverty and lack of employment, as well as alcohol and substance abuse on the part of men. Furthermore, VAWG was found to be both a driver and a consequence of conflict. However, What Works cautioned that the relationship between conflict and VAWG may vary from context to context and that “the exact pathways that lead to increases in VAWG during times of conflict and humanitarian crises have not yet been fully explored”.<sup>14</sup>

The 1992–1995 conflict left over 100,000 dead and missing in BiH.<sup>15</sup> Of a pre-war population of 4.3 million, 900,000 became refugees, and a further 1.3 million were internally displaced.<sup>16</sup> Rape and other forms of conflict-related sexual violence were an integral part of the illegal conduct of the conflict, including widespread and systematic attacks on the civilian population (crimes against humanity), war crimes and genocide.<sup>17</sup> According to Christine Chinkin, a professor of international law at the London School of Economics: “The consequences of rape continue beyond the actual attack or attacks, often lasting for the rest of the women's lives. As well as the degradation, pain and terror caused at the time, the fear engendered remains long after. This fear is also experienced by other women who were not themselves attacked but are aware that they might have been, or might be in the future. Rape centred within a community undermines the well-being and secure existence of the community.”<sup>18</sup>

11 “What works to prevent violence against women and girls in conflict and humanitarian crisis: Synthesis Brief”, What Works to Prevent Violence, accessed 27 December 2019, <https://www.whatworks.co.za/documents/publications/355-p868-irc-synthesis-brief-report-lr-26092019/file>.

12 *Ibid.*, 8.

13 *Ibid.*, 11.

14 *Ibid.*, 12.

15 “The Bosnian Book of the Dead”, Humanitarian Law Center, 25 January 2013, accessed 20 May 2019, <http://www.hlc-rc.org/?p=22376&lang=de>. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia estimated a similar number. See “The Conflicts”, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, accessed 20 May 2019, <http://www.icty.org/en/about/what-former-yugoslavia/conflicts>.

16 Mark Cutts, “The humanitarian operation in Bosnia, 1992-95: dilemmas of negotiating humanitarian access”, New Issues in Refugee Research Working Paper No. 8, May 1999, accessed 20 May 2019, <http://www.unhcr.org/3ae6a0c58.pdf>.

17 Judgements in the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia cases against Delalić, Đorđević, Nikolić, Karadžić, Kunarac, Lukić and Lukić, Dragomir Milošević, Milutinović, Mladić, Tadić, Zelenović included findings related to conflict-related sexual violence.

18 Christine Chinkin, “Rape and Sexual Abuse of Women in International Law”, *European Journal of International Law* 5, (1994): 329, accessed 20 May 2019, <http://www.ejil.org/pdfs/5/1/1246.pdf>.

## OSCE-led survey on violence against women: Conflict and violence against women

Qualitative research conducted by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) with 30 women survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina<sup>19</sup> described the profound impact of such violence on the lives of women. Women participating in the UNFPA survey reported that it changed them as individuals as a result of emotional problems, difficulties in coping with the traumatic experience, difficulties in relationships with others, sensitivity to the comments and behaviour of others, as well as changes to their family role, their economic conditions and their participation in society.<sup>20</sup> The research findings revealed that all victims had feelings of shame and guilt regardless of whether or not their family was aware of the sexual violence they experienced during the conflict. A strong tendency to keep the violence a secret was found among victims through behaviours such as hiding their pain from those close to them, ignoring their personal needs and avoiding friends and acquaintances. When the family or community was aware of the violence experienced by the respondents, the victims were blamed in many cases, thus reinforcing their feelings of shame and guilt. A study on men and masculinity in Bosnia and Herzegovina that explored conflict-related factors of violence against women during the post-conflict period found a significant correlation between war-related experiences and violence against women. Men who participated in a conflict were more likely than men who did not take part in a conflict to report that they committed violence against women.<sup>21</sup>

There are different estimates of the number of women who were victims of sexual violence during the 1996-1999 conflict in Kosovo. A survey conducted by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM, now UN Women) in 2000 found a 4% disclosure rate of rape during the conflict (UNIFEM, 2000: 15).<sup>22</sup> Research conducted by the Kosovo Women's Network points to the serious consequences of wartime violence, including mental health problems due to PTSD, acute psychological distress and impaired social functioning, physical health problems and particularly sexual and reproductive health problems. In 2000, the International Red Cross documented women in Kosovo who gave birth to around one hundred babies conceived as a result of rape.<sup>23</sup> The available surveys do not provide much systematic evidence regarding the impact of conflict on post-conflict partner and non-partner violence against women. A survey conducted by the OSCE and the UNFPA in 2018<sup>24</sup> on men and masculinities indicates that men recognize the importance of the stress caused by conflict and the insecure political and economic situations after a conflict as important factors undermining men's well-being, mental health and self-esteem, which might increase the risk of committing violence against women.

There are no estimates about the number of victims of conflict-related sexual violence in Ukraine, but there is evidence of the severity of such violence. In a special report on conflict-related sexual violence in Ukraine, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reveals severe forms of sexual violence usually in the context of the deprivation of liberty by government forces or armed groups.<sup>25</sup> In these cases, women (but also men) were subjected to sexual violence, beatings, electrocution in the genital area, rape, threats of rape and forced nudity as methods of torture and ill treatment to punish, humiliate or extract confessions. The Ukrainian Centre for Social Reforms, with support from the UNFPA, conducted a survey on gender-based violence in the conflict-affected regions of Ukraine.<sup>26</sup> The survey confirmed an increased vulnerability to various forms of violence in the

19 Selma Begić, Lejla Sadić, Salminka Fazlić, Mahir Hadzić and Ensad Mijšković, "Stigma against Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina – Research Summary", United Nations Population Fund, accessed 27 December 2019, <https://ba.unfpa.org/en/publications/stigma-against-survivors-conflict-related-sexual-violence-bosnia-and-herzegovina-1>.

20 Ibid.

21 S. Dušanić, Man and gender relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina: results of "images" research (Banja Luka: Perpetuum Mobile – Centre for Youth and Community Development, 2012).

22 Rachel Wareham, No Safe Place: An Assessment on Violence against Women in Kosovo – UNIFEM 2000, accessed 10.01.2020 [http://iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/nosafeplace\\_kosovo.pdf](http://iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/nosafeplace_kosovo.pdf)

23 Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment of the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-Building (New York: UNIFEM, 2002); Exploratory Research on the Extent of Gender-Based Violence in Kosovo and Its Impact on Women's Reproductive Health (Prishtina: Kosovo Women's Network, 2008).

24 A Men's Perspective on Gender Equality in Kosovo: Main findings from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) (Prishtine/Prishtina, OSCE Mission in Kosovo, 2018), accessed 27 December 2019, <https://www.osce.org/mission-in-kosovo/382507?download=true>.

25 "Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Ukraine: 14 March 2014 to 31 January 2017", Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, accessed 27 December 2019, [http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/UA/ReportCRSV\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/UA/ReportCRSV_EN.pdf).

26 "Gender-Based Violence in the Conflict-Affected Regions of Ukraine", Ukrainian Centre for Social Reforms, 2015, accessed 27 December 2019, <https://ukraine.unfpa.org/en/publications/gender-based-violence-conflict-affected-regions>.

conflict setting: the share of internally displaced women reporting at least one incident of violence outside the family prior to displacement was three times higher than of local women in communities outside of conflict areas. Among the most prevalent forms of violence found were humiliation, insults, intimidation, blackmail, verbal threats, physical violence, confiscation of money or property, confiscation of official documents, forced labour, sexual harassment and sexual violence. The experience of violence was reflected not just in the consequences for the victim's physical health (although survivors reported injuries, sexually transmitted infections and exacerbation of other diseases); there were also psychological consequences, such as intrusive memories, significant changes in sleep patterns, repeated nightmares and constant feelings of fear or guilt.

Studies from other countries also confirm an increased prevalence of intimate partner or domestic violence due to the participation of men in conflicts. A prevalence survey conducted in 2010 in central Serbia found that risks of partner and domestic violence increases by 20% if the partner or other household members participated in any of the conflicts in former Yugoslavia in the 1990s.<sup>27</sup>

### Overview of the OSCE-led study

The OSCE-led survey included:

- 114 key expert interviews from the area covered by the survey (governmental stakeholders and representatives of civil society organizations, providing an overview of issues related to VAW and of conflict-related acts of violence;
- a survey of a representative sample of 15,179 women aged 18–74 living in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, Moldova<sup>28</sup> and Ukraine<sup>29</sup> in order to establish the prevalence and consequences of violence by using a multistage, stratified, random probability sample design. The sample also included women living in Kosovo;
- In Ukraine, 298 women living in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions<sup>30</sup> were added to the sample to ensure the inclusion of women who were likely to be directly affected by conflict;
- 63 focus groups with women from the area covered by the survey from various demographic backgrounds on their attitudes towards the subject, including 37 groups with women who were impacted by a crisis or conflict;
- 35 in-depth interviews with women who had experienced violence, including 14 with women who experienced violence or discrimination in relation to a crisis or conflict, to understand, in more detail, the impact this had on them.

### Main research goals

In total, 15,179 women aged 18–74 were interviewed face to face using a multistage, random probability approach. The data was weighted to the known population profile within each country. An additional weight (population weight) was calculated to enable reporting for the entire sample of the selected OSCE participating States or for a subgroup thereof.<sup>31</sup> This weight reflects the distribution of the survey population across the area covered.

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

27 M. Babović, K. Ginić and O. Vuković, *Mapiranje porodičnog nasilja prema ženama u Centralnoj Srbiji* (Beograd: SeConS, 2010), accessed 27 December 2019, [http://www.rs.undp.org/content/serbia/sr/home/library/womens\\_empowerment/mapiranje-porodicnog-nasilja-nad-zenama.html](http://www.rs.undp.org/content/serbia/sr/home/library/womens_empowerment/mapiranje-porodicnog-nasilja-nad-zenama.html), 80. [http://www.rs.undp.org/content/serbia/sr/home/library/womens\\_empowerment/mapiranje-porodicnog-nasilja-nad-zen3ama.html](http://www.rs.undp.org/content/serbia/sr/home/library/womens_empowerment/mapiranje-porodicnog-nasilja-nad-zen3ama.html), p. 80.

28 While the survey was not conducted in the Transnistrian region, one focus group discussion was conducted with women from the region.

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

30 In areas controlled by the government

31 The same was done for Kosovo.

## OSCE-led survey on violence against women: Conflict and violence against women

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

The study also aimed to achieve a better understanding of the above in light of whether women had experienced an armed conflict based on the definitions used in the study. This report focuses on the implications of conflict on women's experiences of violence. In particular, the research objectives of this report are to:

- Provide an overview of the prevalence of VAW among women affected by conflict;
- Gain insight into how conflict affects VAW;
- Shed light on the characteristics of conflict-related VAW and reporting behaviours of victims of such violence.

### An overview of the qualitative research

The 114 key experts who took part in the research shared their views on the current state of how governmental institutions and NGOs are working to prevent VAWG, what support is available to women who have experienced VAWG and what improvements they recommend. These experts included representatives of international organizations as well as governmental and non-governmental institutions. Some interviews were conducted with experts whose work has a specific focus on VAW.

Of the 63 focus group discussions conducted, 37 were with women who have been impacted by conflict<sup>32</sup> either because they had lived through a period of crisis, had experienced a conflict or had had to flee the area where they lived. In these discussions, women were asked about societal attitudes towards women generally and about VAWG and its perpetrators. They were also asked about how VAWG had changed during and since periods of conflict, and to reflect on the ways in which conflict impacts the levels and forms of VAWG.

Of the 35 in-depth interviews conducted with survivors of violence, 14 were with women who had an experience of violence associated with conflict (including an experience of racial discrimination). The aims of these interviews were:

- to explore the forms of violence that women have experienced throughout their lifetime and the role of conflict on their experience(s) of violence;
- to gain insight into the impact that the experience of conflict has had on their lives;
- to identify barriers to disclosing experiences and to seeking support, including barriers presented by conflict, and to explore reasons why some women choose to disclose their experiences while others do not;
- to understand the support received, to identify gaps in service provision and to identify the unmet needs of women from specific minority groups (e.g., women from an ethnic minority or women with a disability); and
- for women who did gain access to support (formal or informal), to understand how they were able to access such support and the impact this had on them.

<sup>32</sup> Details on the focus groups conducted with conflict-affected women can be found in Annex 3.



### Reluctance to share

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

The qualitative research confirms this and illustrates that the taboo and shame linked to sexual violence in general and in relation to conflict is particularly prevalent.

### A guide to interpreting survey data

Where the percentages provided do not add up to or exceed 100, this may be due to rounding, the exclusion of "don't know" responses or the fact that respondents were able to provide multiple answers to certain questions. Throughout, an asterisk denotes any value of less than 0.5% but greater than 0%.

### Privacy and anonymity

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

### Forms of violence covered

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

To measure the (stated) prevalence of each type of violence, women were asked if they had experienced a range of different forms of violence in various reference periods.

- Regarding **physical** and **sexual violence**, a list of questions that were asked in the research can be found on Table 4.4 in Chapter 4.
- Regarding **psychological violence**, a list of questions that were asked in the research can be found on page 34 in Chapter 4.
- In terms of **sexual harassment**, women in the survey were asked the questions listed on page 41 in Chapter 4.
- For **stalking**, women in the survey were asked the questions listed on page 42 in Chapter 4.

### Definitions used for the research

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

**Conflict/crisis:** For the purposes of this research, conflict/crisis was defined as armed fighting between two or more organized groups, attacks on communities or general insecurity caused by conflict or crisis. Women were asked in the survey questionnaire if they had lived through a situation where there was a conflict/crisis. If they said yes, they were asked additional detailed questions to establish to what extent they had been directly affected by conflict/crisis. See more details below.<sup>33</sup>

**Directly conflict-affected women:** Women who have lived through a situation where there was a conflict/crisis for a period of at least one week (see definition above) and had experienced at least one conflict-related experience from a predefined list of experiences were considered to be directly conflict-affected.

The list of experiences included questions on whether they had heard gunshots, shelling or bombing during the above-mentioned conflict/crisis period, whether they had witnessed fighting in the area where they lived, whether they had to flee, whether they lost property or relatives and whether armed personnel was stationed in the area where they were living, as well as other effects conflict had on civilians and their families.<sup>34</sup>

Directly conflict-affected women were subsequently asked if they had experienced different types of violence and if they connect these experiences to the conflict they experienced.

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

**Conflict-related violence:** Women who were identified as directly conflict-affected and who indicated that they had experienced physical or sexual violence at the hands of a non-partner or an intimate partner were asked whether any of their experience of physical or sexual violence was associated with an armed conflict. This question was also asked in relation to the experience of violence identified as the most serious. It is important to note that experiences of conflict-related sexual violence are therefore not defined in the same way in this report as they are by the UN, which uses the term "conflict-related sexual violence" to refer to rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization, forced marriage, trafficking in human beings when committed in situations of conflict for the purpose of sexual violence/exploitation and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict.

**Timeline:** Additional questions were asked to establish when violence was experienced in relation to the conflict timeline. More specifically, women who associated an experience of violence with a conflict/crisis were asked whether the violence had taken place before the conflict, during the conflict, in the five years following the conflict or more than five years after the conflict.

<sup>33</sup> More information can be found in Section 2 of this report.

<sup>34</sup> The full list of experiences asked about is as follows: Did you hear gunshots, the sound of bombing or shelling in the local area where you lived at the time of the conflict? Did you live in a location where armed personnel (regular military or other armed groups) were stationed or moving in larger numbers and for at least one week? Did you witness fighting in the local area where you lived at the time of the conflict? Was the property (e.g., your home, car, livestock) of your immediate family destroyed or seriously damaged due to the conflict? Was the property (e.g., your home, car, livestock) of your immediate family taken by armed group personnel? Was it not possible to find work in the local area due to the conflict (office/factories were closed or destroyed or it was too dangerous)? Did an immediate family member or your spouse or partner take part in the conflict or participate in fighting as a member of an armed group? Did you take an active part in fighting during the conflict? Were civilians from the local area where you lived detained or imprisoned?; Did civilians in the local area where you lived die due to the conflict? Were you personally physically attacked or injured due to the conflict? Did you have to flee your home during (any of) the conflict(s) you have experienced?

## 1. Introduction to the OSCE-led survey



# 2. Women's exposure to conflict

This chapter looks at women's exposure to conflict in the places where the survey was conducted. It sets out the conflict landscape in each location and the percentage of women impacted by each conflict. It also explores the prevalence of conflict-related experiences and provides a definition of the term "directly conflict-affected women". An overview of the demographic characteristics of conflict-affected women is provided, as is the prevalence of their conflict-related experiences related to safety, displacement, access to services, violence and harassment.

There is a growing body of international literature that shows that the impact of violent conflicts on the well-being of women and girls is severe, and that civilian women and girls face different risks and dangers in armed conflict compared to those faced by civilian men and boys.<sup>35</sup>

"The fact that, generally, women do not go off to fight and largely remain unarmed and unprotected at a time when traditional forms of moral, community and institutional safeguards have disintegrated, and weapons have proliferated, leads to women being particularly vulnerable during wartime."<sup>36</sup>

Armed conflict exacerbates existing gender inequalities, which are often maintained through violence against women; the availability of weapons that can be used against women increases the risks of the most severe forms of violence, including those with fatal outcomes.

International literature details the diverse impacts of armed conflict on the well-being and safety of women:<sup>37</sup>

- Women and girls experience physical, emotional and sexual violence, and evidence from conflict zones around the world indicates that they are victims of the most severe forms of torture, rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced sterilization and forced termination of pregnancies.
- Women and girls suffer poor health due to injuries, wounds, infectious diseases, exposure to chemical warfare or the environmental pollution caused by the use of weapons. Their mental health deteriorates due to fear and stress; they are exposed to famine and malnutrition, and their increased health needs cannot be addressed due to the conflict-related breakdown of the healthcare system.
- Women experience aggravation of their sexual and reproductive health due to a lack of sanitary conditions, life-threatening pregnancy-related conditions that cannot be properly addressed, lack of access to contraception and family planning options, medically unassisted pregnancies and deliveries, unwanted or forced pregnancies due to rape, sexually transmitted infections and, as a potential consequence, the inability to have children later.
- Women carry a disproportionate burden of care for others, taking responsibility for the protection of children, the elderly, the sick and injured, a role that is prescribed and maintained by strong cultural norms in most of the societies covered by the OSCE-led survey.
- Women's well-being is undermined by disruptions to social institutions, the economy and safety networks. They are the first to become unemployed in times of economic crisis instigated by conflict, and they suffer from loss of assets, loss of support networks during displacement, poverty and deprivation, etc.

<sup>35</sup> Women, Peace and Security: Study submitted by the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) (New York: United Nations 2002).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, quoting the International Committee of the Red Cross.

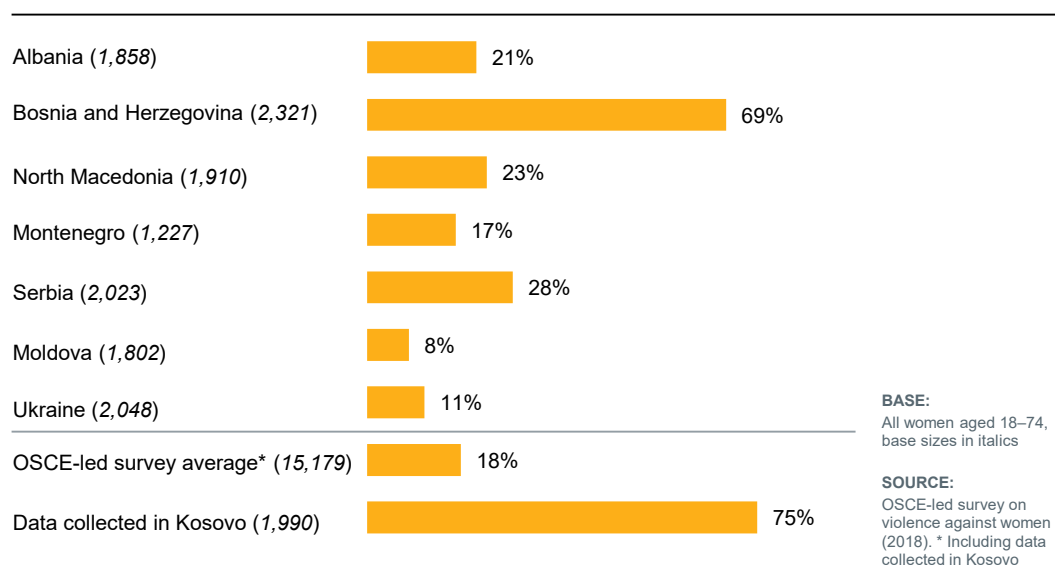
<sup>37</sup> Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, Women, War and Peace.

**2.1: Women’s exposure to conflict**

Women in the OSCE-led survey were asked if they had ever lived in a situation where there was an active armed conflict for a period of at least one week. The proportion of women having lived through conflict is presented in Figure 2.1 below. The majority (83%) of those who indicated that they had lived through an active armed conflict were above the age of 15 at the time, while 16% say they were younger than 15 years old.

**The majority (83%) of those who indicated that they had lived through an active armed conflict were above the age of 15 at the time, while 16% say they were younger than 15 years old.**

**Figure 2.1: Share of women who have lived through a period of conflict/crisis**



With the exception of women in Kosovo, almost all women who lived through conflict experienced one specific conflict, as opposed to multiple conflicts. Table 2.1 below shows which conflicts were experienced by women and the proportion of women who experienced each of these.

## 2. Women's exposure to conflict

**Table 2.1: Conflicts that women say they have experienced**

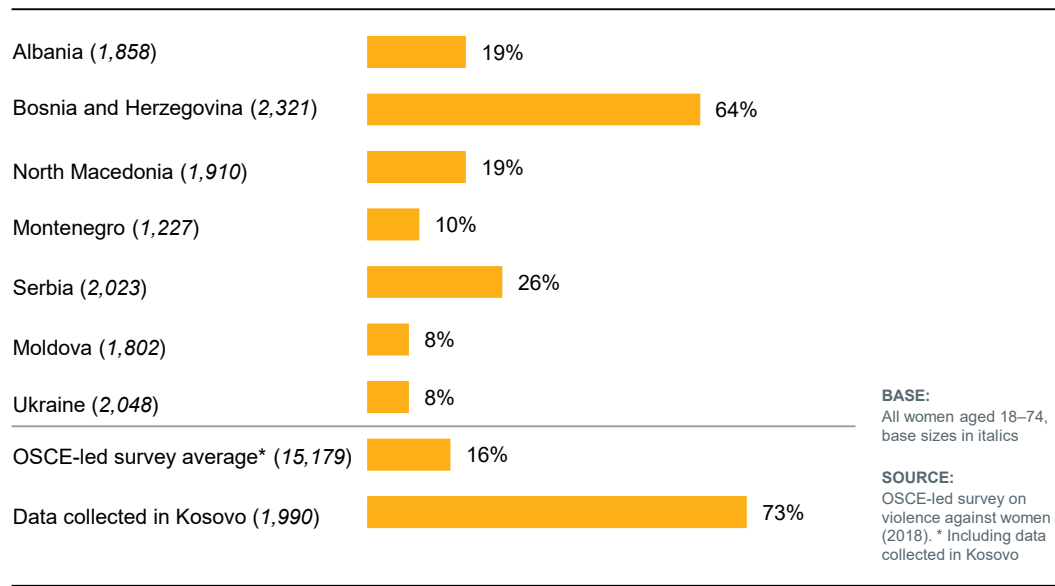
Albania (1,858)	The political crisis in 1997 and 1998	21%
	Other conflict/crisis in another location	0.2%
Bosnia and Herzegovina (2,321)	Armed conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1992–1995	67%
	Armed conflict in Croatia 1991–1995	1%
	NATO intervention 1999	1%
	Armed conflict in Kosovo 1996–1999	0.1%
North Macedonia (1,910)	Armed conflict in North Macedonia 2001	22%
	Armed conflict in Kosovo 1996–1999	1%
	NATO intervention 1999	1%
	2004 March riots in Kosovo	0.2%
	Other conflict/conflict in another location	0.1%
Moldova (1,802)	Moldovan–Transnistrian conflict 1992	7%
	World War II	0.3%
	Other conflict/conflict in another location	0.3%
Montenegro (1,227)	NATO intervention 1999	15%
	Armed conflict in Croatia 1991–1995	2%
	Armed conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1992–1995	1%
	Armed conflict in Kosovo 1996–1999	1%
Serbia (2,023)	NATO intervention 1999	26%
	Armed conflict in Croatia 1991–1995	1%
	Armed conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1992–1995	1%
	Armed conflict in Kosovo 1996–1999	1%
	2004 March riots in Kosovo	1%
	Other conflict	0.1%
Ukraine (2,048)	Armed conflict since 2014	10%
	Other conflict	0.3%
Kosovo (1,990)	Armed conflict in Kosovo 1996–1999	68%
	NATO intervention 1999	34%
	2004 March riots in Kosovo	5%
	Armed conflict in North Macedonia 2001	0.2%

BASE: All women aged 18–74; base sizes in italics  
 SOURCE: OSCE-led survey on violence against women (2018)

## OSCE-led survey on violence against women: Conflict and violence against women

Considering that this research covers different forms of conflict of varying duration, women who have lived through a period of conflict for at least one week were asked to identify whether they had ever lived through any of the specific conflict-related experiences set out in Table 2.2 below. This was done to establish which of the women interviewed could be defined as directly conflict-affected. Women who lived through a conflict and also indicated that they had had at least one of these conflict-related experiences are defined in this report as being directly affected by conflict. Overall, 16% are defined as directly conflict-affected, ranging from 8% in Moldova and Ukraine to 73% in Kosovo (Figure 2.2).

**Figure 2.2: Share of women who are directly conflict-affected, by place**



Most commonly, women said they had heard the sound of gunshots, bombing or shelling in the area where they lived at the time of the conflict (72%), followed by witnessing armed personnel stationed or moving around in large numbers for at least one week in the area where they lived (58%) (Table 2.2).



## 2. Women's exposure to conflict

**Table 2.2: Conflict-related experiences among women who have lived through an active armed conflict**

Please tell me whether or not you experienced any of the following during the armed conflict(s) that you experienced.

	Yes, %
Did you hear gunshots, the sound of bombing or shelling in the area where you lived at the time of the conflict?	72
Did you live in a location where armed personnel (regular military or other armed groups) were stationed or moving in larger numbers and for at least one week?	58
Did civilians in the local area where you lived die due to conflict?	36
Was it not possible to find work in the local area due to the conflict (office/factories were closed or destroyed; it was too dangerous)?	34
Did you have to flee your home during (any of) the conflict(s) you experienced?	33
Did you witness fighting in the local area where you lived at the time of the conflict?	28
Did an immediate family member or your spouse or partner take part in the conflict or participate in fighting as a member of an armed group?	26
Was the property (e.g., your home, car, livestock) of your immediate family destroyed or seriously damaged due to the conflict?	24
Were civilians from the local area where you lived detained or imprisoned?	21
Was the property (e.g., your home, car, livestock) of your immediate family taken by armed group personnel?	17
Were you personally physically attacked or injured due to the conflict?	2
Did you take an active part in fighting during the conflict?	2

**BASE:** Women aged 18–74 who lived through a period of active armed conflict for at least one week (5,347)  
**SOURCE:** OSCE-led survey on violence against women (2018)

The data suggests that these experiences generally did not take place in isolation, with more than half (51%) of women who lived through an armed conflict saying that they had four or more of the experiences asked about, while 29% of women said they had two or three such experiences. One in five women (20%) indicate having had just one of these experiences.

**Table 2.3: Number of conflict-related experiences on the part of women who lived through an active armed conflict, by place**

	Albania %	Bosnia and Herzegovina %	North Macedonia %	Montenegro %	Serbia %	Moldova %	Ukraine %	OSCE-led survey average* %	Data collected in Kosovo %
<i>Base size (n)</i>	<i>386</i>	<i>1,498</i>	<i>364</i>	<i>139</i>	<i>539</i>	<i>148</i>	<i>318</i>	<i>4,954</i>	<i>1,562</i>
One experience	15	7	14	30	36	25	26	20	4
Two or three experiences	35	24	38	32	35	40	34	29	9
Four or more experiences	50	69	48	38	29	35	40	51	88

BASE: All women aged 18–74 who lived through a period of active armed conflict; base sizes in italics

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

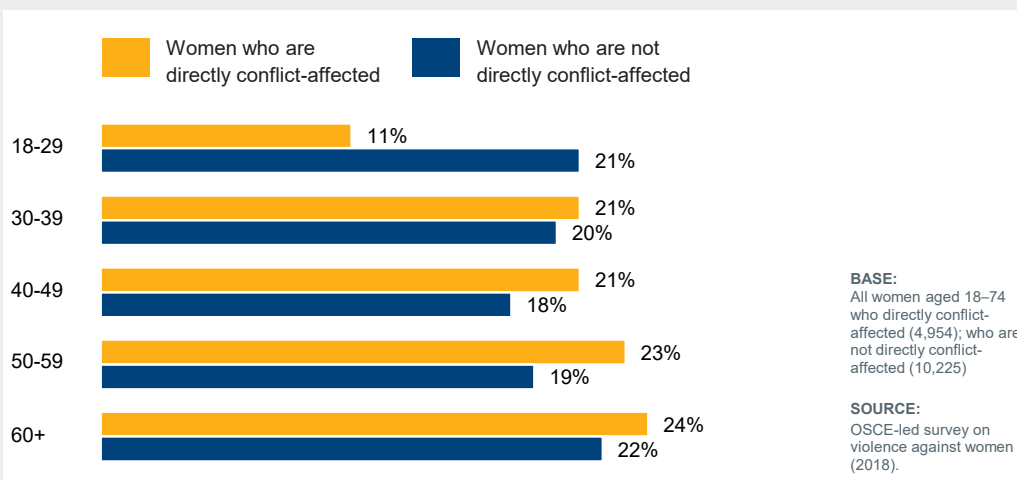
\*Including data collected in Kosovo

Almost all of the surveyed women who are refugees or internally displaced had four or more conflict-related experiences (94%). Only 3% had just one conflict-related experience, while 4% had two or three. Experiences of returnees are very similar: 95% had four or more conflict-related experiences, while 4% had two or three, and just 1% had only one such experience.

## 2.2: Who are directly conflict-affected women?

Women who are directly affected by conflict tend to be older, which is to be expected given that, with the exception of Ukraine, the conflicts that most women in the survey lived through took place in the 1990s and early 2000s. Nearly nine in ten (89%) directly conflict-affected women are over 30, compared with 79% of those who are not directly conflict-affected. It follows therefore that directly conflict-affected women are more likely to be in a relationship or to have had a past relationship and to have children.

**Figure 2.3: Age of women who are and are not directly affected by conflict**



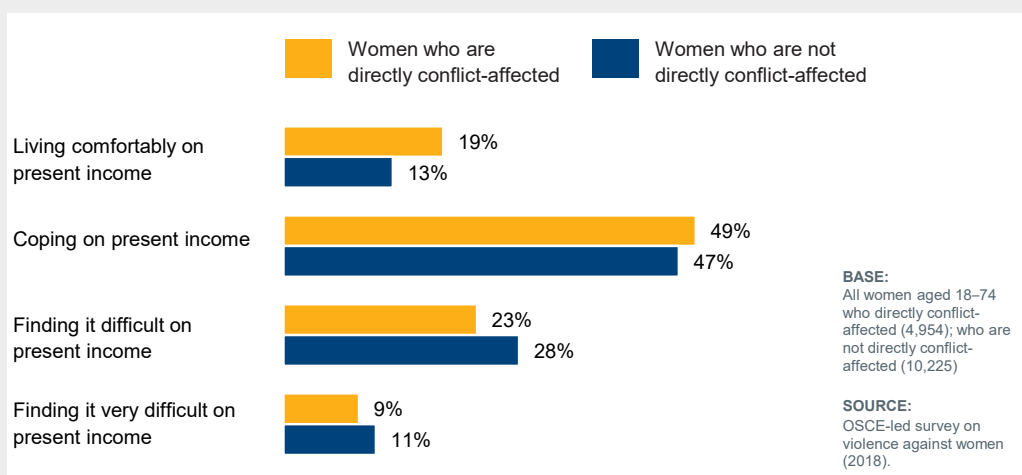
## 2. Women's exposure to conflict

Directly conflict-affected women **are not** more likely to consider themselves to belong to an ethnic, immigrant or religious minority in relation to the place where they live, but they are more likely to say they are a refugee, internally displaced person or a returnee.<sup>38</sup>

Directly conflict-affected women tend to have less education than women not affected by conflict. One in ten (10%) directly conflict-affected women have no formal education or have completed only primary education, compared with just 3% of those who are not directly conflict-affected. Just under three in ten (29%) have tertiary education, compared with 37% of women who are not conflict-affected.

While directly conflict-affected women are older, they are not more likely to say that they are retired (22% compared with 21% of those who are not conflict-affected). They are, however, more than twice as likely to say that they are unemployed (22% compared with 10% of those not conflict-affected) and also more likely to say that they are fulfilling domestic duties and care responsibilities (16% compared with 12%). In line with this, they are less likely than those who are not directly affected by conflict to say they are in paid employment (33% compared with 43% of those who are not directly affected by conflict). Despite this, conflict-affected women are not more likely to be struggling financially, and in fact the survey data suggests the opposite. Just over two-thirds (68%) of conflict-affected women are living comfortably or coping on their present income, compared with 60% of those who are not directly affected by conflict. Just under a third of directly conflict-affected women (32%) say they are finding it difficult or very difficult to cope on their income, compared with 39% of those who are not directly affected by conflict.

**Figure 2.4: Income levels of women who are and are not directly affected by conflict**



Women who are directly conflict-affected are more likely than women on average to have gotten married before the age of 18 (9% compared with 5% of those who are not conflict-affected). This is particularly the case for directly conflict-affected women aged 60 or over (12%) who are more than twice as likely as their non-conflict-affected peers (5%) to have married before the age of 18. It should be noted, however, that for the most part these women would have been married prior to the conflict they experienced.

Finally, directly conflict-affected women are more likely than women who are not conflict-affected to have health-related issues. For instance, 17% consider their health in general to be bad or very bad, compared with 11% of non-conflict-affected women.

<sup>38</sup> Among those women who self-identify as a refugee or displaced person, 68% are conflict-affected, and among those who self-identify as returnees, 80% are conflict-affected. Women who identify as refugees/displaced or returnees were not automatically considered conflict-affected. Some may not have experienced armed conflict for a period of at least a week. Nevertheless, because these women are conventionally considered to be affected by conflict, analyses were conducted on the group as a whole rather than solely on those who fit the criteria of directly conflict-affected.

Furthermore, and pointing to the long-term health impacts of conflict, directly conflict-affected women are more likely than those not conflict-affected to say that they have a long-standing illness or health problem (37% compared with 31%). Likewise, nearly four in ten feel that they have been severely or somewhat limited in their activities in the past six months because of a health problem (37%), compared with three in ten of those not directly conflict-affected (30%).

Of the women who are directly affected by conflict and who have a long-standing illness or health problem, 12% attribute this illness or health problem to the conflict they lived through.

Women who are refugees/displaced or returnees are even more likely to say they have poor health, with 42% and 39%, respectively, saying that they have a long-standing illness or health problem. In line with this, nearly half of women who are or have been displaced consider themselves to have been limited in the six months prior to the survey because of a health problem (44% among both groups).

**Of the women who are directly affected by conflict and who have a long-standing illness or health problem, 12% attribute this illness or health problem to the conflict they lived through.**

### **2.3: Experiences related to safety or access to services**

Women who are directly affected by conflict were asked a further series of questions about their conflict-related experiences. These questions explored the impact of conflict on, notably, the availability of services such as law enforcement and healthcare, their own safety and whether their spouses or partners were injured or killed as a result of the conflict they experienced. Across the region covered by the OSCE-led survey, almost half (46%) of women directly affected by conflict had at least one of these experiences relating to safety, displacement or lack of services. This ranges from 16% in Ukraine to 73% in Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Nearly three in ten women directly affected by conflict experienced situations where men in their family were away from home because they had to flee, they fought in the conflict, they were detained, or they went missing (28%). Nearly one-quarter (24%) indicate that health services in their area (including women's health services) were unavailable for a prolonged period of time as a result of the conflict, and a similar proportion say there was no law enforcement in their local area because of the conflict (22%) (Table 2.4).

**Table 2.4: Experiences of directly conflict-affected women related to safety and access to services**

Please tell me whether or not you experienced any of the following during the armed conflict(s) that you experienced.

	Yes, %
Men in your family (husbands, fathers, brothers) were away from home and the family (because they had to flee, they fought in the conflict, they were detained, or they went missing)	28
Health services (including women’s health services) that you previously used were unavailable or inaccessible for a longer period of time	24
No law enforcement (police or other organization to maintain law and order) was present in your local area for a prolonged time	22
Women in your family had to go into potentially dangerous places (e.g., across front lines or borders or close to explosives such as landmines) for work or to fetch essentials for the household (firewood, food, drinking water, fuel, etc.)	15
An immediate family member or your spouse or partner was injured or died due to fighting/violence	12

BASE: Women aged 18–74 who were affected by armed conflict (4,954)  
 SOURCE: OSCE-led survey on violence against women (2018)

**Conflict-affected women in the qualitative research also explained that living through conflict had left them with deep psychological scars even if they had not been a victim of violence.**

Women in the qualitative research discussed the ways in which conflict had affected their lives. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, for instance, one of the other impacts of conflict discussed was the way in which it had broken down the cohesion of multi-ethnic communities, giving way to hatred and discrimination in places where people from different ethnic backgrounds had previously lived together in peace. Several participants gave first-hand accounts of the psychological violence they experienced during a conflict, in particular bullying and harassment, because of their ethnicity.

**“Concretely, the wars of the nineties had a great impact: in Croatia and Bosnia, marriages were breaking down. Before that, we had brotherhood and unity, no one paid attention to these ethnic differences, people fell in love and got married regardless of nationality. When the war broke out, families started to break down.”**

**Female, aged 18–34, rural, Bosnia and Herzegovina**

**“They kept criticizing [my boyfriend] because he was with me, a Hungarian. They were telling him to leave me, that he didn’t need a Hungarian girlfriend.”**

**Female, in-depth interview, aged 35–55 (Hungarian), Serbia**

Conflict-affected women in the qualitative research also explained that living through conflict had left them with deep psychological scars even if they had not been a victim of violence. For instance, women living now in Montenegro described how, as children at the time of the conflict, they were separated from their family and sent to live in other parts of the country or abroad. This was deeply traumatic, with some women saying that it was common for some foster families to take children in only for the exemptions that they were given on utility bills. Women felt that, in these situations, it was commonplace for the child to be neglected or abused by their foster family.

**“I remember everything, when I sat in the train leaving my mom and dad. I couldn’t get used to it there, the new place, the new rules. I had another uncle there, my dad’s other brother, and I remember how they threw us like a ball [back and forth] between one another. Each of them wanted us in their apartment because people who accommodated refugees didn’t have to pay for electricity. I was used to my uncle and aunt when this other uncle took us, so I was desperate again, because they were strangers to me.”**

**Survivor of conflict-related and non-conflict-related violence, Montenegro**

In Montenegro, women who were refugees said that their experience as refugees had an impact on them throughout their lives. As refugee children, they were treated as outsiders by their peers at school, which led to verbal abuse and rejection. As adults, these women said that they are still classed as foreigners by the government. Women refugees said that despite having lived in the country for more than 20 years, they do not have the rights of citizens, such as the right to vote.

#### **2.4. Experiences related to violence and harassment in conflict**

Twelve per cent of directly conflict-affected women experienced one of the forms of conflict-related violence or harassment set out in Table 2.5. This ranges from 3% in North Macedonia to 21% in Albania. Nearly one in ten (9%) say that armed groups used threats, rumours or violence against women to frighten the population, and a similar proportion say that local women were harassed by such groups (8%).

## 2. Women's exposure to conflict

**Table 2.5: Experiences of conflict related violence and harassment, including threats thereof, by place**

Please tell me whether or not you experienced any of the following during the armed conflict(s) that you experienced.

	Albania %	Bosnia and Herzegovina %	North Macedonia %	Montenegro %	Serbia %	Moldova %	Ukraine %	OSCE-led survey average* %	Data collected in Kosovo %
<i>Base size (n)</i>	386	1,499	364	139	539	148	318	4,955	1,562
Armed groups deliberately used threats, rumours or actual violence against women to terrify the local population in the area where you lived	12	15	2	16	4	5	7	9	11
Members of armed groups harassed local women in the area where you lived	12	14	1	16	5	3	5	8	11
Members of armed groups employed deeply humiliating practices against local women in the area where you lived	10	9	0.4	5	2	3	2	5	6
Circumstances caused women to offer sexual services in exchange for essential goods or for ensuring the safety of their family in the area where you lived	8	6	0.2	5	1	1	1	3	5
Any of the above	21	18	3	19	8	8	8	12	16

BASE: Women aged 18–74 who are directly conflict-affected (n in italics)  
SOURCE: OSCE-led survey on violence against women (2018)

## OSCE-led survey on violence against women: Conflict and violence against women

As seen in Table 2.6, women were equally or more likely to have had more than one of the experiences set out in Table 2.5 rather than just one. In Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, in particular, women are more than twice as likely to have had multiple experiences as they are to have had just one of the experiences listed in Table 2.5.

**Table 2.6: Number of conflict-related experiences of violence and harassment, by place**

	Albania %	Bosnia and Herzegovina %	North Macedonia %	Montenegro %	Serbia %	Moldova %	Ukraine %	OSCE-led survey average* %	Data collected in Kosovo %
<i>Base size (n)</i>	<i>311</i>	<i>1,245</i>	<i>353</i>	<i>115</i>	<i>497</i>	<i>133</i>	<i>295</i>	<i>4,261</i>	<i>1,312</i>
No experiences	79	82	98	81	92	92	92	88	84
One experience	8	6	2	6	5	4	3	5	8
Two or three experiences	11	8	0.2	11	2	3	5	4	4
Four experiences	1	5	0.1	2	0.2	1	0	2	3

**BASE:** All women aged 18–74 who are directly affected by conflict; base sizes in italics

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

\*Including data collected in Kosovo

Women who are refugees or displaced are much more likely to have had more than one experience of violence or harassment, with almost one in ten (9%) having four such experiences.



## 2. Women's exposure to conflict



## 3. Attitudes towards social norms and acceptable behaviours

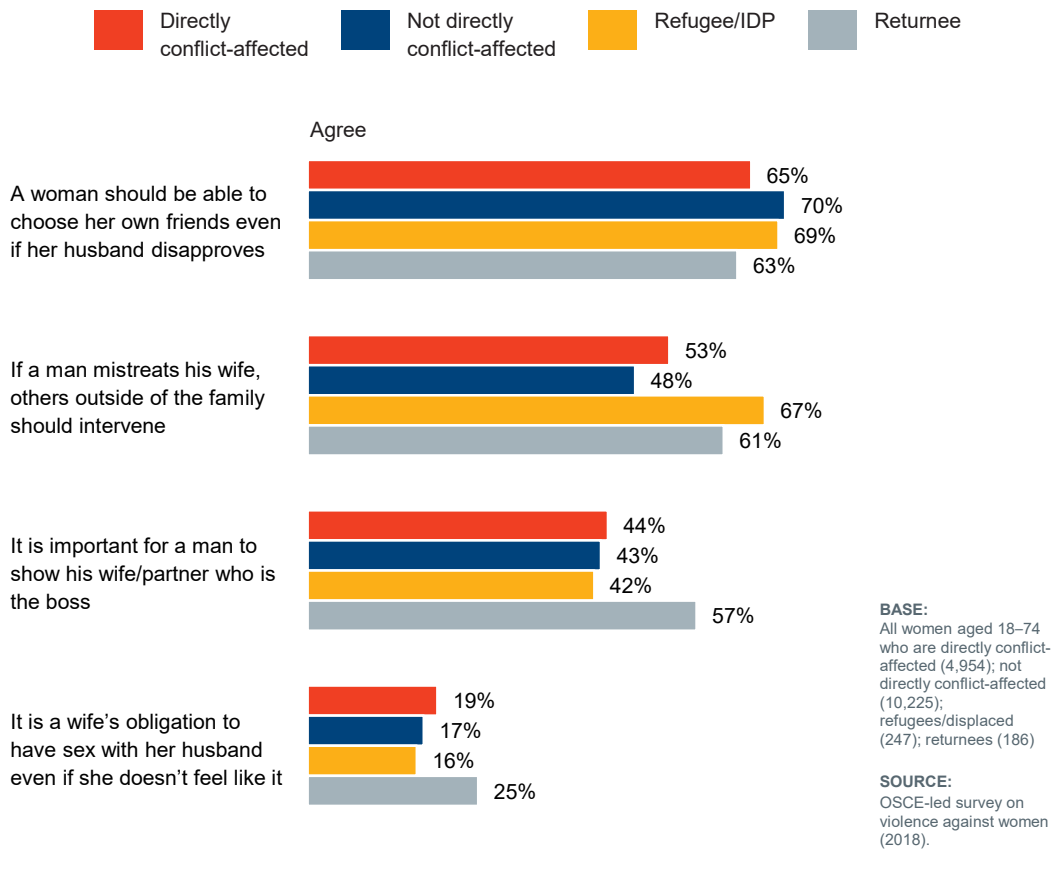
Women in the survey were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a range of attitudinal statements regarding gender norms and the role of women in society. This chapter explores the differences in these attitudes between women who are directly affected by conflict and those who are not, while also exploring the attitudes of refugees/IDPs and returnees. It demonstrates that conflict-affected women are more likely to hold patriarchal views of the role of women in the home and in society.

Women in the survey were asked to what extent they believed that their friends would agree with a number of statements regarding the respective roles of men and women in a relationship, and the data suggests that women who are directly affected by conflict are somewhat more likely to hold traditional views in this regard.

For instance, 65% of directly conflict-affected women think their friends would agree that “a woman should be able to choose her own friends even if her husband disagrees”, compared with 70% of those who are not directly conflict-affected. Likewise, 19% of women who are directly conflict-affected think their friends would agree that “it is a wife’s obligation to have sex with her husband even if she doesn’t feel like it”, compared with 17% of women who are not directly affected by conflict (Figure 3.1).

Although the attitudes of refugees/displaced women with regard to these questions are in line with those of women on average, women who are returnees are more likely to think their friends would hold these traditional views. Indeed, nearly three in five (57%) think their friends would agree that “it is important for a man to show his wife/partner who the boss is”, and a quarter (25%) think their friends would agree that “it is a wife’s obligation to have sex with her husband even if she doesn’t feel like it”. This is likely connected to the fact that they are older: nearly a third of this group (31%) is 60 or older, compared with 21% of women who are refugees.

**Figure 3.1: Perceptions of social norms and acceptable behaviours**

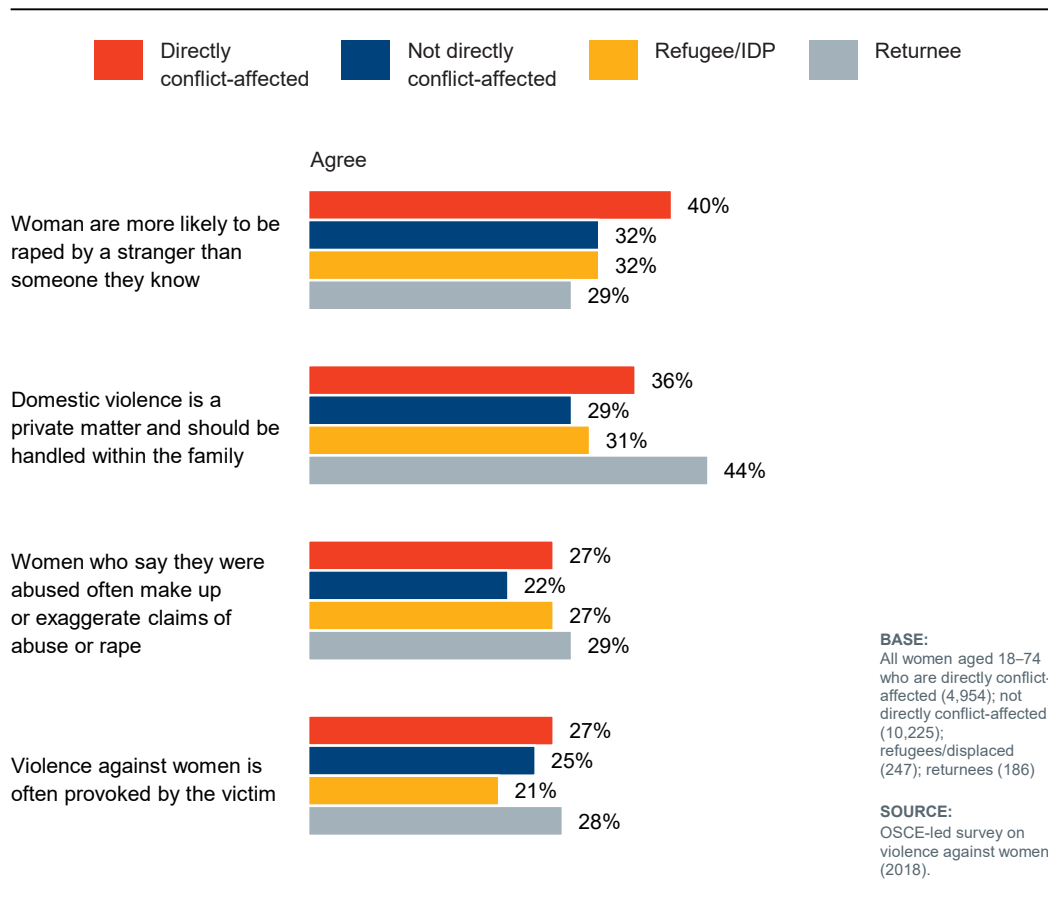


Over a third (36%) of directly conflict-affected women believe that “domestic violence is a private matter and should be handled within the family”, compared with 29% of women who are not directly affected by conflict. Likewise, 27% of directly conflict-affected women believe that “women who say they were abused often make up or exaggerate claims of abuse or rape”, compared with 22% of women who are not directly affected by conflict.

Again, the attitudes of returnees are distinctly more traditional, as shown in Figure 3.2.

### 3. Attitudes towards social norms and acceptable behaviours

Figure 3.2: Underlying attitudes on violence against women



It should be noted that these attitudinal differences may in part be explained by the fact that directly conflict-affected women are older, as explored in Section 2.2, and older women are more likely to be proponents of female subservience, spousal obedience and silence in the face of VAW. Indeed, when looking only at women aged 40 or above, these attitudinal differences between conflict-affected and non-conflict-affected women are less visible. For instance, both groups of women are equally likely to think their friends would agree that “it is important for a man to show his wife/partner who the boss is” (46%) or that “it is a wife’s obligation to have sex with her husband even if she doesn’t feel like it” (22% and 20%, respectively). The attitudinal difference that remains apparent is that conflict-affected women are less likely to think their friends would agree that “a woman should be able to choose her own friends even if her husband disapproves” (64% and 71%, respectively). It is also worth noting that conflict-affected women above the age of 40 are more likely to think their friends would agree that “if a man mistreats his wife, others outside of the family should intervene” (53% compared with 46% of women above the age of 40 who are not conflict-affected).

In the qualitative research, women who have been impacted by conflict shared similar perspectives to those of women who have not about the role of women in society. They explained that women are expected to carry out domestic duties, raise their children, have a job and be well kept. As with women who are not impacted by conflict, however, they also said that the role of women has been progressively shifting over time, and that women today had more freedom and rights than in the past.

**“They all expect women to have the house tidy, lunch cooked, laundry in its place, the yard cleaned up, the gardening done; all of that is expected from a woman. But now, women are able to fight and to share these duties with someone. But again, it all depends on the situation.”**



# 4. Violence against women and girls

### 4.1: Experiences of violence among women who are and are not directly affected by conflict, and among women who are or have been displaced

This chapter explores women's experiences of sexual harassment, stalking and physical or sexual violence at the hands of an intimate partner or a non-partner. Since the age of 15, 70% of all women in the region covered by the OSCE-led survey say that they have had at least one such experience. Contrary to what may be expected, women who are directly affected by conflict are less likely to say that they have had such an experience, with 63% claiming to have had such an experience, compared with 72% of women who are not directly conflict-affected. The same is true of experiences of any type of violence in the 12 months prior to the survey. Around a third (32%) of those not affected by conflict say they had such an experience during that time period, compared with 25% of those who are directly affected by conflict.

Other research that was carried out mainly in different parts of the world was summarized as follows in *Gender-Based Violence Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation with Refugee and Conflict-Affected Populations: A Manual and Toolkit for Researchers and Practitioners*: "Indeed, research has found that sexual violence often does increase during times of armed conflict. However, even accounting for increases in rape and sexual assault, research suggests that even in conflict settings more women experience violence by an intimate partner (intimate partner violence or IPV) than by a non-partner or member of an armed group ... Another systematic review examined the prevalence of GBV during complex emergencies and found evidence to suggest that rates of GBV – particularly non-partner assault – increase during times of conflict. Evidence on the connections between rates of IPV and conflict is more mixed, though the authors concluded that, even during emergency settings, intimate partner violence (IPV) is more prevalent than non-partner sexual assault."<sup>39</sup>

This pattern of a lower prevalence of violence among directly conflict-affected women holds true consistently in the OSCE-led survey across each of the different types of violence explored. For instance, the stated prevalence of intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence is higher among women who are *not* directly affected by conflict, 24% of whom indicate that they have had such an experience compared with 16% of women who *are* directly affected by conflict.

However, the prevalence of violence is high among women who are, or have been, displaced and is thus in line with the existing evidence base.<sup>40</sup> Three in ten refugee/displaced women (28%) say they have experienced physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of a non-partner since the age of 15, and this figure rises to two in five (38%) when also looking at violence suffered at the hands of an intimate partner (Table 4.1).

<sup>39</sup> Gender-Based Violence Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation with Refugee and Conflict-Affected Populations: A Manual and Toolkit for Researchers and Practitioners (Washington, D.C.: The Global Women's Institute, George Washington University, 2017), 5–7, accessed 27 December 2019, <https://globalwomensinstitute.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs1356/f/downloads/Manual%20and%20Toolkit%20-%20Website.pdf>.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

**Table 4.1: Experiences of violence among women who are and are not directly affected by conflict, as well as those who are or have been displaced**

	Directly conflict- affected %	Not directly conflict- affected %	Refugees/ displaced %	Returnees %
Sexual harassment	34	47	42	43
Stalking	8	10	12	7
Non-partner physical and/or sexual violence	12	20	28	16
Intimate partner psychological violence <sup>41</sup>	53	61	61	44
Intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence	16	24	26	12
Partner or non-partner physical and/or sexual violence	21	32	38	21
Any violence	63	72	71	59

**BASE:** All women aged 18–74 who are directly affected by conflict (4,954) and who have ever had a partner (4,661); all women who are not directly affected by conflict (10,225) and who have ever had a partner (9,424); refugees/displaced women (247) and those who have ever had a partner (239); returnees (186) and those who have ever had a partner (177).

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

Further controlling for whether women were under or over the age of 15 at the end of the main conflict in each place where the survey was conducted reveals very similar patterns, as does comparing peer groups that are directly conflict-affected and not directly conflict-affected (excluding Ukraine). There is no difference, for example, in the prevalence of non-partner physical and/or sexual violence between those who are conflict-affected and not conflict-affected regardless of whether they were adults or children at the end of the conflict in question. Intimate partner violence, however, is still higher among those who are not conflict-affected, as is sexual harassment.

<sup>41</sup> Prevalence of intimate partner psychological violence was measured on the basis on whether women indicated having experienced economic violence, controlling behaviours, or abusive behaviours at the hands of an intimate partner, or whether an intimate partner had ever abused her children or used them to blackmail her. The full list of items can be found in section 6.3 of the OSCE Well-Being and Safety of Women Main Report.



#### 4. Violence against women and girls

**Table 4.2: Experiences of violence among women who are and are not directly affected by conflict, by age at end of the conflict in question<sup>42</sup>**

	Not born at the end of the conflict %	Under 15 at the end of the conflict – conflict-affected	Under 15 at the end of the conflict – not conflict-affected	15 or over at the end of the conflict – conflict-affected	15 or over at the end of the conflict – not conflict-affected
Sexual harassment	53	40	48	29	33
Stalking	16	10	14	7	8
Non-partner physical and/or sexual violence	16	10	12	10	9
Intimate partner psychological violence	58	45	57	45	48
Intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence	15	12	20	15	20
Any violence	65	59	69	56	61

**BASE – sexual harassment, stalking, non-partner violence, any violence:** all women (excluding Ukraine) not born by the end of the main conflict (437); women who were under the age of 15 and who are directly affected by conflict (854); women who were under the age of 15 and who are not directly affected by conflict (2,358); women who were 15 or over and who are directly affected by conflict (3,779); women who were 15 or over and who are not directly affected by conflict (5,703).

**BASE – intimate partner violence:** all women who have ever had a partner (excluding Ukraine); women who were not born by the end of the main conflict (273); women who were under the age of 15 and who are directly affected by conflict (759); women who were under the age of 15 and who are not directly affected by conflict (2,045); women who were 15 or over and who are directly affected by conflict (3,596); women who were 15 or over and who are not directly affected by conflict (5,457).

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

When looking at the data on a more localized level, there are cases where the prevalence of violence is higher among those women directly affected by conflict. In Albania, for instance, women who are directly conflict-affected are more likely than those who are not to disclose non-partner violence (18% compared with 10%) and intimate partner violence (30% compared with 16%). This is also the case in North Macedonia in relation to intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence (13% compared with 9% of women who are not directly conflict-affected), and intimate partner violence (49% versus 43%).

<sup>42</sup> The category “not born at end of the conflict” includes women in the following age groups at the time of the survey: Albania, under 21; Bosnia and Herzegovina, under 23; Kosovo, under 19; Moldova, under 26; Montenegro, under 19; Serbia, under 19. The category “15 at the end of the conflict” includes women in the following age groups at the time of the survey: Albania, 21–36; Bosnia and Herzegovina, 23–37; North Macedonia, under 33; Kosovo, 19–34; Moldova, 26–41; Montenegro, 19–34; Serbia, 19–34; Ukraine, under 20. The category “15 or over at the end of the conflict” includes women in the following age groups at the time of the survey: Albania, 37 or older; Bosnia and Herzegovina, 38 or older; North Macedonia, 34 or older; Kosovo, 35 or older; Moldova, 42 or older; Montenegro, 35 or older; Serbia, 35 or older; Ukraine, 20 or older.

**Table 4.3: Experiences of violence among women who are and are not directly affected by conflict, by place**

		Sexual harassment	Stalking	Non-partner physical and/or sexual violence	Intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence	Intimate partner psychological violence	Any violence
Albania	Directly conflict-affected	38 (386)	14 (386)	18 (386)	30 (364)	65 (364)	69 (386)
	Not directly conflict-affected	32 (1,472)	13 (1,472)	10 (1,472)	16 (1,296)	61 (1,296)	67 (1,472)
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Directly conflict-affected	26 (1,498)	4 (1,498)	7 (1,498)	11 (1,451)	37 (1,451)	49 (1,498)
	Not directly conflict-affected	31 (823)	6 (823)	10 (823)	11 (739)	35 (739)	47 (823)
North Macedonia	Directly conflict-affected	28 (364)	7 (364)	9 (364)	13 (338)	49 (338)	57 (364)
	Not directly conflict-affected	30 (1,546)	7 (1,546)	7 (1,546)	9 (1,440)	43 (1,440)	53 (1,546)
Montenegro	Directly conflict-affected	38 (139)	4 (139)	12 (139)	23 (135)	50 (135)	59 (139)
	Not directly conflict-affected	30 (1,088)	6 (1,088)	8 (1,088)	16 (982)	42 (982)	51 (1,088)
Serbia	Directly conflict-affected	37 (539)	11 (539)	11 (539)	14 (525)	42 (525)	60 (539)
	Not directly conflict-affected	44 (1,484)	11 (1,484)	9 (1,484)	19 (1,448)	45 (1,448)	63 (1,484)
Moldova	Directly conflict-affected	43 (148)	5 (148)	19 (148)	38 (138)	72 (138)	76 (148)

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	Not directly conflict-affected	50 (1,654)	11 (1,654)	17 (1,654)	34 (1,560)	71 (1,560)	80 (1,654)
Ukraine	Directly conflict-affected	42 (318)	10 (318)	18 (318)	19 (304)	69 (304)	78 (138)
	Not directly conflict-affected	50 (1,730)	10 (1,730)	24 (1,730)	26 (1,651)	65 (1,651)	75 (1,730)
Kosovo	Directly conflict-affected	26 (1,562)	6 (1,562)	8 (1,562)	11 (1,406)	52 (1,406)	57 (1,562)
	Not directly conflict-affected	36 (428)	13 (428)	8 (428)	11 (308)	57 (308)	60 (428)

**BASE:** All women aged 18–74 who are directly affected by conflict; all women who are not directly affected by conflict (base sizes in italics)  
**SOURCE:** OSCE-led survey on violence against women (2018)

#### 4.2: Most serious incidents of violence among women who are and are not directly affected by conflict, and among women who are or have been displaced


All women who indicated that they had experienced violence or threats thereof,<sup>43</sup> be it at the hands of an intimate partner or a non-partner, were asked to identify the incident that had the biggest impact on them, either physically or psychologically. This incident is referred to throughout the report as the most serious incident. Across all perpetrator types, women who experienced violence most commonly indicate that their most serious incident involved being pushed or shoved (occurring in 40% of most serious incidents), followed by being threatened physically (30%) and being slapped (26%).

Women who are directly affected by conflict are more likely than those who are not to have said that their most serious incident of violence involved some of the more severe forms of violence. For instance, women who are directly affected by conflict are more likely to say that their most serious incident involved being punched, being beaten with a hard object or being kicked (21% compared with 14% of women not directly affected by conflict) or having their head beaten against something (7% compared with 4% of women who were not directly conflict-affected).

Furthermore, the data suggests that women who are refugees/displaced or returnees are much more likely to have experienced some of the more severe forms of violence during their most serious incident. For instance, women who are refugees or displaced are nearly nine times more likely than all women on average to say their most serious incident involved being cut or stabbed, or shot at (17% compared with 2% on average). Returnees are more than three times more likely than average to say their most serious incident involved being raped (21% compared with 6% on average) and more than twice as likely to say it involved attempted rape (17% compared with 7% on average). Refugees and returnees are also nearly three times more likely to say that their most serious incident involved being suffocated or strangled (both 13% compared with 5% on average).

<sup>43</sup> While the reporting rates/prevalence of physical and/or sexual violence discussed above do not include threats of such violence, other questions relating to when such violence happened and details about the most serious incident do include threats of violence.

**Table 4.4: Women’s most serious incident of violence at the hands of a non-partner or intimate partner**



	All women who are directly conflict-affected	Women who are not directly conflict-affected	Refugees/ Displaced	Returnees*
	%	%	%	%
Being threatened with physical violence	33	30	28	46
Being pushed or shoved	34	40	31	44
Being slapped	39	25	43	46
Having a hard object thrown at them	13	9	4	15
Being grabbed or having their hair pulled	22	13	18	26
Being punched, beaten with a hard object or kicked	21	14	15	25
Being burned	1	1	0	0
Being suffocated or strangled	5	5	13	13
Being cut, stabbed or shot at	3	1	17	1
Having their head beaten against something	7	4	5	13
Forced into sexual intercourse by being held down or hurt in some way	8	6	7	21
Attempted sexual intercourse by being held down or hurt in some way	9	7	4	17
Forced to take part in some form of sexual activity when they did not want to or were unable to refuse	5	4	3	3
Consenting to sexual activity because they were afraid of what might happen if they refused	6	4	2	2
Being threatened with violent sexual acts (like rape, forced pregnancy, etc.) in a way that really frightened them	3	3	3	14

**BASE:**  
 All women aged 18–74 who have experienced intimate partner or non-partner physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15 - women who are directly affected by conflict: 1,037; women who are not directly affected by conflict: 2,640; women who are refugees/displaced: 72; women who are returnees: 41  
 \*Caution: Small base size (41)

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

### 4.2: Perpetrators of non-partner violence

Across the region covered by the survey, women are more likely to have suffered violence at the hands of an intimate partner than a non-partner (Table 4.3). Those who have experienced violence at the hands of a non-partner identify a variety of different perpetrator types and, in some instances, say they were subject to violence at the hands of more than one person.

Women who indicated that they had experienced **physical violence<sup>44</sup> at the hands of a non-partner** were asked to provide details of who the perpetrator was (using the list provided<sup>45</sup>). Overall, the most commonly identified perpetrators were a relative or family member (other than the woman's partner), whom 26% of women identified as being responsible, followed by a friend, acquaintance or neighbour (24%) or someone else the woman knew but without specifying further (23%).

Few differences are observed in the perpetrators of non-partner violence between women who are directly affected by conflict compared with those who are not. Women who are directly affected by conflict are somewhat less likely than those who are not to say that the incident was perpetrated by a relative or family member (20% compared with 27%). Furthermore, 4% of women who are directly conflict-affected say that their experience of non-partner physical violence was at the hands of an armed official<sup>46</sup> or aid worker.

Looking at the perpetrators of non-partner physical violence among women who are or have been displaced (refugees, IDPs or returnees), the data suggests that such violence is less likely to be perpetrated by family members. Indeed, 15% of cases are said to have been committed by at the hands of a relative or family member of the victim. Conversely, the share of cases perpetrated by an armed official or aid worker rises to 7%.

**Women in BiH said that prior to the conflict, they thought intimate partner violence was much less prevalent, and that violence during the war was perpetrated by armed soldiers. Today, however, they see intimate partners as the primary perpetrators of VAW.**

44 Only 22 respondents identify a most serious incident of sexual violence and associate it with conflict; as a result, this section focuses solely on perpetrators of physical violence.

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

46 Throughout the report, references to an "armed official" include a guard at a checkpoint/border; a police officer (not at a checkpoint/border); or a soldier or other armed man/women (who is not a police officer or guard at a checkpoint/border);

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In the qualitative research, women discussed the impact that they felt conflict had had on the prevalence of VAW. Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina explained that conflict had had an impact on who perpetrated violence against women. They said that prior to the conflict, intimate partner violence was much less prevalent and that most of the violence experienced during the war was at the hands of armed soldiers. Today, however, they say that intimate partners are the primary perpetrators of VAW, which they attribute to rising tensions within households due to unemployment and financial difficulties.

**“I think there was absolutely a different form of violence in war circumstances. There was no violence in the family, but outside of the home, yes – rape in camps, physical violence by armed individuals, breaking in to houses, beatings, intimidation ...”**

**Female, 38–55, conflict-affected, Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Similarly, women in the qualitative research in Albania explained that the country’s democratic and economic transition had had repercussions on VAW, as men who had previously been employed by the state suddenly found themselves struggling to find work, often ending up unemployed. These women said that this led to increased pressure and strain within relationships, causing a rise in domestic violence. They also said that, in parallel to this, the emancipation of women had resulted in men feeling emasculated, which also contributed to higher levels of VAW. This serves as a testimony to the resistance with which women are met when they challenge traditional gender norms, such as those measured in Chapter 2.

Finally, in the qualitative research in Ukraine, women explained that they considered the conflict that broke out in 2014 to have triggered a rise in intimate partner violence. They expressed the belief that the high unemployment rate pushed many young men to enlist in the Ukrainian armed forces. This, they said, led to various tensions within society, including between men who took part in military action and those who did not, and between IDPs and others within society.

Overall, three-quarters of women who identified a most serious incident of non-partner physical and/or sexual violence (76%) say one perpetrator was involved, which is consistent among both women who are directly affected by conflict and those who are not (75% and 76%, respectively). However, **women who are directly conflict-affected are more likely to say that their most serious incident of violence was perpetrated by three or more people (11%)** than those women who are not conflict-affected and who identify a most serious incident (4%) (the figures for two perpetrators are 13% and 17%, respectively). Violence at the hands of multiple perpetrators is even more prevalent among women who are or have been displaced, 19% of whom say that their most serious incident of non-partner violence (regardless of whether it happened in connection with a conflict) was perpetrated by three or more people.

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**Table 4.5: Number of perpetrators involved in women’s most serious incident of non-partner violence**

	All women who are directly conflict-affected %	Women who are not directly conflict-affected %	Refugees/ displaced women or returnees %
One perpetrator	75	76	76
Two perpetrators	13	17	4
Three or more perpetrators	11	4	19

**BASE:** All women who identified a most serious incident at the hands of a non-partner and who are directly conflict-affected (362); women who are not directly conflict-affected (936); refugees/displaced women or returnees (57)

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

\* Caution, small base size

Women who identified a most serious incident of non-partner violence were also asked where the incident had taken place. The data suggests that conflict-affected women are more likely than average to have experienced violence in public places. Indeed, the most serious incident identified by directly conflict-affected women is more likely to have taken place in the street or some other public place like a square or a parking lot (16% compared with 9% of women not directly conflict-affected). Such incidents were also twice as likely to have taken place at school or at the victim’s workplace (8% compared with 4%) or elsewhere outdoors (8% compared with 3%). Two per cent of women who are refugees or internally displaced and who identified a most serious incident by a non-partner say that it took place in an IDP/refugee camp.

### 4.3: Sexual harassment and stalking

Sexual harassment was measured by specifying acts that respondents felt were unwanted and were perceived as offensive or intimidating and sexual in nature.<sup>47</sup> Six forms of sexual harassment were selected for their severity, and they are referred to in this report as “the most severe forms” of sexual harassment.<sup>48</sup>

Looking at the data on a regional level, women who are not directly conflict-affected indicate higher rates of sexual harassment than those who are, both since the age of 15 (47% compared with 34%) and in the 12 months prior to the survey (17% compared with 12%). Likewise, women who are not affected by conflict are more likely to say that they have experienced at least one of the most serious forms of sexual harassment since the age of 15 (32% compared with 22%) and in the 12 months prior to the survey (9% compared with 6%).

The only exception to this is in Albania, where directly conflict-affected women are more likely to say they have experienced this form of violence than women who are not conflict-affected. Indeed, 38% of directly conflict-affected women in Albania say they have

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

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

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experienced sexual harassment since the age of 15 compared with 32% of women who are not conflict-affected.

As seen in Table 4.1, sexual harassment among refugee/displaced women and returnees is in line with the average for all women (42% and 43%, respectively, compared with 45% of all women). This holds true for the prevalence in the 12 months prior to the survey and for experiences of the more severe forms of sexual harassment both since the age of 15 and in the 12 months prior to the survey.

When looking at experiences of sexual harassment considered the most serious, women who are directly conflict-affected are more likely than those who are not to say that their most serious incident involved the more severe forms of sexual harassment. For instance, they are three times more likely to say that their most serious incident involved receiving unwanted sexually explicit emails or SMS messages that offended them (7% compared with 2%) and more than twice as likely to say it involved inappropriate advances on social networking websites (10% versus 4). Younger conflict-affected women are particularly likely to say their most serious incident involved these types of harassment. For example, 22% of 18–29 year old conflict-affected women said their most serious incident involved inappropriate advances on social networking sites. Directly conflict-affected women are also twice as likely to say that it involved somebody indecently exposing themselves (8% compared with 4%).

In terms of stalking, 8% of women who are directly conflict-affected indicate having had an experience of stalking since the age of 15<sup>49</sup>, compared with 10% of those who are not directly conflict-affected. On a local level, the prevalence is similar among both women who are directly conflict-affected and those who are not.

As with sexual harassment, there are some differences when comparing the most serious incidents of stalking among directly conflict-affected women and among those who are not conflict-affected. For instance, women who are directly conflict-affected are more likely to say that their most serious incident of stalking involved offensive, threatening or silent phone calls (28% compared with 17% of women who are not conflict-affected); being deliberately followed around (25% compared with 13%); and somebody deliberately interfering with or damaging their property (17% compared with 14%).

There are some differences in perpetrators of **sexual harassment** between women who are directly affected by conflict and those who are not. **Women who are directly affected by conflict** are more likely to say that their experiences of sexual harassment were perpetrated by someone they did not know (59% compared with 50% of women who are not directly affected by conflict). Women directly affected by conflict are more likely to say that their experiences of sexual harassment were perpetrated by a guard at a checkpoint, a police officer, a soldier or armed man/woman, or an international peacekeeper or aid worker (4% compared with 1% of women who are not directly affected).

There are also some differences in the perpetrators of stalking among women who are directly conflict-affected compared with those who are not. Directly conflict-affected women are almost twice as likely as those who are not to say that the stalking was perpetrated by a friend, acquaintance or neighbour (16% compared with 9% of women who are not directly conflict-affected). One in five directly conflict-affected women say that their experience of stalking was perpetrated by someone they knew, but without specifying further from the list provided (20%), compared with 14% of women who are not directly affected by conflict. Finally, 4% of directly conflict-affected women say that they were stalked by an armed official or aid worker, while none of the women who were not directly conflict-affected said this.

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



## 4. Violence against women and girls

### 4.4: The role of firearms in VAW

Women in the survey were asked whether they had ever personally been assaulted or threatened with a firearm since the age of 15. Across the region covered by the OSCE-led survey, 1% of women say that they have either been assaulted or threatened with a firearm. This figure is higher among women who are directly affected by conflict (3%) than among those who are not (1%). Of all the women who were ever threatened or assaulted, three-quarters (76%) say the incident happened more than 12 months prior to the survey.

Women who are directly affected by conflict and who have been assaulted or threatened with a firearm are much more likely than those who are not to say the perpetrator was someone other than an intimate partner. Indeed, among directly conflict-affected women, nearly four in five assaults or threats with a firearm were perpetrated by someone other than an intimate partner (78%), while just 5% were perpetrated by an intimate partner. Among women who are not directly affected by conflict and who have been assaulted or threatened with a firearm, fewer than half say the perpetrator was someone other than an intimate partner (46%), while nearly one in five cases was perpetrated by an intimate partner (19%).

Women in the qualitative research in Ukraine explained that they were concerned about the high number of firearms on the street and that they sometimes felt scared when out in public as a result of this. One woman recalled a time when her husband had come home in the evening and informed her that somebody had just been shot dead in the street. He said he believed the perpetrator had been waiting near the victim's home to kill him.

This was also touched on by women in Kosovo, who explained that men who had taken part in the 1996-1999 conflict did not return their weapons after the conflict ended, and, as a result, there are many weapons in households to this day.

**“I live in fear. I feel afraid every time I’m walking home, because I don’t know what’s around the corner.”**

**Female, aged 18–35, urban, Ukraine**

Women in Albania described how, during the political crisis in 1997, heavy fighting in the streets left them in constant fear of being hit by a stray bullet. The widespread availability of weapons also meant that men could easily get their hands on a gun from ransacked military warehouses, and they sometimes killed women over minor relationship disputes.

**“Our biggest fear was these stray bullets.”**

**Female, aged 56+, rural, lived through political crisis, Albania**



## 5. Conflict-related violence against women and girls

This chapter explores women’s experiences of conflict-related violence. The prevalence of different forms of violence identified as being associated with conflict is discussed, along with the characteristics of such violence, such as the timelines of violence in relation to conflict and the severity of the violence, through an analysis of the experiences identified as the most serious.

The table below gives an indication of how common violence is as a product of conflict.

**Table 5.1: Experiences of violence and harassment associated with conflict**

Any physical and/or sexual violence, sexual harassment or stalking since the age of 15 associated with conflict	12
Armed groups deliberately using threats, rumours or actual violence against women to terrify the local population	9
Members of armed groups harassing local women	8
Members of armed groups employing deeply humiliating practices against local women	5
Intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15 associated with conflict	5
Sexual harassment since the age of 15 associated with conflict	5
Non-partner physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15 associated with conflict	3
Circumstances causing local women to offer sexual services in exchange for essential goods or for ensuring the safety of their family	3
Stalking since the age of 15 associated with conflict	2

**BASE:** All women aged 18–74 who have been directly affected by armed conflict (4,954)  
**SOURCE:** OSCE-led survey on violence against women (2018)

Across the region covered by the OSCE-led survey, there are significant differences in the proportion of conflict-affected women who associate their most serious incident of violence with their conflict-related experience, which may in part be due to the nature and duration of the conflict experienced. For instance, more than half of directly conflict-affected women in Albania who identified a most serious incident of intimate partner violence say it was connected to the political crisis they experienced (56%), while the corresponding figure in Serbia is 7% (Table 5.2).

**Table 5.2. Share of most serious incidents associated with conflict among directly conflict-affected women, by place**

	Albania %	Bosnia and Herzegovina %	North Macedonia %	Montenegro %	Serbia %	Moldova %	Ukraine %	OSCE-led survey average* %	Data collected in Kosovo %
Intimate partner violence	56 (80)	42 (133)	-	-	7 (72)	13 (46)	46 (60)	36 (593)	38 (151)
Non-partner violence	44 (42)	40 (65)	-	-	19 (57)	-	41 (42)	34 (362)	32 (103)
Sexual harassment	4 (108)	10 (254)	5 (43)	9 (39)	3 (168)	3 (50)	26 (113)	14 (1,064)	4 (290)
Stalking	36 (42)	20 (46)	-	-	14 (47)	-	-	31 (255)	41 (70)

**BASE:** All women aged 18–74 who are directly conflict-affected and who identified a most serious incident; base sizes in parentheses. Data based on fewer than 30 responses has been excluded.

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

\*Including data collected in Kosovo

### 5.1: Occurrence of violence in relation to conflict timeline

Of the women who are directly affected by conflict and who experienced violence at the hands of a non-partner, 28% associate their experience of physical violence with the conflict they lived through, and 12% associate their experience of sexual violence with the conflict.<sup>50</sup> For intimate partner violence, the equivalent figures are 33% for physical violence and 19% for sexual violence.

Women who are directly affected by conflict and who associated their experience of physical and/or sexual violence with conflict were asked when the experience had happened in relation to the conflict.<sup>51</sup> Two-thirds of those who have experienced non-partner physical/and or sexual violence and say who it was associated with the conflict say it occurred during the conflict (67%), while around one-third (36%) say it occurred prior to the conflict, and 7% say that it occurred in the five years following the conflict. In contrast, those who have experienced intimate partner physical/and or sexual violence and associate this with the conflict<sup>52</sup> are more likely to say that their experiences happened after the conflict, suggesting that the impact of conflict in intimate partner relationships is longer-lasting. Just over half of this group (54%) say the violence occurred during the five years after the conflict, and 23% say that it happened more than five years after the conflict, while 22% say it happened before the conflict and 24% that it happened during the conflict.

50 The specific wording of this question was as follows: "Thinking about all your experiences of [physical/sexual] violence [since the age of 15/ with your partner/ with any of your previous partners] were any connected to an armed conflict?" As such, it does not ask whether the violence occurred as a direct result of conflict but whether the victim associates the experience with conflict.

51 The base size for this question is smaller than the total number of women who associate their experience of violence with conflict. This is because only the women who indicated that at least one of their experiences of violence was associated with conflict initially were asked when the experience had happened in relation to the conflict. Data was later recoded to include those women who initially indicated that none of their experiences of violence were connected to conflict but then said that their most serious incident of violence was connected to conflict.

52 Please be aware of the small base (n=48).

## 5. Conflict-related violence against women and girls

Although base sizes do not allow for a comprehensive analysis by area or demographic group, the data suggests that experiences of violence linked to conflict occur at different times depending on whether the incident is physical or sexual. For physical violence, over half of the incidents associated with conflict took place during the conflict (55%), while 30% occurred prior to the conflict and 22% occurred in the five years following the conflict.

In terms of sexual violence, although the number of women in the survey who experienced such violence at the hands of any perpetrator and associate it with conflict is small (n=26), the data suggests that these experiences were more spread out across the timeline of the conflict. Of the 26 respondents, 8 say the incident occurred during the conflict, while 11 say that it occurred prior to the conflict. The repercussions of conflict on experiences of sexual violence also seem to last longer, with 13 women saying that the experience took place after the conflict ended (including nine who say that it happened more than five years after the conflict). This suggests that while experiences of physical violence might be more immediately and directly associated with conflict, the impact of conflict on sexual violence is more prolonged and remains a reality for many women long after the conflict has ended.<sup>53</sup>

For sexual harassment, of those women who are directly conflict-affected and who indicated having experienced sexual harassment since the age of 15, 14% associate at least one of their experiences of such violence with the conflict.<sup>54</sup> Over half of these women (57%) say that the incident of sexual harassment they experienced in relation to conflict took place prior to the conflict. One-third (33%) say that it occurred during the conflict, and 9% say it took place in the five years following the conflict.

Of the women who are directly conflict-affected and indicate having been stalked since the age of 15, 28%<sup>55</sup> link these two experiences. Of those, nearly all (90%) say that the incident of stalking took place during the armed conflict, while 7% say that it took place prior to the conflict, and 4% say it took place after the conflict.<sup>56</sup>

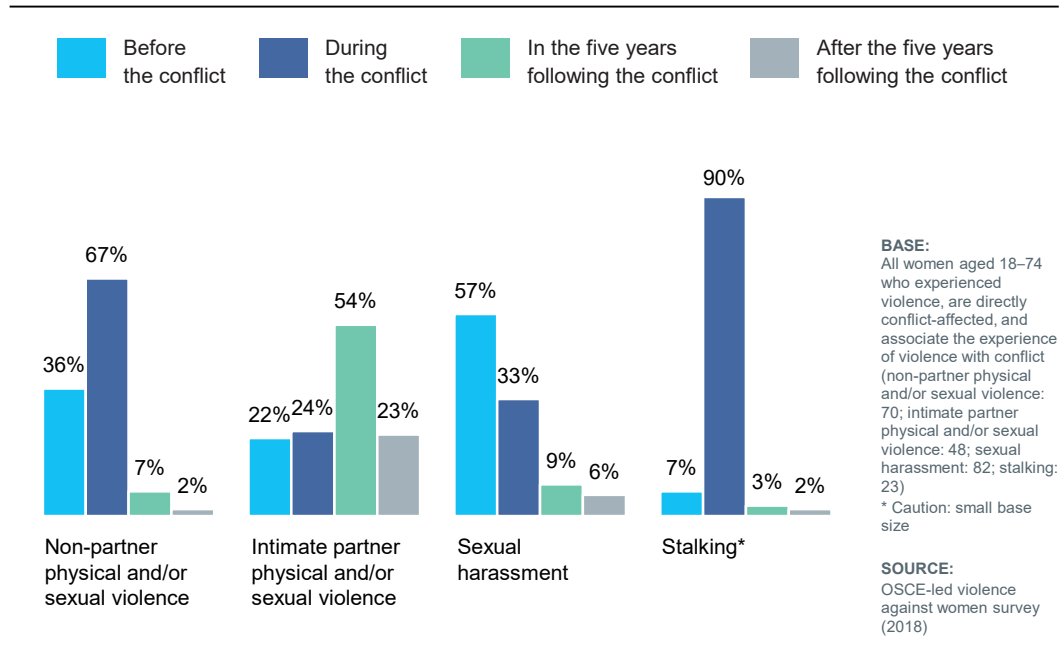
<sup>53</sup> Small base sizes do not allow for a breakdown of this data according to type of perpetrator.

<sup>54</sup> This figure was recoded to include directly conflict-affected women who did not say that any of their experiences of sexual harassment were associated with conflict but did say that their most serious incident of sexual harassment was associated with conflict. A series of questions, explored here, were asked only of those directly conflict-affected women who initially said that one of their experiences of sexual harassment was associated with conflict.

<sup>55</sup> This figure was recoded to include directly conflict-affected women who did not say that any of their experiences of stalking were associated with conflict but did say that their most serious incident of stalking was associated with conflict. A series of questions, explored here, were asked only of those directly conflict-affected women who initially said that one of their experiences of stalking was associated with conflict.

<sup>56</sup> Please be aware of the small base (n=23).

Figure 5.1: Timeline of violence in relation to conflict



In the qualitative research, women in several locations explained that, under the communist regime, men were afraid of the state, which resulted in lower levels of VAW. In the qualitative research, women discussed the impact that conflict had had on the prevalence of sexual violence. In Bosnia and Herzegovina for instance, women said that sexual violence was common during the conflict. They stated that such violence was not perpetrated by intimate partners but by armed soldiers, and that it generally took place in prison camps.

**“I wanted to mention rape in camps during the war. I think [that], in the war, the violence was sexual, not by spouses but by the aggressor’s army against women in camps. And it happened often. Those who raped during the war, we know most of them have not been prosecuted; they are rapists even today – for sure.”**

**Female, aged 18–37, rural, Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Similarly, women who participated in the qualitative research in Albania explained that during the 1997 crisis they saw a rise in sexual violence, as well as increased kidnapping and trafficking of women.

## 5. Conflict-related violence against women and girls

### Case study: A.'s story

- A. entered into an arranged marriage at the age of 22, having never met her husband.
- A. was pregnant six times, and her husband passed away following the birth of her last child. After his death, she remained with her step-parents and raised her children on her own.
- When A. was 34, armed conflict broke out. She was captured by armed forces, along with her children, her sister (who had married her brother-in-law) and other women from the community. They were brought to a village, where the men and women were split up, and where she was kept hostage for three days and two nights. During this time, she was the victim of brutal physical and sexual violence at the hands of the armed men, who were a mix of military and paramilitary forces.

**“They first had fun with some young girls, because it was also a holiday, Bajram [Eid], but I don’t know how many police were there. I wanted to die, and I told them ‘Kill me. Don’t leave me alive.’”**

- A. was eventually freed, and she travelled to a neighbouring country, where she sought medical help before returning home.
- A. suffers from severe physical and psychological trauma, including having to undergo dialysis as a result of being repeatedly kicked in the kidneys by her captors. She has sought help from a psychologist. She says that this has been very beneficial, but she still feels like “the living dead” as a consequence of the trauma that she suffered.
- In 2018, she applied for a war pension for victims of violence in the conflict; however, she was unsuccessful because she was unable to prove her status as a war victim.

**“Yes, Medica started helping us with whatever they could. This was all after the war. And this helped us women, because this healed our soul.”**

**Female, aged 55+, survivor of conflict-related violence**

### 5.2: Most serious incidents of physical and sexual violence against women related to conflict

Women who are directly conflict-affected and who identified a most serious incident were asked to specify whether this incident was associated with the conflict(s) they had experienced. Nearly two in five women who identified a most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner physical and or sexual violence attribute it to the conflict(s) they experienced (38%). Nearly three in five (57%) say that it was not associated with the conflict, and 5% say that they do not know whether there was a connection between the two.

The data demonstrates that women who associate their most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner violence with conflict are more likely than those who do not to say that the incident included some more severe forms of violence. For instance, women whose most serious incident is connected to conflict are more than twice as likely to say that the incident involved having their hair grabbed or pulled (35% versus 13%) or having their head beaten against something (11% versus 4%). They are also twice as likely to say that during this incident, they were raped (13% versus 6%).

**Table 5.3: Most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner physical and/or sexual violence, according to whether the incident is associated with conflict or not**

	Most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner violence associated with conflict %	Most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner violence not associated with conflict %
Being threatened with physical violence	39	31
Being pushed or shoved	52	40
Being slapped	55	26
Having a hard object thrown at them	22	9
Being grabbed or having their hair pulled	35	13
Being punched, beaten with a hard object or kicked	30	14
Being burned	1	1
Being suffocated or strangled	5	5
Being cut, stabbed or shot at	3	2
Having their head beaten against something	11	4
Forced into sexual intercourse by being held down or hurt in some way	13	6
Attempted sexual intercourse by being held down or hurt in some way	8	7
Forced to take part in some form of sexual activity when they did not want to or were unable to refuse	4	4
Consenting to sexual activity because they were afraid of what might happen if they refused	5	5
Being threatened with violent sexual acts (like rape, forced pregnancy, etc.) in a way that really frightened them	4	3

**BASE:** All women aged 18–74 who are directly conflict-affected, experienced intimate partner or non-partner violence and who identified a most serious incident associated with conflict (284); those who experienced intimate partner or non-partner violence and who identified a most serious incident not associated with conflict (3,150)

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

Women who are directly conflict-affected and who associate their most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner violence with conflict are not more likely to say that the perpetrator was drunk at the time of the incident (53% compared with 58% of women whose most serious incident is not associated with conflict). There are no differences in terms of the use of substances or being under the influence of both substances and alcohol



## 5. Conflict-related violence against women and girls

between women whose most serious incident was associated with conflict and those whose most serious incident was not.

### 5.3: Most serious incidents of sexual harassment and stalking related to conflict

As explored in Chapter 4, women who are directly conflict-affected are more likely to say that their most serious incident of sexual harassment involved its more severe forms. This pattern is consistent when looking at the most serious incidents of sexual harassment that directly conflict-affected women say are associated with conflict. Indeed, conflict-affected women who associate their most serious incident with conflict are significantly more likely to say that it involved the forms of sexual harassment considered most serious. For instance, they are more than five times as likely to say that the experience involved unwanted sexually explicit emails or SMS messages that they found offensive (16% compared with 3% of all women). They are also more than twice as likely to say that it involved somebody indecently exposing themselves (12% compared with 5%).

**Table 5.4: Most serious incident of sexual harassment, according to whether incident is associated with conflict or not**

	Most serious incident of sexual harassment associated with conflict %	Most serious incident of sexual harassment not associated with conflict %
Unwelcome touching, hugging or kissing*	26	24
Inappropriate staring or leering that was intimidating	36	18
Sexually suggestive comments or jokes that were found offensive*	23	12
Somebody sending or showing sexually explicit pictures, photos or gifts that were found offensive*	2	2
Inappropriate invitations to go out on dates	13	9
Intrusive questions about the victim's private life that were found offensive	42	12
Intrusive comments about the victim's physical appearance that were found offensive	23	9
Unwanted sexually explicit emails or SMS messages that were found offensive*	16	3
Inappropriate advances that were found offensive on social networking websites such as Facebook or in Internet chat rooms	21	4
Somebody indecently exposing themselves to the victim*	12	5
Making the victim watch or look at pornographic material against their will*	2	0.3

**BASE:** All women aged 18–74 who experienced sexual harassment, are directly conflict-affected, and associate their most serious incident with conflict (92); those who experienced sexual harassment and who identified a most serious incident not associated with conflict (4,603)

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

\*Forms of sexual harassment considered "the most severe"

As with sexual harassment, there are some differences in the severity of stalking when comparing all incidents of stalking identified as the most serious and no associated with conflict and those that are. Indeed, women who say that their most serious incident of stalking was associated with conflict are more likely to say that it involved receiving offensive or threatening emails or messages (30% compared with 16%); or offensive, threatening or silent phone calls (35% compared with 18%). They are also more likely to say it involved two seemingly more severe forms of stalking: being deliberately followed around (23% compared with 15%) or having their property deliberately interfered with or damaged (39% compared with 14%).

## 5. Conflict-related violence against women and girls

**Table 5.5: Most serious incident of stalking, according to whether incident is associated with conflict or not**

	Most serious incident of stalking associated with conflict %	Most serious incident of stalking not associated with conflict %
Being sent emails, text messages (SMS) or instant messages that were offensive or threatening	30	16
Being sent letters or cards that were offensive or threatening	2	4
Receiving offensive, threatening or silent phone calls	35	18
Posting offensive comments about the victim on the internet	2	4
Sharing intimate photos or videos of the victim on the internet or by mobile phone	1	1
Loitering or waiting for the victim outside her home, workplace or school without a legitimate reason	8	15
Deliberately following the victim	23	15
Deliberately interfering with or damaging the victim's property	39	14

**BASE:** All women aged 18–74 who experienced stalking, are directly conflict-affected, and who identified a most serious incident associated with conflict (68); those who experienced stalking and who identified a most serious incident not associated with conflict (1,063)

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

### 5.3: Perpetrators of violence associated with conflict

There are some differences in the perpetrators of the most serious incidents of non-partner physical and/or sexual violence associated with conflict compared with the experiences of women overall. Women who are directly conflict-affected and associate their most serious incident of non-partner violence with conflict are significantly more likely than women whose experience was not associated with conflict to say that the incident was carried out by someone they did not know (34% compared with 17%) or a friend, acquaintance or neighbour (33% compared with 22% on average). These incidents are also more likely to have been perpetrated by an armed official or aid worker (8% compared with 1% of victims who do not associate their experience with conflict). Conversely, they are less likely to have been carried out by a relative or family member of the victim (11% compared with 19%) or a pupil or fellow student (1% compared with 7%).

**Among directly conflict-affected women who identified a most serious incident of non-partner violence and associate it with conflict, 17% say that the incident was perpetrated by three or more people, which is more than three times more than the average of 5% among victims of non-partner violence not associated with conflict.**

When the most serious incident of non-partner violence is associated with conflict, a higher proportion of these experiences are characterized as multi-perpetrator incidents. Among directly conflict-affected women who identified a most serious incident of non-partner violence and associate it with conflict, 17% say that the incident was perpetrated by three or more people, which is more than three times more than the average of 5% among victims of non-partner violence not associated with conflict.

## 5. Conflict-related violence against women and girls

The case study below recounts the experience of a young woman who was raped during a conflict by multiple armed men.

### Case study: L.'s story

- L. was 14 at the start of the conflict. She lived with her parents and younger sisters.
- When she was 16 her father went into hiding, and when men- who she believed were from the army- came to their home, her mother was beaten and raped in front of the family to the point that she needed urgent medical care. While her mother was unconscious, L. and her 13-year-old sister were raped by multiple men.
- When the men left, L. and her family travelled to another village and went into hiding. She received some medical care for the physical violence but no other support at the time.
- She was prescribed some follow-up medication but did not take it for fear that someone would recognize her at the medical centre and find out what had happened to her.

**“I didn’t want to risk losing everything I had. They said we needed to take some injections. We didn’t know what to do, and we didn’t know what the doctors there could do to us, and we didn’t want them to know what happened to us.”**

- She did not tell anyone about the experience. When she married, she feared that her husband would not accept her if he knew she had been raped, and so she told him that she had previously had a relationship when he asked if she was a virgin.
- Years later, a friend suggested that she visit an NGO that helped women with experiences of conflict-related violence and that was the first time that she talked about her experiences.
- **Survivor of conflict-related violence**

**Table 5.5: Number of perpetrators involved in the most serious incidents of non-partner violence, according to whether they were associated with conflict or not**

	Most serious incident of non-partner violence associated with conflict %	Most serious incident of non-partner violence not associated with conflict %
One perpetrator	67	76
Two perpetrators	12	17
Three or more perpetrators	17	5

**BASE:** All directly conflict-affected women who associate their most serious incident of non-partner physical/sexual violence with conflict (111); all women who identify a most serious incident of non-partner physical and/or sexual violence not associated with conflict (1,187)

**SOURCE:** OSCE-led survey on violence against women

Those women who are directly conflict-affected and who say that at least one of their experiences of sexual harassment was associated with the conflict they experienced were asked about the perpetrator of this incident specifically. More than one-third of women say that the perpetrator of this conflict-related incident was someone they knew at the time (34%), and a similar proportion say that it was someone they did not know (31%). Eight per cent say that the incident was carried out by a civilian related to some fighting party, and half as many say that it was perpetrated by their current or a previous partner (4%). Very few say that the incident was perpetrated by an armed person (1%).

The most serious incidents of sexual harassment that are associated with conflict are also more likely to have been perpetrated by multiple people; three times as many victims of the most serious conflict-related incidents say that it was carried out by three or more perpetrators (38% compared with 12% of those whose most serious incident was not associated with conflict).

Again, similarly to sexual harassment, the data suggests that the most serious incidents of stalking that are associated with conflict are more likely to have been **perpetrated by multiple actors**. While 4% of all women who identified a most serious incident of stalking that is not associated with conflict say the stalking was carried out by three or more perpetrators, this rises to 37% among women who associate their most serious incident with a conflict.

## 5. Conflict-related violence against women and girls

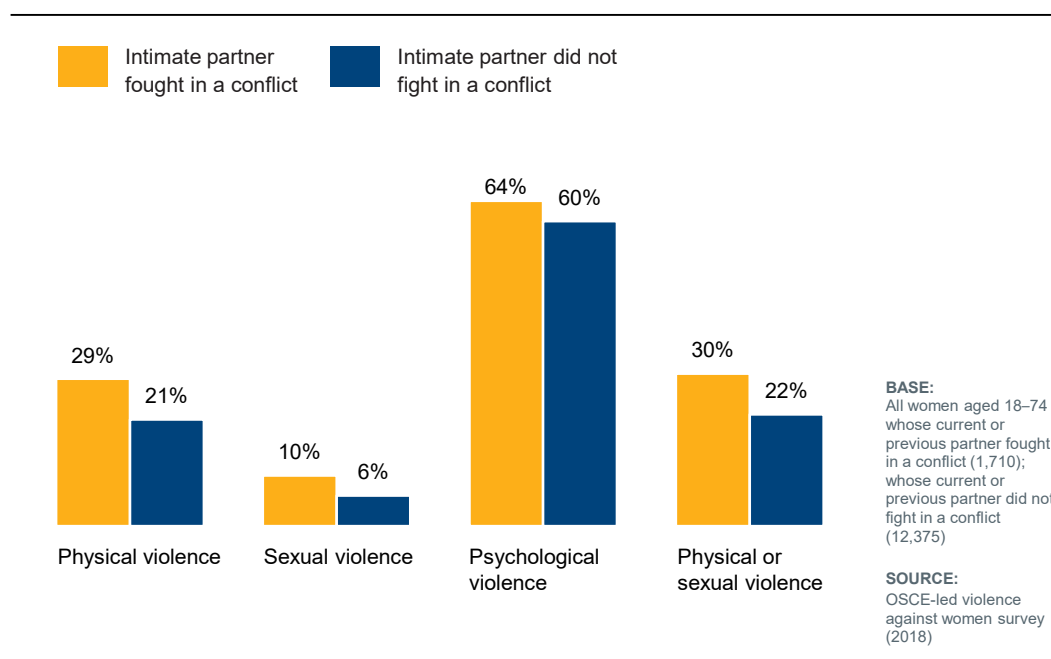




## 6. Impact of partner's involvement in conflict on the prevalence of intimate partner violence

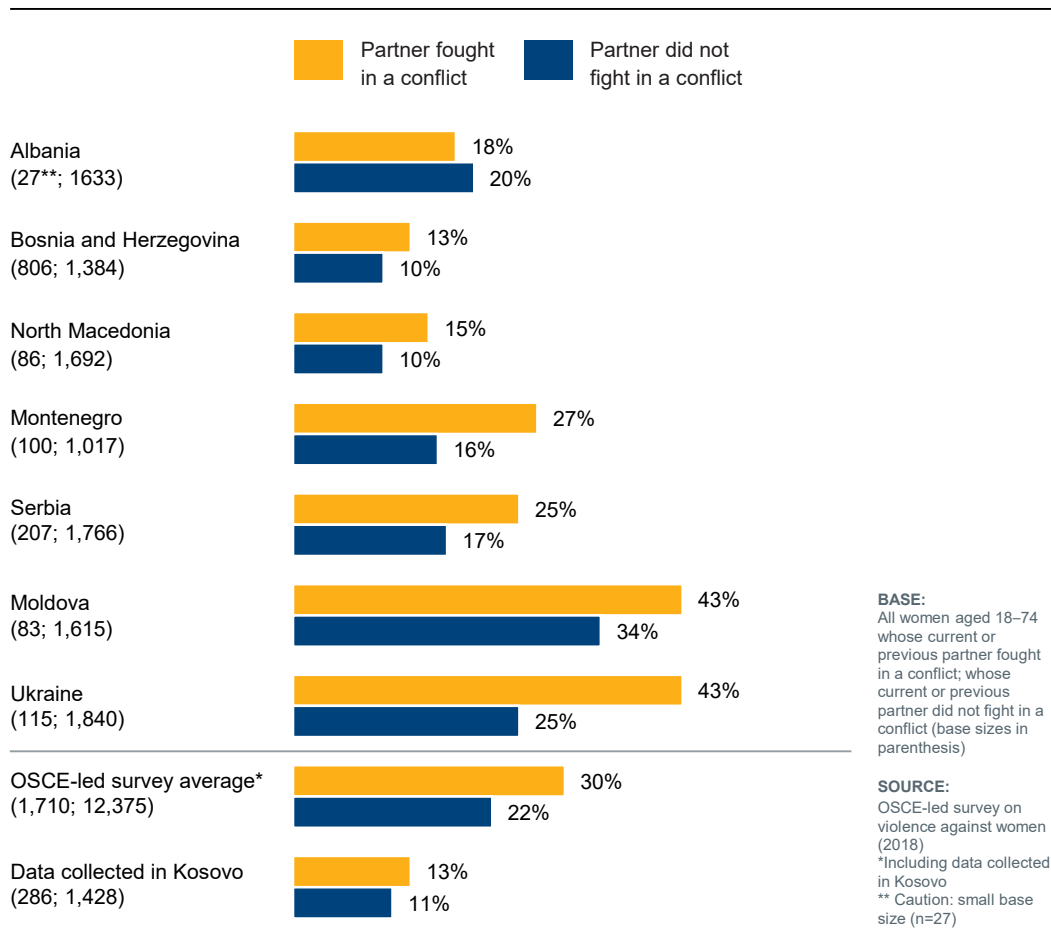
This chapter explores the impact that an intimate partner's involvement in armed conflict has on the prevalence of violence against women. Indeed, the data suggests that a key factor influencing the prevalence of intimate partner violence is whether a woman's partner or previous partner was involved in a conflict, regardless of whether she herself was directly affected by conflict or not. Indeed, women whose current or previous partner fought in a conflict are more likely than those whose partner did not take part in a conflict to indicate having experienced intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15 (30% compared with 22%). This is consistent for physical and sexual violence but is less marked for psychological violence, as detailed in Figure 6.1 below.

**Figure 6.1: Prevalence of violence according to whether an intimate partner fought in a conflict**



Locally, this pattern is visible in Montenegro, Serbia, and Ukraine (Figure 6.2). When considering the prevalence of violence in the 12 months prior to the survey, it holds true only for Ukraine, where 17% of women whose partner fought in a conflict say that they experienced intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence during that time frame, compared with 7% of those whose partner did not fight in a conflict.

**Figure 6.2: Prevalence of intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15, by partner’s involvement in conflict**



In addition to having an impact on the prevalence of violence, the data suggests that whether an intimate partner was involved in a conflict also has an impact on the severity of violence experienced. Women whose current or previous partner fought in a conflict are more likely to say that they suffered from a more severe physical injury as a result of their most serious incident than women whose intimate partner did not fight in a conflict. For instance, although women whose intimate partner fought in a conflict are not more likely overall to say they suffered from an injury, they are six times more likely to say they had a miscarriage following their most serious incident of intimate partner violence (6% compared with 1%) and three times more likely to say they suffered from internal injuries (6% compared with 2%) (Table 6.1). The consequences of violence are explored further in Chapter 7.

## 6. Impact of partner's involvement in conflict on the prevalence of intimate partner violence

**Table 6.1: Physical consequences of physical and/or sexual violence (most serious incident of intimate partner violence), according to whether an intimate partner fought in a conflict**

	Current or previous partner fought in a conflict %	Current or previous partner did not fight in a conflict %
Bruises, scratches	31	48
Wounds, sprains, burns	12	8
Concussion or other brain injury	8	7
Fractures or broken teeth	8	3
Internal injuries	6	2
Miscarriage	6	1
Infertility or inability to carry out pregnancy	0.1	0.3
Infection or a sexually transmitted disease	4	0.2
Pregnancy	1	1
Any physical consequence <sup>57</sup>	45	50
No injuries	49	47

**BASE:** All women who identified a most serious incident of current or previous partner physical and/or sexual violence - current or previous partner fought in a conflict (287); current or previous partner did not fight in a conflict (1,752)  
**SOURCE:** OSCE-led violence against women survey (2018)

Involvement in armed conflict also had long-term impacts on many of the men involved. Among current partners who fought in a conflict, half (50%) experienced some form of psychological or physical consequence as a result of the fighting. Most commonly, nearly one-quarter (23%) suffered from difficulty sleeping or having nightmares, and around one in five suffered from anxiety (19%). Slightly fewer suffered from depression and PTSD (both at 17%) or a physical injury (14%), while 2% developed an alcohol or drug addiction following the conflict.

Similarly, just under half (47%) of previous partners who fought in a conflict suffered from a long-term psychological or physical impact as a result of their involvement. Again, the most commonly mentioned consequence is difficulty sleeping or having nightmares (20%). Unlike the experiences of current partners, the second-most-cited consequence of a previous partner's involvement in a conflict is addiction to alcohol or drugs (14%), followed by PTSD and anxiety (both 13%). Just under one in ten (9%) suffered a physical injury.

Whether an intimate partner suffered from a psychological consequence as a result of conflict has a substantial impact on the prevalence of intimate partner violence. Indeed, women who say that their current partner suffered from one of these psychological impacts as a result of their involvement are nearly twice as likely to indicate having suffered physical and/or sexual violence at their hands since the age of 15 (27% compared with 14% of women overall). Women who say that their previous partner fought in a conflict and suffered from a psychological consequence are more than twice as likely as women overall to say

<sup>57</sup> This includes women who selected "other" as a physical consequence of violence.

## OSCE-led survey on violence against women: Conflict and violence against women

that they have experienced physical or sexual violence at their hands (51% compared with 25%).

In the qualitative research, women shared how men who had fought in a war had been deeply impacted by their experiences. Across the region covered by the survey, women were unanimous in stressing the widespread impact that this had, particularly in terms of triggering long-term mental health issues such as PTSD. They also said that these conditions, exacerbated by financial difficulties, had led to more frequent alcohol and substance abuse, which in turn had an impact on levels of intimate partner violence.

**“Many people became mentally ill [as a direct result of the war].”**

**Female, aged 35–55, urban, Serbia**

**“Both men and women [were impacted psychologically]. To be honest, it reflects more on men. They were [involved in combat]; [they] were in the trenches. [Men were the ones who suffered the most consequences].”**

**Female, aged 38–55, conflict-affected, urban, Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Women in Ukraine said that men who were psychologically affected by their active combat duty in the crisis in and around Ukraine struggled to reintegrate into society, resulting in greater physical and psychological violence towards their partners. This is substantiated by the survey results, where 71% of women whose current partner fought in the crisis say they think it had a long-term psychological impact on their partner.

**6. Impact of partner's involvement in conflict on the prevalence of intimate partner violence**



## 7. Consequences of violence against women in conflict

In the survey, women who experienced violence and identified a most serious incident were asked about the impact the incident had on them emotionally, psychologically and, in the case of intimate partner and non-partner violence, physically.

This chapter explores these consequences of violence and the impact that experiences of conflict have on these responses. It also looks at the long-term health effects of conflict itself.

### 7.1: Psychological and physical consequences of violence

Of those women who experienced violence at the hands of an intimate partner or a non-partner and identified a most serious incident, the vast majority (81%) said that the incident left them suffering from a long-term psychological consequence, most prominently anxiety, reported by 39% of victims, and feelings of vulnerability, identified by 32% of victims.

Directly conflict-affected women who associate their most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner physical and/or sexual violence with conflict are not more likely than women who do not associate their most serious incident with conflict to say that it had a long-term psychological impact on them (85% compared with 80%). However, there is some evidence to suggest that they are slightly more likely to suffer from multiple different impacts, with 26% stating they have suffered from four or more of the psychological consequences asked about, compared with 20% of those women whose most serious incident of violence was not associated with conflict.

In particular, women who associate their most serious incident with conflict are more likely to say that it led to anxiety (identified by 50% of women compared with 39% of those whose most serious incident was not associated with conflict.) and left them suffering from depression (43% compared with 27%). However, this pattern is not consistent across all psychological consequences, as seen in Table 7.1 below.

**Table 7.1: Psychological consequences of intimate partner or non-partner physical and/or sexual violence (most serious incident), according to whether the incident is associated with conflict or not**

	Most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner violence associated with conflict %	Most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner violence not associated with conflict %
Anxiety	50	39
Depression	43	27
Loss of self-confidence	37	26
Feelings of vulnerability	29	33
Difficulty in sleeping	28	26
Panic attacks	21	22
Difficulties in relationships	21	29
Difficulties concentrating	12	12
Any of the above	85	80
None of the above	15	18

**BASE:** All directly conflict-affected women who identified a most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner physical and/or sexual violence and who associated this incident with conflict (284); all women who identified a most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner physical and/or sexual violence not associated with conflict (2,479)

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

When looking specifically at women who are directly conflict-affected and who associate their most serious incident with conflict, just over half (53%) say that the incident resulted in a physical injury or other physical consequence. This is very similar to the average among all women who identified a most serious incident not associated with conflict (55%). There are no substantial differences in the prevalence of individual forms of physical injuries between these two groups of women, as seen in Table 7.2.



## 7. Consequences of violence against women in conflict

**Table 7.2: Physical consequences of intimate partner or non-partner physical and/or sexual violence (most serious incident), according to whether the incident is associated with conflict or not**

	Most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner violence associated with conflict %	Most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner violence not associated with conflict %
Bruises, scratches	44	43
Wounds, sprains, burns	14	12
Concussion or other brain injury	6	11
Fractures or broken teeth	6	6
Internal injuries	2	3
Miscarriage	1	1
Infertility or inability to carry out pregnancy	1	1
Infection or a sexually transmitted disease	0.3	1
Pregnancy	0.2	1
Any physical consequence <sup>58</sup>	53	55
No injuries	46	41

BASE: All directly conflict-affected women who identified a most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner physical and/or sexual violence and who associate this incident with conflict (284); all women who identified a most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner physical and/or sexual violence not associated with conflict (2,479)

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

### Impacts of sexual harassment and stalking

Women who associate their most serious incident of sexual harassment with the conflict they lived through are less likely than women whose most serious incident was not associated with conflict to say that it resulted in a psychological consequence. Indeed, more than half (56%) of these women say that the incident did not result in any long-term psychological consequence, compared with fewer than half (48%) of women whose most serious incident was not associated with conflict. However, this is not consistent across all of the forms of psychological consequences. For instance, substantially more women suffered from a loss of self-confidence if their most serious incident was associated with conflict (25% compared with 14%). This is also the case with depression (18% compared with 8%).

<sup>58</sup> This includes women who selected "other" as a physical consequence of violence.

**Table 7.3: Psychological consequences of sexual harassment (most serious incident), according to whether the incident is associated with conflict or not**

	Most serious incident of sexual harassment associated with conflict %	Most serious incident of sexual harassment not associated with conflict%
Loss of self-confidence	25	14
Depression	18	8
Anxiety	13	18
Feelings of vulnerability	10	19
Panic attacks	10	6
Difficulty sleeping	9	7
Difficulties in relationships	7	10
Difficulties concentrating	6	4
Any psychological consequence	44	49
No psychological consequence	56	48

**BASE:** All directly conflict-affected women who identified a most serious incident of sexual harassment and who associate this incident with conflict (92); all women who identified a most serious incident of sexual harassment not associated with conflict (3,422)

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

When it comes to the psychological consequences of stalking, women who are directly conflict-affected and who associate **their most serious incident with conflict are more likely to report certain long-term psychological impacts than women whose most serious incident is not connected to conflict**. In particular, directly conflict-affected women who associate their most serious incident of stalking with conflict are nearly three times more likely than women who did not associate their most serious incident of stalking with conflict to say that it resulted in panic attacks (31% compared with 12%). They are also more than twice as likely to say that it resulted in difficulty sleeping (51% compared with 18%) and feelings of vulnerability (47% compared with 20%).

## 7. Consequences of violence against women in conflict

**Table 7.4: Psychological consequences of stalking (most serious incident), according to whether or not the incident is associated with conflict**

	Most serious incident of stalking associated with conflict %	Most serious incident of stalking not associated with conflict%
Anxiety	52	29
Difficulty in sleeping	51	18
Feelings of vulnerability	47	20
Panic attacks	31	12
Depression	29	14
Difficulty in relationships	22	14
Difficulties concentrating	12	6
Loss of self-confidence	11	14
Any psychological consequence	70	55
No psychological consequence	30	43

**BASE:** All directly conflict-affected women who identified a most serious incident of stalking and who associate this incident with conflict (68); all women who identified a most serious incident of stalking not associated with conflict (817)

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

### 7.3: Impact of the unavailability of services on the long-term health of violence

The impact of violence, both in terms of psychological consequences and physical injuries, was also analyzed in relation to whether the victim had lived through a situation where, as a result of conflict, there was no law enforcement or where health services were unavailable or inaccessible for a prolonged period of time.

Contrary to what might be expected, conflict-affected women who lived through a situation where there was either no law enforcement or no health services are less likely to have suffered any psychological consequence of violence than women overall (73% compared with 81%).

This group, however, is more likely to say that their most serious incident resulted in difficulty sleeping (36% compared with 26% of women overall who identified a most serious incident) or loss of self-confidence (35% compared 27%).

In terms of physical violence, women who lived through a situation where there was no law enforcement or health services were *less* likely to indicate having suffered from a physical injury as a result of their most serious incident. Forty-six per cent of women who lived through this type of situation say that their most serious incident resulted in a physical injury, compared with 55% of women overall who identified a most serious incident.

While the data suggests that women who lived in an area where there was no law enforcement or limited access to health services do not report more physical injuries as a result of their most serious incident, women in the qualitative research revealed how the lack of services impacted their personal experiences of conflict and violence.

**Case study: B.'s story**

- B. was 12 when country X seceded from the Soviet Union to become an independent country. When B. started suffering severe physical abuse at the hands of her classmates, she said it was because she looked different.
- She was raped by a neighbour, which led to depression and a health crisis and then hospitalization. She did not want to tell anyone about the rape because of the shame it would bring on her family, and because she did not think she would be believed.

**“I didn’t want my parents to feel ashamed. Besides, who would have believed me? At that time, there were no tests. And they always blamed the girl ... There were two girls in the village, two older sisters who were very frequently raped by many [men]. And they were beaten and raped, and [everyone in the village would say that it was their fault]. And that’s it! It wasn’t the boys who were guilty.”**

- During the mid-1990s, as the situation in the country became more violent, B. was sexually assaulted and raped by a number of men. Some came from wealthy families who knew the police, so she did not seek help. During this period, B. said that there was chaos in the region and no one to seek help from.

**Survivor of conflict-related and non-conflict-related violence**

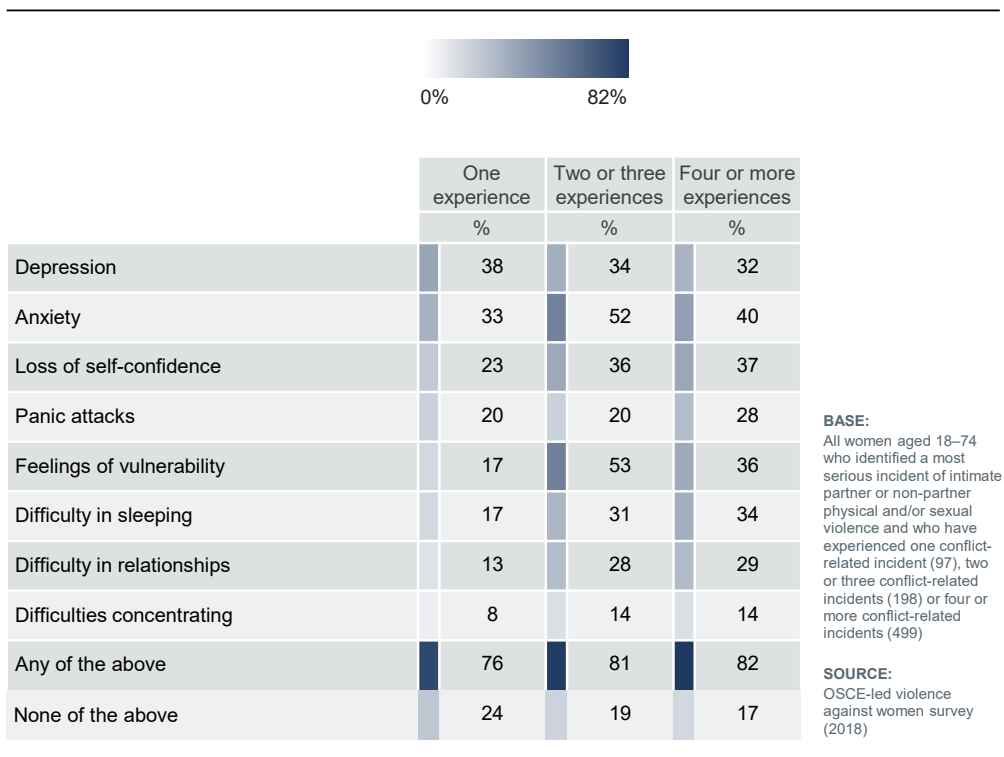
**7.4: Severity of conflict experience and long-term health consequences**

The consequences of women’s most serious incident of violence were analyzed according to the number of conflict-related experiences conflict-affected women had. The data suggests that women who had four or more conflict-related experiences (as listed in Table 2.3 in Chapter 2) are more likely to indicate having suffered from certain psychological responses as a result of their most serious incident of non-partner or intimate partner violence.

Women who had four or more conflict-related experiences are around twice as likely to say that their most serious incident of non-partner or intimate partner violence led to feelings of vulnerability (36% compared with 17% of those who experienced one conflict-related experience), difficulties sleeping (34% compared with 17%) and difficulties in relationships (29% compared with 13%).

## 7. Consequences of violence against women in conflict

**Table 7.5: Psychological responses to women’s most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner physical and/or sexual violence, by number of conflict-related incidents experienced**



Turning to physical injuries, the number of conflict-related experiences is not linked to a greater likelihood of conflict-affected women suffering any injury as a result of their most serious incident. Around half of women who had one conflict-related experience incurred an injury during their most serious incident (52%), which was similar to the proportion of women who lived through four or more conflict-related experiences (48%).



## 8. Barriers to reporting, experiences of reporting and satisfaction with services

In the survey, women were asked whether the police or other organizations were informed about the most serious incident of physical and/or sexual violence that they had experienced.<sup>59</sup>

This chapter explores whether women reported their experiences to anyone and, if they did, how satisfied they were with the response. It focuses on the differences – if there are any – between women who are directly conflict-affected and those who are not and between the most serious incidents of violence that are conflict-related compared to all serious incidents not associated with conflict. The most serious incident was defined as the one that had the most impact on the woman either psychologically or physically.

### 8.1: Official reporting

#### Reporting to the police

In the survey, women were asked whether the police came to know about the most serious incident of physical and/or sexual violence they had experienced, including threats of physical and sexual violence.

Looking at experiences of intimate partner and non-partner violence combined, slightly fewer than one in five victims of violence (18%) say that they reported the experience to the police themselves, while 3% indicate that someone else reported it, or the police came to know about it without anyone reporting it. Conversely, more than three-quarters (77%) say that the police did not come to know about the incident.

Women are more likely to say they reported the incident to the police themselves if it was perpetrated by a non-partner than by an intimate partner (19% compared with 12%). When considering the most serious incidents of intimate partner or non-partner violence that were associated with conflict, 13% of women say they reported it to the police, which is lower than the average of all women who identified a most serious incident not associated with conflict (18%). More specifically, 9% of victims of intimate partner violence reported their most serious incident directly to the police (compared with 12% of victims of intimate partner violence not associated with conflict), and 12% reported their most serious incident of non-partner violence (compared with 20% of women whose most serious incident was not associated with conflict).

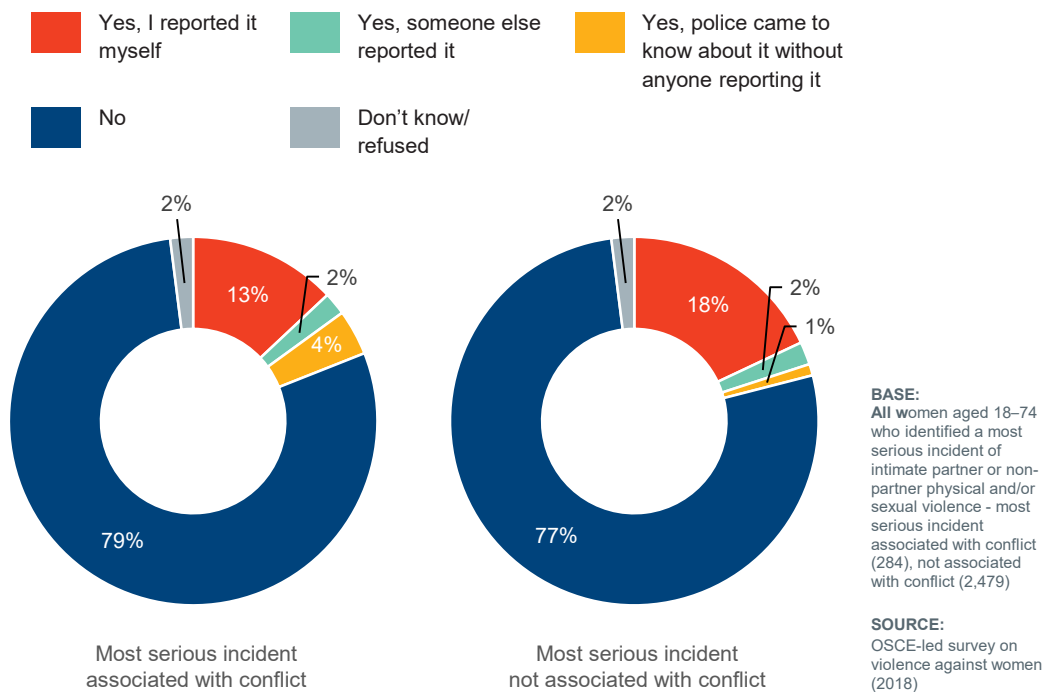
<sup>59</sup> The other organizations asked about were hospitals, doctors and other healthcare institutions, legal services or lawyers, church or faith-based organizations, social services, victim support organizations, women's shelters or other organizations.

## Twelve per cent of women whose most serious incident of non-partner violence was connected to conflict reported it directly to the police, compared with 20% of women whose incident was not connected to conflict.

Although not all most serious incidents of intimate partner or non-partner violence among refugees are associated with conflict, the data suggests that refugees are more likely than average to have reported their most serious incident directly to the police (31% compared with 18% on average).

**Figure 8.1: Contact with the police by victims of intimate partner or non-partner physical and/or sexual violence (most serious incident), according to whether the most serious incident was associated with conflict or not**

Did the police come to know about the most serious incident?





## 8. Barriers to reporting, experiences of reporting, and satisfaction with services

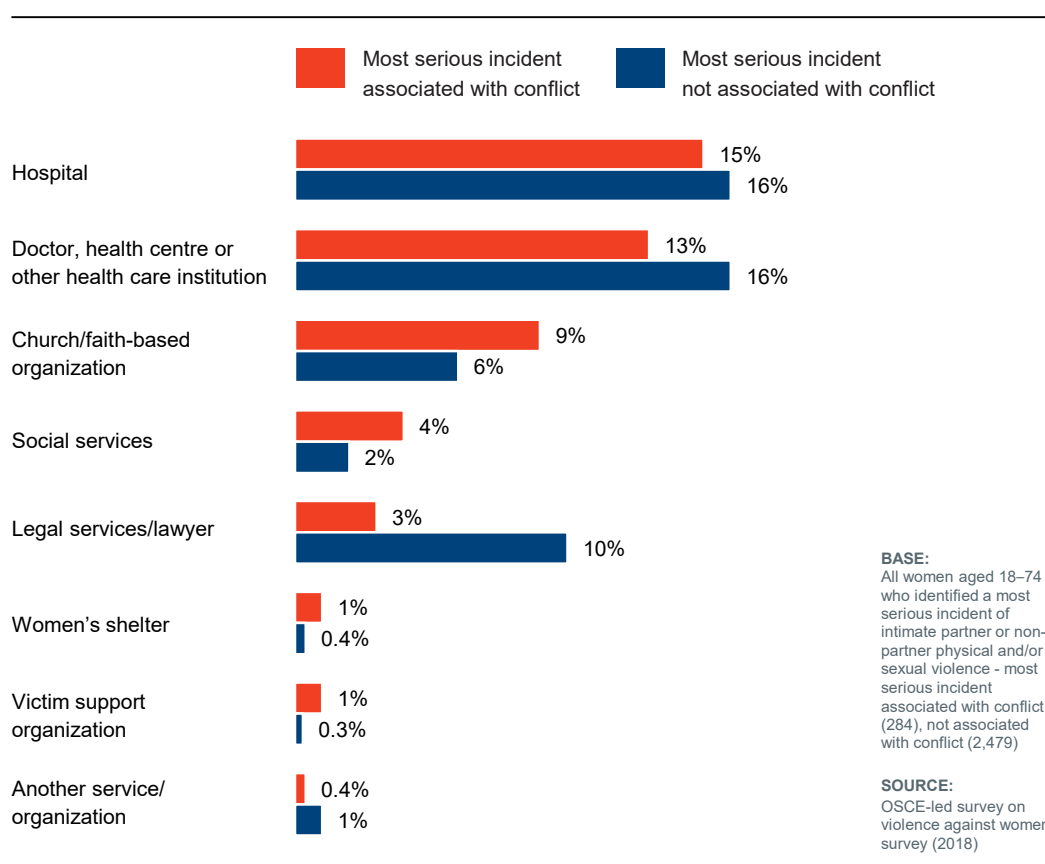
### Reporting to other services

Victims of non-partner, current partner and previous partner violence were asked about other support services they contacted. Victims of intimate partner or non-partner violence were most likely to say that they contacted a hospital or a doctor or healthcare institution (both at 16%). Ten per cent indicate having reported the incident to a legal service or lawyer, and a further 6% say they told a church or faith-based organization.

Whether an experience of violence happened in connection with a conflict has little impact on the victim's likelihood of reporting it to services other than the police aside from contacting a legal service/lawyer. Three per cent of women who associate their most serious incident of partner or non-partner violence with conflict contacted a legal service/lawyer, compared with 10% of all women who identify a most serious incident not associated with conflict.

**Figure 8.2: Contact with other services by victims of intimate partner or non-partner physical and/or sexual violence (most serious incident), according to whether the most serious incident was associated with conflict or not**

Did you contact any of the following services?



### Reporting sexual harassment and stalking

Overall, almost half of women did not tell anyone about their most serious incident of sexual harassment (49%). Those who did were most likely to tell a friend about it (25%), followed by a family friend or relative (24%). Less than one in twenty women reported their experience of sexual harassment to other people; after family friends and relatives, the next group women were most likely to tell were colleagues (4%).

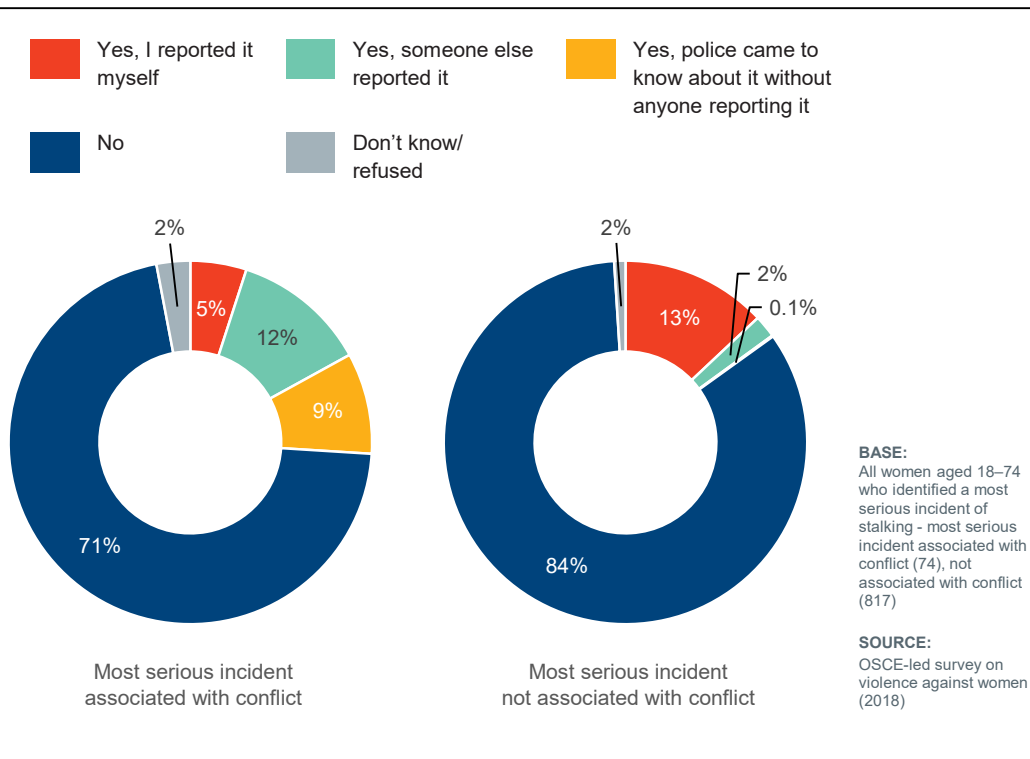
The reporting behaviour of women who experienced sexual harassment in connection with conflict – whether they reported the incident to the police or other organizations or people – is largely in line with women whose most serious incident was not associated with conflict.

In relation to stalking, in the majority of cases the police were not informed about the most serious incident (84%). Only 13% of victims informed the police about the incident themselves.

When the most serious incident of stalking was associated with conflict, the police were more likely to learn about it through someone besides the victim (12% compared with 2% of victims whose most serious incident of stalking was not associated with a conflict) or without anyone reporting it (9% compared with 0.1%). However, victims of stalking were less likely to have reported the incident themselves to the police (5% compared with 13%) (Figure 8.3).

**Figure 8.3: Contact with the police by victims of stalking (most serious incident), according to whether the most serious incidents was associated with conflict or not**

Did the police come to know about the most serious incident?



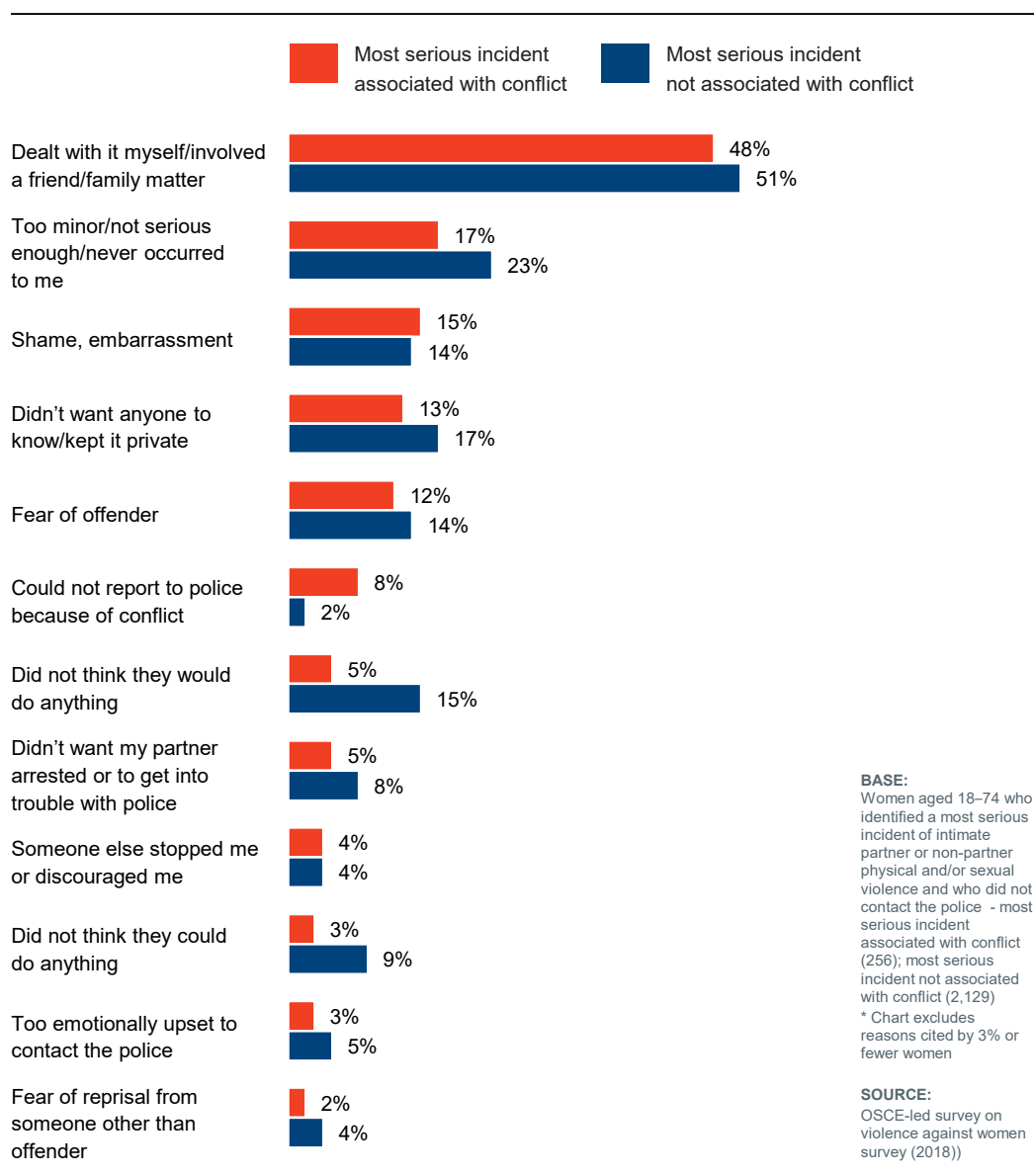
**8.2: Barriers to reporting**

The barriers to reporting intimate partner or non-partner physical and/or sexual violence to the police among women who have experienced conflict and associate their most serious incident of violence with conflict are broadly similar to those of women whose most serious incident was not associated with conflict (Figure 8.4). **However, women whose most serious incident was associated with conflict appear to have had more faith that the police could and would take action.** The belief that the police would not do anything was a barrier for 5% of women whose most serious incident was associated with conflict compared with 15% of women whose most serious incident was not conflict-related, while only 3% of women whose most serious incident was associated with conflict said that the police could not do anything, compared with 9% of women whose most serious incident was not conflict-related. This is generally consistent across both intimate partner violence and non-partner violence, though the difference in trust in the police is more pronounced when it comes to intimate partner violence.

## 8. Barriers to reporting, experiences of reporting, and satisfaction with services

**Figure 8.4: Reasons for not contacting the police after a woman's most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner physical/and or sexual violence, according to whether or not the incident was associated with conflict**

Why did you not contact the police?



However, women whose most serious incident was associated with conflict are significantly more likely to say that they were unable to report it to the police because of the conflict (8% compared with 2% of all women whose most serious incident was not associated with conflict).

### Barriers to contacting other services

The reasons provided for not contacting other services are similar to those given for not reporting to the police. In particular, women overall say that they preferred to deal with it themselves (61%) or considered it too minor (24%).

Women who are conflict-affected and who associate their most serious incident with conflict are more likely to say that they did not contact another service because they preferred to deal with it themselves (70%) compared with those whose most serious incident was not associated with conflict (61%). They are also more likely to say that they did not contact one of these services because they did not want anyone to find out (21% compared with 17%). Four per cent of women who are conflict-affected and who associate their most serious

incident with conflict say that they did not contact other serviced because no other services were available (compared with 6% of women whose most serious incident was not associated with conflict), and 3% of the former say that the services were too far away (compared with 1% of the latter).

In the qualitative research, women who had experienced violence as a result of conflict disclosed that they felt ashamed and were afraid to report it. They said that society treated these women differently and that men viewed them as less deserving of respect because of the sexual violence they experienced. Lack of awareness of where to go was also discussed in the qualitative research as a barrier to seeking help.

**“How can you know where this safe house is, who to contact? There is probably something available. I don’t know anything about that.”**

**Female, aged 56+, urban, conflict-affected, Serbia**

**8.3: Satisfaction with the response**

Although small base sizes do not allow for an analysis of satisfaction with the police by perpetrator type, the data suggests that directly conflict-affected women who associate their most serious incident of violence with conflict were satisfied with the service they received from the police, hospitals and doctors or other healthcare services. Although caution should be exercised due to the small base sizes, the data suggests that women who associate their most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner violence with conflict and who reported it to a hospital were particularly satisfied with the service they received (78% satisfied). The very small number of women who sought support from other services does not allow for an analysis of satisfaction levels with these services.

**Table 8.1: Satisfaction with services among women who contacted each service, according to whether the most serious incident of intimate partner or not partner violence was associated with conflict or not**

Very/fairly satisfied

	<b>Women who are directly affected by conflict and associate their most serious incident of intimate partner or non-partner violence with conflict, %</b>	<b>Women who identified a most serious incident not associated with conflict, %</b>
<b>Police</b>	61 (61)	47 (542)
<b>Hospitals</b>	78 (45)	70 (363)
<b>Doctor, health centre or other healthcare institution</b>	61 (43)	77 (372)

**BASE:** All women aged 18–74 who reported their most serious incident of violence to a doctor, health centre or other healthcare institution; base sizes in italics

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

The qualitative research provides more insight into the personal experiences of women when it comes to reporting incidents of violence. Some women, for example, explained that they felt that, ultimately, public service staff would (often inappropriately) encourage them to return to their husbands. Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina explained that the difficult economic situation facing the country had made women more financially dependent on their partners and therefore less financially capable of leaving abusive relationships. This was in large part attributed to the conflict, with women explaining that they had lost their jobs during the conflict and had been unable to find employment ever since. Some also explained that, as a result of the conflict, they were unable to access their pension because they had not contributed enough as a result of the war.

## 8. Barriers to reporting, experiences of reporting, and satisfaction with services

**“It is not good to be a woman today in Bosnia and Herzegovina [...] First, our generations got it the worst in this war. We were left without jobs, and we do not have enough years of service to get a pension. Nobody wants to hire women at this age in order for us to continue our employment. Life is hard. So concerning the economic aspect, it is very hard to be a woman in [Bosnia and Herzegovina] today.”**

**Female, aged 56+, conflict-affected, Bosnia and Herzegovina**

**“You don’t meet the conditions for retirement. You don’t have pensionable years of service. During the war, you lost 12 years of pensionable years of service. After the war, you couldn’t find a job. And you lose those years of service.”**

**Female, aged 56+, conflict-affected, Bosnia and Herzegovina**

In Kosovo, some women said that the authorities had been slow to act in response to all types of violence against women, particularly in relation to conflict-related violence. One participant applied for a pension that is available to women who experienced sexual violence during the conflict. She was told that her claim was rejected because there were doubts about her case.

**“When they asked for the documents, I didn’t have them. Whoever thought about documents?”**

**Survivor of conflict-related violence, Kosovo**



# Annexes

## Annex 1: Ethical and safety considerations

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

- All interviewers and moderators were women who had experience conducting surveys on sensitive issues and who were native speakers of the language used for the interviews. All interviewers and moderators attended a two-day briefing.
- For the protection of both respondents and interviewers, interviewers were instructed not to disclose in advance that the survey was about violence, and to conduct the survey in private.
- At the end of the survey, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, all respondents were offered information on support organizations that they could contact should they wish to discuss any issues arising as a result of taking part in the survey.
- The project co-ordinator was available for interviewers and moderators to speak with at any time during fieldwork, and individual meetings with counsellors could be arranged if needed.
- Adherence to ethical principles is a cornerstone of the research methodology used for the OSCE-led survey, and the procedures used by the World Health Organization<sup>60</sup> and the *United Nations Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women*<sup>61</sup> were taken into account.

<sup>60</sup> Ethical and safety recommendations for intervention research on violence against women. Building on lessons from the WHO publication *Putting women first: ethical and safety recommendations for research on domestic violence against women* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2016), accessed 27 December 2019, <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/251759/9789241510189-eng.pdf;jsessionid=8E35B9DA678667DD989016A395720263?sequence=1>.

<sup>61</sup> *Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Violence against Women: Statistical Surveys* (New York: United Nations, 2014), accessed 27 December 2019, [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/docs/guidelines\\_statistics\\_vaw.pdf](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/docs/guidelines_statistics_vaw.pdf).

### Annex 2: Survey and quantitative fieldwork

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

The key research questions for the project are as follows:

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

### Quantitative survey

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

### Sampling

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

### Sample frames

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



**Table A2.1: Sample frames and lists of primary sampling units (PSUs) in the OSCE participating States covered by the survey**

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

**Table A2.2: Sample frames and list of PSUs in Kosovo**

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

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

## OSCE-led survey on violence against women: Conflict and violence against women

### Survey population and sample size

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

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

### Coverage

The survey aimed to cover the whole population of women aged 18–74 in each OSCE participating State. The survey also aimed to cover the whole population of women aged 18–74 in Kosovo. In certain participating States, however, the actual coverage is slightly lower than 100% either due to non-coverage of the sample frame or as a result of accommodating fieldwork practicalities. The fieldwork coverage and a description of areas not covered are given in Table A2.3 and Table A2.4 below.

**Table A2.3: Fieldwork coverage in the OSCE participating States covered by the survey**

	Coverage	Areas not included in coverage
Albania	100%	The sample frame covered all territories in Albania. Due to fieldwork practicalities, six PSUs with fewer than 100 voters were excluded from the selection, as these were regarded as remote and secluded. These accounted for less than 0.1% of the population.
Bosnia and Herzegovina	97%	The sample frame covered all territories in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Due to fieldwork practicalities, all settlements with fewer than 40 households were excluded, as these were considered to be remote and secluded. Three per cent of the population live in these settlements.
Montenegro	96%	All settlements with fewer than 30 households were excluded; these represent 4% of the population. (Montenegro is highly mountainous with a lot of remote areas with a small number of inhabitants. Since these areas are hard to reach and very sparsely populated, and thus impractical to cover, they are excluded from the coverage.) Additionally, homes built or inhabited since 2011 are not covered, since they were not available in the sample frame. The effect this had on coverage was not expected to be significant, but the actual proportion is not known.
North Macedonia	99%	The sample frame covered all territories in North Macedonia. Due to fieldwork practicalities, PSUs with fewer than 70 voters were excluded from the selection, as these were usually remote and secluded. They covered 1% of the population.
Serbia	98%	Areas in south Serbia with an Albanian majority (who did not participate in the latest census) are not covered. These areas represent 1% of the total population. Additionally, homes built or inhabited since 2011 were not covered, since they were not available in the sample frame. The effect this had on coverage was not expected to be significant, but the actual proportion is not known. Finally, all settlements with fewer than 30 households were excluded, as they are considered to be remote and secluded. They represent 1% of the population.
Moldova <sup>62</sup>	99%	Due to fieldwork practicalities, localities with fewer than 300 registered voters were excluded from the coverage. These are usually very small villages with difficult access (roads are not well developed). These represent 1% of registered voters.
Ukraine	84%	The survey could not cover non-government-controlled areas or areas near the contact line. In practice, this meant that Crimea could not be covered, nor could parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. In total, 16% of the population lives in these areas. Additionally, PSUs with fewer than 100 voters were excluded from the selection, as these were regarded as remote and secluded. These areas cover 0.1% of the population.

62 The Transdniestrian region was not covered and is not included in the coverage calculation.

**Table A2.4: Fieldwork coverage in Kosovo**

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

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

### Stratification

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

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

### Stages of sample selection

#### Stage 1: Selection of PSUs

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Weighting

The weights for each OSCE participating State were calculated in two stages: a) sampling design weights and b) post-stratification weights. The same approach was used in Kosovo. The design weights reflected probabilities of selection at each sampling stage: selection of

PSUs, selection of addresses, then households within addresses (if applied) and selection of respondents. The post-stratification weights were calculated to compensate for nonresponse. Region, local population size and age categories were used for post-stratification.

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

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

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

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

Due to a better than expected response rate in all survey locations, the final sample size was greater than what was initially targeted. The final sample size and response rates are provided in Table A2.5 below.

**Table A2.5: Final sample sizes and response rates in the OSCE participating States covered in the survey**

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

**Table A2.6: Final sample size and response rate in Kosovo**

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

The response rate was in accordance with the RR3 definition of response rates by the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR).<sup>63</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Standard Definitions: Final Dispositions of Case Codes and Outcome Rates for Surveys, 7th edition (Oakbrook Terrace, IL: The American Association for Public Opinion Research, 2011), p. 46.

**Table A2.7: Demographic breakdown of the achieved sample**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Weighted, %</b>	<b>Unweighted, %</b>
18–29	20	17
30–39	20	18
40–49	18	19
50–59	19	19
60+	23	27
<b>Work status</b>		
In paid work	42	30
Self-employed	4	4
Helping in a family business (unpaid)	1	1
Unemployed	11	22
Pupil, student, in training	5	4
Not working due to illness or disability	1	1
Fulfilling domestic duties and care responsibilities	13	15
Retired	21	22
Compulsory military/community service/other	1	0.4
<b>Education</b>		
No formal education	1	3
Primary education	3	10
Secondary education	60	65
Tertiary education	36	22
<b>Location</b>		
Urban	62	56
Rural	38	44
<b>Conflict-affected</b>		
Yes	16	33
No	84	67

**Sampling tolerances**

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

## OSCE-led survey on violence against women: Conflict and violence against women

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

Design effect = (unweighted sample size) \* (Sum of the squared weights) / (Square of the sum of weights)<sup>64</sup>

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

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

**Table A2.8: Effective sample sizes for the OSCE participating States – total sample**

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

**Table A2.9: Effective sample size for Kosovo – total sample**

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

<sup>64</sup> Leslie Kish, "Weighting for unequal PI", Journal of Official Statistics, 8 (1992): 183–200.



**Table A2.10: Effective sample sizes for the OSCE participating States – conflict-affected sample**

	N	Design effect	Effective sample size	95% confidence interval for a survey estimate of 50% based on a weighted sample	
				Lower	Upper
Albania	386	1.227	315	44.5%	55.5%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1,498	1.366	1,097	47%	53%
Montenegro	139	1.240	112	40.7	59.3%
North Macedonia	364	1.515	240	43.7%	56.3%
Serbia	539	1.372	393	45.1%	54.9%
Moldova	148	1.354	109	40.6%	59.4%
Ukraine	318	1.387	229	43.5%	56.5%
Total conflict-affected sample	4,954	3.084	1,606	47.6%	52.4%

**Table A2.11: Effective sample size for Kosovo – conflict-affected sample**

	N	Design effect	Effective sample size	95% confidence interval for a survey estimate of 50% based on a weighted sample	
				Lower	Upper
Kosovo	1,562	1.403	1,114	47.1%	52.9%

**Annex 3: Qualitative research details**

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

**Focus group discussions**

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

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

**Table A3.1: Composition of FGDs in the OSCE participating States covered by the survey**

	Number of FGDs in total	Number of FGDs with conflict-affected women	Urban/Rural	Composition	Age
Albania	7	4	4 Urban	6 Albanian 1 Roma	3 18–35 4 36+
Bosnia and Herzegovina	9	9	3 Rural	4 Bosnian 4 Serbian 1 Roma	3 18–37 4 38–55 2 56+
Montenegro	8	6	3 Rural	4 Mixed Montenegrin/Serbian 2 Macedonian 1 Albanian 1 Roma	2 18–29 4 30–55 2 51+
North Macedonia	9	5	4 Urban	5 Macedonian 2 Albanian 2 Roma	3 18–34 2 20–45 3 35–55 1 55–74
Serbia	8	4	2 Mixed Urban/Rural	4 Serbian 2 Roma 1 Bosniak 1 Hungarian	2 18–34 5 35–55 1 56+
Moldova	8	3	6 Urban	5 Moldovan (including 1 with women from the Transdnestrrian region) 1 Moldovan/Russian 1 Roma 1 Gagauz	3 18–34 2 20–45 3 35–54 1 55–74
Ukraine	8	3	3 Rural	3 FGDs were conducted with IDPs	2 18–35 1 18–50 3 36–55 2 56+

**Table A3.2: Composition of FGDs in Kosovo**

	Number of FGDs	Number of FGDs with conflict-affected women	Urban/Rural	Composition	Age
Kosovo	8	3*	5 Urban 3 Rural	5 Kosovo Albanian 2 Kosovo Serb 1 Kosovo Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian	3 18–29 3 25–55 2 40+

\*For the remaining five groups, information was not provided as to whether any of the participants were conflict-affected.

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

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

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

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

**In-depth interviews**

Thirty-five in-depth interviews were conducted with women who had experienced violence. Some of the in-depth interview participants were recruited via the survey, with women who agreed to be contacted for further research at the end of the interview. Others were recruited with the assistance of local NGOs. In total, 17 in-depth interviews were conducted with women who lived through conflict.

**Table A3.3: Number of in-depth interviews with women who lived through conflict, by place**

Albania %	Bosnia and Herzegovina %	North Macedonia %	Montenegro %	Serbia %	Moldova %	Ukraine %	Data collected in Kosovo %
3	5	0	2	1	0	3	3

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

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

The broad aims of the in-depth interviews were as follows:

- To explore the forms of violence that women have experienced and how this has changed over time.
- To understand the role of conflict in women's lives over time and its linkages to gender-based violence.
- To identify the barriers to disclosing experiences and seeking support, and to explore women's decision-making process when deciding whether or not to disclose their experiences.
- To understand the support they received and to identify gaps in service provision.
- To identify any specific barriers for different groups, including women from ethnic-minority groups or women living with a disability, and support needs for these groups.
- For women who have accessed support (formal or informal), to understand how they did so and the impact that this had on them.

**Annex 4: Acknowledgements**

This study was commissioned by the OSCE and implemented by Ipsos, a large international survey company. The OSCE would like to thank the central Ipsos team for their commitment and dedication. They managed the fieldwork, analyzed the data and drafted the reports. Ipsos local branch offices and IMAS in the area where the study was conducted supported this work.

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The OSCE project management team consisted of Serani Siegel and Dušica Đukić.

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A total of 461 professional interviewers conducted the interviews with great care and professionalism and gave visibility to a topic that is often hidden in everyday life.

A sincere thank you goes to all the women who participated in the survey, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews and shared their opinions and personal experiences. Without their trust, this study would not have been possible.





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