



**Violence Against Women and Girls  
in Albania: Data Comparisons  
From 2007, 2013 to 2018**





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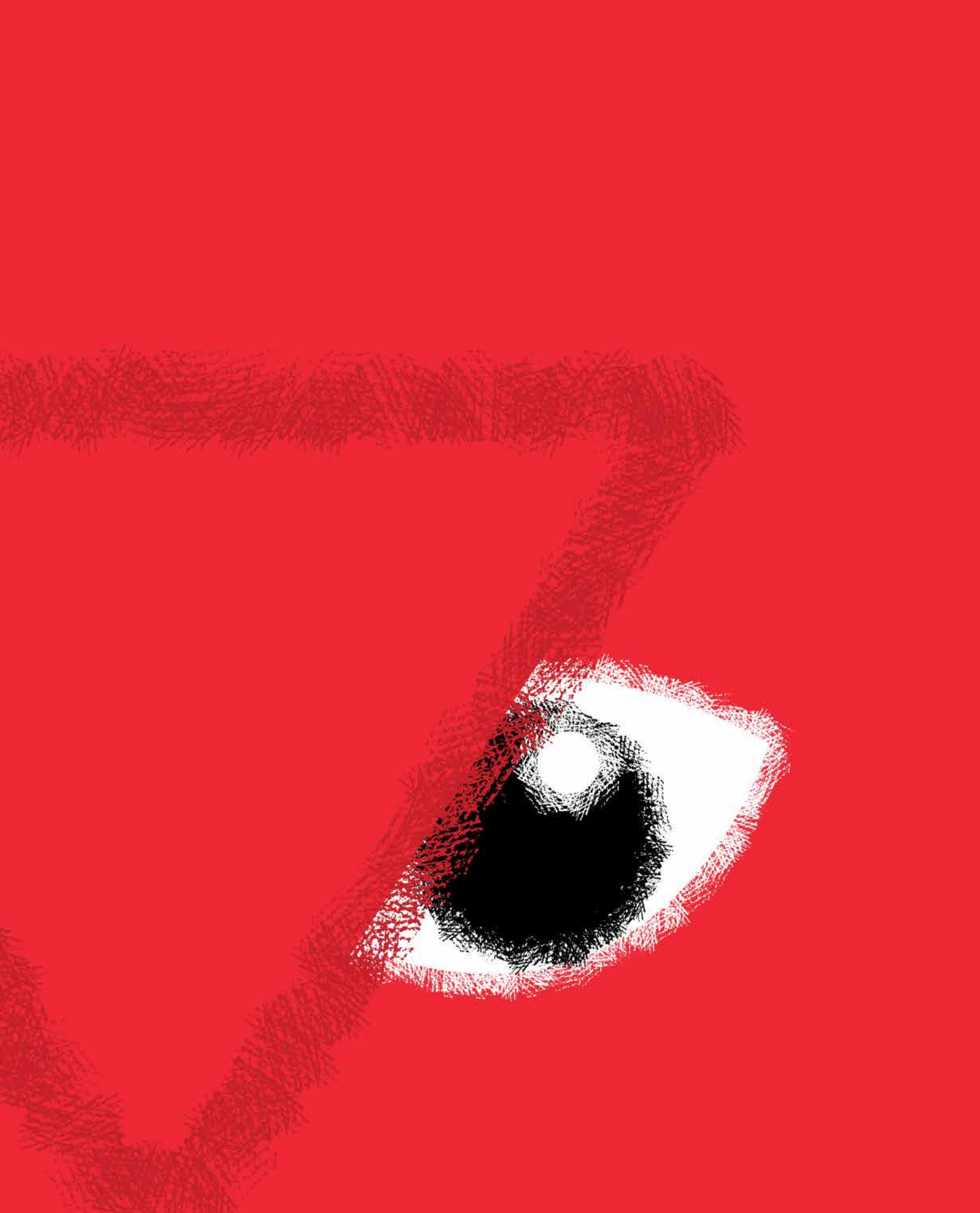
RESEARCH BRIEF<sup>1</sup>

# Violence Against Women and Girls in Albania: Data Comparisons From 2007, 2013 to 2018

June 2019

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<sup>1</sup>. This survey was conducted by INSTAT with technical expertise provided by and report writing led by Dr. Robin Haarr, international consultant, supported by UNDP and UN Women and financial contribution through the Government of Australia in the framework of the regional gender statistics and SDGs project “Women Count” and the Government of Sweden in the framework of the UN Joint Programme on Ending Violence Against Women in Albania. Opinions and views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of UNDP, UN Women and/or their donors.



# INTRODUCTION

Violence against women (VAW) is a pervasive violation of human rights and a global public health problem of epidemic proportions. VAW is recognized as both a cause and consequence of gender inequality, and is a major obstacle to women and girls' enjoyment of human rights and their full participation in society and the economy.

There is no single factor that causes VAW; rather, there are a combination of elements operating at different levels of the 'social ecology' that perpetuate and reinforce gender discriminatory and biased attitudes, norms, and practices that contribute to the pervasive imbalance of power that exists between men and women within societies and contributes to VAW.

VAW manifests in various forms of physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence that occur in public and private spaces. VAW undermines the mental and physical health and well-being of women and girls and can

have a negative impact on their long-term sense of safety, stability, and peace. VAW also has serious implications for the development and advancement of women, and their contribution to the economy.

VAW is not a new phenomenon in Albania, but has deep roots in the patriarchal traditions and customs that have long-shaped Albania, including strict gender identities and roles, patriarchal authority, adherence to an honour-and-shame system, customs of hierarchal ordering within the family, and intergenerational family control.

## POPULATION-BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN SURVEYS IN ALBANIA

VAW is a sensitive issue, making data collection on the prevalence of VAW a complex process. This is because much of the violence women experience happens behind closed doors and at the hands of intimate partners, family members and/or men with whom they are acquainted. VAW survivors are often reluctant or afraid to report instances of violence out of fear of retaliation from their abuser(s) and/or negative reactions from family and friends. Females who speak out or seek help for VAW are often blamed for their own victimization. For these reasons, women usually do not spontaneously disclose a history of violence.

Despite data collection challenges, INSTAT has conducted three national population-based surveys of VAW in Albania.

In 2007, with technical assistance and support from UNDP and UNICEF, INSTAT conducted the 1<sup>st</sup> National Domestic Violence Survey (NDVS). In 2013, with technical assistance from UNDP and financial support from Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), INSTAT conducted the 2<sup>nd</sup> NDVS. The 2018 National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS) was the 3<sup>rd</sup> population-based survey.

Over the years, INSTAT has systematically applied international standards to collect data on VAW and the negative consequences of VAW on women and their children, and the help-seeking behaviours of VAW survivors. The 2018 NVAWS also measured social norms related to VAW, as well as women's perceptions of the seriousness of VAW in Albania and importance of legislation related to VAW.

To measure VAW prevalence, these studies utilized methodologies and standardized questionnaires advanced by the WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence and the EU Agency for Fundamental Right (FRA) models for studying violence against women. In keeping with the FRA, the decision was made in the case of the 2018 NVAWS to sample women up to the age of 74, unlike the 2013 NDVS which capped the upper age limit at 55 years and the 2007 NDVS which capped the upper age limit at 49 years. In the 2018 NVAWS, the measures of social norms and attitudes related to VAW were grounded in international literature on measuring social norms and standardized questions and measures that were used in a 2018 study of social norms on VAW and harmful practices in Malawi, conducted under the aegis of UN Women Malawi.<sup>2</sup>

Each of the 2007, 2013 and 2018 national population-based surveys were conducted using similar, but not the same methodologies or data collection tools. There were some notable differences and changes that were made over the years (see Table 1). Most notable is that the 1<sup>st</sup> survey included a sample of women age 15-49 years and children age 10-14 years, whereas the 2<sup>nd</sup> survey sampled only women age 18-55 years, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> survey sampled women age 18-74 years. In addition, the types of VAW measured were significantly expanded in 2018 to include not only intimate partner domestic violence experienced by women (those who were or had been married and/or lived with a partner), but also dating violence (experienced by women who were never been married and never lived with

2. Haarr, R.N. (2018). Perceptions of Social Norms on Violence against Women and Girls, and Harmful Practices in Malawi. UN Women: Lilongwe, Malawi.

**Table 1. National domestic violence and VAW surveys in Albania conducted by INSTAT**

	1st NDVS (2007)	2nd NDVS (2013)	3rd NVAWS (2018)
<b>Sample</b>	12 Prefectures	12 Prefectures	12 Prefectures
<b>Sample size</b>	Women, N=2,590 Children, N=991	Women, N=3,589	Women, N=3,443
<b>Sample demographics</b>	Women, age 15-49 Children, age 10-14	Women, age 18-55	Women, age 18-74
<b>Types of VAW measured</b>	Intimate partner domestic violence experienced by women (emotional, psychological, physical and sexual violence)  Domestic violence experienced by children (psychological and physical violence)	Intimate partner domestic violence (psychological, physical and sexual violence) <sup>1</sup>  Non-partner violence experienced by women since age 15 years (physical)	Intimate partner domestic violence (coercive controlling behaviours and economic, psychological, physical and sexual violence)  Dating violence (coercive controlling behaviours and economic, psychological, physical and sexual violence)  Non-partner violence experienced by women since age 15 years (physical and sexual violence)  Sexual harassment  Stalking  Social norms and attitudes related to VAW

<sup>1</sup> Note: Emotional and psychological violence were measured in 2013 using similar measures as 2007, however, they were not disaggregated into separate categories during analysis as they were in 2007.

a male partner, but have been involved in a relationship with a male without living together), non-partner violence, sexual harassment, and stalking, as well as social norms and attitudes related to VAW. It is important to note that measure of intimate partner domestic violence was modified and expanded from the 2<sup>nd</sup> NDVS to the 3<sup>rd</sup> NVAWS

There is no one way to measure VAW prevalence rates and there are a range of data collection tools that have proven valid and reliable for measuring VAW prevalence rates. Nevertheless, cross-sectional data and findings from 2007 NDVS, 2013 NDVS and 2018 NVAWS can and should be compared

because they can offer estimates for the range of women who experience violence. Thus, each of the 2007 NDVS, 2013 NDVS and 2018 NVAWS serve to help the government, development partners, and civil society organizations better understand VAW in Albania, to monitor patterns and trends over time, and to investigate the impact of recently developed policies, action plans and prevention, intervention, and protection initiatives on the prevalence of VAW and women's help-seeking behaviours. Data and findings from these studies can inform legislative and policy development, shape prevention and intervention efforts, and improve protection and support for VAW survivors and their children.

## PREVALENCE RATES OF DIFFERENT POPULATION-BASED SAMPLES

This research brief represents a significant step in monitoring patterns and trends in women's experiences with intimate partner domestic violence and non-partner violence since age 15, as well as help-seeking behaviours of VAW survivors based upon data obtained from the 2007 and 2013 NDVS, and 2018 NVAWS.

### INTIMATE PARTNER DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DATA COMPARISONS (2007, 2013 AND 2018)

Globally, intimate partner violence (IPV) is the most widespread form of VAW. IPV is a manifestation of gender inequalities that exist in intimate relationships, families and the wider society. Although IPV exists in all societies, societies with more traditional patriarchal practices and stereotypes of gender roles tend to have higher rates of IPV. In countries where cultural practices dictate that women leave the home and family of their birth to live with their husband and his family, such arrangements reinforce women's isolation from their natal family and places them at increased risk of marital violence. In such situations, perpetrators of marital violence are not only husbands, but can also be in-laws, particularly mothers- and sisters-in-law; especially in families where newly married women are relegated to the lowest position within the marital family.

Common forms of intimate partner domestic violence include physical, sexual, and psychological violence. International research has found the majority of women who experience violence in intimate relationships often experience multiple forms of violence and endure repeated acts of violence at the hands of their current and/or former husband/partner. In the context of marriage, sexual

violence may not be recognized or defined as such because of assumptions that husbands are justified in forcing sex upon their wives and women are obliged to sexually satisfy their husband's sexual needs. In many countries, there is a reluctance to define forced sexual acts in the context of marriage as sexual violence or marital rape. Albania, however, has laws that address marital rape and provide harsher penalties against perpetrators of marital rape, which is now a separate criminal offence.

In many societies, it is believed there are "justifiable reasons" for intimate partner domestic violence, particularly when women do not match the expectations for their gender roles (e.g. a wife burns food, argues with her husband, goes out without telling him, neglects the children, or refuses to have sex with her husband). In these supposedly justifiable circumstances, women are blamed for their own victimization, making it difficult for them to speak out and seek help and protection from their abusive husbands/partners. Cross-cultural research reveals in many societies, both men and women, young and old, subscribe to cultural attitudes and social norms that justify wife beating.

In addition to being culturally accepted in many societies, intimate partner domestic violence remains largely hidden behind closed doors and heavily stigmatized, making it difficult for women to speak out and seek help and protection. Women who experience intimate partner domestic violence often feel they have nowhere to turn, especially in societies where there are limited support services and it is difficult for women to leave their husbands/partners and to live alone. In societies with high rates of intimate partner





domestic violence, girls learn at a young age that they must not challenge abuse and violence, as they witness violence against women being normalised in their families.

Findings from the 2018 NVAWS, 2013 NDVS and 2007 NDVS confirm that intimate partner domestic violence against women is widespread in families and communities throughout Albania. Given that fact that these three studies used similar methodologies and data collection tools related to intimate partner domestic violence, comparisons can be made. Bear in mind, however, some modifications made to the 2018 NVAWS in an effort to measure more types of intimate partner domestic violence than measured in the 2013 NDVS and 2007 NDVS; some questions from the 2013 NDVS and 2007 NDVS were eliminated or modified, and other questions were added.

Table 2 reveals that the 2018 NVAWS found that 47.0% of women age 18-74 who were ever married and/or lived with a partner experienced one or more of the five types of intimate partner domestic violence (controlling behaviours, economic violence, psychological violence, physical violence and/or sexual violence) in their lifetime, and 33.7% experienced one or more of the five types of intimate partner domestic violence in the 12 months prior to the interview. More specifically, 21.0% of women age 18-74 'ever' and 8.2% 'currently' experienced physical and/or sexual violence, or both, at the hands of their husbands/partner.

The 2013 NDVS found among ever partnered women age 18-55 that 59.4% of women 'ever' experienced intimate partner violence, and 53.7% of women experienced intimate partner violence in the 12 months prior to the survey. More specifically, 24.6% of women

**Table 2. Intimate partner domestic violence against women in Albania (2007, 2013 and 2018)**

	2018 Women, 18-74 years, ever married/lived with a partner		2013 Ever partnered women, age 18-55		2007 Ever part- nered women age 15-49
	Ever	Current	Ever	Current	Ever
Experienced intimate partner domestic violence (one or more of the 5 types)	47.0%	33.7%	59.4%	53.7%	56.0%
Coercive controlling behaviors	41.2%	25.2%	51.4%	45.4%	NA
Economic violence	7.0%	7.0%	10.4%	8.6%	NA
Psychological violence	31.4%	19.7%	58.2%	52.8%	58.2%
Physical violence	18.0%	7.2%	23.7%	14.7%	23.7%
Sexual violence	8.6%	3.6%	7.9%	5.0%	7.9%
Experienced intimate partner physical and/or sexual domestic violence	21.0%	8.2%	24.6%	16.2%	NA

age 18-55 'ever' experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence, and 16.2% experienced physical and/or sexual violence, or both in the 12 months prior to the survey. The 2013 NDVS did not distinguish between intimate partner domestic violence and dating violence, as was done in this study. In comparison, the 2007 NDVS found that 56.0% of women age 15-49 'ever' experienced intimate partner domestic violence. More specifically, 58.2% of women 'ever' experienced psychological violence, 23.7% experienced physical violence and 7.9 experienced sexual violence.

Findings from these three studies provide estimates of the proportion of women who experience intimate partner violence. Depending upon the sample, including ages of women included in the sample, the prevalence of intimate partner domestic violence can vary, and different measures of violence can result in different prevalence rates.

Given the increase in the upper age limit of women who were sampled to 74 years in the 2018 NVAWS, it was hypothesized that their presence in the sample would skew the results to show a decrease in intimate partner domestic violence where one does not really exist, particularly if the 2018 NVAWS data were compared with data from the 2013 NDVS. This hypothesis was grounded in the assumption that women over 55 years of age are often less likely to experience violence in the 12 months prior to the interview. During the analysis and report writing process, data was analysed for only women age 18-55 (similar to the 2013 NDVS) to test this hypothesis and the findings were that the hypothesis was false. When data from the 2018 NVAWS was analysed only for women age 18-55, the prevalence of current experiences of intimate partner domestic violence decreased two to three percentage points. Based upon these findings, comparisons of prevalence rates of different populations samples can be made from the 2013 NDVS to the 2018 NVAWS.

**The 2013 EU-wide survey on VAW found that 22.0% of women experienced physical violence by someone other than their partner since the age of 15.**

#### **NON-PARTNER VIOLENCE DATA COMPARISONS (2013 AND 2018)**

It is well documented that women and girls are at risk of physical and/or sexual violence by non-partners in the context of the family and home, and in public spaces. In 2005, WHO global estimates were that 7.2% of women experienced sexual violence by a non-partner in their lifetime. The 2013 EU-wide survey on VAW found that 22.0% of women experienced physical violence by someone other than their partner since the age of 15.

This 2013 NDVS and 2018 NVAWS focused on non-partner violence experienced by women since the age of 15 at the hands of both family members and other relatives, and non-family members. Table 3 shows the 2018 NVAWS found that among all women aged 18-74, 18.2% 'ever' experienced non-partner violence

**Table 3. Experiences of non-partner violence since age 15 (2013 and 2018)**

	2018		2013
	Ever	Current	Ever
<b>Experienced non-partner physical and/or sexual violence since age 15</b> (one or more of the 4 types)	<b>18.2%</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>NA</b>
Since age 15, a non-partner hit, slapped, kicked or done something else to physically hurt (physical violence)	17.3%	2.3%	6.9%
<b>Experienced non-partner sexual violence since age 15</b> (one or more of the 3 types)	<b>1.3%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>NA</b>
Since age 15, a non-partner touched you sexually when you did not want them to or attempted to touch you sexually, but did not succeed at forcing you to have sexual intercourse	1.3%	0.1%	NA
Since age 15, a non-partner forced you into sexual intercourse when you did not want to, for example by threatening you, holding you down or putting you in a situation where you could not say no	1.0%	0.0%	NA
Since age 15, forced you to have sex when you were too drunk or drugged to refuse	1.1%	0.0%	NA

since the age of 15 (by someone other than their husband/boyfriend), of which 17.3% experienced non-partner physical violence and 1.3% experienced non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime; and 2.4% experienced one or more of the four types of non-partner violence in the 12 months prior to the survey. Only 4.6% of women sought help for non-partner violence.

In comparison, the 2013 NDVS found among women age 18-55 that 6.9% of women experience non-partner physical violence; non-partner sexual violence was not measured in the 2013 NDVS. The 2007 NDVS did not measure non-partner physical or sexual violence. Data from these three findings reveals no one study generates the same prevalence rates, but they do provide understanding that women in Albania have experienced non-partner violence since the age of 15.

### **PHYSICAL VIOLENCE DURING PREGNANCY DATA COMPARISONS (2013 AND 2018)**

Among women who had ever been pregnant, the 2018 NVAWS found that 1.1% of women had ‘ever’ been hit, slapped, kicked or physically abused during pregnancy (this is similar to findings in the 2013 NDVS that 1.3% of women age 18-55 were physically abused during pregnancy); women who ‘ever’ experienced physical violence in their marriage/relationship were two times more likely to be physically abused during pregnancy (2.3%). Among women who were physically abused during pregnancy, 30.5% were physically abused during their last pregnancy and 10.1% had been punched and/or kicked in the abdomen while pregnant. Only 9.0% of women age 18-74 years sought help for intimate partner domestic violence. In the 2018 NVAWS women who experienced physical violence during pregnancy were

**Table 4. Experiences of physical violence during pregnancy (2013 and 2018)**

	2018		2013
	Ever been pregnant	Ever experienced physical violence	Ever been pregnant
Ever hit, slapped, kicked or physically abused during pregnancy	1.1%	2.3%	1.3%
Did this happen during your last pregnancy?		30.5%	NA
Ever punched or kicked in the abdomen while pregnant		10.1%	NA

asked who committed acts of physical violence against them during pregnancy. Fifty-one percent of women reported their current and/or former husband/boyfriend hit, slapped, kicked or physically abused them during pregnancy. Some women also reported a variety of other family members hit, slapped, kicked or physically abused them during pregnancy. This includes: mothers/step-mothers (4.3%), fathers/step-fathers (4.5%), sisters/brothers (4.3%), daughters/sons (2.5%), other relatives (7.3%), mothers-in-law (1.6%), fathers-in-law (1.6%) and other-in-laws (2.6%). Surprisingly, women also reported non-family members, including teachers (7.3%) and employers or someone at work (2.5%), hit, slapped, kicked or physically abused them during pregnancy.

In terms of being punched or kicked in the abdomen while pregnant, 79.1% of women reported their current or former husband/boyfriend punched or kicked them in the abdomen while pregnant, and 10.4% reported another in-law committed such physical violence against them while they were pregnant. Perpetrators who punch or kick a pregnant woman in the abdomen attack not only the mother, but also aim to harm the child and maybe even end the pregnancy.

#### **HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOURS DATA COMPARISONS (2013 AND 2018)**

Data revealed that the majority of women who experience intimate partner domestic violence and non-partner violence do not seek help for the violence, although the majority of women tell someone about their experiences of violence. Most VAW survivors continue to suffer in silence despite ongoing efforts to raise public awareness to the problems of VAW in Albania.

When women do seek help for intimate partner domestic violence and/or non-partner violence, most women seek help from their own family and informal networks, such as friends, neighbours and in some cases religious leaders; however, very few women seek help from formal sources, such as victim support service providing agencies, the health system, police and/or the justice system. Table 5 shows that the proportion of women who reported seeking help for domestic violence was 8.4% in 2013 to 6.7% in 2018, but the proportion of women who sought help for domestic violence experienced in the 12 months prior to the interview was 9.0% in 2018.

**Table 5. Help-seeking behaviours among women who experienced domestic violence and non-partner violence**

	2013		2018	
	Domestic violence (ever)	Domestic violence (current)	Domestic violence (ever)	Non-partner violence (ever)
Sought help for violence	6.7%	9.0%	8.4%	4.6%

**Table 6. From whom domestic violence victims sought help**

Family	2013	2013	2018
	Women who sought help for domestic violence	Women who sought help for domestic violence	Women who sought help for non-partner violence
Own family	98.0%	91.8%	85.3%
Husband/partner's family	40.4%	60.9%	15.5%
Current/former husband/boyfriend	4.2%	8.8%	2.6%
<b>Informal networks</b>			
Friend	6.7%	29.0%	12.1%
Neighbour	11.9%	NA	16.6%
Religious leader	1.7%	0.0%	1.1%
<b>Formal networks</b>			
Doctor/health workers	3.1%	14.8%	2.6%
Police	4.4%	16.8%	8.3%
Lawyer	3.4%	14.8%	2.2%
Judge	2.8%	11.2%	4.7%
Social service agency/organization	1.6%	11.2%	2.2%
Shelter for women and girls	0.4%	NA	0.0%
Helpline (0800 11112)	0.0%	NA	0.0%
Local Domestic Violence Coordinator	0.0%	NA	0.0%
Other	0.0%	NA	2.7%

Table 6 shows that the majority of women for domestic violence and non-partner violence sought help from family; few women sought help from informal and formal networks. Thus, VAW survivors are not receiving the protection, support services, and access to

justice that is their legal and human rights. Surprisingly, fewer women reported seeking help from formal and informal networks for domestic violence from the 2013 NDVS to the 2018 NVAWS; there is no clear explanation for this change.

## **The Government should promote and fund VAW prevalence studies in a concerted effort to uncover information on women's experiences with intimate partner domestic violence, dating violence, non-partner violence, sexual harassment and stalking.**

### **WAYS FORWARD**

Findings from the 2007 NDVS, 2013 NDVS and 2018 NVAWS demonstrate that VAW is not a marginal issue that touches only some women and girl's lives in Albania; instead, VAW affects the majority of women and results in children's exposure to violence, particularly in the home where children are both direct and/or indirect victims of domestic violence. The 2007 NDVS, 2013 NDVS and 2018 NVAWS also revealed that partner's alcohol use/abuse was linked to the prevalence and severity of intimate partner domestic violence and women's risk and severity of domestic violence injuries.

Data from the 2013 NDVS and 2018 NVAWS demonstrate a significant proportion of women have experienced physical and/or sexual non-partner violence, or both, since the age of 15. The 2018 NVAWS found that women exposed to non-partner violence since the age of 15 were at increased risk of experiencing intimate partner domestic violence in adulthood. These findings support international research findings that link intimate partner violence with intergenerational domestic violence.

Efforts of INSTAT to monitor patterns and trends in the prevalence of VAW is important and will enable the Government of Albania, including policy- and decision-makers, as well as development partners and service providers to assess the impact of legislative reforms, policy developments, programming and referral mechanisms that aim to improve prevention, protection and intervention efforts and ending VAW initiatives.

The Government of Albania should signify their commitment to the collection of VAW data on an ongoing and regular basis by ensuring that funding mechanisms exist to support VAW prevalence studies. The Government should promote and fund VAW prevalence studies in a concerted effort to uncover information on women's experiences with intimate partner domestic violence, dating violence, non-partner violence, sexual harassment and stalking. These surveys should be repeated at the least ever five years to measure developments over time. Data collection should be supported by INSTAT and relevant expert groups, with continued technical support from international organizations.



**Ending  
Violence**  
Against  
Women

