

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



UNDER THE SHADOW OF PANDEMIC MONITORING REPORT



GLOBAL EQUALITY AND INCLUSION NETWORK ASSOCIATION 2022

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Global Equality and Inclusion Network Association

The Global Equality and Inclusion Network was established in Istanbul on 3 April 2011, on the 91st anniversary of women's entitlement to vote and be elected to local governments in Turkey.

Under the changing circumstances of the 21st century, we started our work to contribute to the aspirations of all segments of society for a more equal and inclusive world in the face of global and local problems.

We are continuing our work with the belief that a just, free and better life is possible.

In the context of equality and inclusiveness, we regard differences as richness and stand against all forms of discrimination. We organize our activities by upholding equality, universal human rights standards, democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights and freedoms.

Placing scientific studies to the forefront and, supporting these studies, conducting our work independently, impartially and transparently are all valuable and important for us.

The Global Equality and Inclusion Network Association seeks to contribute to the empowerment, solidarity and mutual learning of women and all vulnerable groups in society by developing innovative projects, publications and reports.

A more equal and inclusive world is possible!

Why should it not be!





Executive Summary

During the pandemic,, people had to stay home under the **“Life Fits into Home”** policy. So, how safe are homes for women? Homes that should be safe for all turned out to be risky spaces for women and children exposed to violence. With the pandemic, women closed in the same home with male perpetrators of violence, and their risk of facing domestic violence increased during this period.

While the Covid-19 pandemic was an extraordinary case with its fatal consequences, women worldwide were exposed to more frequent cases of violence. Studies on the effects of living in quarantine and isolation at “home” on women and children confirm that psychological, economic, digital, physical and sexual violence were on the rise. As a result of the adverse effects of pandemic management and policies adopted, the “shadow pandemic” confronted us with consequences that were as fatal as the pandemic going on outside.

Women experienced multi-dimensional and multiplied cases of violence during the pandemic. It is possible to say that all forms of violence against women were on the rise in this period. The present study monitored services and practices geared toward preventing violence against women in 12 metropolitan municipalities of Turkey during the Covid-19 pandemic, where violence against women became a shadow pandemic. The objective of this monitoring report “Violence against Women Under the Shadow of Pandemic” is to investigate to what extent municipalities have fulfilled their responsibilities concerning violence against women and whether there have been violations in this respect.

According to Law no. 5393 on Municipalities, Municipalities are authorized to **“engage in all appropriate activities and initiatives to respond to common needs of residents in their localities”** (Article 15). The Metropolitan Municipality Law no. 5216 includes the duties, authorities and responsibilities of metropolitan municipalities **“delivering and improving a range of social services for women and cooperating with universities, public agencies and civil society organizations in this field.”** In this context, municipalities are responsible for preventing violence against women under the existing legislation. Further, international conventions that Turkey is a state party to, as well as European Council decisions, are also binding for municipalities.

Our monitoring work covering the period 3 September 2021-15 January 2022 is limited to 12 metropolitan municipalities that include 3 metropolitan centres as well: **Adana, Ankara, Samsun, Balıkesir, Trabzon, Bursa, İzmir, Gaziantep, İstanbul, Erzurum, Kayseri and Malatya**. The work is based on information from the websites and institutional documents of municipalities and a fieldwork. It exposes whether women could have access to **“preventive/deterrent, protective, empowering/supportive”** services of municipalities during the pandemic, the level of access, and violations of rights due to lack of access. Three hundred fifty women in total from selected metropolitan municipalities were reached online.



The study concludes that metropolitan municipalities mostly failed to fulfil their responsibilities in preventing violence against women during the pandemic and that women faced violence as a result as accompanied by grave violations of their rights. The situation can be summarized as follows:

- The “right to health” as the fundamental right of women is violated,
- Close to 60% of women suffer violence by mothers, fathers, brothers, spouses, ex-spouses and other family elders,
- “Psychological violence” is the most common form of violence,
- Home is not a safe space for women; they face violence more often at home,
- Following lockouts, cases of psychological violence, also known as emotional violence, outnumbers cases of physical and economic violence,
- Most of the victims of psychological violence are single women,
- Services extended by municipalities in this field are not accessible to women in different circumstances (i.e. with disabilities, refugee women, younger and older women),
- There are no women who gave the affirmative answer (YES) when asked if they benefited from preventive, protective and supportive services of municipalities in the context of violence against women,
- 58% of women residents say neither district nor metropolitan municipality is engaged in any activity/service related to violence against women,
- 65% of metropolitan and district municipalities have no activity in this context, while 35% have,
- Municipal work concerning violence against women remained limited to information building during the pandemic,
- There mainly were setbacks in protective and supportive/empowering services that women need more urgently during the pandemic,
- Women cannot have access to municipal protective services to save themselves from environments of violence during the pandemic
- Women are deprived of their right to a “free”, “dignified”, and “safe” life that they can enjoy through protective and supportive/empowering services,,
- Under the Law no. 5393 on Municipalities, all metropolitan municipalities, as well as municipalities with population over 100,000, have to launch women’s shelters; however, such shelters exist only in 5 of 12 metropolitan municipalities that we monitored (İstanbul, Bursa, Ankara, Gaziantep and İzmir),
- In Istanbul and Ankara,, operational “violence hotlines” are launched specifically for cases of violence against women.

In preventing violence against women, which is a major human rights violation, metropolitan municipalities must,



Preventive/Dissuasive Services

- Include in their recruitment orientation programmes training in “combating violence against women,”
- In cooperation with local headmen, organize in local neighbourhoods awareness building in violence against women seminars for men in particular (dissemination of brochures, shooting videos),
- Insert the article “wages of a worker who is involved in any act of physical and psychological violence against his wife are paid to the wife for a period of at least one year” in collective agreements,
- Establish “Commissions for Combating Violence against Women” in municipal councils,
- Organize joint awareness building campaigns with civil society organizations and city councils,
- Conduct field surveys to measure the tendency of males to resort to violence,
- Keep regular data on the incidence of violence and offer services accordingly (i.e. employment creation in neighbourhoods where cases of economic violence are more common),
- Introduce violence hotline (7/24 and multilingual),
- Train municipal personnel in forms of violence (psychological, economic, physical, etc.) and establish an ethics unit within the municipality,
- Carry out work in cooperation with schools within municipal boundaries to build awareness in children and adolescents in combating violence against women,
- Launch “Violence Prevention and Monitoring Centres” in busy locations of cities (i.e. bus and train stations, public squares, subway transfer stations, etc.),
- Place visuals on the theme “Life free from Violence” on billboards at central locations of the city.

Protective Services

- Identifying and responding to women’s unique needs emerging as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic (in psychological, social and legal terms)
- Informing and orienting women victims of violence in line with the Law no. 6284
- Launching of women’s shelters
- Launching of life houses for women
- Launching of women’s counselling and solidarity centres



Supportive/Empowering Services

- Employing women victims of violence
- Continuous social and psychological support for women
- Providing micro-credit opportunities to women
- Supporting women's cooperatives



We hope this work contributes to women in terms of their life in urban environments where their rights are not violated and to strengthening municipal policies in combating violence against women...



INTRODUCTION

While “staying home” was a necessary health measure during the pandemic, this stay forced many women to live together with males who resorted to violence against them.

It leads to suffering more frequent cases of violence at “home”. Children, too witnessed instances of such violence. Witnessing violence is, on the part of children, also psychological violence in and of itself.

Essential duties fall upon central and local governments in preventing violence against women. As public entities closest to citizens' daily lives, municipalities have significant duties and responsibilities in combating violence against women (preventive, protective, supportive and empowering activities). In the context of national and international legislation, municipalities are obliged to provide women with all kinds of support they need (legal, economic, social, psychological, etc.)

The monitoring work covered 12 metropolitan municipalities (**Adana, Ankara, Samsun, Balıkesir, Trabzon, Bursa, İzmir, Gaziantep, İstanbul, Erzurum, Kayseri and Malatya**), where a significant part of the population of the country live including the most significant 3 metropolises to see whether women could access, during the pandemic, municipal services geared to preventing violence against women, the extent of this access, and to disclose violations of rights that women experienced as a result of lack of access. Desktop studies showed that earlier studies mainly focused on the contribution of local governments to gender equality while the issue of violence against women remained in the background.

The original feature of this monitoring work is that it discloses violations of women's rights that stemmed from municipalities¹ failure to effectively fulfilling their duties and responsibilities related to violence against women during the pandemic. The survey sample consisted of 12 existing metropolitan municipalities in Turkey. These metropolitan municipalities were selected in line with the EU Classification of Territorial Units for Statistics NUTS 1.

CURRENT STATE of AFFAIRS

Violence against women violates many fundamental human rights, having its historical roots in gender inequality. Hence, ending violence against women requires ensuring gender equality. As public entities closest to the women's daily lives, municipalities are among the leading actors in ensuring gender equality and empowering women and girls in all walks of life. In this context, municipalities have their critical responsibilities, conferred by legislation, to prevent violence against women, build awareness in this issue, remove women from environments of violence and empower them in standing against violence.

¹Kaşıkırık, A. (2021). Combating Violence against Women Perspective of Municipalities Signing the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life. Econdor International Academic Journal, 5 (1), 81-101.



Turkey is the first country to sign the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (shortly “Istanbul Convention”). Turkey then passed and put into effect the “Law on the Protection of Family and Prevention of Violence against Women”, also known as Law no. 6284. While Turkey was expected to demonstrate her resolution to enforce the convention as a lead country², there was a sudden switch that annulled the Istanbul Convention upon a legally contested Presidential Decree published on the Official Gazette dated 20 March 2021³. Turkey ceased to be a party to the convention as of 1 July 2021. This was a step leaving women defenceless against violence in legal terms and making them more vulnerable.

In the Opuz Group Cases⁴, as the most critical court case bringing about the Istanbul Convention, which was opened in the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) against Turkey in 2002, the Court decided that Turkey failed to protect her citizen against domestic violence. It is the first case in which a country was found as such by the court in the field of domestic violence. This decision of the court served as an inspiration for the Council of Europe to draft a new human rights treaty (Istanbul Convention) to protect family members against domestic violence. In this context, Turkey still has her obligations albeit having withdrawn from the convention and the decisions of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe are still binding for Turkey.

As one of the 9 United Nations (UN) fundamental human rights instruments, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) singles out with its focus on gender equality and human rights of women in particular. The convention is known as “international women’s rights law” and Turkey is a state party. The General Recommendation no. 35 by the CEDAW Committee states that prevention of violence against women is accepted by states as an international legal norm.⁵

Legislation assigns significant duties and responsibilities to municipalities in combating violence against women. As stated in the Law no. 5393 on Municipalities, municipalities are responsible for responding to common local needs of their citizens. According to Article 14 in this law, **“Metropolitan municipalities and municipalities with population over 100,000 are supposed to open guesthouses for women and children. Other municipalities as well may launch guesthouses for women and children according to their financial means and service priorities.”**⁶ Duration of stay in a guesthouse is for six months starting from the date of woman’s first reception. This period may be extended by reviewing the situation of the woman concerned. Male children under age 12 and females under age 18 may benefit from guesthouse services together with their mothers.⁷

²Kaşıkırık, A. ve Gülümser, İ. (2021), *Toplumsal Cinsiyet Eşitliğinin Anayasalara ve Uluslararası Sözleşmelere Yansımaları (Gender Equality as Reflected in Constitutions and International Conventions)*, *Ulusam Türkiye Politik Çalışmalar Dergisi*, 1(1): 59- 69

³Official Gazette (2021). <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2021/03/20210320-49.pdf>.

⁴Opuz Group Cases, <https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng#%7B%22EXECIdentifier%22:%5B%22004-37222%22%5D%7D>.

⁵CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35, <https://kadinininsanhaklari.org/savunuculuk/uluslararasi-sozlesmeler-ve-mekanizmalar/cedaw/>

⁶Law no. 5393 on Municipalities, <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.5393-20150404.pdf>.

⁷Regulation on the Opening and Management of Women’s Guest Houses, <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2013/01/20130105-5.htm>



The European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life⁸ drafted by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions to ensure the fuller realization of equality in local life by local and regional governments assigns critical responsibilities to signatory municipalities in combatting gender-based violence. Article 22 in the Charted is about “**gender-based violence**”:

- 1 The signatory recognizes that gender-based violence which disproportionately affects women, constitutes a violation of fundamental human rights and is an offence to the dignity and to the physical and emotional integrity of human beings.
- 2 The signatory recognizes that gender-based violence arises from the idea, on the part of the perpetrator, of the superiority of one sex over the other in the context of an unequal relationship of power.
- 3 The signatory therefore commits itself to establish and strengthen policies and actions against gender-based violence, including:
 - Providing special support structures for victims
 - Providing public information, in each of the mainly used local languages , on the assistance available in the area
 - Ensuring that professional staff have training in identifying and supporting victims
 - Ensuring that there is effective coordination between the relevant services such as the police, health and housing authorities
 - Promoting awareness-raising campaigns and educational programmes aimed at potential and actual victims and perpetrators.

Starting from 2013, 34 municipalities in Turkey signed this charter thus demonstrating a strong will in combating gender-based violence.⁹ 7 out of 12 metropolitan municipalities monitored (Adana, İzmir, Bursa, İstanbul, Ankara, Gaziantep and Trabzon) are signatories to the Charter.

The number and capacity of shelters in Turkey are too limited despite the legal responsibility of municipalities in this regard. According to information supplied by the CİMER upon our written application there are 33 women’s guesthouses under municipalities and their total capacity is 735. Given safety considerations, further information about the locality of these centres could not be obtained. The most important problem with municipal shelters and women counselling centres is related to their sustainability. This problem is the result of some cultural resistance besides their shortfalls in personnel and finances. As a matter of fact many municipal counselling centres and shelters had to close within few years.¹⁰

⁸European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, https://www.ccre.org/img/uploads/pieces-jointe/filename/charte_egalite_tr.pdf.

⁹Union of Municipalities of Turkey, CEMR Municipalities Signing the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, https://www.tbb.gov.tr/Tr/icerik_cemr-avrupa-yerel-yasamda-kadin-erkek-esitligi-sarti_304.

¹⁰Sallan Gül, S. (2021). Women’s Shelters in Turkey, Bağlam Yayınları, 3. Printing



Article 16 in the Law no. 6284 on the Protection of Family and Prevention of Violence against Women states: **“Public institutions and agencies as well as other real and corporate entities are obliged to cooperate, give mutual assistance and urgently implement measures adopted in the enforcement of this law in their respective areas of responsibility.”**¹¹

With their services and practices, municipalities have the responsibility to prevent violence against women and deliver protective and supportive services to women victims of violence. Municipal services and practices in combating violence against women are given in Table 1 as preventive & deterrent, protective, and supportive & empowering.

Table 1. Municipal Services and Practices in Combating Violence against Women¹²

Preventive & Deterrent Activities	Protective Activities	Supportive & Empowering Activities
1. Awareness and Consciousness Raising Activities 2. Mentality Changing Activities 3. Dissuasive Practices	1. Women’s Shelters	1. Counselling and Support Activities 2. Economic Support and Empowerment Activities 3. Social-Political Activities

It must be clear that municipalities have their multi-dimensional responsibilities in ending violence against women. Failure in fulfilling these responsibilities may lead to some grave consequences including the violation of the right to life and women’s exposure to torture or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. All these amount to the violation of women’s right to life, personal freedom and safety.

¹¹6284 Sayılı Kanun, <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.6284.pdf>.

¹²Koyuncu Lorasdağı, B. and Sumbas, A. (2015), Türkiye’de Yerel Siyaseti Toplumsal Cinsiyet Eşitsizliği Üzerinden Düşünmek: Kadına Yönelik Şiddetle Mücadelede Belediyeler (Thinking Local Politics in Turkey from the Perspective of Gender Inequality: Municipalities in Combating Violence against Women) , Çağdaş Yerel Yönetimler, Vol. 24 No. 2 April 2015, p.1-26.



METHODOLOGY

The present monitoring work employed a mixed survey design that combined document scanning as a qualitative and survey technique as a quantitative method.

In monitoring work, institutional documents of 12 metropolitan municipalities (strategic plans and activity reports) as well as their websites were scanned by using some key words. These keywords were “women”, “violence” and “violence against women”. Survey techniques was also used for soliciting the opinions of women living in urban and rural areas of 12 metropolitan provinces. The original idea was to reach 20 women in each province and thus have a total of 240 women. Due to various difficulties, however, this survey could be completed with the participation of 15 women from Kayseri and 11 from Malatya. This shortfall, however, was over-balanced by higher number of participants from other provinces and 340 women in total were reached. Their opinions were reflected in the report through cross-validation. Making use of specific experiences of women in the monitoring process is important in disclosing violations of rights that they encountered.

Since this monitoring work was completed during Covid-19 pandemic circumstances, data were collected through online survey form in the face of increasing number of infection cases. The preference for online survey technique derived from the following:

- 1 Our association lacked financial resources necessary for conducting face-to-face interviews in 12 metropolitan municipalities
- 2 As Covid-19 was going on it was considered as risky to conduct face-to-face interviews

The support of civil society organizations, universities, local headmen, political parties and city councils was taken to reach women with differing demographic characteristics living in 12 metropolis. Yet, some difficulties were faced while collecting data. Firstly, women in some sub-groups like refugees, migrants and persons with disabilities could not be reached. This confronted us as one of the limitations of the study. Secondly, since there was a specific time restriction on the completion of the survey form, difficulties arose in reaching sufficient number of persons in some provinces. Lastly, there were also difficulties in dealing with fully illiterate women, women who do not use smart phones or internet.





MONITORING

Institutional documents (strategic plans and activity reports) and websites of 12 survey municipalities were scanned by using key words. Activities of these metropolitan municipalities in combating violence against women are summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Municipal Activities in Combating Violence against Women

Municipality	Activities
Adana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information building • Women's shelter is about to be launched
Ankara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information building • There is women's shelter. • There is "Blue Button" facility for violence against women. • There is violence hotline. • Awareness building campaign "Orange Mask against Violence" and handing out 6,250 masks to males. • There are Women's Counselling Units under Women's Counselling Centres in 5 districts. Services offered by centres include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Sheltering services ◦ Increased safety measures ◦ Starting and following legal processes ◦ Cash assistance ◦ Direct in-kind assistance (household items, food and fuel) ◦ Psychosocial support ◦ Training courses for employment
Balıkesir	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information building • Decision taken to launch a women's shelter.
Bursa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information building • There is a women's shelter. Services offered include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Psychosocial support services ◦ Psychological counselling services ◦ Health services ◦ Social-cultural activities ◦ Preschool education services ◦ Education services ◦ Nutrition services ◦ Security services



Municipality	Activities
Erzurum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information building
Gaziantep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information building • There is a women's shelter. • 16 Days-Long Activism and End Violence against Women Campaign
İstanbul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a women's shelter. Second one is presently under construction. • Sexual Violence Crisis Centres are about to be launched. • There is women's support line. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available 7/24 for women victims of violence or women under the risk of violence. • Extends social and legal counselling services. • Services are available in four languages as Turkish, Kurdish, English and Arabic. • There is a women's counselling unit. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Other than reporting of cases of violence there is multi-faceted and integrated work for occupation building for women who have their demands. • There is Women's Solidarity House. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Psychological, social and economic support activities. • 16 Days-Long Activism and End Violence against Women Campaign
İzmir	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information building • There are two women's shelters that provide services in; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Basic needs of women and children ◦ Psychological, legal and social counselling; assistance in job seeking by referring to occupation building courses. ◦ Follow-up of healthcare and judicial processes. ◦ Activities in awareness building and empowerment. ◦ Children staying in shelters can benefit from İZELMAN Infant Schools or "Fairy Tale Houses" depending upon their ages.
Kayseri	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information building
Malatya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information building

Municipality	Activities
Samsun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information building • There is Family Counselling and Training Centre. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The centre extends family and marriage counselling services to support the settlement of domestic conflicts.
Trabzon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information building

Municipalities are among the leading actors in combating violence against women. However, going over their institutional documents and websites, it can be said that their preventive, deterrent, protective, supportive and empowering services in this regard fall short of what is needed and what can be done. This is one of the reasons why violence against women confronts us today as the most common, grave and systematic violation of human rights. Yet, municipalities have the obligation of ensuring women's right to live freely in safe environments free from any form of violence.

Field Work

The number of women participating to the field work is as follows by municipalities: Adana 22, Ankara 21, Samsun 25, Balıkesir 49, Trabzon 20, Bursa 26, İzmir 46, Gaziantep 33, İstanbul 58, Erzurum 24, Kayseri 15 and Malatya 11.

Demographic characteristics of participants:

- Their level of education is high: 58% are university graduates and 14% have their post-graduate degrees.
- Half of participants are working while the other half are not in any income generating activity.
- Participants are from younger age groups: 35% are in the age interval and 18-25 and 12% in 25-31.
- More than half are singles. 56.9% are singles and 43.1% are married.
- 54.86% of participants have no child. 17 % have one and 22% have 2 children.
- 24% of participants are students, 38% are retired, 30% are housewives, 28% are teachers, and 27% are civil servants.



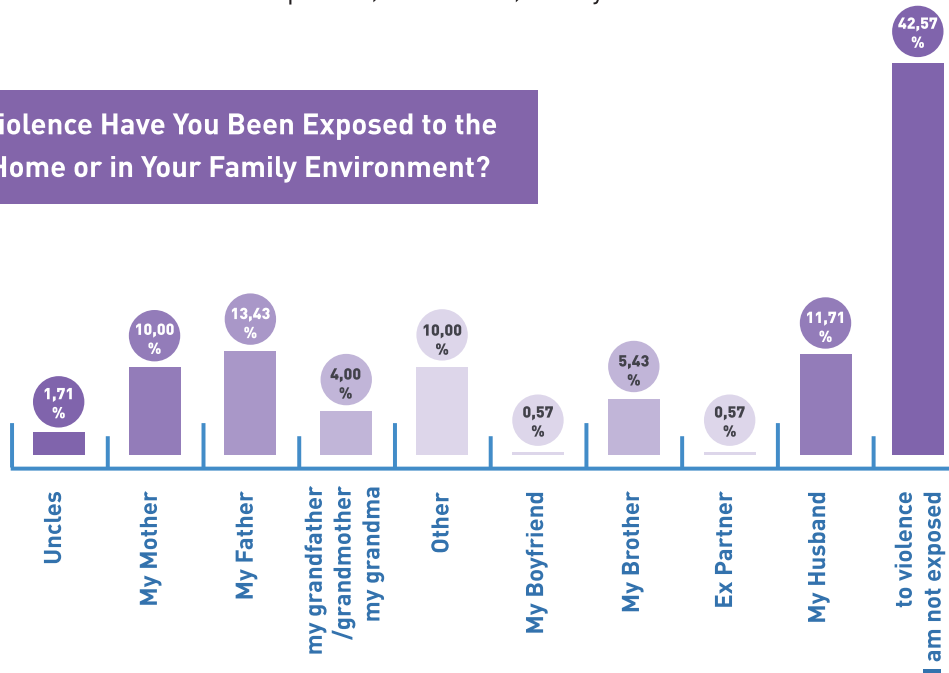


Most Common Form of Violence: Psychological Violence

The most common form of violence as stated by participants is psychological violence. 24.57% of women experienced this form of violence. Participants express the graveness of the situation by saying, “Unfortunately women have to live with violence in our society. We are not considered as victims of violence in case there is no physical violence.” Further, women frequently stressed, “We experience psychological violence so often particularly because of our working conditions.”

As to incidence of violence with respect to marital status we find that it is very close for married and single women. On the other hand, women who suffer psychological violence are mostly singles. Since the proof of psychological violence is more difficult, victims of this form of violence feel themselves desperate, worthless, lonely and exhausted.

Whose Violence Have You Been Exposed to the Most at Home or in Your Family Environment?



60% of participants say perpetrators in their experiences of violence are parents, brothers, spouses, husbands, ex-husbands and some other family elders. Employers, neighbours, relatives, friends, some persons they have no acquaintance and landlords constitute another group of perpetrators in the case of 10% of participants. While perpetrators of violence against women mainly turn out to be husbands, ex-husbands and partners in other surveys, this survey points out to brothers and parents as well. This finding is quite different from the outcomes of most studies on violence against women. This can be explained by the fact that the majority of participants are single women at younger ages for whom males in their families think they have the right to “intervene” and resort to violence.

Women victims of psychological violence are exposed to multiple violation of their rights. As earlier studies show, women victims of psychological violence are ignored, insulted, threatened, degraded, oppressed, made to feel incapable and accused. Hence, women suffering this form of violence commonly display a range of problems including depression, anxiety, feeling of loneliness, fear, unrest and stress.

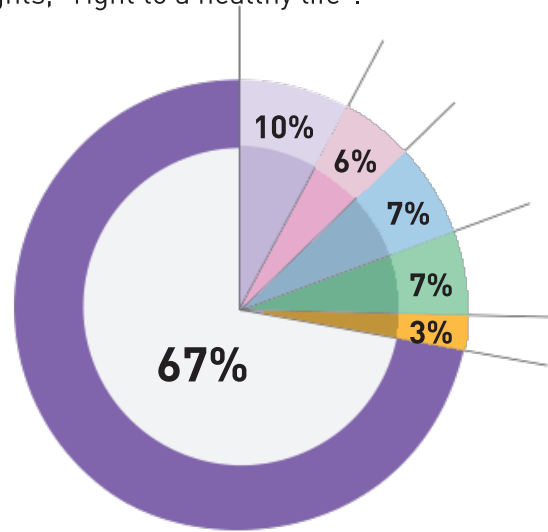


Psychological Violence is the Most Common Form of Violence at Homes During the Lockdown

The prevalence of psychological violence also named as emotional violence increased relative to physical and economic violence following the pandemic lockdown. During the pandemic, continuous presence or threat of psychological violence doomed women to live in fear at their homes. Hence, homes were not “safe” living spaces but “centres of violence” for women in this period. Since municipalities do not have sufficient number of shelters and counselling centres women had no way of moving away from these environments of violence. This means a violation of one of the fundamental human rights, “right to a healthy life”.

If you were exposed to violence at home, which of the following forms of violence was it? In the diagram below, figures are only for those stating that they were exposed to violence after the pandemic

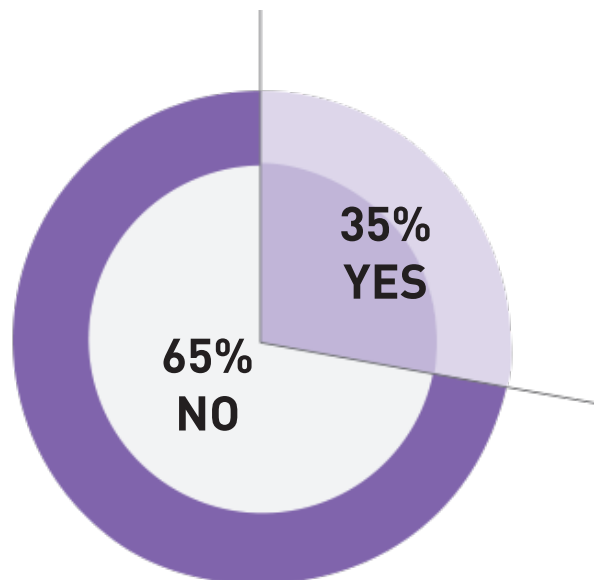
- Economic
- Physically
- Physical, Psychological
- Physical, Psychological, Economic
- Psychological,
- Psychological, Economic



Municipal Activities to Prevent Violence before the Pandemic

According to responses given by participants, many municipalities had no work related to combating violence against women prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. In fact, according to participating women, 65% of metropolitan or district municipalities had no activity in this context and only 35% had. Yet, municipalities are entities with their essential duties in preventing violence against women under both national (Law no. 5393 on Municipalities and Metropolitan Municipality Law no. 5216) and international (Istanbul Convention, CEDAW, European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life and Decisions of the Council of Europe) legislation

Has the Metropolitan and District Municipality in the Place You Live Conducted any Activity to Prevent Violence against Women?

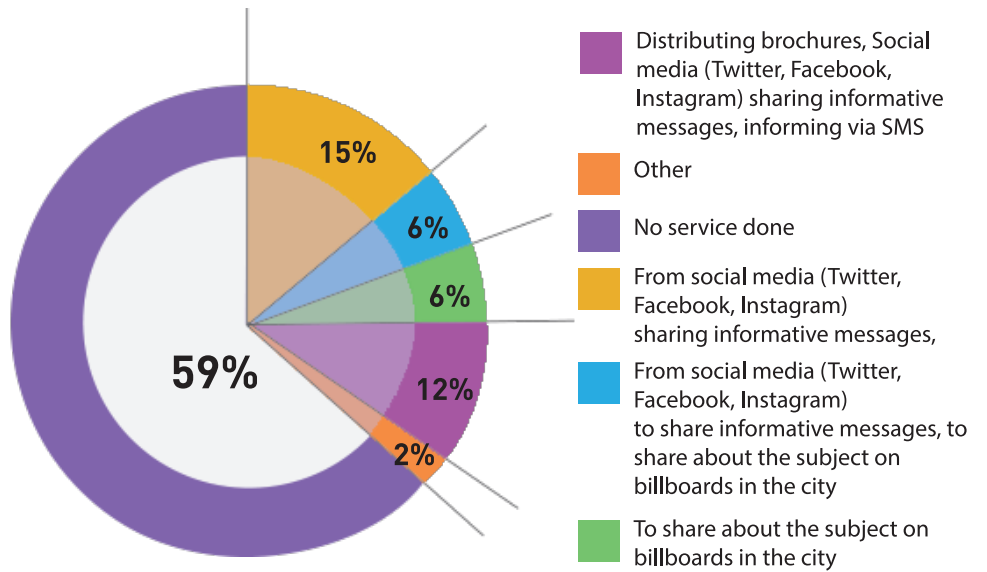




Actions of Metropolitan and District Municipalities in the Context of Violence against Women

More than half of participants say there is no activity or service at all either by district or metropolitan municipality in places they live. Others say that municipal activities in this regard consist of informative initiatives which can be considered as preventive/deterrent services (i.e. social media posts, billboards in busy parts of the town, home visits by municipal officers, SMS, dissemination of brochures, etc.)

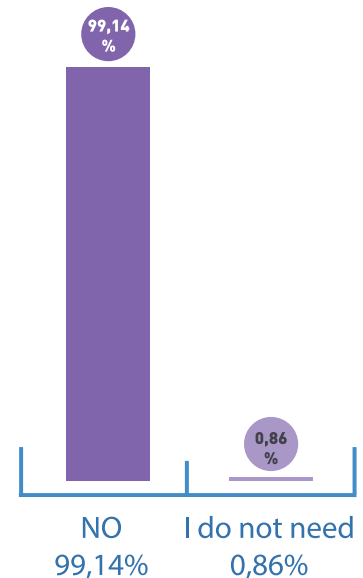
Extent to which Preventive Activities Related to Violence against Women Have Been Carried out by Metropolitan and District Municipalities where Participants Live



Municipal Activities During the Pandemic and their Beneficiaries

Half of participants say there was no service by municipalities in the context of combatting violence against women during the pandemic. As to activities pointed out, these consist of social media posts, dissemination of brochures, information through SMS, seminars on violence against women and messages on billboards. This means that activities of municipalities related to violence against women remained limited to information building. In other words, there was absence of or setbacks in protective and supportive/empowering services that women actually need more.

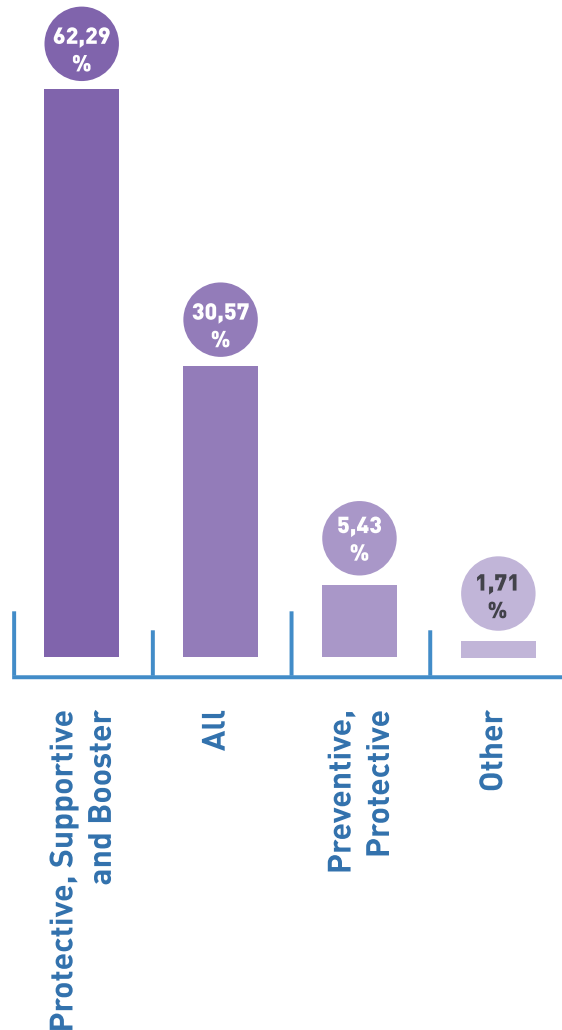
Have You Benefited from Violence Related Preventive, Protective and Supportive Services of Municipalities during the Pandemic?



There was no woman responding “YES” (I did) to the question whether they benefited from preventive, protective and supportive services of municipalities against violence during the pandemic. This means there was no single woman in 12 metropolitan municipalities who benefited from these activities and services. 99% said “NO” (I did not) while 1% said they had no need for such services. In sum, women could not enjoy protective services that they need the most during the pandemic.

Activities that Municipalities are Expected to do in Preventing Violence

The majority of participants expect municipalities to deliver protective, supportive and empowering services. These are the service areas that 12 selected metropolitan municipalities are the weakest in general. Municipal activities in this context mostly concentrate on information building, leaving protective, supportive and empowering services that women need the most too weak. Women are therefore deprived of their right to “free”, “dignified” and “safe” life that they could enjoy through protective, supportive and empowering services.





CONCLUSION

This monitoring work investigated whether 12 metropolitan municipalities fulfilled their duties in combating violence against women, the extent to which they could do this, and violations of rights that women experienced as a result.

During monitoring work, institutional documents and websites of municipalities were gone through and the field work reached a total of 350 women online in these provinces.

Although municipalities have their vital duties in combating violence against women which assumed the character of a “shadow pandemic” during Covid -19, it is found that they generally failed to fulfil these duties and mentioned services did not reach women. Nevertheless, it is also found that the Metropolitan Municipalities of İstanbul, Ankara, Bursa, İzmir and Gaziantep went beyond mere information building and also delivered protective and supportive services in combatting violence against women. Municipalities are found to be too short in opening women’s shelters which is an essential protective service. Also limited are municipal services that are to be delivered to women victims of violence for their economic, social and psychological empowerment.

The majority of women providing information during the fieldwork were single women from the age group 18-31 who are higher education graduates and presently in employment. This profile is different from the profile observed in other studies on violence against women. In these studies, the overall profile mostly consists of married women in the age interval 25-30 who are not employed while university graduates are few. It appears that young, single and employed women who constitute the majority of women we reached in our monitoring work are more vulnerable to psychological violence. Indeed, women state that they are exposed to psychological violence mainly as a result of unequal working-employment conditions. This outcome is similar to that mostly found in studies on violence against women. Our fieldwork suggests that more than half of women experience violence by their parents, brothers, partners, ex-partners and other family elders. Yet, in other studies, perpetrators are mostly present or ex-husbands/partners.

Most women state that municipalities extend no service in combatting violence against women. As to available services, they don’t find them sufficient and accessible. While they think information building activities are important, they stress individual counselling and home visits will be more effective. Saying “We are not considered as victims of violence unless that violence is physical” women express how difficult it is to prove the act of psychological violence and their helplessness in this regard. Responding women repeatedly expressed that they continuously experience psychological violence from their families, intimates, husbands and employers and even from other individuals “just for being a woman”. This form of violence also include interfering in how they should talk or walk outdoors.

The absence of “women’s shelters” of sufficient capacity and top-level safety managed by municipalities deprives women of their fundamental right to life. Similarly, it is the violation of the right to a healthy life when there are not sufficient free and accessible counselling and solidarity centres extending legal, social and psychological support to women.



These violations usurp the right of women to “equal”, “dignified” and “free” life. As a result of this lack of support, women are troubled in their daily lives with such problems as anxiety, traumas, depressive feelings, disreputation and feelings of shame and guilt.

Going over the websites and institutional documents of municipalities we see that important problems include the absence of “Commission for Combating Violence against Women”, special mechanisms (i.e. branch directorates or units) geared to responding to the problem of violence against women, and limited budgets allocated to this issue. Since each locality has its own circumstances, there is need to conduct field surveys at neighbourhood level, which is the “local of the local”, which municipalities have missed to do so far.

It is doubtless that women in different circumstances have different needs and expectations when it comes to service delivery. As a matter of fact, while psychological violence comes to the fore among younger, educated and single women, economic and physical violence is more prevalent among women with lower levels of literacy and education. Accordingly, measures to be adopted, policies to be developed and mechanisms to be introduced by municipalities must differ.

SUGGESTIONS

It is a fundamental right for all to live in a safe urban environment. Municipalities must combat violence against women through preventive & deterrent, protective, supportive & empowering interventions in line with the concept of integrated service delivery. Municipalities may, in this context, provide preventive, protective and supportive services. Policy suggestions for municipalities in ending violence against women:

Preventive/Deterrent Services

- Trainings in “combatting violence against women” must be added to first recruitment orientation programmes of municipalities
- In cooperation with local headmen, organizing in local neighbourhoods awareness building activities in violence against women for men in particular (dissemination of brochures, shooting videos)
- Inserting the clause “wages of a worker who is involved in any act of physical and psychological violence against his wife are paid to the wife for a period of at least 1 year” in collective agreements
- Establishing “Commissions for Combating Violence against Women” in municipal councils
- Organizing joint awareness building campaigns with civil society organizations and city councils
- Keeping regular data on the incidence of violence and offer services accordingly (i.e. employment creation in neighbourhoods where cases of economic violence are more common)
- Hotline for cases of violence (7/24 and multilingual)
- Training municipal personnel in forms of violence (psychological, economic, physical, etc.) and establishing an ethics unit within the municipality



- Carrying out work in cooperation with schools within municipal boundaries to build awareness in children and adolescents in combating violence against women
- Launching “Violence Prevention and Monitoring Centres” in busy locations of cities (i.e. bus and train stations, public squares, subway transfer stations, etc.)
- Placing visuals on the theme “Life free from Violence” on billboards at central locations of the city.

Protective Services

- Identifying and responding to women’s special needs emerging as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic (in psychological, social and legal terms)
- Informing and referring women victims of violence in line with the Law no. 6284
- Launching women’s shelters
- Launching life houses for women
- Launching of women’s counselling and solidarity centres

Supportive/Empowering Services

- Providing employment to women victims of violence
- Uninterrupted delivery of social and psychological support to women
- Making micro-credit facilities available to women
- Supporting women’s cooperatives



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