

**OVERVIEW AND
ANALYSIS OF THE
SITUATION OF
INTIMATE PARTNER
VIOLENCE
BETWEEN YOUNG
PEOPLE IN
SLOVENIA AND
SPAIN**

**REPORT ON OVERVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF SITUATION
REGARDING INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE BETWEEN YOUNG
PEOPLE IN SLOVENIA AND SPAIN**

Institute for Gender Equality

in cooperation with

Avisensa, Institute for psychology, counselling and education, Kamnica
and Fundación Privada Indera

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1. INTRODUCTION

Summary of costs regarding gender based violence (GBV) in the United Kingdom in 2019 was 43. 435 820 061 euros – a number most of us barely know how to even read. Most of these costs are related to physical and emotional consequences of violence, judicial system, as well as health and social services. The number solely for intimate partner violence (IPV) the same year was around half of the above one (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021, pp. 44). A different research evaluated the cost of GBV online ranging between 49 and 89 billion euros, a huge part of that dedicated to immediate and long-term health services due to mental health issues. Data on violence against women and girls shows that in Europe, 9 million girls has had an experience with some form of cyber violence by the time they were 15, including hate speech, hacking, cyber stalking, non-consensual pornography, gender-based slurs, slut-shaming, threats of sexual and physical violence, doxing etc. Experts warn that cyber violence against women and girls does not exist in a vacuum, but goes hand in hand and is often a part of offline violence (Fundación Indera, 2020a, pp. 2). Upcoming analysis represents a short overview of main terms, necessary to understand violence against women and girls, its definition and types, the influence of social stereotypes, stigmatization and reactions of the society, including consequences of violence, legal framework overview and statistics. It focuses especially on Slovenia and Spain, since AWARE project partners are coming from these two countries. We of course cannot frame violence within national borders and international comparisons are of major importance. Theoretical analysis as well as analysis of executed 3 focus groups per country serve as a baseline of project AWARE, that will help us to prepare better upcoming activities, be more effective in the execution of our project and produce tangible results.

Project **AWARE- Youth empowerment for recognition and informed reacting to different forms of violence in intimate partner relationships**, addresses violence in intimate partner relationships between young people of different sexual orientations. It aims to inform youth about the meaning, working and overcoming gender-based stereotypes and gender roles that young people often unconsciously use as a tool to rationalize violent behaviour. The project continues and complements the mission of a previous project I can choose to say no, that included creating a website called True2You, aiming to inform about and prevent violence in intimate partner relationships between youth. Project coordinator and the main creator of this report is Institute for Gender Equality, project partners are Avisensa, Institute for psychology, counselling and education, Kamnica and Fundación Privada Indera.

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2. BASIC TERMS

2.1 Defining violence

Violence is a term that marks different phenomena, making it difficult to form a coherent and perfect definition. Conceptualizations vary, but there is an overall consensus, that violence is any behaviour with which a person abuses their power (Veselič, 2007). The goal of such behaviour can be to control, intimidate, harm, devalue, humiliate, take away power, subordinate, use or destroy another person(s). An important element of any violence is the imbalance of power between included people, which can be a consequence of social status, age, nationality, bodily characteristics, cognitive abilities or other factors. Conflicts are a natural and inevitable part of relationships; it is impossible to always have the same opinions as others. Conflicts are solved with a compromise, taking into account feelings and opinions of all participants and they often result in a deepening of the relationship, whereas violence destroys the relationship. Anybody can be a perpetrator, but research shows (Društvo za nenasilno komunikacijo, 2023c) that in 95 % of cases, offenders are men. Declaration on fighting violence against women (Obran, 2018) defines violence against women as any act of violence, that is based on gender and has as a consequence (or is likely to have as a consequence) physical, sexual or psychological harm and suffering of women. This includes threats with such actions, limiting somebody's freedom of movement etc., regardless of whether it is happening in public or in the privacy of a home (Društvo za nenasilno komunikacijo, 2023c). GBV is the most extreme expression of gender inequality that disproportionately affects women and girls. Boys and men can also fall victims to GBV, but this usually occurs when they use non-normative gender expressions and/or are not heterosexual. General definition of IPV is any physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence between current or former spouses or partners. It constitutes a form of violence that disproportionately affects women and is therefore distinctly gendered (EIGE, 2022e).

2.2 Types of violence

There are numerous types of violence, often correlating and happening simultaneously. In very few cases does violence happen in a form of individual actions – mostly it is a system of behaviour and communication from perpetrator. We can differentiate between types of violence in multiple ways. Most commonly we speak of 4 types of violence, defined by the way it is perpetuated (Veselič, 2007; Društvo za nenasilno komunikacijo, 2023d):

Psychological	
<p>This type of violence is about abusing power without using physical force; with words and behaviour. The victim is hurt, humiliated, devaluated, scared. It is often difficult to recognize, victims speak of feeling confused and having doubts with themselves, feeling caged in a relationship and responsible for the violence.</p>	<p>For example name-calling, mockery, constant critiquing, threats, humiliation, gaslighting (convincing a person they are losing their minds), limiting contacts with others, sharing false gossip, controlling behaviour (like checking personal messages).</p>

Physical	
Abuse of physical power, usually directed towards the body and life of the victim, possibly towards their belongings. It often occurs as an escalation of previous psychological violence and starts with minor physical forms of violence (for example slapping) that later on escalate.	Slapping, kicking, punching with hand or objects, throwing things towards the person or around the room, pushing, shoving, purposefully putting the person in dangerous situations (reckless driving, not complying with measures against covid-19), twisting arms, spilling with liquids, burning the skin, cutting hair, limiting movements, choking, force-feeding or starving, attacks with weapons, murder.
Sexual	
Any type of an act of sexual nature, that the other person feels forced into. It is important to distinguish that the person is not necessarily physically forced (unable to move), the force is often psychological. Sex, sexual acts mean all types of activities of sexual nature that participants want and consent to do. Consenting to a certain sexual activity does not mean consenting to any sexual activity, nor does it mean automatic consent any time in the future. If this is not respected, we are no longer talking about sex, but sexual violence.	Unwanted touching, commenting on the body, undressing, groping, forcing somebody to watch pornography, forcing somebody into any type of sexual acts with the perpetrator or anyone else, forcing somebody to masturbate, limiting or dictating the use of contraception, removing the condom without previous consent of the other person, rape.
Economic	
All forms of control, dominance, mistreatment or humiliation of the victim with the help of material funds, including limiting access to earned money. The goal is usually financial dependence of the victim on the perpetrator, making their departure more difficult.	Limiting the right to work, prohibiting managing own or commonly shared money, demanding submissiveness due to lower income, not paying child support, taking earned money (for example salary).

Violence can also be differentiated based on the location at which it occurs (for example violence in school, cyber violence, violence in the place of employment), based on the relationships between the victim and the perpetrator (peer-to-peer violence, IPV, institutional violence), based on belonging to a certain social group (violence against immigrants, the elderly, LGBT+ community, disabled people) and others (Kolbert et al., 2019). Regardless of the location, relationship or personal characteristics, violence can be psychological, physical,

sexual, economic or a combination of them. We are mentioning some more relevant forms for our project.

IPV against women is one of the most common forms of violence against women and it is almost always present in cases, ending in femicide. It harms the victim on a physical and psychological level and is usually a mixture of types of violence, mentioned above. Men can also be victims of IPV – in this case the most often type is psychological violence. Major social changes or catastrophes nearly always spike the prevalence of such violence, which was seen during lockdown as well. It is important to also mention dating violence, which means all forms of violence that the perpetrator uses on a date, with which they cross the other person's boundaries (Veselič, 2007). Under stalking we understand all unwanted interference in another person's life and similar acts that are repeated and make the victim feel scared and worried. Stalking often leads to other forms of violence (rape/murder) and is rarely a goal in itself. Most common stalkers are ex partners, their methods ranging from directly contacting the victim (sending letters) or being more indirect (waiting in places the victim frequents) (ibidem).

We want to shed light on violence through information-communication technologies, often referred to as cyber violence. Anonymity online allows for adopting a fake identity, making it easier to make contact with certain individuals. Common forms of cyber violence are harassment, threats, humiliation, embarrassment, identity theft, private information access and especially numerous forms of sexual violence (production, manufacturing and posting of photos or videos without consent, pressures into sexting, sharing videos, filming or taking photographs of sexual abuse, blackmailing with intimate videos, prostitution and human trafficking, grooming and others (Hauptman, 2020; Društvo za nenasilno komunikacijo, 2023a). Cyber violence against women and girls happens in a multitude of ways, starting online and continuing offline at school, at home, at work, or the other way around, where violence in person is later magnified or moved online via different platforms, emails etc. Perpetuator can be one or multiple anonymous people as well as somebody (or multiple people, like classmates) the victim knows (Horváth et al., 2020). Cyber stalking is the main tactic of control used in cases of IPV. 7 out of 10 women that have an experience with cyber stalking have also experienced at least one form of physical and/or sexual violence from their intimate partner. Many researchers stress the connection between stalking and cyber stalking. Research in UK found that more than half of cases of cyber stalking first involved meeting the person in a physical world. Negative consequences of cyber stalking are similar to those of physical stalking – anger, fear, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal thoughts (EIGE, 2022e). 5 % of women in European Union (EU) have experienced one or more forms of cyber stalking since they turned 15; 77 % of women that have experiences cyber harassment have also experienced at least one form of sexual and/or physical violence from their intimate partner. In global terms women are 27 times more likely to experience cyber harassment (Horváth et al., 2020, pp. 3).

2.3 Violence in youth

Adolescence is a time of exploration and development of emotional and social competences. Teenagers are learning how to understand and manage their own emotions as well as the workings of multiple relationships – family, friends, romantic connections. The latter play an

especially important part in adolescence and can have positive impacts for teenagers' confidence and self-worth. When relationships are built on mutual respect, trust, intimacy and good communication, people, especially teenagers, tend to be happier. Young people in healthy relationships feel accepted, acknowledged and appreciated, which affects their capabilities in making their own decisions without pressure, feeling safe to do so. They express mutual support for their peers, keep an open communication, listen to each other and understand the word »no«. In first romantic experiences, young people often struggle recognizing the quality of the relationship, because they simply do not have the knowledge and experience to help them do so. This makes it more likely for them to end up in relationships that are not healthy. Toxic behaviour can start with things that seem small, even innocent in the moment, but later grow to violence. Not only is it more difficult for young people to recognize these patterns, but even if they do, they often misinterpret them for romantic gestures. We need to help them gather the knowledge to develop healthy and positive relationships. Acknowledging different imbalances of power in society, including gender stereotypes and historic domination of men over women is therefore important (Horváth et al., 2020, pp. 8–11).

Research shows, that in general we can notice some differences in IPV between adults versus teenagers:

- IPV between teenagers is often more mutual (both persons are using some form of violence);
- imbalance of power is less present, mostly because there is rarely an element of financial dependence on their partner;
- lack of experience and knowledge in managing relationships is extremely apparent;
- relationships are generally much more public and in front of other people, for example in school rather than more in private, which also speaks of peer pressure and influence.

Another research shows that boys and girls try to inflict a certain level of control towards their partner, but usually boys are more successful at this. The difference is also the fact that girls are more often experiencing feelings of fear, shame, worthlessness and guilt, whereas boys tend to not bother with the experiences of their victims. The same research also shows that in cases where the girl is the perpetrator, the boys seem to have fewer mental consequences, viewing the unhealthy behaviour more as an annoyance and burden, which they often ignore. When they do respond, this response is usually a more severe form of violence (Horváth et al., 2020, pp. 16).

3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

To understand different types of violence and responses, especially in the context of IPV, it is important to familiarize ourselves with the legal framework within nation states as well as beyond them.

3.1 Slovenia

The most important is the **Family Violence Prevention Act** (ZPND, 2008). It entails provisions about cooperation of different institutions working in the field, provisions on the workings of Centres for Social work, details about handling domestic violence including procedures as well as prohibition of physical punishments for children. Article 3 defines family violence.

Family violence (hereinafter: violence) denotes any form of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence exerted by one family member against the other, or disregard of any family member as found in the Article 2 of this Act (hereinafter: victims) regardless of the age, sex or any other personal circumstance of the victim or perpetrator of violence (hereinafter: perpetrator of violence).

Physical violence denotes any use of physical force that causes pain, fear or shame to the family member regardless of the fact whether injuries were inflicted.

Sexual violence pertains to handling with sexual content that is opposed by one family member, or if he or she is forced into acting them out or because of his or her stage of development they do not understand their meaning.

Psychological violence denotes such actions with which the perpetrator of violence exerting it against a family member induces fear, shame, feelings of inferiority, endangerment and other anguish.

Economic violence is undue control or setting of restrictions of any family member concerning disposing with one's income or in other words managing the financial assets with which the family member disposes or manages and it can also mean undue restricting of disposing or managing the common financial assets of family members.

Disregard falls under those forms of violence in which a person does not provide due care for the family member who is in need of it due to illness, disability, old age, developmental or any other personal circumstances.¹

Other relevant laws, not directly addressing domestic violence:

- The Police Tasks and Powers Act (ZNPPol), also includes restraining orders against people, place or area,
- Criminal Code (KZ-1),

¹ In the original, Slovene version, the first sentence states that family violence is forbidden. There is an additional paragraph after "Disregard" section, discussing stalking.

- Family Code,
- Civil Procedure Act,
- Obligations code,
- Crime Victim Compensation Act,
- Property Law,
- The Claim Enforcement and Security Act,
- Laws dealing with free legal service, protection of personal information, protection from discrimination and gender equality.

3.2 Spain

Organic Law 1/2004, of December 28, on comprehensive protection measures against gender violence has maintained GBV as any violence to a woman that is or was the perpetrator's partner. In international documents the term domestic violence is used for this, in Slovenia family violence is often in use as well. It involves changes in the fields of education, health, social services, public administration and criminal liability (GBV is a criminal act). This law encourages some changes in education, for example inclusion of gender equality trainings, different trainings for teachers on topics of equality, assuring better representation of women in organizations and others (I can choose to say no, 2020, pp. 16).

Law 4/2015 of April 27, of the Statute of the Victim of the crime maintained guidelines and rights of victims of different crimes, but it also gave special attention to victims of GBV. Protection of victims of domestic violence is granted through Law 27/2003 of July 31. It entails legal instruments that protect victims of domestic violence through immediate activation of social security instruments via different institutions at national and local level. One of the oldest provisions is Law 35/1995, of December 11, on Aid and Assistance to Victims of Violent Crimes and against Sexual Freedom. The protection it establishes is not relevant for all victims of GBV, however it does apply to all victims of violent crimes, committed in Spain that resulted in death, serious body injures and serious consequences to physical and mental health. It also mentions sexual liberty and allows help for victims of sexual violence, including cases where no physical force was used. Worth mentioning is also Organic Law 8/2015, of July 22, on the modification of the protection system for childhood and adolescence. It is important, because it recognizes that children and adolescents can also be victims of GBV. It stresses the duty of judicial system when dealing with cases that include children and adolescents living in domestic violence. A year later another document was presented, connecting different political parties, state institutions and civil society in a promise to fight against violence towards women and girls. It was based on ratification of Istanbul Convention and other United Nations (UN) recommendations and it maintained multiple mechanisms of reaction when faced with violence, for example strengthening the protection in cases of underage persons, strengthening acknowledgment of all kinds of violence against women and girls with special importance to sexual violence, human trafficking, female genital mutilation and arranged marriages (ibidem).

We are also mentioning some specific laws for the region of Catalonia. Law 5/2008, of April 24, on the right of women to eradicate male violence aims to eradicate sexist violence and social structures that perpetuate it, to establish comprehensive measures for prevention, detection and awareness and to recognize the rights of women who suffer it to assistance care, protection and recovery. Law 11/2014, of October 10, is meant to guarantee the rights of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgenders and intersexuals and to eradicate homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. (I can choose to say no, 2020, pp. 17).

Cyber sexual harassment was included amongst criminal acts in 2013, but it only includes cases of perpetrators contacting underaged victims (grooming), meaning it excludes other forms of cyber sexual violence, happening between adults. Additionally, sexual harassment in Spanish Criminal Code only includes situations of demands for sexual favours in the workplace, from teachers and other similar cases, leaving out multiple other cases of sexual harassment. The law was changed in 2015 and now includes stalking, sexting (non-consensual sharing of intimate photos or videos, even when they were obtained consensually) (Fundación Indera, 2020b).

3.3 International

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women defines GBV as violence towards women, because they are women, or violence that disproportionately affects women. It recognizes it as a form of discrimination that seriously influences the lives of women and their ability to exercise their rights and freedoms (Horváth et al., 2020, pp. 3). Let's take a look at some of the more important international documents.

Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (**Istanbul Convention**) is one of the foundational documents. It defines violence, including psychological violence, stalking and sexual harassment and demands their criminalization. In an additional report it recognizes the possibility of cyber stalking via e-mail or social platforms. It handles violence against women as a human rights violation and a form of discrimination and it also represents the first international contracts that includes the definition of gender, acknowledging sociological understanding of sex/gender and different societal norms and expectations. It criminalizes different types of violence, including female genital mutilation, arranged marriages, forced abortions and sterilizations (Horváth et al., 2020).

Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime (**»Budapest Convention«**) through different criminal law provisions directly addresses some types of cyber violence and their consequences, including production and distribution of child pornography. Some provisions deal with cyber violence more generally, forming international cooperation when preventing and investigating it (Horváth et al., 2020, pp. 69–71).

Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (**»Lanzarote Convention«**) aims to protect children from sexual violence. It includes preventative measures (trainings, awareness raising for people, working with children, educating children and general public, cooperating of different sectors), protective measures and different forms of help (including reporting suspicion of sexual abuse or

exploitation), different programs of intervention and changes in Criminal Code (including in it sexual abuse, child pornography, child prostitution). It also includes a commitment to investigating and prosecuting violence and international cooperation in doing so through Lanzarote Committee. Protection of children against all forms of violence and abuse is addressed in **Convention on the Rights of the Child from United Nations** (ibidem).

Gender equality has been on the EU agenda since the very beginning. Currently in force is the **Strategy of Gender equality**, focusing on goals of specific policies and measure to achieve progress until 2025. The goal of the document is EU, where men and women, girls and boys, with all their differences are free when choosing their life path, have the same possibilities and can equally participate in our society. The Strategy aims to eliminate GBV, fights against gender stereotypes, close the gender gap, reach the same level of participation of different genders in different market sectors, address the gender pay and pension gap, close the gender care gap and reach a better balance between genders in decision-making. The document utilizes a double approach: a well established gender mainstreaming in combination with targeted measures and intersectionality as a general principal for implementation. EU is an important source of information in connection to violence against women, because its different institutions gather data on the issue. Eurostat, for example, gathers all kinds of information regarding member states. European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) focuses specifically on – gender equality. Additional data is found on Eurobarometer and in an all-wide European survey about GBV against women (EU-GBV) (European Commission, 2023).

Other relevant international documents include European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, European Social Policy List and European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, all put forward by Council of Europe. UN demand a mention with their Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (Horváth et al., 2020; Društvo za nenasilno komunikacijo, 2023a).

4. STATISTICS

Statistics are an important source of information, however we need to keep in mind that a tremendous part of violence remains unreported. During epidemic of COVID-19 the gap between reported and actual violence got even larger. For Slovenia, an average degree of reporting before the pandemic was 16 % (meaning more than 80 % of violence remains unreported and often hidden to statistics) (Društvo za nenasilno komunikacijo, 2023e). WHO stresses that sexual violence remains highly stigmatized and often times means extensive societal sanctions for victims. Due to this we know that our assessment of prevalence of sexual violence is most likely not large enough (Društvo SOS telefon za ženske in otroke – žrtve nasilja, 2014, pp. 69). One of the challenges with statistics is also the fact that often there is no systematic data gathering, which is true for young people as well as general population (Horváth et al., 2020). This is part of the reason for different statistics, presented below.

Additionally we want to stress that much research is based on the principle of self-assessment of lived experiences. This requires a certain level of knowledge about violence as well as accepting the fact that one has experienced it. Because of internalized gender stereotypes and societal norms, a large part of the problem is that many instances of violence are not recognized as such. Often only the most extensive forms of violence are considered violence (for example, to consider behaviour physical violence, a beating has to occur, »a simple slap« doesn't qualify), it is only considered violence in case of repetitive behaviour (»one time he snapped«) or is recognized as violence only years after leaving the situation. In many rural areas, the criteria for violence is even stricter. It is necessary to mention sexual violence specifically, as it has gathered much attention in the past years. In the past sexual violence was mostly understood within the general public as violent rapes, where actual physical force is used. In Slovenia, for example, due to an extensive civil society campaign, a law, stating that for a conviction of rape a physical force is mandatory was changed to »only yes means yes«, but this happened only in 2021 (Criminal Code - Kazenski zakonik KZ-1, 2008, Article 170). The previous law and similar provisions exclude many violent acts and also point to dissociation and inaccurate information on reality of sexual violence. In many cases it also excludes sexual violence, where the perpetrator is the victim's intimate partner. Public discourse in the recent years along with #MeToo movement has demanded more attention towards the reality of the extent of sexual violence and uncovered many cases that were not considered sexual violence in the past. The presence of such discourses affects the ability to self-assess our experiences, therefore we have to pay extra attention when looking at data, gathered before 2017 (when the movement became viral). Sexual violence is strongly connected to gender roles, sexualization and objectivization of women and women's bodies in the media, as well as ideas of expectations and responsibilities of women towards men in intimate relationships. All of the above often blurs boundaries and obstructs the ability to recognize violence as such.

It is also worth mentioning that the numbers present actual people, meaning they do not have to be extreme to be worrisome. Most data is presented in a form of percentage of the (female) population. SURS (2021) has assessed that from the entire population of Slovenia (2.108.977), around half of it are women. Due to lack of data and easier comparisons, let's check Eurostat (2023). It only shows data for 2001, but still the number of women in the entire population is 1.005.460, which is around half. 678 020 of those women were between 15 and 64 years old in 2001. If the statistics say that 5 % of the population are victims of a certain type of violence, according to numbers in Slovenia, this still means 33 901 women that were victims of such violence. Because population of Spain is much bigger, the same percentage means nearly 7 million women, victims of such violence. Keeping all of this in mind, let's take a look at some statistics.

4.1 Slovenia

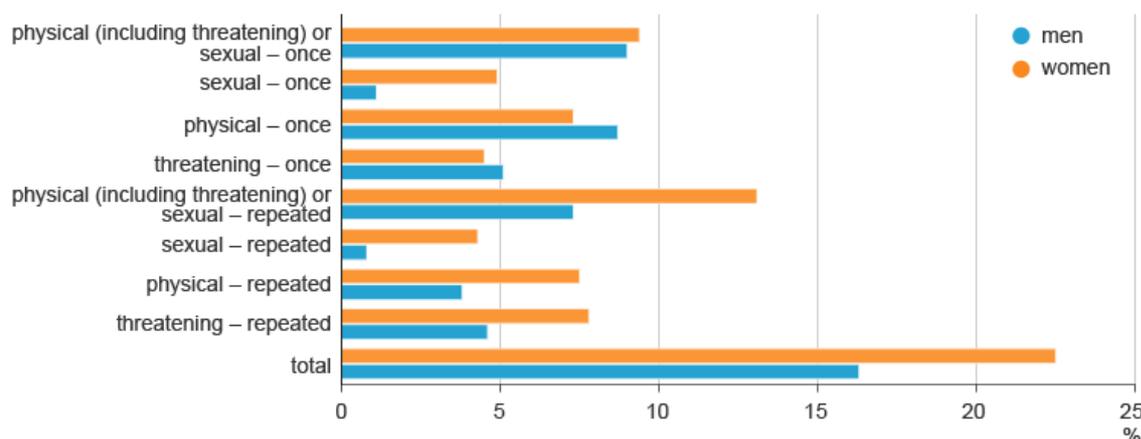
National research on occurrence of violence in private sphere and intimate partnerships showed that:

- Every second woman has experienced one form of violence (56,6 %) since turning 15, most commonly psychological violence;
- every second woman has experienced violence in the past year;

- violence can start at any point in life and lasts throughout their entire life with some women;
- 5,5 % of women has experienced violence while pregnant;
- women that are victims of violence often experience anxiety, stress, indigestion, loss of appetite, headaches, tiredness, vertigo, sleep disturbances, depression, suicidal thoughts;
- in over 90 % of cases the perpetrators are men, many of them with higher levels of education and full-time employment (Društvo za nenasilno komunikacijo, 2023e).

According to Statistical office of Slovenia (SURSTAT) women more often experience violence than men, it repeats more frequently and has worse consequences, and is commonly perpetrated by their intimate partners. ¾ of victims of IPV are women and the perpetrators men. Women are also more likely to experience violence outside of intimate partner relationships than men, with violence occurring more frequently and in more severe forms, including requiring the victim to fight for their life (SURSTAT, 2020).

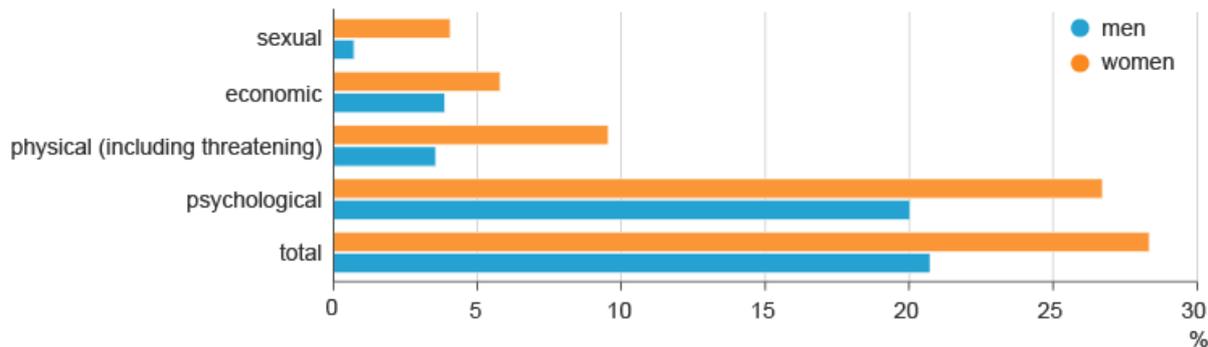
Victims who have experienced violence since the age of 15, Slovenia, 2020



Source: SURSTAT.

SURSTAT shows that women were 3 times more likely to be victims of domestic violence than men and 5 times more likely to experience sexual violence. The most common type of violence in intimate partnerships is psychological violence. In general violence in intimate partner relationships tends to repeat itself, which leaves the victim with intense psychological consequences. In cases of physical violence, women are more likely to experience it in intimate partnerships, whereas men are more likely to experience it outside of them (ibidem).

Ever-partnered population who have experienced violence by an intimate partner, Slovenia, 2020



Source: SURS.

SURS also stresses that most violence remains unreported, even if victims talk to others about what is happening (SURS, 2020; Lah, 2021). Police or other institutions tend to be informed only about the worst acts of domestic violence. Comparing data between different institutions is impossible, because there is no common system for gathering information between health services, police etc.). Many organizations that deal with violence against women in Slovenia claim that the most dangerous place for a woman in Slovenia is their home, followed by workplace, public and worldwide web (Lah, 2021). Comparison between 2019 and 2020 and therefore periods before and during pandemic, shows general decline of criminal acts in 2020, but an increase of criminal acts, related to marriage, family and children. Between January and November 2020 in comparison to the same month a year prior, police had dealt with 12,9 % more cases of domestic violence where a charge was made (1233 in 2019; 1346 in 2020). Crimes that have increased were manslaughter (56,3 % more), murders (33,3 % more) and rapes (19,4 % more) (Ministrstvo za notranje zadeve, Policija, n. d.).

4.2 Spain

Multiple different researches were done in Spain in relation to IPV. The first one we are mentioning was conducted by Ministry for Equality and it showed that 1 out of 10 girls report about a violent situation from a boy they are dating. 1,3 from 10 boys (teenagers) has admitted to behaving aggressively towards their girlfriends in particular situations. It seems that in comparison to general population, IPV between young people is especially problematic online. More than 25 % of girls between ages 16-19 admit that partners have controlled them through their phone (in general population this % is around 9). Another research has dealt with how teenagers understand violence and points out that 1 out of 3 young people believe that their partner having control over their schedule, preventing them from having contact with friends or family, prohibiting working or studying and in general stating what they can or cannot do, is acceptable and inevitable in some situations. This shows an outstandingly high tolerance towards violence in a form of control between youth (Fundación Indera, 2020a, pp. 3).

One research shows that 13 % of women report experiencing physical and sexual violence

from their previous or current intimate partner. 1 in 3 women has an experience with some form of psychological violence in intimate partnerships (17 % mentioning their current partner, 37 % their ex). Stalking is around 11 %, sexual harassment is graded between 39-50 %, depending on the definition. 16 % of women report experiencing sexual harassment in a form of unwanted touch, hugs and kisses from turning 15 years old. 10 % have experienced cyber harassment. Some research shows there are important connections between sexual harassment (exhibitionism, sending unsolicited intimate photos), sexual abuse (groping, kissing) and sexting as a way of flirting (or understanding them as such) (ibidem).

Research of the project I can say no (Fundación Indera, 2020b) included 204 young people – 103 boys and 101 girls between 14-18 years (with almost half of them being 14). More than half of them has reported that their bodies have been sexualized through comments online at least once. The percentage of girls that say they have not experienced this is 36,6 % and the percentage of boys without this experience is 57,3 %. More than 85 % of questioned people say they have not experienced cyber harassment, but between those that have, girls have a two times higher possibility. Similar applies when we discuss sharing intimate photos of someone or encouraging someone to share such photos. Threats of physical violence online are more common for boys from other boys in a form of peer-to-peer violence, not GBV. Threats of sexual violence have only been imposed to girls (Fundación Indera, 2020b, pp. 13). Out of girls that have sent an intimate photo to a stranger, more than half report doing so, because the other person wanted them to, whereas when boys are asked, they all answered that they sent the photo, because they wanted to. 50 % of girls from this research report they have never experienced receiving an unsolicited intimate photo, comparatively 70 % of boys claim so (Fundación Indera, 2020b, pp. 14).

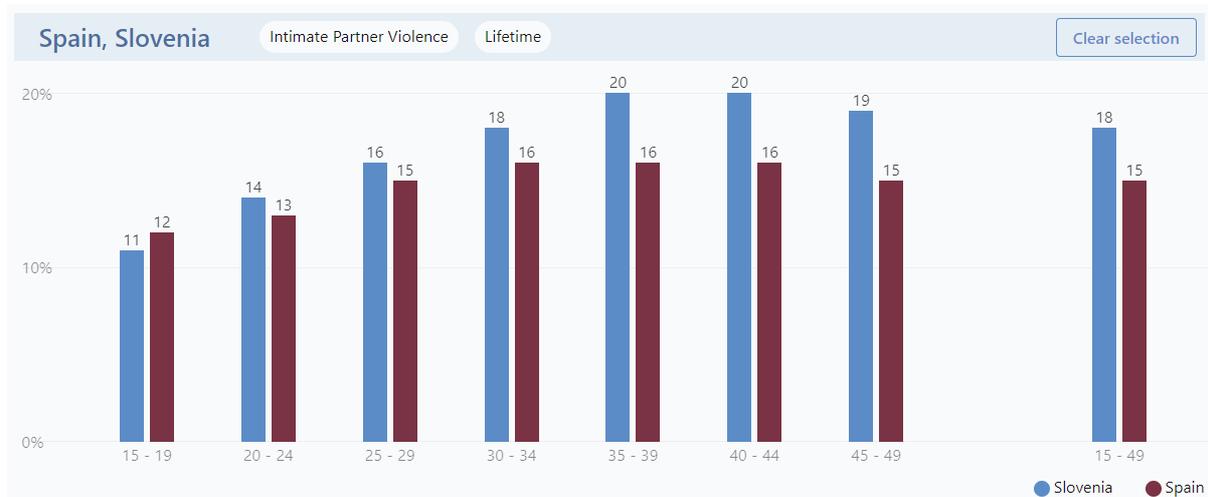
A few different scenarios were presented to the young people. A boy has shared nude photos of his girlfriend with his friends and the photos ended up online and on social media. The researchers wanted to know, how the young people would respond, if they were the girl in the photos. 24,3 % of boys and 17,8 % of girls have answered that they would want to get revenge and would try to find a way to embarrass the person that shared them (Fundación Indera, 2020b, pp. 15). For their response, if they were a bystander, almost 80 % of women would call the girl in the video/photos, tell her and ask her how she feels. Over 86 % of women would ask the people that have the material to delete it. Respectively, 46,6 boys would make the phone call and less than 38 % of boys would try to get the video/photos deleted. More than 31 % of boys in comparison to not even 8 % of girls would ignore it and over 14 % of boys and 4 % of girl believe that she should not have made the content and send it at all. Around 8 % of boys and 1 % of girls would laugh at it (Fundación Indera, 2020b, pp. 21). Researchers also wanted to see responses of young people, when they were shown a group conversation between boys, where they ranked the girls on appearance. Most women would reprimand the boys, but only 38,8 % of boys would do so. 24,3 % of boys have normalized this behaviour and have described it as something that boys do. Over 20 % have admitted to doing this in the past (in comparison to 5 % of women) (Fundación Indera, 2020b, pp. 20).

4.3 International

Some statistics gathered via European and global organizations make cross-country comparisons much easier. Looking at women aged 18-29 for 2012, 1,8 % of women in Slovenia and 1,1 % of women in Spain report experiencing physical violence in the last 12 months before the survey from their current intimate partner (EU average is 3,8 %). When asked the same question, but referring to ex-partners, numbers are higher: 2,5 % for Slovenia, 1,2 % for Spain and 4,3 % in EU average (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2023a).

If all other variables remain the same, but we are not asking about the last 12 months, but throughout their lives since turning 15 years old, numbers are once again higher. Referring to current partners they are 3,7 % for Slovenia, 1,8 % for Spain and 5,5 % for EU average, but asking about ex-partners presents numbers around 20 % for all entities (EU: 21,7 %, Slovenia: 17,7 %, Spain: 18,2 %). This means that approximately every fifth woman in the population, aged between 18-29, has experienced physical violence in intimate partnership at some point of her life (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2023b).

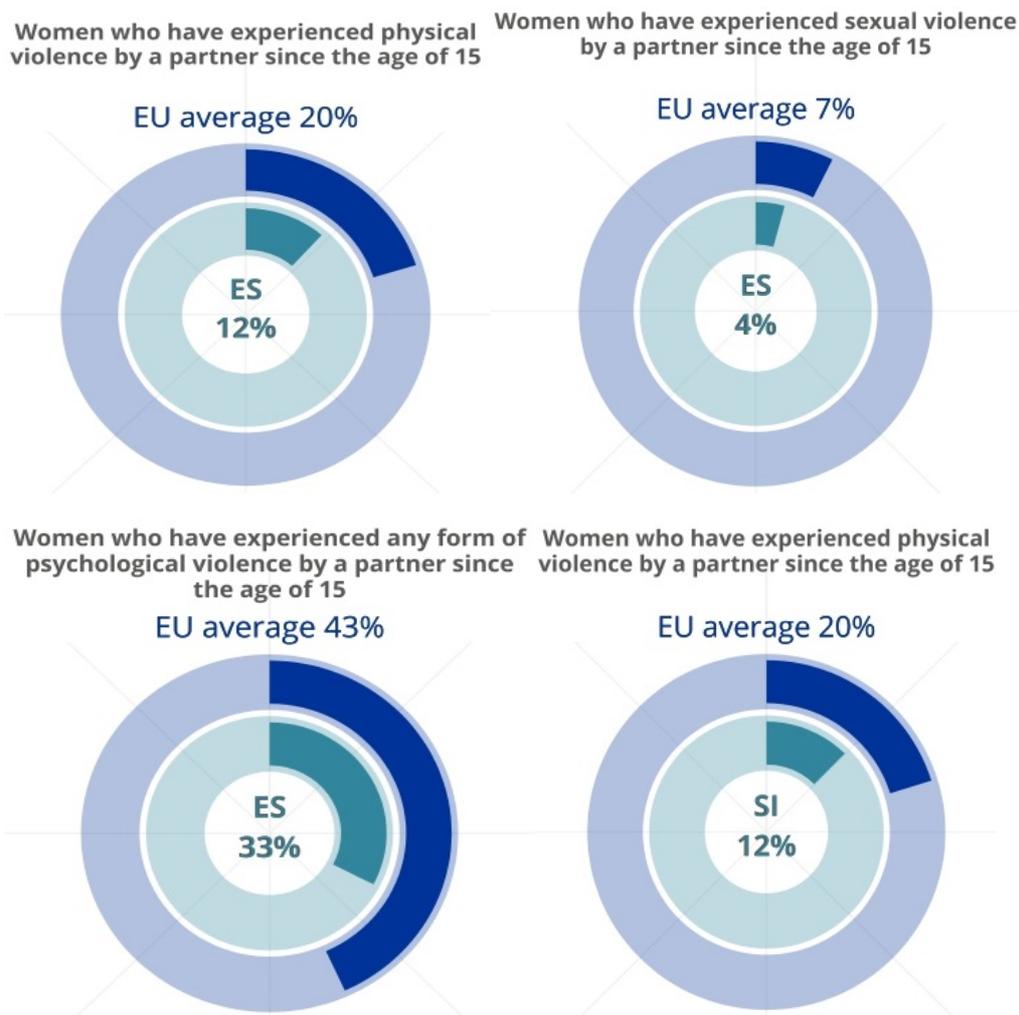
In the group aged 18-29 and based on 2012 data, 0,4 % of women in Spain and 0,8 % in Slovenia have experienced sexual violence since turning 15 years old from their current intimate partners (EU average is 1 %). 2,8 % of women in Spain, 2,5 % of women in Slovenia and over 7 % of women in EU (on average) have experienced sexual violence since turning 15 from any of their ex intimate partners (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2023c).

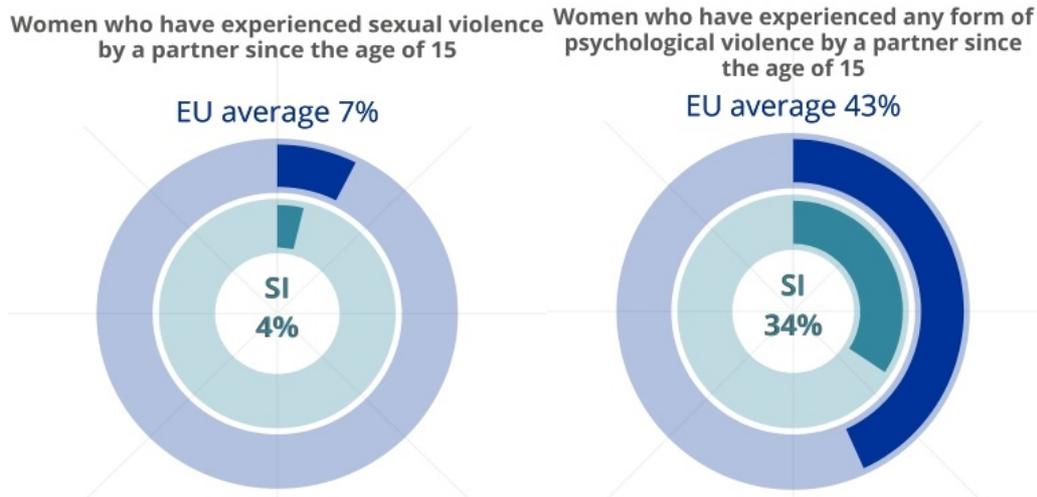


The graph above from World Health Organization (2023) shows national assessments of IPV between 2000 and 2018. Slovenia is shown with blue colour and we can see that in general it seems to have higher numbers than Spain (marked with red). Differences are not enormous, but worth mentioning. Most victims tend to be between 35-44 years old in Slovenia, followed by 45-49, 30-34, 20-24 and 15-19 age groups. Distribution in Spain is similar – first place is shared by age groups 30-44, second place is shared by 25-29 and 45-49. Following is age group from 20-24 and only one percent difference is 15-19. It is important to stress that this doesn't necessarily mean only that IPV most often occurs after a woman is 30 years old. One

thing to consider is how the question is posed – it wonders about experiences throughout life, meaning that by being older, there is a bigger chance to have encountered some form of violence. Secondly, due to self-assessing nature of such surveys, age can be an important factor in recognizing whether a situation was violent and therefore providing an answer as such.

Survey on violence against women in EU from 2012 (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2012) allows us to look at statistics of both countries regarding different types of violence. In Spain 12 % of the female population has reported experiencing physical violence from their intimate partner since turning 15 years old, 4 % has reported sexual IPV and 33 % mention psychological violence. In Slovenia the numbers are very similar: 12 % for physical IPV, 4 % for sexual and a percentage more than Spain (34 %) for psychological IPV. All of these values are lower than EU average (20 % for physical, 7 % for sexual and 43 % for psychological violence), but worrisome regardless.





Some other general results from the research above state (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2012):

- Every third woman, older than 15 years, has experienced physical and/or sexual violence in EU;
- 1 out of 10 women, older than 15, has experienced a form of sexual violence, 1 in 20 was raped (meaning 5 % or 9 million women), keeping in mind that this question specifically asked about physical dominance or harm (meaning rapes, where the perpetrator did not physically prevent the victim from escaping, aren't included);
- every third woman has experienced psychological violence;
- 8 % of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in the 12 months prior to the survey;
- 22 % women have been victims of intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence since turning 15;
- every third woman has been a victim of psychological violence from their ex or current intimate partner;
- every fourth woman has experienced one of the following forms of psychological violence in intimate partnerships: humiliation, demanding whereabouts, extreme jealousy;
- 13 % of women dealt with economic violence in one of their previous relationships, most commonly being unable to manage family finances or work outside of home;
- 18 % of women have dealt with stalking since turning 15 years old, 5 % in the last 12 months;
- 14 % of women have received threatening messages and phone calls, 8 % met with their stalker (because they followed them/waited outside their work or home);
- every tenth woman was stalked by her ex-partner;
- every fifth woman that has been a victim of stalking, reports it lasted over 2 years and/or had to change her phone number and e-mail;
- every fifth woman has experienced groping, hugging or kissing since turning 15, as well as 6 % of all women report they have experiences this type of violence at least 6 times;

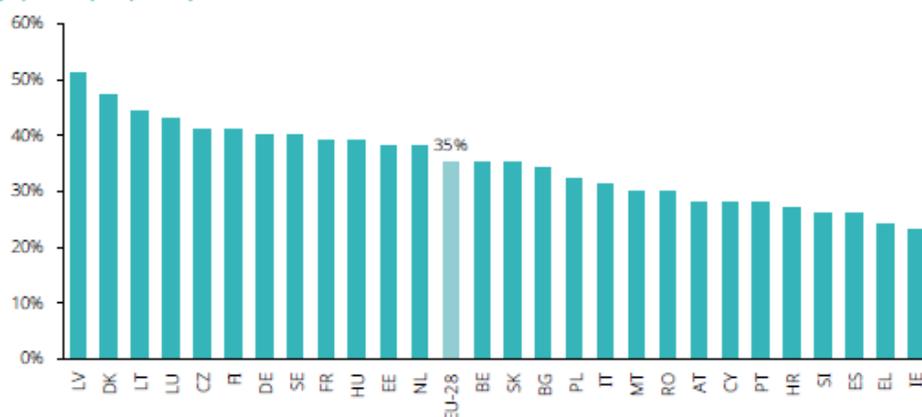
- 32 % of women that have experienced sexual harassment report the perpetrator was their boss, co-worker or client;
- 74 % of women have dealt with sexual harassment in the workplace, every fourth in the 12 months prior to the survey;
- 35 % of women have experienced physical/sexual/psychological violence from an adult person before turning 15;
- 12 % of women mention being sexually abused by an adult before turning 15 (which represents 21 million of women in EU).

Figure 1. Women having experienced any form of psychological violence by a partner since the age of 15 (% , 18-74, EU, 2014)



Adapted from European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022a, pp. 19.

Figure 2. Women having experienced any form of psychological violence by a current partner (% , 18-74, EU, 2014)



Adapted from European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022a, pp. 19.

According to WHO 35,6 % of women worldwide have experienced IPV and/or violence outside of intimate partnerships. Nearly one third of women that had a partner, have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from them. Some key discoveries include:

- 38 % of all murdered women are murdered by their intimate partners;
- 42 % of women that have been physically and/or sexually abused from their intimate partner suffered injuries due to the violence;
- women that experience IPV have higher levels of important health problems and risk behaviours;
- in comparison to women that have not dealt with IPV, there is a 16 % bigger chance for victims to deliver a premature infant, they are two times more likely to have a

miscarriage, two times more likely to suffer from depression, in some regions are even 1,5 times more likely to get infected with HIV and 1,6 times more likely to get syphilis (Društvo SOS telefon za ženske in otroke – žrtve nasilja, 2014, str. 65).

Gender stereotypes are very prevalent in society and they affect how people see and react to violence against women. Especially worrisome are numbers regarding sexual violence. Eurobarometer data shows that 27 % of questioned people believe that in some cases sexual intercourse without consent is justifiable (if the victim is drunk, on drugs, went with the perpetrator voluntarily, was wearing revealing clothing, has not physically resisted or clearly said »no«) (Matko in Horvat, 2016). 11 % of participants believe that forcing your partner into sexual intercourse should not be illegal, and 1 in 5 people believe that women exaggerate and lie when reporting abuse (ibidem). UN Women states that every day 137 women are murdered by their family members. They assessed that from 87.000 women murdered in 2017 around 50.000 of those were done by intimate partner or family member. Throughout the world male intimate partners are responsible for 38 % of murders of women. Less than 40 % of women that are victims of violence look for any kind of help. The ones that do, often reach out to informal networks – less than 10 % of victims that look for help, report violence to the police. Women and girls together represent 72 % of all human trafficking victims (Društvo za nenasilno komunikacijo, 2023e). Other research shows that at least 200 million of women and girls between ages 15 and 49 have suffered female genital mutilation and 15 million women between 15 and 19 years old were forced into some form of sexual practice. Approximately every fourth child, younger than 5, living with their mother, is a victim of IPV, which represents 176 million children. 1 in 6 people above the age of 60 have experienced some form of violence in the community in the past year, often in elderly homes and similar institutions (Svet Evrope, 2020).

5. FOCUS GROUPS

To get an idea of how the youth sees IPV we decided to execute 6 focus groups: 3 in Slovenia, implemented by Avisensa and 3 in Spain, implemented by Fundación Indera. The sections above present a short summary of participants' responses to 4 of the same statements.

5.1 Slovenia

Statement 1: Intimate partner violence has decreased over the centuries, due to living in a more modern world.

Participants had different opinions; some agreed with the statement, others believed that the amount of violence in modern world is the same as in the past and a third group of people believed the level of violence had increased. Participants that believe modern society has lower levels of IPV justified their opinion with women empowerment, including financial independence of women; less influence of traditional societal roles and less submission of women; development of legal framework; less tolerance towards violence; different helpful resources for victims and in general less violence from men in modern societies.

»In modern world it is easier for women to leave men, because they are more financially independent.«

»In the past, men were the head of the family.«

»Violence was not as wrong in the past as it is now.«

Participants that believed that the level of violence nowadays is the same or higher than in the past, mentioned that violence used to be a taboo topic, whereas nowadays we talk about it much more; that women in modern societies openly share their opinions, which makes conflicts in relationships more likely; that societal view on violence has changed; that in the past violence was mainly perpetuated by men, however in nowadays women are also perpetrators. Some participants did not provide an argument for their opinion.

Statement 2: The worst type of violence is psychological violence.

In all three focus groups the answers were different: in the first one, participants agreed that all types of violence are equally harmful; in the second everyone agreed with the statement above; in the third group opinions differentiated. Many participants believe that all types of violence are equally bad and that the judgment of that is also very subjective.

»All violence is violence, I couldn't say, a certain type is worse.«

»The person is entering your personal space in all types of violence, so they are all very harmful.«

»With physical violence, there is also psychological, but not necessarily the other way around.«

Some participants stressed sexual violence as the worst type of violence, combining psychological and physical violence. They also mentioned peer-to-peer violence as extremely harmful, because of its repetitive nature – every day, the victim has to go to school, where peer violence happens and see their perpetrators. The violence can increase, if the victim tries

to look for help in adults, such as teachers or parents. Participants believe peer-to-peer violence is more harmful when victims are younger. Many participants had different opinions on worst types of violence – some mentioned sexual violence, others psychological, then again others physical. Some believe that this entirely depends on the individual. Participants that agreed with the statement stressed that physical wounds heal, whereas psychological ones stay, destroying the individual's self-worth and sometimes even leading to suicide. Many believe that physical violence is horrendous, but in a different way. Some participants stressed that they are strongly connected and go hand in hand.

Statement 3: Men tend to be more violent than women in intimate partner relationships.

In general, participants agreed. They stressed their belief that men are more often perpetrators of physical violence, whereas women more often use psychological violence. Some believed we cannot confirm or deny due to lack of data – the fact that much of the violence remains unreported. As arguments for agreeing with the statement participants mentioned physical power and behaviours that are traditionally expected from men.

»It is much more normal for men to express their anger through aggression, women are more often labelled hysterical.«

Participants stressed that men perpetrate physical and psychological violence, whereas women only use psychological violence. Others believed that men resort to physical and sexual violence more often, but women use psychological and economic violence more often. A group of participants that disagreed with the statement above believed that men are less likely to report, giving us a false impression of how uncommon it is for them to be the victims of violence.

Statement 4: Self-love is key in preventing intimate partner violence.

Most participants agreed, stating that other people sense what our relationship to ourselves is; that it is crucial to set boundaries; that loving ourselves allows us to accept and appreciate others as they are. They believe that not appreciating ourselves makes us more dependent on other people, makes it more difficult to set boundaries and not see our worth, making it more difficult for us to leave.

»If you value yourself you will not allow this sort of treatment towards you.«

»Self-love makes it easier to stand up for yourself. If people notice, you don't care about yourself, they will take advantage of that.«

Participants pointed out that it is easier to leave, if the victim has more self-respect, is emotionally stable, independent and appreciative of their peace and safety. Some participants stressed that even when possessing these qualities, actually leaving is very challenging, especially when financial aspects or children are included. A smaller portion of participants did not agree with the statement, stressing that self-love is not a relevant factor to consider when preventing violence, that we cannot control other peoples' behaviour and that often victims identify with the perpetrator or love their partners more than themselves.

»If you are with somebody for a while and you love them, they seem like a part of you and it is difficult to leave. «

»I think it is easier to appreciate someone else than yourself.«

5.2 Spain

Statement 1: Intimate partner violence has decreased over the centuries, due to living in a more modern world.

Participants have expressed that IPV has not decreased, but we have started talking about it more, started documenting, creating legal frameworks, reporting to the police. All this has made the violence more visible. Participants also stated that women had become more empowered, familiar with their rights and demanding those. It has become more acceptable to address violence and it is seen less exclusively as just a private matter. It is less socially acceptable now than it was, which also means the chance of punishment for perpetrators is higher.

Participants mentioned that even though the topic is highly discussed in many countries around the world, the situation has not changed that much. The violence is ever-present in the media, family friends, they hear stories about it constantly, as if it is just a part of relationships.

“Violence is so ingrained it is hard to change anything about it. It’s a good thing we started questioning it, though.”

Participants agree that violence has no place between partners. They feel that physical violence maybe has decreased, but emotional and verbal have actually become more prevalent. They also mentioned pornography as a source of normalization of violence, stating that many people consume pornographic content that is often unrealistic, fuelling expectations and accepted ways of having sexual relations, which are very often violent.

Statement 2: The worst type of violence is psychological violence.

Participants agree that psychological violence leaves lasting effects and extensive trauma, also mentioning psychological violence is often a part of other forms of violence, stating it is impossible to separate it from, for example physical violence (if the latter is present, so is the former). Participants share an opinion that psychological violence is extremely normalized and experienced daily through manipulation, control, emotional violence, criticism, emotional dependency, putting each other down, jealousy, blaming, isolation etc.

»You don't need to shoot someone to kill them.«

Psychological violence is sometimes hard to notice and can be interpreted as issues in relationships, instead of violence. This is also due to the fact that admitting to yourself you are experiencing violence is very difficult. When somebody physically attacks you, it is very obvious and easy to notice what happened, but snarky comments are not always that obvious. Often it is done through bringing down our self-worth, diminishing our confidence.

Participants are wondering how to even report psychological abuse and feel they almost have to wait for it to turn physical to have something to report. Sometimes the psychical violence is

a much smaller portion, but there is plenty of psychological violence; they wonder how much psychological violence occurs before it even becomes physical.

Participants believe there is too much focus strictly on physical violence. Injuries can be cured, but the psychological trauma stays. Both, physical and psychological violence affect your mind and body, you can become depressed, it affects your wellbeing, can even bring about illness. They feel that because everyone is affected by psychological violence, we play it down and normalize it. In turn we see physical violence as an exception.

Statement 3: Men tend to be more violent than women in intimate partner relationships.

In this statement there was some disagreement between participants, but most of them did not agree with the statement. They believe that facts have shown men to be more physically violent, but if psychological violence is more considered, this is not necessarily the case. Men are more physically violent in their opinion, but it is important to consider that women can easily be just as psychologically abusive. They believe there is a game of power and women manipulate and exert control a lot.

Participants believe that statistics are not always great, because they only look at one aspect of violence. Both men and women are capable of violence. There are men that tend to be more violent, but we cannot say this for men generally. It is not in the nature of men to be more violent, but we could say there are more cases of men being physically violent towards women in intimate partner relationships.

Participants believe we cannot identify men with violence, because the claim does not allow to look at the bigger picture. They also believe the problem exists, so we do have to look at why men are more often physically violent.

“Violence is something that occurs between people, not just from one person to another.”

Participants believe we need to change how boys and girls are educated, otherwise we are reproducing power structures. Women want a tough guy and that is why they are not just victims. The cool guy in every school, according to participants, is the alpha male, that is disrespectful and violent. There is this idea of men as strong and women as weak. If a man reports violence, they claim, nobody will believe him.

Statement 4: Self-love is key in preventing intimate partner violence.

The participants have strongly agreed with this statement.

“When I was in a relationship with a guy who was psychologically abusive, and because I had so little self-worth and appreciation for myself that any attention that came from him was enough. But today it is very different, my standards of how I take care of myself have changed and I would never let this happen. So, self-love is the standard you have for yourself and its key for any relationship.”

How much you respect yourself and how high your self-worth is, is closely connected to what the standards for your relationships will be. If we love ourselves, we are less affected by what

others say, but we don't criticize everyone around us either. Self-love, participants believe, is key for relationships. When you treat yourself with love and care it is easy to also treat someone else this way, but if you are hard on yourself, you are quicker to be hard on others as well.

There is much confusion about what self-love is, as if it is egoistic, or a person being narcissistic. Some participants mentioned sympathy as important value in relationships – being there for your partner when they are in a bad mood, but also how much this can affect you, how your surroundings affect you. What you say yes to depends on the level of love you have for yourself. There are many expectations for young people. Men have to be alpha males and players if they want recognition. Self-love also allows you to set your own standards about these things.

5.3 Comparison

Regarding the first statement, that is “**Intimate partner violence has decreased over the centuries, due to living in a more modern world**”, there were different opinions throughout all focus groups in Spain and Slovenia, however there seemed to be more cohesion between Spanish participants. Regardless of this, in both countries, some participants believed that violence has decreased, stayed the same, or increased. Justifications the young people presented were similar in both countries: influence of women empowerment, development of legal framework, more conversations about it, making the topic less of a taboo, and overall less tolerance towards violence. In Slovene groups specifically the possibility of financial independence of women was mentioned, alongside less influence of traditional societal roles and existence of helpful resources. Spanish participants stressed that all these procedures, such as documenting, reporting and discussing violence, have made it more visible, but have not necessarily influenced the amount of it. Interestingly, they point out the situation not changing much in their opinion, even though the visibility of such violence existing is much higher. Young people in the Spanish focus groups recognized violence on a more personal level, stating there are mentions of it in media, they hear about experiences of people around them, even mentioning pornography as a source of normalization of violence (as well as unrealistic expectations around sex). Participants in Spain feel that it is possible physical violence has decreased, but the opposite is true for psychological violence. In Slovene focus groups a belief that in the past violence was mainly perpetuated by men, and nowadays it is also perpetuated by women, was present. An interesting statement was presented, insinuating that there are more conflicts in relationships nowadays, because women openly share their opinions. This could point to a lack of knowledge, equating violence with conflict and a certain image of desired behaviour of women, however it does not necessarily mean the individual himself subscribes to this. Overall, even though the opinions were different, the arguments across groups and countries ended up being similar.

The statement »**The worst type of violence is psychological violence**” got many different responses across the board. In Spanish groups there was generally more agreement with the statement than in Slovene ones. Participants agreed that psychological violence leaves lasting effects, also recognizing psychological violence as a part of other types of violence (believing it is always present alongside physical violence). The issue with psychological violence for them is how common and normalized it is, making it difficult to recognize or easy to misinterpret just as issues in relationship. They recognize how difficult it is to admit to oneself

one has experienced violence and the difficulty of proving psychological violence. Groups from both countries recognize that psychological violence aims to diminish a person's self-worth and confidence. Spanish groups wonder how much psychological violence occurs before it even becomes physical, stating that it seems people almost have to wait for this escalation to occur. If Spanish participants stressed normalization and provided interesting insights into how they believe psychological violence is a part of daily life through manipulation, control, criticism, emotional dependency, jealousy, isolation etc., Slovene participants made for an interesting analysis because of their differentiating opinions. Some participants also believed that psychological violence is the most harmful, stating that physical wounds heal, but psychological stay. Others presented all types of violence as equally harmful, claiming to not be able to pick a specific one. During discussion, many participants pointed to sexual violence as being the worst type of violence, because it combines psychological and physical violence. Many of them, similarly as in Spanish groups, believe physical and psychological violence go hand in hand. Slovene participants specifically mentioned peer-to-peer violence as extremely harmful due to its repetitive nature; being forced to go into school, where the violence happens, on a daily basis, is a particular challenge, especially since asking for help often leads to violence increasing. Many participants believe the worst type of violence depends on a specific individual and is therefore subjective, depending on the types of things that you have experienced and/or hurt you the most. Overall, participants recognized the harmfulness of psychological violence and did not diminish its effects. In both countries, groups understood the correlation between physical and psychological violence. Interesting to note was the mention and recognition of sexual violence and peer-to-peer violence in Slovene groups.

Participants generally agreed with the third statement **»Men tend to be more violent than women in intimate partner relationships»** in Slovene focus groups. They stressed that men are more often perpetrators of physical violence, where women more often use psychological violence, connecting this with traditional expectations of physically strong and aggressive men. Even though participants agreed with this across the board, some also believed that alongside psychological violence, women also use economic violence more often, whereas men, alongside physical violence, also perpetuate sexual violence more often. A group of participants disagreed with the statement, stating that men are less likely to report, giving us a false idea of how often they are victims of violence. In Spanish focus groups there was more differentiation between participants, but mostly there was disagreement with the statement. They believed that men are more physically violent, but when considering violence, it is important to include psychological violence, stating that women are just as psychologically abusive, playing a game of power and manipulating men often. Participants believe that there are men that are more violent, but do not agree with saying the statement generally, because it is not in the nature of men to be violent (both men and women are capable of violence). The statement, in their opinion, does not allow a look at the bigger picture. They believe changing the education around this is important, as to not reproduce power structures. An interesting statement in this section is about women wanting a tough guy, therefore not just being victims, alongside with a description of a popular boy in school: a disrespectful and violent alpha male. They recognize some existing gender stereotypes and roles, such as an idea of men as strong and women as weak and use this as an argument when stating nobody will believe a man, if he reports violence.

The participants in Spanish groups have strongly agreed with statement **Self-love is key in preventing intimate partner violence**, stressing that how much respect and worthiness you have for yourself is closely connected to the treatment you allow. Loving oneself also allows you to live more freely, criticize others less and not worry about what others think. Participants believe self-love is key for relationships, also allowing us to treat others well. Self-love sets our own individual standards of what is and is not okay with us; what we avoid, put up with, tolerate – making it everything but egoistic to practice. The expectations society has of us pressure us less, if we have stable self-worth. Interestingly, in Slovene groups, the opinions differentiated more. Most participants did agree that it is crucial to set boundaries in relationships, and that, similarly to what the young people stated in Spanish groups, loving ourselves allows us to accept and appreciate others as they are. They recognized that not seeing our worth makes us more co-dependent and our departure more difficult, because somebody that loves themselves will not tolerate being treated horribly. In this sense, answers across countries are very similar. Where they differentiate a bit is the mention of other people sensing how we feel about ourselves and possibly taking advantage of that in Slovene groups as well as stressing that even if a person is emotionally stable, independent and confident, leaving is sometimes very difficult, especially when children and finances are included. In comparison to Spanish groups, there were some people in Slovene groups that did not agree with the statement, believing that behaviours of others cannot be influenced and self-love is not a relevant factor to consider when preventing violence. This answer can be understood in many ways, one of them being that the participant is trying to stress the complexities of violence, focusing on whether self-love can prevent somebody from being violent, instead of what we tried to insinuate with the statement – that it is easier to fall victim to violence or recognize it later, if our self-image is not good. Another interesting point that was brought up was that leaving is not black and white, showcasing a certain level of knowledge about violence. Participants mentioned that victims often identify with the perpetrator, still love them, love them more than themselves or are simply attached to them due to a long-term relationship with them.

5.4 General findings

To sum things up, according to different young people in our focus groups, IPV has decreased/stayed the same/increased in a modern world. Even though opinions differ, justifications and understanding of violence are similar. Participants stress development of legal framework, women empowerment, changes in societal roles as well as attitudes towards violence, existence of resources, increased visibility and more discussion around the topic. Some participants observed that with all these changes, the levels of IPV are still surprisingly high. Participants are familiar with instances of violence happening, whether that be from personal experience, experiences of their family/friends or via media. They are aware that IPV exists and presents a problem, even recognizing its normalization, especially of psychological violence or in some cases through pornography. They believe that psychological violence has become more prominent, as have women as perpetrators, which in turn proves their earlier narrative – psychological violence and women as perpetrators have of course existed in the past, but with expanding our knowledge, we are now able to identify different characteristics of IPV better than in the past. For many participants, psychological violence is the worst type of violence, recognizing that it leaves lasting effects and often presents alongside other types of violence. They stressed its normalization, presence in daily lives and sometimes lack of

tangible evidence (such as bruises) all make it more difficult to recognize and prove. A positive light needs to be shed onto participants' recognition of difficulty admitting to oneself when we experience violence, as well as on some participants pointing out sexual violence as the worst type (combining both physical and psychological) and peer-to-peer violence (due to the inability of the victim to escape the place, where violence often occurs – school). Some participants believe all types of violence are equally harmful and others stress this is subjective. They recognize psychological violence as targeting a person's self-worth and are aware of the serious nature of all types of violence, including psychological violence, which shows a certain level of knowledge and exposure to education surrounding violence. Whereas many participants in principle agreed that men tend to be more violent than women in intimate partner relationships, they dissected the statement further, stressing that this is true for physical violence. Women, according to our participants, gravitate towards psychological violence. For many participants, blindly agreeing with the statement is wrong as it does not provide a full picture and in their opinion disregards women as perpetrators, the existence of psychological violence and their belief that men are less likely to report (even though our statement did not insinuate any of these). We can notice participants' resistance to the generalized statement ("not all men"), which is a predictable and common response, but the length they take this to is of particular interest, hinting that statements as this one can reproduce power structures, that women are not just victims, because they want a "tough guy" and that popular boys in school are exactly that: disrespectful and violent alpha males. They recognize that there is an idea of men as strong and women as weak, but turn it on its head instead of challenging the stereotype, saying nobody will believe a man, if he reports violence. This is not to say this cannot be the case, but it does showcase a lack of understanding the actual full picture. All groups demonstrate their awareness of certain gender roles and stereotypes (mentioning that society sees men as strong and aggressive and women as weak), but lack recognition (as most people do) of their own ingrained and internalized misogyny. This is an area that needs to be examined and challenged by projects such as ours. For most participants self-love is key in preventing IPV in terms of setting standards for yourself in relationships. Participants in majority believed that self-love allows us to set boundaries, live more freely, be less bound to societal pressures, worry less about peoples' opinions of us and determines, what we tolerate and allow in our relationships and lives. Not appreciating ourselves makes us more co-dependent, making it more difficult to leave a relationship. How we see ourselves and how much self-respect we have is also visible to others, making some people better targets for potential perpetrators. This shows a very mature outlook on the issue and deserves to be mentioned as a positive example. The same goes for the recognition of the difficulties of departure in a few participants, stressing that even with independence and confidence, things are not black and white, because the victim and perpetrator share a (long-lasting) relationship, the victim can still love the perpetrator, children or money can be involved and others. A minority of participants disagreed with the statement, stressing that we cannot influence behaviours of others and self-love is not a relevant factor to consider when preventing violence – this of course is a valid point, as our statement did not insinuate people loving themselves will prevent violence, but rather how accepting ourselves can make us less likely to fall victim to such treatment (or make it easier for us to notice wrongdoings early on).

6. WHY DOES VIOLENCE HAPPEN AND WHAT CAN BE DONE?

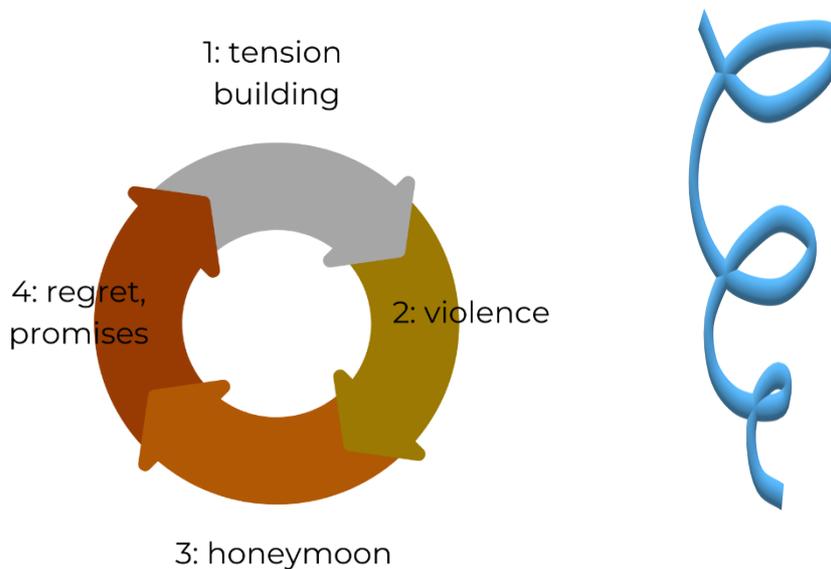
6.1 Risk factors

Instead of discussing causes of violence we must speak of risk factors; the responsibility for inflicting violence lies within the perpetrator, even though society often justifies violence and transfers responsibility onto the victim, stress, alcohol or other factors (Sardoč, 2019). Perpetrators are often the ones blaming the victims as well, therefore it is crucial to defy such misconceptions and stereotypes, because they help excuse the violence. Upkeeping the stereotypes makes it much more difficult for the victims to report the violence they are experiencing and it worsens the psychological consequences through feeling guilt and shame. There aren't reasons that causes violence, but there are risk factors that are commonly recognized in violent cases. Even with risk factors it is important to stress that violence is not acceptable as is still full responsibility of the perpetrator. Such risk factors include experiencing violence when they were children, illness, poverty, unemployment, alcohol and drug use, stress and others (ibidem). Most commonly IPV starts with less severe forms of psychological violence, which is why education on recognizing it in these stages is of utter importance. Victims often do not even consider the beginning critics as violence and recognize it as such only much later, when it is more frequent and severe. Wanting to prevent the violence from happening, the victim adapts their life, whether that means direct demands from the partner («you will no longer talk to so and so») or tactics they discover by themselves (Obran, 2018). The victim takes on at least a portion of the responsibility and guilt for the violence and is trying to change themselves to avoid it. In-between individual acts of violence, couples often experience a stage of peace, where the perpetrator is full of apologies and promises, stating that nothing like that will ever happen again (honeymoon period). Very often it is this period that convinces the victims to stay, because they see possibility of change, they want to believe their partner and their claims. Not every relationship where IPV occurs has these peaceful periods, and even in those that do have them, fear and constant control are still very much present. There is no guideline to how long the comfortable period will last and together with being isolated from their loved ones, victims find it extremely hard to look for help (Veselič, 2007).

6.2 Process and phases

Relationships with violence usually proceed in phases; we call this the cycle of violence. After the fourth phase the first one repeats and the cycle is complete. The duration of each phase tends to get shorter the longer the relationship lasts, and frequency and severity of the violence get worse, sometimes erasing the entire honeymoon phase (Matko in Horvat, 2016). What is important to realize is that violence is a process. The victim's life does not change in a few days, it consists of slow and steady limitations of activities and life, ability to make own decisions and the victim's confidence. Victims, coming from a place of love, often want to please their partner by respecting their demands and continue limiting themselves and their social lives. Human beings are extremely adaptable. When we add repetitive behaviour (therefore them becoming our reality, a norm) and constant manipulation («it isn't that bad», «it is worse elsewhere», «you make me do this») into the mix, the victim is actually experiencing brainwashing and changes to their personality. Over time they lose confidence, self-respect and self-trust. The duration of phases varies, but they tend to be longer at the

beginning of the relationship. Later on, when the violence is escalating, the peaceful phase is often left out. It is crucial to remember that violence is a dynamic and long-lasting process. The escalation of violence is often referred to as the spiral of violence (Matko in Horvat, 2016; Veselič, 2007).



Source: Phases of cycle of violence and the spiral of violence (adapted by Veselič, 2007).

Phases of cycle of violence (Veselič, 2007):

PHASE 1:

- ☐ The perpetrator is becoming sarcastic, sardonic, often speaks and behaves offensively, but blames the victim for it;
- ☐ having conversations is made difficult, tension is building despite the efforts of the victim to calm their partner down and prevent the violence;
- ☐ feeling of walking on eggshells, escalation of demands towards the victim.

PHASE 2:

- ☐ Tension builds to a point of violence;
- ☐ the victim tries to understand what happened, is confused, blamed themselves for not preventing the violence.

PHASE 3:

- ☐ Perpetrator apologizes to the victim and flatters them («you mean everything to me«, »I cannot live without you«, »it will never happen again«);
- ☐ at the same time the perpetrator blames the victim («if you hadn't done xy, I would never hit you») and suggests changes in behaviour of both or denies the violence even happened (convincing the victim it is much worse elsewhere).

PHASE 4:

- ☐ The victim feels better due to experiencing a peaceful phase (feeling like love conquers all) and is sure to prevent other possible violent outbursts (with their behaviour);
- ☐ the perpetrator is not physically violent, is buying gifts, taking care of the children and the home (love-bombing);
- ☐ in this phase it is very difficult to end the relationship – the victim hopes and wants to believe that violence will not happen again.

6.3 Consequences and help

Consequences of violence depend on many factors, including the longevity of the violence, its severity, responses from institutions and loved ones (including offered support) etc. Usually more severe violence leaves stronger and longer-lasting damage, but this is not always the case (Lampe, 2020). Violence has consequences also for the perpetrator, but these vary largely depending on specific circumstances: the person can lose their job, is held accountable in the court of law, experiences changes in their relationships with children, termination of a relationship, decreased reputation, decreased social network, increase in loneliness etc. (Sardoč, 2019). However, these consequences are not always present, whereas there are always consequences for the victims. These can be seen throughout spheres of life and are often manifesting through health conditions (directly connected to injuries or completely separate). In most cases victims feel fear, anxiety, shame, guilt and are depressed. Their confidence and personality are fragile, because they have often been isolated from the social support network and have felt extreme loneliness. Many victims turn to self-destructive behaviours (intentional harming of the body, addictions) (Društvo za nenasilno komunikacijo, 2023b). Another type of consequences are economic ones, usually long-term, because victims find it more difficult to have a job (due to worse health), leading to poverty and a whole other realm of struggles, seen at the individual as well as societal level. Violence even changes people that are not experiencing it directly: people around the victim feel less safe, change their behaviours, are more stressed (Matko in Horvat, 2016). Victims respond differently, but many of them share these common consequences:

- Physical body: lack of energy, tiredness, vertigo, loss of appetite, stomach issues, chronic pain, allergies, miscarriages, invalidity, death.
- Mental health: drop in motivation, increased stress and anxiety, chronic worry, emerging phobias, panic attacks, difficulty concentration, decreased memory, sleep disturbances, suicidal thoughts and behaviours, feelings of fear, guilt, shame, anger, sadness, hopeless, powerlessness.
- Personality: worsening of self-worth, lack of confidence and trust in oneself, changes in behaviour for example taking worse care of oneself, eating disorders, misuse of medication, self-medicating through alcohol and drugs, self-harming, lack of libido, promiscuity.
- Social network: difficulty making friends, difficulty keeping relationships, addiction to relationships, social isolation, decrease of social communication skills (Veselič, 2007; Društvo SOS telefon za ženske in otroke – žrtve nasilja, 2014, pp. 226).

Most common consequences are issues with central nervous system, unexplained chronic pain, repetitive vaginal bleedings and urinary tract infections. People with physical and mental disabilities are more often victims of violence, as are pregnant people (42 % of all violent

intimate partner episodes were reported to happen during the victim's pregnancy) (Društvo SOS telefon za ženske in otroke – žrtve nasilja, 2014, pp. 226).

6.4 Femicide

In 2020 around 47 000 women were murdered globally by their intimate partners or family members, and around 2600 in Europe. In reality this number is much higher. One major problem when discussing femicides is the existence of legal voids. The lack of institutionalized response in cases of femicide means ineffectively preventative measures as well as prosecution, but it also does not offer support to the victims and their families, re-victimizing them via legal procedures all over again (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022b, pp. 1). Legal approach to dealing with femicides goes one of two ways: it is considered a murder without regard to special circumstances, or it is considered GBV. Spain is one of few countries recognizing in its legal system that femicide is the extreme form of GBV against women. The result is a much more integrated approach to handling femicides. Since 2004 all the cases of GBV, including femicides, are investigated, dealt with and judged through specialized bodies. This ensures that employees have extensive knowledge about femicide, making it possible for them to identify relevant evidence and prosecution of the perpetrator. Not one country legally recognizes femicide as a separate criminal act, even though many professionals believe such arrangement possesses multiple advantages. Femicide, treated as a separate criminal act, clearly shows the connection with GBV, simplifies legal procedures, aids in forming specific measures and plans for prevention of femicides, aids to prevent femicides in the context of domestic violence and strengthens the faith of people in the judicial system (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022b, pp. 2).

Femicide does not have one definition, but it can generally be understood as an extreme on the continuum of violence against women, happening in all EU members (and wider). Lack of common definition often complicates treatment of femicide, including valuing what it entails and how much of it occurs (it often becomes invisible in general data of murdered people). General concept of femicide is about a murder of a girl or woman because of her gender. Vienna Declaration of United Nations was first to identify different forms of femicides, including murder as a result of IPV, honour killings; torture and misogynistic slaying of women; targeted killing of women and girls in the context of armed conflict; dowry-related killing of women; killing of women and girls because of their sexual orientation and gender identity; killing of aboriginal and indigenous women and girls because of their gender; female infanticide and gender-based sex selection foeticide; genital mutilation-related deaths; accusations of witchcraft and other types of femicide connected with gangs, organised crime, drug dealers, human trafficking and the proliferation of small arms (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022b, pp. 3).

Figure 2: Rate of female victims of intentional homicide in EU Member States and the United Kingdom (2018)



Source: European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022c, pp. 5.

In Slovene Criminal Code femicide is not mentioned, but it does fall under other criminal acts, such as manslaughter, homicide, negligent homicide and others (KZ-1, 2008, Article 170). A specialized institution gathering data in relation to femicide does not exist in Slovenia, nor does Slovenia have specific protocols for dealing with femicide (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022c, pp. 5).

Žrtve umora/uboja (v družini)						
Leto obravnave	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Moški	6	9	5	7	5	6
Ženske	7	10	9	8	8	5
Vsi	13	19	14	15	13	11

TABELA 7: Statistični podatki o številu vseh žrtev kaznivih dejanj umora in uboja (tudi poskusov) v letih 2008 – 2013

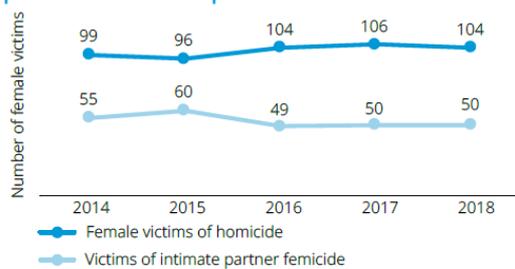
Žrtve umora/uboja						
Leto obravnave	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Moški	21	36	28	39	32	33
Ženske	9	15	17	14	12	7
Vsi	30	51	45	53	44	40

Source: Društvo SOS telefon za ženske in otroke – žrtve nasilja, 2014, pp. 194.

The first row (Žrtve umora/uboja v družini) represents the victims of homicides in the family. The second row (leto obravnave) specifies the year of proceedings, followed by the number of men (moški), women (ženske) and total numbers (vsi). Second table is the same with one major difference – the first row states homicide victims. The comparison of the two therefore allows us to see how many homicide victims were possibly domestic violence victims. Taking 2012 as an example we can see there are 12 women, that have been victims of homicide and two thirds of them – 8 were victims of homicide in a family. Out of 32 male victims of homicide only 5 are related back to the family. In all the years mentioned in above tables, female victims of homicide inside a family represent more than half of all female homicide victims.

Spanish Criminal Code also does not possess a definition of femicide, but the crime falls (similarly as in Slovenia) under other criminal acts. The difference is Spain does consider femicide related to GBV and bears this in mind when prosecuting. Spain also has 6 institutions that gather and analyse data to identify femicides, as well as multiple non-governmental organizations that gather information (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022d, pp. 2).

Figure 1: Female victims of homicide and intimate partner femicide in Spain



Looking at 2014 we can see that 99 women were victims of homicide, around half (55) of those victims of intimate partner femicide. A similar conclusion can be drawn for all of the years in the graph. The most common type of femicide is intentional murder of a woman by her intimate partner or family member. At EU level around 29 % of murdered women are murdered by their intimate partner (ibidem).

6.5 Societal response

If violence is that horrible and consequences are so severe, why do victims not leave? Questions as such simplify the reality of living in a violent situation. Firstly, we must realize that the couple shares much more than just violence. There are memories, emotions, affection, commonly also monetary investments. Sometimes eliminating oneself from the situation is simply not possible, but it is always much more complicated than it seems to a bystander. Some of the reasons can be (Obran, 2018; Matko in Horvat, 2016) sharing children, memories, reflecting and nostalgia of good periods, legal battles (lack of ground for recognizing the violence, complicated divorce procedures), idealization of the violent partner and hope/belief that the violence will not repeat, feeling guilty, presence of threats, denial or minimizing the violence, lack of confidence, fear of loneliness, isolation of the victim, exhaustion, negative responses from society towards the struggles, lack of information, economic reasons and others.

Such reasons are only examples, since it would be impossible to mention all variations of them. Even as such they serve as an example of how much courage and determination leaving takes. Some research even shows that victims on average need 7 years to leave the abusive relationship, but it can also take decades (Društvo za nenasilno komunikacijo, 2023f). A major reason for the struggle to leave is the deterioration of the mental health of the victim due to manipulation and years of violence. Often, the victims that experience the most severe violence, stay silent the longest. They learn to adapt their lives and try to survive, managing their behaviour to prevent violence from happening. Many victims leave only when they are certain they have nothing left to lose, because leaving also means risking their lives. In the eyes of society, they are often blamed for endangering their children, even though they are equally blamed for staying in abusive relationships (Obran, 2018). Statistics show that women

are most often hurt by the people they know, most commonly their partners. Intimate partner homicides are not accidents, but the final act of violence in years long relationship filled with violence. They are the most common form of deadly violence against women. In Slovenia almost half of all homicides and intents to commit homicides of women are done by their current or former partners. Many times, threats are present before the actual homicide is committed. Besides the victims, other family members are also harmed in such situations, especially children, witnessing the crime in around one third of cases and remaining without both parents when it's all said and done (Društvo SOS telefon za ženske in otroke – žrtve nasilja, 2014, pp. 82–87; Obran, 2018).

6.5.1 Gender stereotypes

We have already mentioned the role of gender stereotypes, but because of their importance we wish to elaborate further. Gender stereotypes are commonly accepted judgements and generalizations about a person of a certain gender or gender in general. They can be connected to personality traits, role in family or relationship, occupations, physical appearance and others. These stereotypes are based on traditional gender roles that have historically ensured certain hierarchy between genders. They are closely connected to gender norms – a complex system of expectations, based on the gender of the person. Gender norms and stereotypes reproduce the hierarchy between genders and affect all spectres of life: the way the person communicates, behaves, their emotional intelligence, their ideas about what they can become and where their worth lies. Different behaviour is expected and accepted for men and women. Traditional gender norms demand that women and girls be accommodating, timid, sensitive, caring and supporting towards their environment, whereas boys and men should be unruly, confident, exploring, dominant and aggressive. Women and girls are often portrayed as emotional, hypersensitive and irrational, whereas boys are taught that real men don't cry and are tough and rational. Gender stereotypes form responsibilities that fall onto family members: women are housewives, mothers and carers of the children. If they are employed, we expect to see them in the social sector as nurses or teachers or lower paying jobs. Men have to take charge and lead, work in science, engineering, politics, make family decisions and financially support the family (Horváth et al., 2020, str. 8).

Traditional gender roles can repress the actual individual needs and choices. Heterosexual relationships are a norm, with female and male traits seen as complementary. This gap in expectations between girls and boys can lead to dominant behaviours on the side of men against vulnerable women, taught that independence and assertiveness are not their values. Society can be very strict when trying to upkeep these norms and is quick to penalize anyone that opposes them (statements like »no man will like her, she is too masculine« / »he is not a real man«). Socialization around sexuality is another topic, presented very differently according to gender. Girls are taught that their attractiveness is one of their most important qualities. The media is flooded with female bodies, shown through male gaze and in accordance with current beauty standards. This is how girls learn to look at their body from an outside perspective, leading them to lose touch with it. Consequences are negative for their self-image, ability to form boundaries and understand own sexuality, often for girls understood in terms of object of satisfaction of others' needs. In contrast, boys and men get messages, that sexuality is connected to conquering, proving masculinity, dominance and satisfying intrinsic need. In combination with girls that are socialized into blurring boundaries with their bodies and needs, this is a recipe for a disaster. Girls often don't know how to say no, because

that is not something they were ever taught, but even when they do, boys often persist. Society maintains double standards around the freedom certain genders have to explore their sexuality and sexual expression. Women that take on active roles in their sexual lives are often stigmatized, whereas men wear it as a badge of honour. GBV is strongly connected to gender stereotypes and norms, because it punishes non-normative behaviour. People that view gender roles very traditionally are more likely to miss their and their partner's actual physical and psychological needs (Horváth et al., 2020, str. 9).

6.5.2 Tolerance and justifying violence

We already showed that the responsibility for violence always falls on the perpetrator. Violence does not just happen; it is a choice to act a certain way. Language we use is therefore important.

She was raped → passive: it happened to her, she is the centre of the story, no mention of perpetrator.

He raped her → active: rape does not just happen on its own, he made a conscious decision to act that way.

We cannot justify violence, because the circumstances and behaviour of the victim do not play a role in the responsibility for violence, but justification of violence is exactly what society so often does (statements like »I was stressed« / »she talked back«). Zero tolerance is important and is the best way to prevent and recognize violence. If society views some violence as completely unacceptable, victims find it much easier to look for help, because they feel less guilt and responsibility. If society had zero tolerance against violence, not as many people would justify their violent behaviour or even feel entitled to act in such way. Sanctioning violence can lead to its decrease, whereas minimizing violence only enables it and its perpetrators. Violence against women reproduces the imbalance of power between genders and enlarges gender inequality. Violence affects all aspects of a person's life: if we are focused on surviving, we cannot direct our energy into our career, personal growth or any other areas of life. Violence also presents a huge cost to state treasury due to health services, law procedures, missing work etc. It not only affects the victim and the perpetrator, it also affects everyone that know both of them. In Slovenia the most common place of long-lasting violence is home. 95 % of all violence is violence against women by men, most of those men are familiar to the victims (family members, partners, co-workers, friends) (Društvo za nenasilno komunikacijo, 2023e). Personal relationships with perpetrators make leaving even more difficult and the fact is that often the violence escalates after the victim leaves. Perpetrators use all sorts of tactics to deny, minimize and excuse their behaviour. We cannot tell whether someone is a victim or perpetrator of violence simply by looking at them – violence is prevalent across all social classes, levels of education, nationality, race, age and sexual orientation. Perpetrators are convinced their actions can be explained and sometimes even necessary to reach a goal, which is of course false (Hauptman, 2020).

Perpetrators want to excuse their behaviour, but a whole other problem is the way society reacts to confessions of victims about their experience with violence. Often times, society judges women that do decide to leave, which once again leads back to gender stereotypes and norms. This also explains why instances of women being violent against men are major stories in the public. A strong man is simply unable to control himself, whereas it is very

unusual for a weak woman to act aggressively – often we hear that it is »unnatural«. What is natural and not is not objective; it is internalized based on our socialization. People that lived in matriarchal societies, led by women, would feel very bizarre if they were acquainted with ideas of fragile women. Our beliefs and reactions depend on what we were taught is the norm and therefore right, which is determined by our culture. Research shows that raising girls and boys differentiates before they are even born and intensely continues after. If we are expecting a boy, we want him to be strong, whereas a girl should be pretty and good. These types of behaviours place men in leadership roles and women in those that need to be led, which enhances the imbalance of power between genders. Of course, it is not wrong to wish for our boy to be strong; the only problem is that the adjectives we use are based on the child's gender (Brečko, 2019; Matko in Horvat, 2016).

Preventing violence is often made difficult due to the response of society and the belief that family problems are exactly that – personal family problems that should not be interfered with. This usually applies to conflicts, but we have already established those vary greatly from violence. Society, whether that is in wider terms or in terms of victim's surrounding and social network, needs to respond and be clear about zero tolerance against violence. Instead of doing so, many declare themselves judges and make assessments about who is responsible, if it was justified and so on. Judgements from others are especially common when the victim is not acting the way society would expect her to (for example is wearing revealing clothes). Common responses when confronted with violence of someone else are (Matko in Horvat, 2016; Hauptman, 2020):

- Denial (violence never happened, there is no violence in our family, he would never, victims are lying);
- minimalization (victims are exaggerating, violence is less prevalent and severe, there are only sole cases);
- rationalization (there was a reason for violence, the victim asked for it);
- wrong interpretation (seeing violence as a fight, a conflict);
- silence (this is a personal thing, not our business).

Our relationship towards violence plays a major role in how we as a society deal with it, therefore it is important to familiarize ourselves with our prejudices about violence and victims of violence. It is understandable it is sometimes difficult to understand situations we are not familiar with; especially if we are happy with who we are, are confident and cannot imagine tolerating violence against us. It is important to know, violence is a process that deeply affects mental health of the victim (Pečjak in Pirc, 2019). When the victim finally sees the situation for what it is, their mental health is often weakened, making the departure much more difficult, even if we don't acknowledge other possible limitations (financial, children, isolation etc.). If we have knowledge about violence, we can understand why victims struggle to leave or report, the negative feelings and struggles they experience daily and how much courage it truly requires to look for help.

7. CONCLUSION

Every act of violence is an infringement into our privacy and personal and bodily inviolability. In cases of IPV it is even more complicated to understand that what is happening to us is violence, because the perpetrator is somebody that is supposed to love us and care for us (and that we love and care for ourselves). Violence causes serious physical, sexual, psychological and economic consequences. Every form of violence against women is strongly connected to gender stereotypes and norms. Some forms of control are dangerously accepted in intimate partnerships, especially between youth. IPV knows different types (physical, psychological, sexual, economic) and locations (cyber, offline), but it does not know borders. It is a global phenomenon that even with continuous development of our society does not decrease, but actually develops in new ways. Theoretical analysis above shows that GBV against women, including IPV, still presents a large problem. At first glance, Slovenia and Spain share many similarities. Spanish researches seem to focus more specifically on youth as well (in terms of sexual violence and IPV specifically), whereas Slovene researches gather data on violence more generally. In Slovenia there is a serious lack of data regarding young people, especially about sexual violence. Many statistical values are similar between countries, regardless of different cultures, geographical position and policies. We especially want to stress the progressive arrangement regarding femicide in Spain, that is, even though not sufficient, more detailed and effective than in Slovenia. Results of focus groups revealed a decent level of knowledge between participants, showing that visibility such topics have been getting throughout the years do matter. It also shows these conversations are still needed. Participants shared educated beliefs and showed the ability to be critical of society's wrongdoings. A surprising amount of compassion and understanding can be perceived from some participants, however a daunting amount of apathy is visible in others. The popularization of discourse of self-love is definitely visible with many young people understanding the importance of respecting oneself. The largest areas in need of improvement however have to do with gender stereotypes and roles. While it is true that many participants recognize them, they equate this recognition with overcoming and deconstructing them, making it seem as if the stereotypes exist, but they personally do not participate in them. The internalization of gender stereotypes is precisely what we are trying to point out with our project. This is not to say participants were wrong – it should go without saying we do not believe all men are violent, that women are never violent, or that men are not likely to report to not be seen as weak, but it is a fact that in intimate partner relationships, men are violent much more often than women, that most violence goes unreported (not just with men as victims) and that if women (believe they) desire an aggressive man, this is due to internalized gender roles and it does not, in any way, place the guilt for the violence on them. We are not advocating for limiting our conversations, in fact – we wish to open them up. Focusing on women as victims is a logical response, because in a grand majority, the victims of IPV are women. Discussing omnipresent abuse of women does not mean we ignore male victims, nor does it mean that women cannot be perpetrators. The approach to conversations about (intimate partner) violence needs to change; it is not a competition of who is abused more often, it is not women against men, it is simply a fight for humane treatment of everyone. Looking at it from this perspective allows us to examine the data, listen to the victims and prepare informed, constructive and coherent measures to prevent and effectively fight IPV.

8. LITERATURE

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